A CLOSET FULL OF DRESSES: INTERSECTIONS OF FEMININITY AND SEXUALITY AMONG QUEER WOMEN IN PANHELLENIC SORORITIES

BY

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DISSERTATION
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Abstract

Despite the fact that the sorority experience has been sensationalized in the media (e.g., movies such as *Legally Blonde* and *The House Bunny*; television shows such as *GRΣΣK*), few academic studies have focused on gender or sexuality within the sorority context (Berbary & Johnson, 2012; Hevel & Bureau, 2014; Kahn, 2012). By exploring the experiences of queer women in Panhellenic sororities and using a grounded theory approach to understand how they negotiate expectations of femininity, the current study suggests preliminary theoretical relations in an otherwise understudied area. The findings indicate that queer women do indeed seek and enjoy their membership in Panhellenic sororities, despite overarching heteronormative expectations and homophobic microaggressions. After obtaining membership in these elitist organizations, queer women engaged in a process of staying in bounds, allowing them to maintain inclusion and a good standing with their organizations, but compromising aspects of their identities.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

College students today have grown up with gender equality and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights receiving significant political and social attention. As a result of increased social awareness, students on college campuses are seeking inclusion of LGBT members in fraternities and sororities, and many heterosexual sorority women consider themselves to be accepting of same-sex relationships (Neumann et al., 2013). In addition to the emergence of queer-inclusive fraternities and sororities in the 1980s, existing organizations have responded in support of LGBT inclusion. This support has taken the form of permitting LGBT students to join or retain membership, prohibiting homophobic and transphobic behaviors among members, revising statements of policy to reflect inclusivity, and creating officer positions focused on diversity and inclusion (Campus Pride, 2019; National Panhellenic Conference [NPC], 2019). Campuses can and have joined the movement as well by developing resources for LGBT members of fraternities and sororities and creating educational programs on topics such as diversity and inclusion for all members (Case et al., 2005; Rankin et al., 2013). As further evidence of inclusion-oriented actions and beliefs, some campuses have supported the formation of student organizations for LGBT members of fraternities and sororities (e.g., Lambda Q at Washington University, LGBTGreek at the University of Illinois, and Queer Sorority Members Affinity Group at Vanderbilt University).

Despite intentional efforts at both the campus and organizational levels to be inclusive of diversity in both gender expression and sexuality, gendered expectations and an assumed heterosexuality of members remain pervasive in society and across college campuses (Stone & Gorga, 2014). Thus, membership in sororities\(^1\) may remain limited for queer\(^2\) women, particularly for those perceived to be non-conforming to heteronormative expectations of femininity. Gender expression and sexuality, though different constructs, are intricately connected through the social construction of heteronormativity (Oswald et al., 2005). In single-sex social organizations, such as sororities, women may face elevated pressures to conform to the expression, ideals, and beliefs of a heteronormative femininity that assume gender conventionality and heterosexuality. As a result, queer women may conceal, minimize, or reject aspects of their identities in order to comply with or uphold standards of heterofemininity\(^3\) and gain

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1 Only member organizations of the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) are included in this study. As such, the use of the term “sorority,” unless otherwise noted, will refer only to these organizations.

2 It is expressly understood that sexual identity is a complex and fluid construct (Diamond, 2008). Although individual choice of terminology varies, the identity labels in this dissertation (e.g., queer, sexual minority) are used interchangeably and are intended to encompass all non-heterosexual sexual identities (American Psychological Association, APA Task Force on Psychological Practice with Sexual Minority Persons [APA], 2021).

3 Heterofemininity refers to the dominant, privileged White femininity, which is rooted in traditional beliefs about gender and heterosexuality.
access to membership in sororities. Access refers broadly to the opportunity to gain membership in a sorority, as well as to fully participate as one’s authentic self.

Access is also regulated by policing of explicit and implicit practices. Historically, sorority members have been found to hold more heteronormative beliefs about gender and sexuality than non-members (Kalof & Cargill, 1991; Kamm & Rentz, 1994), and non-conforming women (known or suspected) have been subjected to a number of containment practices. These practices, including closeting, excluding, or encouraging membership in sororities designated—either formally or informally—for queer women, deny queer women equal and complete access to sororities broadly (Stone & Gorga, 2014). Exclusion or containment practices may be also be implicit. For example, it may be the case that women who produce certain feminine performances (e.g., looking, acting, and dressing “like a lady”) are granted more access to sorority membership (Berbary & Johnson, 2012; Neumann et al., 2013) and rewarded among active members in ways that deny full participation by queer women. Understanding the extent to which this characterizes queer women’s experiences in sororities today is necessary for creating inclusive environments.

Although issues of femininity have been studied among women in Panhellenic sororities, they are not often studied in tandem with sexuality. In general, queer women holding membership in sororities report positive experiences (Case, 1996; Case et al., 2005), but their unique experiences with femininity as sexual minorities have not been examined. This intersection is important because broader perceptions of increased inclusivity and overall positive experiences among queer women may mask their continued marginalization in the sorority context. The negative effects of marginalization on sexual minorities are well documented (e.g., Oswalt & Wyatt, 2011; Przedworski et al., 2015; Woodford et al., 2014), but sororities themselves, despite their historical presence on college campuses and influence on the college student experience, have received relatively little academic attention (Berbary & Johnson, 2012; Hevel & Bureau, 2014; Kahn, 2012). This may be due to the challenge of accessing elite and privileged groups, the overall focus of academic research on marginalized populations (Molasso, 2005; Scheyvens et al., 2014), or the lack of awareness of marginalized groups within sororities. Furthermore, a large-scale exploration of the experiences of sexual minorities in sororities has not been conducted since 2007 (Rankin et al., 2007), and the study of sexuality is limited by the complexity and fluidity of sexual identity, as sorority members’ sexual identities may change over time (Diamond, 2008). Thus, several important questions remain unanswered: Why do queer women join sororities? What do they gain from membership? How do queer women negotiate femininity in the context of sororities?

Given the gaps in current knowledge, the purpose of the present study is to explore the experiences of queer women in Panhellenic sororities and how their experiences are shaped by their perceptions, replication, negotiation, and resistance of femininity. A multi-method design was used,
including quantitative description and grounded theory methods. Survey and in-depth, semi-structured interview data were collected to describe queer women’s experiences in sororities, with particular consideration of how femininity is experienced. Although transgender women may also identify as queer, this study focused on queer, cisgender women. Gender identity, rather than gender expression, is a complex construct, and transgender women likely have unique experiences, pressures, and fears in the ways they experience femininity that merit individualized attention (Garfinkel, 1967; Yavorsky & Sayer, 2013).

Exploring the experiences and perceptions of femininity of queer women in sororities can provide valuable insight into the impact of the changing political climate and inclusion-based policies on sororities today. In the chapters that follow, I first provide an overview of key sensitizing theoretical frameworks and existing literature that inform the research problem. Then, I detail the sorority experience in three contexts—recruitment, housing, and social events—and discuss how heterofemininity is (re)produced in Panhellenic sororities at an institutional level. This is followed by an overview of what is currently known about the experiences of queer women in sororities. Next, I present my research questions, study design, procedures, and analytic plan. I then present the findings of the quantitative and qualitative components of the study and discuss them within the context of the existing literature. Finally, I close with a consideration of strengths, limitations, and directions for future research.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Queer women in Panhellenic sororities negotiate complex intersections of gender and sexuality as they navigate the sorority experience. They hold membership in a social institution that reinforces a visibly heteronormative context through the “doing” of gender, but experience it from a position of (in)visible queer sexuality. As such, both theories of gender formation and gender relations hold relevance to the sorority experience. In many qualitative approaches, theoretical foundations and existing literature are not used to formulate testable hypotheses prior to a study, but rather, they offer sensitizing concepts and ideas that may be relevant to the topic and influence data analysis and interpretation. They also provide starting points for investigation but do not direct data analysis (Charmaz, 2014). In this section, I review the theoretical framework and existing literature that informed the current study.

Theories of Gender

Gender is a social construct that is considered to be both internalized as an identity (Bem, 1981; Egan & Perry, 2001; Green, 1974) and externalized as an expression (Goffman, 1976; West & Zimmerman, 1987). According to West and Zimmerman (1987), gender can be defined as “the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category” (p. 127). In this sense, normative refers to the heteronormative ideology in which dominant cultural and social expectations of gender, sexuality, and family are rooted (Ingraham, 1996; Oswald et al., 2005). In other words, individuals are “doing gender” as they engage in behaviors and practices on a daily basis to reaffirm their gender. These “gender performances” indicate one’s degree of adherence to societal standards for normative masculinity and femininity and are not always conscious behaviors (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Two theoretical foundations, the enculturated lens theory of gender formation and gender hegemony, are useful for understanding the replication of normative gendered ideologies at both the individual and institutional levels. The enculturated lens theory of gender formation explains the internalization of a gender binary, which shapes individual identities and structures relationships between men and women (Bem, 1993). These concepts are linked to gender hegemony, a theory of gender relations that informs the hierarchical structure of gender performance both within and across genders (Schippers, 2007), as well as across geographic, cultural, spatial, and historical contexts (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009).

Enculturated Lens Theory of Gender Formation

Bem’s (1993) enculturated lens theory of gender formation provides a foundation for understanding the embeddedness of gender binaries within Western society. There are three primary lenses—biological essentialism, gender polarization, and androcentrism. Biological essentialism is the societal belief that there are natural, biological differences between men and women (Bem, 1993). The lens of gender polarization posits that not only are men and women biologically different, but that these
innate differences position them to be opposite to one another in virtually all aspects of being. This belief has resulted in deeply rooted cultural beliefs about appropriate or expected roles of men and women in society (e.g., within the household, in the workplace, in relation to each other). An androcentric lens centers on the belief that not only are men and women polar opposites, but men are superior to women. This belief is used to justify patriarchal institutions centered on the needs of men and structures that oppress or deny opportunities to women. According to Bem (1993), the male/female dichotomy is enculturated, or taught and reinforced, through both daily interactions and meta-messages about gender, starting at an early age. These lenses become internalized and transmitted from generation to generation (Bem, 1993). As such, gender continues to be a primary means of organizing social power.

A critical examination of societal institutions reveals patterns of enculturating gender lenses to members that begin at an early age and result in the persistence of gender binaries (Coltrane & Adams, 2008; Osmond & Thorne, 1993). Bem’s enculturated lens theory of gender formation has been applied to the study of a number of social institutions such as education (e.g., Charles & Bradley, 2009; Henning-Stout & Close-Conoley, 1992; Meyer, 2010), religion (e.g., Mihelich & Storrs, 2003), and economic (e.g., Choi & Hon, 2002; Herrick, 1999; Williams, 1995). These institutions convey cultural standards for the behaviors, needs, and expectations of men and women. The gendered institution of education is particularly consequential as one of the social institutions to which children are first exposed outside of the family, and one that continues to impact their understanding of gender through early adulthood (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Bem, 1993). Early classroom experiences reflect the embeddedness of gender in society and convey expectations of boys and girls to children, as teachers often respond differentially to male and female students (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Bem, 1981, 1993; Skelton & Read, 2006) and reinforce the notion of a gender binary (Rands, 2009; Smith & Payne, 2016). These messages become internalized over time and shape the way children see gender. Such enculturation has been linked to increased gender stereotypes and patterns of “doing gender” among children as young as four years old (Bian et al., 2017; Bigler, 1995; Hilliard & Liben, 2010).

Similarly, patterns of exclusion and differential treatment of men and women at post-secondary institutions further demonstrate gender enculturation. Initially excluded from higher education, women were first permitted to attend alongside men in 1833 at Oberlin College. Although seemingly progressive, this decision was made on the basis of advancing the education of men, as an integrated classroom provided male students with a “more wholesome and realistic view of women” (Stock, 1978, p. 190). In the 150 years since the integration of higher education, women have made significant gains in both presence and performance at universities (Blair & Northway, 2001; Johnson, 2017). However, differential treatment persists as female students encounter faculty bias in areas such as the biological and physical
sciences (Barthelemy et al., 2016; Moss-Racusin et al., 2012) and even overt discouragement in male-majority fields (Allan & Madden, 2006), reinforcing and reproducing androcentric assumptions.

**Gender Hegemony**

Theories of gender hegemony extend concepts of androcentrism to explain not only the dominant position of men relative to women, but also the social hierarchies that exist within the same gender. Connell (1995) defines hegemonic masculinity as “the configuration of gender practice. . .which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (p. 77), as well as non-dominant masculinities. In other words, hegemonic masculinity is the dominant masculinity in a given context that establishes a power hierarchy relative to other forms of masculinity and to femininities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Although the attributes of hegemonic masculinity vary by context, hegemonic masculinity in Western society is characterized by being White, wealthy, aggressive, and dominant (Bem, 1993; Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; James 1998), as well as strictly heterosexual (Grazian, 2007; Sweeney, 2014). Although other masculinities exist, the privileging of the dominant masculinity reinforces the practices, qualities, and behaviors that characterize that way of being male. Any deviation from these ideals is perceived to disrupt normative social order (Garfinkel, 1964) and is relegated to a position of lesser social power (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

In an androcentric society, femininities are also considered as they relate to masculinities. The emphasized, or hegemonic, femininity is a privileged femininity compared to other femininities, but remains unequal to masculinity (Bem, 1993; Connell, 1987; Scheele, 2003; Schippers, 2007). Schippers (2007) defines hegemonic femininity as “consist[ing] of the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (p. 94). Similar to hegemonic masculinity, the specific attributes of hegemonic femininity vary based on the context; however, the attributes always exist to serve the needs of men in power and replicate the perceived natural social order (Bem, 1993; Charlebois, 2011; Messerschmidt, 2010; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009; Schippers, 2007).

In Western society, hegemonic femininity privileges both physical characteristics, such as conventional beauty (with or without make-up), thin with appropriate curves, and feminine dress (Bordo, 2003; Longhurst, 2001), as well as behavioral characteristics, such as emotional responsiveness and abstinent (hetero)sexuality, that align with heteronormative gender conventionality (Aulette & Wittner, 2012; Dittmar et al., 2006; Krane, 2001). The social meaning of these physical and behavioral characteristics is taught at early ages as children internalize expectations for gender at a young age (Bem, 1993), and reinforced by meta-messages through mass/social media and peer reinforcement that convey an idealization of heterofemininity. Internalization and idealization of these perfectionist standards for
femininity are not without consequence. The pressure to conform to perfectionist standards of heterofemininity as early as in adolescence can lead to a number of health risks including disordered eating (Wertheim et al., 2001), dysfunctional exercise, and mental health concerns (Hausenblas et al., 2008) that may persist into adulthood.

The pressure to produce heterofemininity continues into adulthood. In early adulthood, conformity to these standards may serve as a form of cultural capital (McCall, 1992) and grant access to certain “high status” social networks (Gilmartin, 2005; Holland & Eisenhart, 1990). As a result, women may strive to achieve heterofemininity, silencing some aspects of their identity or experience (Schrick et al., 2012). Faced with the pressure to adhere to standards of perfectionism, college women, for example, may consequently struggle with appearance and body image (Piran & Cormier 2005; Schrick et al., 2012; Swim et al., 2001), which has been shown to increase mental health risks (Jack & Dill, 1992). Although these standards are culturally embedded at a societal level, there are certain contexts that further privilege heterofemininity, such as beauty pageants, mass media, and social sororities. In these contexts, the pressure to (re)produce heterofemininity may lead to an elevated pressure to conform.

The Panhellenic Sorority: A Gendered Organization

Beliefs about the inherent differences between men and women influenced the founding of single-sex organizations, and may be the reason fraternities and sororities continue to exist as opposite today. All-male scholarly, honorary, and secret societies—that would later come to be known as fraternities—were first established at colleges in the United States in the late 1700s (Hunt & Rentz, 1994). These organizations were established to recruit honorable men of an elite status, embodying the Greek ideals of superiority (Owen, 1998; Syrett, 2009). By the mid-1800s, existing organizations began to expand and establish chapters at other colleges across the nation. At the same time, women began to form similar secret societies—later known as sororities—on all female-campuses, modeling their organizations after literary societies (Nelson, 1965). As all-male campuses began to open their doors to more women, women sought out a space for support in a male-dominated setting and the sorority movement gained momentum (Turk, 2004; Wilson, 1956). In the early 1900s, eight sororities joined to form what is now known as the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC, 2019).

The demographic composition of the earliest fraternities and sororities was reflective of the population with the greatest access to education at the time: predominantly White, wealthy, and Christian (Boschini & Thompson, 1998; Lee, 1955; Syrett, 2009). By the mid-1920s, fraternities and sororities added eligibility clauses that explicitly restricted membership access to those of privileged (White,

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4 NPC sororities are considered the hegemonic counterpart of fraternities affiliated with the North-American Interfraternity Conference. Unless otherwise noted, the use of “fraternities” will refer only to the organizations that hold membership in the Interfraternity Conference.
Christian) status (Lee, 1955; Syrett, 2009). Over time, university campuses have diversified and the landscape of the fraternity and sorority experience has evolved, but racial, religious, and socioeconomic homogeneity persists. Once scholarly societies, many fraternities and sororities transitioned to social organizations, and criteria for membership have changed. Though all member organizations of the NPC now have anti-discrimination clauses, fraternities and sororities remain relatively homogenous (Hughes, 2010; Matthews et al., 2009; Rankin et al., 2013; Yeung, 2009) in part due to privileging heteromasculinity and heterofemininity in membership (Stone & Gorga, 2014). As such, the fraternity and sorority system exists as a social institution that enculturates gender (Arthur, 1998; Berbary, 2012; Case et al., 2005; Gillan, 2016; Rismann, 1982; Scott & Scott, 1965; Stone & Gorga, 2014).

Production of Gender in Sororities

Although the heterofeminine identity is not produced by all members at all times, there are a number of underlying organizational practices and behaviors that may reinforce gender polarization within fraternities and sororities, leaving little space for exploration or consideration of other identities (Case et al., 2005). In particular, membership recruitment, social events, and chapter housing exemplify the embedded nature of gender and the persistence of heteronormative values (Handler, 1995).

Membership Recruitment as a Gendered Process. Sorority recruitment is often a well-organized process that is strictly regulated by policies established by the NPC and by each individual campus. National policies include restrictions on chapter spending for decorations, financial transparency with potential new members, and disassociation (i.e., separation from chapter) of collegiate Panhellenic officers and recruitment counselors (NPC, 2019). Men, alcohol, and hazing are strictly prohibited from recruitment activities as well. The duration and structure of the formal recruitment period often include multiple rounds with events hosted by each of the Panhellenic organizations. After each round, potential new members and active members engage in a mutual selection process, whereby each creates a narrowed down list reflecting their membership preference (NPC, 2019). In each subsequent round, potential new members return to fewer chapters, and chapters invite back fewer members. The duration of rounds and events vary based on the number of women involved in sororities and the number of chapters on each campus (NPC, 2019). These policies, along with others, are typically determined at the university level.

In addition to determining the structure of formal recruitment, universities typically provide recruitment information in the form of a website or booklet. These materials often include campus-specific recruitment policies (e.g., dates and times of events), answers to commonly asked questions, and suggestions for what to wear to each of the rounds. Individual chapters also may have suggested or required dress codes for coordination in each of the rounds (Stuber et al., 2011). Although designed to create a more equitable opportunity for membership in sororities, dress codes throughout recruitment socialize women about the type of femininity and behavior required for access to and participation in
sorority life (Risman, 1982; Scott & Scott, 1965). These practices emphasize the production of heterofemininity, as first impressions and physical appearance are crucial when active members may have only five to ten minutes of conversation with new recruits (Arthur, 1998; Case et al., 2005; Joyce, 2018). As a result, sororities are often criticized for their exclusionary practices, as women less successful in performing heterofemininity or those who deviate from it may have less of an opportunity to be invited back to other rounds (Rolnik et al., 2010). These women are often deemed to not be a “good fit” for the sorority experience and relegated to a designated “lesbian sorority” or excluded from sorority life altogether (Stone & Gorga, 2014). Thus, access to sorority membership for queer women may be limited at even the earliest stages of sorority recruitment.

Social Events as Gendered Events. After recruitment and acceptance into a sorority, members engage in social events throughout the academic year that further emphasize traditional gendered behaviors, especially in interactions with fraternity members. Social events typically involve drinking alcohol and take place at campus bars or nearby venues. These events are highly reflective of heteronormative practices, as they often involve pairing a sorority with a fraternity, with the intent of introducing men and women. There are occasions when two sororities may participate in an event together. These events are categorized as sisterhood events rather than social events. The label of “sisterhood” designates same-sex relationships as familial rather than romantic in nature (Cohen et al., 2017).

Not every sorority and fraternity hold social events together. Typically, fraternities and sororities pair with another of similar social status. Social ranking is arbitrarily determined by peers and is based on the overall adherence to heteromasculine and heterofeminine behaviors of the members of each chapter (Gillan, 2016). These rankings influence social interactions, idealizing heteromasculinity and heterofemininity among members of fraternities and sororities. These “top tier” sororities often have more social power in that they are considered most desirable by fraternities, and they can be more selective in their membership, perpetuating and reinforcing traditional gendered expectations.

Chapter Spaces as Gendered Spaces. Although some sororities do not have a shared residential location, many have chapter houses, dormitory floors, or adjacent units in apartment complexes. In these spaces, expectations for feminine performance are reproduced through the bedroom culture and routines of getting ready (e.g., getting dressed, applying make-up; Arthur, 1998; Esposito, 2011; McRobbie, 2009). Desirable behaviors are reinforced and undesirable behaviors are discouraged as members engage in “girl talk,” discussing and reacting to others’ gender performances (Berbary, 2012). As a result, expectations for gendered practices are enculturated into the sorority experience and transmitted to new cohorts of members (Esposito, 2011).
Additionally, chapter housing policies are rooted in traditional beliefs about how women should behave. Alcohol is strictly prohibited in all sorority residences per NPC policy, but not in fraternities (Berbary, 2012; NPC, 2019). Although some sororities permit visitation, many limit male visitors to common areas and prohibit overnight guests, both for the safety of the residents and the maintenance of the chapter house as a space for sisterhood (Berbary, 2012). These policies also emphasize the moral standards for pure, innocent behaviors associated with traditional femininity (Schippers, 2007). Notably, while there are policies limiting male visitors due to the implicit sexual nature, there are usually no policies regarding female guests. This lack of explicit regulation for female visitors reflects the assumed platonic nature of same-sex relationships for sorority women. Indeed, heterosexuality is assumed among sorority women who visibly enact heterofemininity as they “do gender,” highlighting the complex relations between gender and sexuality.

**Other Femininities and Sexuality**

Although heterofemininity is privileged as the hegemonic femininity, women do not universally aspire to produce it. In fact, women can and often do produce other femininities, both by resisting elements of heterofemininity, as well as enacting attributes of heteromasculinity, such as sexual promiscuity, aggression, and sexual attraction to women (Charlebois, 2011; Schippers, 2007). These attributes, once enacted by women, are no longer perceived as masculine, but instead transform into another femininity (Halberstam, 1998; Schippers, 2007). For example, women participating in alternative sports, such as roller derby or skateboarding, demonstrate a physical aggression and strength, as well as a degree of rebelliousness, which is uncharacteristic of heterofemininity (Finley, 2010; Kelly et al., 2005; Leblanc, 1999; Mabe, 2007; Rinehart, 2005). Similar transgressions of heterofemininity are observed among women holding manual labor jobs (Kazyak, 2012; Smyth et al., 2018), female athletes (Ezzell 2009; Gieseler, 2014; Krane, 2001), and women who choose not to wear makeup, dress fashionably, or shave their body hair (Basow & Braman, 1998; Basow & Willis, 2001; Fahs, 2011, 2014). Other (non-hegemonic) femininities hold lower social power, not because they are inferior to the hegemonic femininity, but because they fail to serve the needs of the hegemonic male (Scheele, 2003; Schippers, 2007). Schippers (2007) deems these alternative femininities “pariah femininities.”

Oftentimes, the sexuality of women enacting pariah femininities is questioned, revealing the deeply intertwined nature of heteronormative beliefs about gender and sexuality (Nielsen et al., 2000). The relationship between men and women in society is based on an assumed heterosexuality, as women are viewed as objects of an innate and insatiable sexual desire unique to men (Bem 1993; Hollway, 1984; Schippers, 2007). Queer women transgress this assumption when they enact a pariah femininity and threaten male dominance because they embody an attribute (attraction to women) reserved for men, thus disrupting gender order (Butler, 1990; Schippers, 2007).
Containment practices may have contributed to a historic underrepresentation of LGB-identifying women in Panhellenic sororities. Case and colleagues (2005) found that many LGB-identifying individuals in fraternities and sororities reported exclusionary practices in membership selection. As a result, fewer LGB individuals may join sororities overall or those who join may be hesitant to disclose their sexual identity. Desire to be accepted and fear of judgment have appeared consistently as factors that deter women from disclosing diverse sexual identities to other sorority members (Welter, 2012). A small-scale study of LGB-identifying women at a private university in the Midwest revealed that anticipated stigma, fear of exclusion, and a highly heteronormative environment, rather than overt discrimination, were the most important factors in queer women’s decisions to conceal their sexual identities within their sororities (Welter, 2012).

Stone and Gorga’s (2014) study expands previous work on containment practices by providing perhaps the only insight into the intersections of femininity and sexuality in the context of Panhellenic sororities. Using a sample from a small, southern liberal arts college, they identified three containment practices employed by sorority members to limit the visibility of lesbian and bisexual women in Panhellenic sororities. These practices—exclusion, closeting, and directing toward a designated sorority—worked to silence queer women and maintain the appearance of alignment with heteronormative ideals and practices. Their findings are limited, however, because the study was conducted at a university where the majority of sororities were not associated with national organizations, and thus not bound by nationally-regulated policies prohibiting discrimination. Worthen’s (2014) study of perceptions of LGBT-individuals found that sorority members reported relatively low levels of acceptance of lesbian and bisexual women (broadly) at two large, public universities in the southeastern United States. Although this study represents the most up-to-date information about sorority members’ perceptions of LGBT-individuals, the survey items did not focus specifically on perceptions of LGB-identifying sorority members. Perceptions of the larger LGBT-community may differ from perceptions of LGB-identifying women with a shared experience (i.e., sorority membership). Nonetheless, both Worthen’s (2014) and Stone and Gorga’s (2014) findings demonstrate the persistence of containment practices and heterosexist attitudes as recently as 2014.

Despite these exclusionary practices and fear of stigma or exclusion, there are still queer women in sororities who disclose their sexual identities to other members. However, participants in Case and colleagues’ (2005) study reported that other chapter members were much more receptive and supportive when learning of an already initiated members’ sexual identity. As an invisible social identity, sexuality can be concealed from others during recruitment, allowing queer women access to a system that privileges heteronormativity as long as they can enact visible standards for femininity (Berbary & Johnson, 2012; Neumann et al., 2013). This suggests that once a member has demonstrated the capacity to produce
a visible heterofemininity and gain access to the sorority, other sorority members may be willing to accept—or overlook—diverse sexual identities. At present, there is insufficient research in the area of queer women in privileged contexts to fully understand their experiences.

**Queer Men in Privileged Contexts**

Garnering greater, though still underdeveloped, focus has been the experiences of queer men in contexts that privilege heteromasculinity, such as athletics and fraternities. Though the experiences of men and women in society cannot be equated, this body of research provides some insight into possible similarities. For example, Anderson (2002) found that openly gay male athletes feared disclosing their sexuality to team members and had overheard heterosexist comments prior to their disclosure. These findings are consistent with other research at the time, suggesting heterosexual team members’ rejection of gay men as non-masculine (Clarke, 1998; Hekma, 1998; Wolf Wendel et al., 2001). Despite perceived fears, many of these athletes were accepted by heterosexual teammates and opponents after coming out—as long as they could reproduce the visible aspects of heteromasculinity, such as competitive sport performance (Anderson, 2002; Price & Parker, 2003). Similarly, queer men in fraternities have historically feared the response of other chapter members, and many concealed their sexual identities in order to appear similar to heterosexual peers (Case et al., 2005; Dilley, 2002; Hesp & Brooks, 2009; Windmeyer & Freeman, 1998). Heterosexuality was often understood, both implicitly and explicitly, as the acceptable form of sexuality (Trump & Wallace, 2006). Although fraternity members who came out after initiation reported general acceptance from other members, underlying heterosexist beliefs were evident as members encouraged the presentation of heteromasculinity (Case et al., 2005; Harris, 2008, 2010). More recent examinations reveal a changing and more inclusive attitude toward both openly gay men in athletics (Adams, 2011; Anderson, 2011; Anderson et al., 2016) and fraternities (Hesp & Brooks, 2009; Rankin et al., 2013). Whether or not these changes and experiences are similar for queer women in sororities remains unexamined.

As the preceding review illustrates, there are a number of gaps in the current literature that warrant attention. Although queer women have received considerable scholarly attention, existing research has focused more on the intersecting, marginalized identities (e.g., race, class) of queer women who resist heterofemininity (e.g., Molasso, 2005; Scheyvens et al., 2014) than on those who reproduce it. It is possible that queer women’s capacity to conform to gender norms affords them a more privileged position (Allen & Mendez, 2018). In general, privileged groups have received less academic attention, resulting in a limited body of comparable research for queer women in the contexts of privilege (e.g., queer beauty pageant queens, ballerinas, cheerleaders). The dearth of research in this area highlights the need to “study up” and investigate queer women’s experiences in privileged contexts (Scheyvens et al., 2014).
The Current Study

To address gaps in the existing literature, the current study examined three questions: 1) what are queer women’s experiences in Panhellenic sororities; 2) how does the Panhellenic sorority serve as a context for heterofemininity; and 3) how do queer women negotiate gender expectations in the context of Panhellenic sororities. Data were collected from queer sorority women and analyzed using a multi-method approach. Survey data and quantitative descriptive analysis were used for Research Question 1 and in-depth interview data and grounded theory methods were used for Research Questions 2 and 3. Multi-method approaches differ from mixed-method approaches, where the pieces of the study are integrated through either the research design, data collection, and/or analysis portions (Morse, 2003). A multi-method approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding by considering the independent results of each method together. The theoretical drive behind this study is inductive, meaning that the overarching goal is discovery rather than testing of an established theory or hypothesis (Morse, 1991, 2003). The study is qualitatively driven, as the core results were derived from the qualitative study and the results of the quantitative are supplemental (Morse, 1991, 2003; Morse & Niehaus, 2009). In accordance with multi-method design notations, the current study is considered quan + QUAL, indicating the simultaneous use of both methods with an inductive theoretical drive (Morse, 2003). Consistent with this design, quantitative data and qualitative data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted independently, prior to integrating the discussion of the findings and implications (for a visual depiction, see Figure 1).
Figure 1
*A quan + QUAL Multi-Method Study*

**Topic:** Intersections of Femininity and Sexuality among Women in Panhellenic Sororities

### quan Component

**RQ 1:** What are queer women’s experiences in sororities?

**Methods:** Online survey

**Analysis:** Descriptive

**Discussion:** How queer-identifying experience sororities and negotiate femininity in their context

### QUAL Component

**RQ 2:** How does the Panhellenic sorority serve as a context for heterofemininity?

**RQ 3:** How do queer women negotiate gender expectations in the context of sororities?

**Methods:** Semi-structured interviews

**Analysis:** Grounded Theory Methods
Chapter 3: Quantitative Methods

Although quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, participants for the qualitative interview were identified from among those who completed the quantitative survey. As such, the quantitative component is discussed first. A descriptive approach was used to collect data using an online survey and address the first research question.

Recruitment

The target population for this study included queer, cisgender women holding membership in Panhellenic sororities. Participation in the study was not limited to any specific organizations affiliated with the NPC, nor was it limited to students at specific university campuses (for complete listing of organizations and chapters, see Appendix A). To be eligible for the study, potential participants were initially required to self-identify as non-heterosexual (e.g. lesbian, bisexual, queer, non-conforming) cisgender females that were at least 18 years old, active (non-alumnae) and initiated members of Panhellenic sororities, and enrolled full-time as undergraduate students. After recruitment began, eligibility was expanded to recent graduates (May 2018) to reach a larger pool of potential participants. Participants were not required to have disclosed their sexual identity to any other individual at the time of participation. All individuals meeting these criteria were eligible to participate, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or any other demographic characteristics. The University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained before beginning any recruitment efforts (see Appendix B). An undergraduate research assistant (RA) enrolled in course credit for the duration of the project assisted with recruitment efforts. The RA completed the IRB certificate for Social and Behavioral Research before assisting with any research activities.

Participants in Case’s (1996) study of lesbian and gay members of sororities and fraternities reported knowing approximately 3-4% of sorority members who had disclosed their identity as a sexual minority. Because some women may not have disclosed their identities to the participants, Case estimated that the actual percentage of queer women in sororities was slightly higher. In a recent, informal assessment of sorority members on the University of Illinois campus, 5.65% indicated a queer sexual identity. Using the total number of collegiate Panhellenic women from the NPC website (400,000) and a conservative estimate of sorority women who identify as having a queer sexual identity in previous studies (4%), it was estimated that there were approximately 16,000 women who could potentially qualify to participate in the survey. Given that average response rates for online surveys among college students range from 20-30%, it was anticipated (using 20%) that a total of 3,200 surveys could potentially be obtained (National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE], 2018; Nulty, 2008). This possible sample size was well over the number of participants needed for power to detect correlations ($n = \sim 200$ for small to medium effect size at 80% power, .05 significance level) or mean differences ($n = \sim 350$ for small to
medium effect size at 80% power, .05 significance level). Thus, the target sample size was 400 survey participants.

The initial recruitment plan relied on several sources to recruit potential participants, including the NPC Research Committee (governing), NPC member organizations’ membership listservs (organizational), campus-based organizations that support queer women in Panhellenic sororities (institutional), and word-of-mouth using professional networks (individual). Indeed, recruitment of participants proved to be much more difficult than originally anticipated and was met with some resistance at both the organizational and institutional levels.

**Governing.** NPC has a formalized procedure in which the NPC Research Committee reviews and approves research studies involving undergraduate members, and then provides a recommendation of approved studies to the inter/national leadership of NPC organizations. The recruitment materials for this study included a request for the NPC organizations to share a link to participate in the survey in their digital newsletters to active members, as well as through social media templates (i.e., Facebook, Twitter; see Appendices C and D). After receiving preliminary approval for support from the Research Committee, the NPC full board denied the request to support this research project. They stated that participation in such a large scale project was beyond their scope and they only support projects that target specific campuses versus all organizations. Recruiting participants through the NPC member organizations’ membership listservs would have allowed for the most widespread distribution of the survey with the highest potential for return (26 member organizations, 670+ campuses, 3,250+ chapters, and 400,000+ members). It is likely that the sorority experience differs geographically and targeting specific campuses, rather than inter/national organizations, may have led to biased results (Berbary, 2012; Middleton-Keirn, 1986). Recruitment materials were also given to campus-based student organizations that support queer women in Panhellenic sororities to distribute to members. Although targeting support organizations at specific universities may have limited the geographic reach, this approach offered a focused effort to reach the target population. See Appendix E for a complete listing of student organizations that were contacted.

**Organizational.** An informational email was sent to the primary contact listed on each NPC member organization’s website. This contact was most often for general inquiries; however, three organizations had contacts specifically focused on research and/or diversity and inclusion. In these instances, an email was sent to both the email address provided for general inquiries and the research and/or diversity and inclusion contact. Out of 29 emails sent, only two responses were received; both responses denied the request to distribute the opportunity to participate in the study to their members through any avenue. One even stated that their organization “does not participate in studies like this and has a policy prohibiting our members from doing the same” (personal communication, November 6,
The lack of support and assistance from NPC and member organizations with the recruitment process limited participation substantially.

**Institutional.** The most success in recruitment came from either the institutional or individual levels. A total of 22 student organizations that support queer women in Panhellenic sororities were identified; four responded positively to requests to share the opportunity to participate in the study with their student membership. This allowed for a representation of members of different NPC organizations with chapters on each campus, but also had the effect of concentrating participation geographically to campuses with established student organizations for queer sorority women.

**Individual.** Potential participants were also identified through professional networks. The undergraduate RA and I were both involved in Panhellenic sororities at the time of the study (myself as an alumnae advisor and Director of Residence Life and the RA as an active sorority member serving as President). We both have networks that extend to other sororities at other universities as well. We contacted individuals in our networks to recruit participants for the study and asked that they share the information with others who may be interested and eligible. We also reached out to 15 contacts at other campuses to request their support in distributing information about the study. Information about the study was shared with other Facebook groups with potential connections to eligible participants (e.g., Fraternal House Directors Online Community, Queer Grads at UIUC, NASPA Fraternity and Sorority Knowledge Community). Additionally, members of the dissertation committee shared recruitment information among their professional networks with sorority affiliations.

**Sample**

Table 1 includes demographic information for the survey sample, consisting of 77 participants. The majority of participants identified as white \((n = 60, 77.9\%)\) and were between 18 and 21 years old \((n = 68, 88.3\%)\). At the time of participation, the majority of participants identified as bisexual \((n = 51, 66.23\%)\), followed by gay/lesbian \((n = 17, 22.08\%)\). The remaining participants \((n = 9, 11.69\%)\) reported other non-heterosexual identities. Participants also reported, retrospectively, their sexual identities when they first participated in sorority recruitment and when they first initiated into their sorority (see Table 2).

Although participants represented a geographically diverse sample, most identified the Midwest \((n = 36, 46.8\%)\) as their home region and the majority attended college in the Midwest region \((n = 40, 51.9\%)\). Approximately one-fifth of the sample identified the Southeast as their home region \((n = 15, 19.5\%)\). Similarly, the Southeast region represented the second most common location for college attendance \((n =17, 22.1\%)\). Notably, the Rocky Mountain region was the least represented, both in terms of home region \((n = 2, 2.6\%)\) and institution region \((n = 0, 0.0\%)\). Most participants attended large \((n = 36, 46.8\%)\) or medium \((n = 32, 41.6\%)\) institutions and nearly three-quarters \((n =57, 74.0\%)\) were enrolled in public, as opposed to private, institutions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demographic Information of Survey Participants (N = 77)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hometown Region</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Mountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (international)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institution Region</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Mountain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Size</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large &gt;9,999</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>46.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium 3,000-9,999</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>41.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small &lt;3,000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>74.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Sexual Identity of Survey Participants during their Sorority Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>During Sorority Recruitment (N = 61)</th>
<th>At time of Sorority Initiation (N = 57)</th>
<th>At time of Study (N = 77)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay/Lesbian</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.67</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45.90</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.67</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.75</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the target sample size was not reached, the sample size in this study was sufficient to conduct descriptive analyses and provide context to the experiences of queer women in sororities.

Procedures

Qualtrics online assessment platform was used to design the online survey. Participants were able to complete the electronic survey on any device with internet connection at the location of their choice. Upon initiating the survey, participants were presented with information about the study, asked to confirm their eligibility to participate, and asked to provide electronic consent to participate (see Appendices F and G). After completing survey measures, participants were asked if they were willing to also take part in a semi-structured interview. Those who indicated interest were asked to provide their contact information. As an incentive to participate, survey respondents could enter into a drawing upon completion of the survey. Contact information for the drawing was collected through a separate online form and not linked to survey responses. One $20 gift card was offered for every 50 participants; however only 24 entered the raffle so only one gift card was awarded.
**Measures**

The online survey consisted of five sections detailed below. Participants could skip any question they chose not to answer.

**Eligibility Screener.** The eligibility screener consisted of five statements with the intent of confirming eligibility for participation in the quantitative study. In order to participate in the study, participants were required to respond affirmatively to all five questions. Those who did not meet eligibility criteria were not permitted to participate in the study and were not eligible to be entered into the drawing.

**Demographic Questionnaire.** Age, year in school, race/ethnicity, sexual identity, age at first same-sex sexual attraction and experience, geographic region of hometown, and institutional information (size, private/public, and geographic region) were collected from all participants using multiple-choice questions. Participants could select multiple responses or provide an open-ended response that more accurately aligned with their experience or identity if not included in the prescribed options.

**Experiences of Sexual Minorities in Sororities.** Sixteen multiple-choice items were used to collect descriptive data about the experiences of sexual minority women in sororities. Questionnaire items and multiple-choice options were constructed to as a conceptual replication of the 1996 study (Case, 1996) and the 2007 Lambda 10 Project (Rankin, et al., 2007) on the experiences of LGBT people in fraternities and sororities. Items covered a range of topics including experiences as a member (e.g., “What are the main benefits of membership in your sorority?”) and experiences with homophobic or heterosexist behavior (e.g., “Which of the following discriminatory behaviors, if any, have you observed within your sorority?”). The constructed measure can be considered a conceptual replication as it is based on previously published studies, but does not use the exact same measurement to capture data. Notable differences in the newly constructed measure included updated terminology (e.g., exclusive use of sorority rather than fraternity/sorority to describe the respondent’s organization; replacement of GBL with sexual minority or queer). No open-ended responses were specifically solicited, but space for additional comments was provided after each question.

**Outness Inventory.** The Outness Inventory is an 11-item scale originally developed to assess an individual’s general degree of outness, beyond instances of overt disclosure of sexual identity, in three domains: religion, family, and world (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). Participants were asked to indicate the

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5 Due to restrictions in reprinting permissions, these appendices are only available upon request.

6 The instrument from the original study (Case, 1996) was lost. The questions used in this study attempt to collect similar information, but are not an exact replication.

7 The Lambda 10 Project, a Campus Pride initiative, organized the first replication of Cases’s (1996) study in 2007. Case continues to serve as the Lambda 10 Project Coordinator.

8 Adapted with permission from Mohr and Fassinger’s (2000) Outness Inventory.
degree to which individuals or groups of individuals were aware of their queer sexual identity on a Likert-type scale at four time points (i.e., *when going to college, during sorority recruitment, when initiating into the sorority, and at the time of the survey*). Responses ranged from 1 (*person definitely does not know about your sexual identity*) to 7 (*person definitely knows about your sexual identity, and it is openly talked about*). Participants also had the option to indicate that the individual/group of individuals was not a part of their life at the indicated time point.

The Outness Inventory has demonstrated reliability in all three domains ($\alpha_{\text{religion}} = .97; \alpha_{\text{family}} = .74; \alpha_{\text{world}} = .79$) with a sample of lesbian and gay participants (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). Additional analyses have also demonstrated reliability of the Outness Inventory among diverse populations, including queer Asian Americans ($\alpha = .80-.83$; Szymanski & Sung, 2010) and African Americans ($\alpha = .69-.99$; Moradi et al., 2010). The Outness Inventory has convergent validity for both lesbian/gay and bisexual participants (Balsam & Mohr, 2007). Additionally, confirmatory factor analysis has revealed that factors derived from the Outness Inventory load on a second order factor (*overall outness*), meaning the main construct, *overall outness*, is significantly related to each of the sub-constructs. As such, both full scale and individual scales can be used in analysis (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000).

For the purposes of this study, five modifications were made to the original instrument: 1) religion-related terminology (i.e., “religious community”) was replaced with sorority-related terminology (i.e., “sorority community”) to reflect the focal context of the study; 2) work-related terminology (i.e., coworkers) was replaced with school-related terminology (i.e., classmates) in the domain “out to the world,” as school constituted their primary “landscape;” 3) two items (both listing “other parent/guardian”) were added as options in the *outness to family* domain to be more inclusive of diverse family structures; 4) in the item reading “*my old heterosexual friends,*” “heterosexual” was replaced with “straight” for consistency in terminology with other items; and 5) “sexual orientation” was replaced with “sexual identity” for consistency in terminology with the rest of the study. None of the above adaptations were expected to significantly influence validity and reliability of the measure.

**Conformity to Feminine Norms Inventory-45 (CFNI-45)**. The CFNI-45 was adapted from the 84-item Conformity to Feminine Norms Inventory (CFNI; Mahalik et al., 2005) and was used to measure an individual’s alignment with nine factors that reflect conventional feminine gender norms: 1) thinness; 2) domestic; 3) investment in appearance; 4) modesty; 5) relational; 6) involvement with children; 7) sexual fidelity; 8) romantic relationships; and 9) sweet and nice (Parent & Moradi, 2011). Participants were asked to respond with the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements reflecting both traditional and non-traditional beliefs about gender on a Likert-type scale. Responses ranged from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 3 (*strongly agree*).  

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9 Used with permission from Parent and Moradi (2011)
The CFNI-45 has demonstrated strong internal consistency (median alpha value of .78), high test-retest reliability, and high correlations with the original measure (Parent & Moradi, 2011). The original measure demonstrated convergent validity and was found to be positively correlated with other measures of femininity, such as the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI)-Femininity Identity (Bem, 1974) and the Feminist Identity Composite Passive Acceptance subscale (Fischer et al., 2000; Mahalik et al., 2005). Brown et al. (2020) also recently explored the appropriateness of CFNI-45 as a measure of traditional femininity for sexual minority cisgender women and found similarities in the ways in which sexual minority cisgender women adhered to principles of traditional femininity. The CFNI-45 has also been negatively correlated with the BSRI-Masculine Identity scores (Mahalik et al., 2005).

Data Analysis

The primary goal of the survey was to provide a descriptive context for the experiences of queer women to frame the qualitative findings. As such, a descriptive analytic approach was used. This approach included measures of frequency for demographic data as well as correlations between demographic data, sorority experiences, and scale scores from the Outness Inventory and CFNI-45. Correlations were also used to examine relations among outness and femininity and relevant contextual factors (e.g., geographic or university factors), and mean difference scores were used to explore retrospective accounts of outness over time with respect to sexual identity. Listwise deletion was used in each phase of analysis to remove participants with incomplete data.
Chapter 4: Quantitative Results

In this chapter, I describe the results of the descriptive analyses \( (N = 77) \) and address the first research question: What are queer women’s experiences in sororities? These results provide a context for the qualitative component of the study.

Participants reported a variety of reasons for joining sorority organizations (see Table 3). Most frequently reported among participants’ top three motivations for joining were to find a support group \( (n = 50, 22.42\%) \) followed by friendship \( (n = 49, 21.97\%) \) and opportunities for social events and having fun \( (n = 31, 13.90\%) \).

Table 3
Participants’ Motivations for Joining a Sorority \( (N = 59) \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finding a support group</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>84.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making new friends</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>83.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending social events</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>52.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having leadership opportunities</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>47.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming involved in campus</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>40.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends encouraged me to join</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a home away from home</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents encouraged me to join</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing as heterosexual</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting others for relationship (same-sex)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Participants were asked to select up to three choices.

Participants also reported developing social and interpersonal skills \( (n = 39, 22.67\%) \), finding long-term friendships \( (n = 37, 21.51\%) \), and gaining leadership skills \( (n = 32, 18.60\%) \) among the three greatest benefits of their sorority membership (see Table 4).
Table 4

Participants’ Named Benefits of their Sorority Membership (N = 59)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing social and interpersonal skills</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>66.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding long-term friendships</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>62.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing leadership skills</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>54.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a support group</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>42.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking professionally</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting people from diverse backgrounds</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having social status</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting partner for long-term relationship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Participants were asked to select up to three choices.

Overall, participants reported high levels of involvement in their sororities and satisfaction with their experience. The majority reported that they held at least one leadership role (n = 49, 83.05%) and many held multiple roles (n = 17, 28.81%; range = 0 – 7). Seven participants (11.86%) held roles related to recruitment of new members. Participants reported an overall high level of satisfaction (M = 4.11, SD = 0.98; 1 = very dissatisfied; 5 = very satisfied). A little over one-third reported that feeling the need to hide a part of their identity (n = 23, 38.98%) and that social events geared toward heterosexual couples (n = 22, 37.29%) detracted from the quality of their overall sorority experience.

Most participants (n = 49, 83.05%) reported that they came out to at least one other sorority member during their membership. The majority of the time, this information was shared on a voluntary basis (n = 44, 89.80%) and was most frequently disclosed after initiation (n = 24, 48.98%) or during the new member period (n = 19, 38.78%). Responses were generally very supportive (n = 34, 69.39%) or somewhat supportive (n = 12, 24.49%) (M = 3.61, SD = 0.66; 1 = very negative; 4 = very supportive). Substantially fewer women came out to their entire sorority (n = 19, 32.20%) but for most this was voluntary (n = 17, 89.47%). Similarly, disclosure occurred most frequently after initiation (n = 13, 68.4%) and responses of other sorority members were perceived to be very or somewhat supportive (n = 18, 94.7%) (M = 3.68, SD = 0.57).

Overall, participants reported observing relatively few types of negative behaviors directed toward sexual minorities from other members of their sorority (M = 1.22; SD = 1.63; range = 0 – 6). There were slightly more, but still relatively few, types of negative experiences observed with members of other sororities (M = 1.48; SD = 1.85; range = 0 – 6). A comparison of these observations can be found in Figures 2 and 3.
Figure 2
Number of Participants Reporting Discriminatory Behavior toward Non-Sorority Members (N = 58)

Figure 3
Number of Participants Reporting Discriminatory Behavior within their Sorority (N = 58)
Participants were asked to report their degree of outness in three domains (outness to sorority, outness to family, and outness to world). Additionally, a measure of overall outness was computed using an average across domain subscales. These were obtained retrospectively at four time points (i.e., when first at college, during sorority recruitment, when initiating into the sorority, and at the time of the survey). Outness to sorority was not reported at the first time point (when going to college) and sorority membership was not part of their experience yet. See Table 5.

Table 5

Participants’ Degree of Outness across Time and Domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall outness when first at college (N = 67)</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To family</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To world</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall outness during recruitment (N = 55)</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To sorority</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To family(^a)</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To world(^b)</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall outness when initiating (N=53)</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To sorority</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To family</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To world</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall outness at time of study (N=53)</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To sorority</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To family(^c)</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To world(^c)</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. 1 = person/group definitely does NOT know about your sexual identity; 7 = person/group definitely knows about your sexual identity, and it is OPENLY talked about.

\(^a\)N = 57. \(^b\)N = 56. \(^c\)N = 54.

Paired samples t-tests were conducted to compare degree of outness in each of the three domains and overall outness, over time based on retrospective accounts. There was a significant difference in the degree of outness when first arriving to college (\(M_{Family} = 2.62, SD = 1.82; M_{World} = 2.61, SD = 1.19\); \(M_{Overall} = 2.61, SD = 1.31\)) or during sorority recruitment (\(M_{Sorority} = 2.04, SD = 1.72\)) and at the time of the study (\(M_{Sorority} = 4.58, SD = 2.08, t(50) = -8.91, p = 000; M_{Family} = 3.83, SD = 1.82, t(52) = -5.66, p = 000; M_{World} = 3.77, SD = 1.26, t(52) = -5.71, p = 000; M_{Overall} = 4.05, SD = 1.41, t(52) = -7.03, p = 000\).
Overall, participants reported moderate to low alignment to feminine norms, particularly in the domain of sexual fidelity ($M = 1.07$). All subscales, which the exception of relational ($\alpha = 0.526$) and sweet and nice ($\alpha = 0.69$), demonstrated moderate to high levels of reliability. Average scores across each of the nine domains are presented in table 6.

Table 6
Participants’ Conformity to Feminine Norms using the CFNI-45 ($N = 54$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>$\alpha$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thinness</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invest in appearance</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modesty</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement with children</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual fidelity</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic relationship</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet and nice</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.690</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. 0 = strongly disagree; 3 = strongly agree

Bivariate correlations among CFNI-45 scores, Outness Inventory scores, and demographic variables revealed two statistically significant correlations. Relatively low, negative correlations were observed between: 1) the CFNI-45 relational domain and outness to the world at the time of participation in the study ($r(54) = -.293, p = .031$); and 2) the CFNI-45 sweet and nice domain and outness to the sorority at the time of the study ($r(52) = -.276, p = .048$). No other statistically significant associations were observed.

Given the relative proportion of bisexual-identifying participants, a binary variable was created (1, 0) for bisexual identity. Independent samples $t$-tests were used to explore the relations between sexual identity, conformity to feminine norms, and outness among participants. Results indicated that participants who identified as bisexual at the time of the study were less likely to conform to sexual fidelity on the CFNI-45 ($t = -2.794; df = 55$) but statistically more likely to conform to sweet and nice ($t = 2.108; df = 54$) compared to participants identifying as gay/lesbian/non-conforming/queer. See Table 7.
### Table 7

**Independent t-Test Results Examining Mean Differences in CFNI-45 Scores by Sexual Identity (N = 54)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Identity</th>
<th>Bisexual</th>
<th></th>
<th>Other</th>
<th></th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>t-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinness</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invest in appearance</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modesty</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement with children</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual fidelity</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
<td>-2.614*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic relationship</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet and nice</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>1.987+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** “Other” includes participants reporting gay, lesbian, non-conforming, or queer; 0 = strongly disagree; 3 = strongly agree

+p < .10; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Participants identifying as bisexual also were significantly less likely to be out to their sororities across all time periods than participants with other sexual identities. Additionally, bisexual-identifying participants were less likely to be out across all domains at the time of participating in the study (Table 8).

### Table 8

**Independent t-Test Results Examining Mean Differences in Outness Inventory Scores by Sexual Identity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Identity</th>
<th>Bisexual</th>
<th></th>
<th>Other</th>
<th></th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>t-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall outness when first at college (N = 67)</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To family</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To world</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall outness during recruitment (N = 55)</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
<td>-1.897+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To sorority</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>-1.16</td>
<td>-2.219**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To family&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>-0.75</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To world&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8 (cont.)

Independent t-Test Results Examining Mean Differences in Outness Inventory Scores by Sexual Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Identity</th>
<th>Bisexual</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall outness when initiating (N =53)</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To sorority</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To family</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To world</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall outness at time of study (N =53)</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To sorority</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To family</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To world</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. “Other” includes participants reporting gay, lesbian, non-conforming, or queer. 1 = person/group definitely does NOT know about your sexual identity; 7 = person/group definitely knows about your sexual identity, and it is OPENLY talked about.

a N = 57, b N = 56, cN = 54.

+p < .10, *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Summary of Quantitative Results

In summary, participants reported a wide range of motivations for joining their sorority and were overall satisfied with their sorority experience. Of particular interest is the relatively high proportion of bisexual-identifying women who participated in the study. Most notably, bisexual-identifying participants reported significantly lower scores on the Outness Inventory across several domains and at multiple time points than participants with other sexual identities.
Chapter 5: Qualitative Methods

Grounded theory methods are used to construct a process-based theory specific to a population and context (Charmaz, 2014) and are useful in exploring complex social interactions such as gender and sexuality (Benoliel, 2001). A constructivist grounded theory approach was used to collect data using semi-structured interview and address the second and third research questions.

Recruitment

At the conclusion of the quantitative survey, participants were invited to participate in an in-depth interview and a $25 incentive was offered for participation. Survey participants who indicated interest in the qualitative study were sent an email to confirm their willingness to participate in an interview and to schedule a phone interview. In the event of non-responsiveness, a follow-up email was sent one week after initial contact, a second follow-up was sent three weeks after initial contact, and a final email was sent six weeks after initial contact. No survey participants indicated that they changed their mind; however, six did not respond to a request to schedule an interview, or failed to attend their scheduled interview and did not respond to requests to reschedule. Every effort was made to schedule interviews at a time that was convenient for the participant.

Sample

The target population for this study was queer, cisgender women who were active (or recent alumnae) and initiated members of Panhellenic sororities at the time of the study. Using a grounded theory approach, sampling was designed to occur in two distinct phases: purposive (or initial) sampling and theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2016). The goal of purposive sampling was to obtain information-rich cases (i.e., participants) with experiences relevant to the research question. The approach to recruitment for the quantitative survey served as purposive sampling. Among the survey participants, 15 indicated a willingness to do an interview, and nine scheduled and completed an interview. Demographic information is reported for interview participants in Tables 9 and 10.

The goal of theoretical sampling is to saturate the developing theory. This phase of sampling is driven by the analytic process. Generally, the aim is not to obtain a representative sample of the population, but rather to generate a cohesive theory about a social process (i.e., negotiating gender) with all theoretical categories saturated in terms of properties and dimensions (Charmaz, 2014). Thus, there was no specific sample size expected or required except that inclusion was limited by the number of survey participants willing to participate in an interview. Sampling continued until all those who expressed willingness to participate in the qualitative study were interviewed. Due to challenges with survey recruitment and follow up with all those expressed interest in an interview, theoretical saturation was not reached. Nonetheless, an understanding of several concepts and theoretical relations were developed in analysis, which provides a foundation for future theoretical work.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9</th>
<th>Demographic Information of Interview Participants (N = 9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22+</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latina</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hometown Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Mountain</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institution Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Mountain</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 9 (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Size</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large &gt;9,999</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium 3,000-9,999</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small &lt;3,000</td>
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<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 10

**Sexual Identity of Interview Participants during their Sorority Experience (n = 9)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>During Sorority Recruitment</th>
<th>At time of Sorority Initiation</th>
<th>At time of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay/Lesbian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66.67</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.22</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Procedures

Upon successfully scheduling an interview, I sent a confirmation email and participants had agency in selecting a private location to participate in the phone interview. Participants also received a digital copy of the informed consent form to review prior to the interview (see Appendix L). At the scheduled time of the interview, I contacted the participant by phone, confirmed the participant’s eligibility for the study, reviewed the informed consent form, and asked for verbal consent from the participant to audio record the interview. In all instances permission was granted; however, I still took detailed notes throughout and immediately after the interview to capture the information shared. All interviews were conducted in a private office, with the exception of one that was conducted in a private vehicle. All participants completed the interview in its entirety. Interviews lasted an average of 59 minutes, with a range of 42 – 81 minutes and were transcribed as close to verbatim as possible, with special attention to ensuring quality and trustworthiness by minimizing errors (Poland, 1995). Participants received a $25 gift card as compensation for their participation in the interview following the conclusion of the call.
Measures

An interview protocol previously used to investigate femininity among sorority leaders was adapted for use with queer women (Gillan, 2016). The protocol focused specifically on the production of femininity within the sorority experience and included broad sections related to perceptions of femininity, sorority experiences, relationships with fraternities, and sexuality. Consistent with grounded theory methods, questions were intentionally broad and open-ended to allow participants to describe their own experiences, behaviors, and perceptions as they relate to negotiating gender in the sorority context. The protocol was semi-structured in that it served as a guide but participants were encouraged to tell their stories as they experienced them while I probed for more detail and depth. Minor revisions were made throughout the research process as the analysis developed. For example, the section of the protocol titled “relationships with fraternities” was moved to the end of the interview as this information was the least relevant to the developing theory. By moving this section to the end, I minimized the impact of fatigue and ensured that both the participant and I were most engaged with sections closely related to the theory. See Appendix M for the adapted interview protocol.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began after the first interview and continued throughout data collection. Data were analyzed using an approach most similar to Charmaz’s (2014) constructivist approach. A constructivist approach assumes the researcher plays an active role in creating meaning from the data as their experiences, beliefs, and background influence interpretation (Charmaz, 2014). The three stages of analysis are initial coding, focused coding and categorizing, and theory building (see Figure 4). Although the stages of data analysis are presented in a linear fashion, I oscillated between stages, revisiting earlier stages for constant comparison as a theoretical model developed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

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10 Adapted with permission from Gillan (2016)
**Phase One: Initial Coding**

Initial (open) coding was the first stage in grounded theory analysis and included line-by-line coding, during which I attached action-based codes, or gerunds, to each line of data (Birks & Mills, 2015). The goal of initial coding was to take the data apart and capture every idea within the data using descriptive codes. Coding stayed close to the data at this stage. After line-by-line coding of four interviews, I developed an initial codebook from the most salient codes. Using the initial codebook, I then coded incident-by-incident, which involved attaching codes to segments of data that represented complete ideas (versus coding every line of data). During this phase, I remained open to coding for new ideas not yet captured by the codebook. Constant comparison continued with incident-by-incident coding, as newly obtained data were compared to previously coded data to identify any new codes found in subsequent analysis and to confirm existing codes. The codebook was revised accordingly.

Data were questioned and compared at all phases of analysis to ensure that findings are grounded in the data and do not include theoretical leaps unsupported by the data. This “constant comparison” of
the data to interpretations is a key component of grounded theory and occurred throughout all phases of data collection and data analysis (Glaser, 1965). Memo writing began in this phase of analysis and served to document the analytical process throughout analysis. Memo writing helped to ensure codes, categories, and theoretical suggestions were informed by the data and allowed me to check my assumptions. I returned to previously written memos many times as analysis progressed. This created an audit trail that demonstrates the trustworthiness of the study (Bowen, 2009) and facilitated constant comparison.

**Phase Two: Focused Coding and Categorizing**

In the second stage, analysis moved beyond initial coding into focused coding. Focused coding was used to revisit and redefine the most salient codes from incident-by-incident coding. This step moved analysis forward while also ensuring that analysis continued to fit the data (Charmaz, 2014). During this stage, analysis gradually moved from descriptive to conceptual ideas. Descriptive codes were subsumed into categories that captured more conceptual aspects of process. For example, descriptive codes such as “asking for small changes” and “leaving it open for interpretation” were subsumed into the more conceptual code “pushing the boundaries.” Sensitizing concepts also informed this stage of analysis. For example, concepts of gender performativity and “doing gender” guided analysis and highlighted the ways in which participants engaged in negotiating expectations of femininity within their sorority. A variety of analytical tools, including diagraming, concept mapping, and tabling, were used in this stage to organize data in a logical way that provided insight to the underlying social process. This stage of analysis also involved false starts and a lot of uncertainty, as constant comparison and analysis of new interviews revealed data that did not fit into identified categories. This was an expected part of grounded theory analysis and I remained open to revising codes, recoding previously collected data, and refining developing ideas to stay consistent with the data.

Interviews continued throughout the open coding analytical phase and into focused coding, when the theoretical model began to take shape. At this point, I identified gaps within the forming theory and intended to specifically seek out data to fill these gaps through theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2014). The purpose was to fill gaps, or saturate, the developing categories and their relations or the emerging theory as a whole, not to test the emerging theory by seeking cases that reaffirm or reject the initial model or expand its generalizability. The theoretical sampling plan included follow-up interviews with participants to ask additional questions and further investigate their experiences, additional interviews with new participants reporting specific experiences in their surveys, or elicited texts from participants (e.g., requesting written responses to questions). New data that conflicted with or expanded the existing model in new ways was intended to be incorporated into the findings or analyzed as negative cases if appropriate (Creswell, 1998). Not surprisingly, the target sample was hard-to-reach (i.e., participants may be comfortable participating in an anonymous online survey but reluctant to participate in an interview) and
the eligible pool was limited to those who completed the survey and agreed to do an interview. Due to these challenges and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, not all categories and their relations within the theoretical model were explained completely and gaps remain in the dimensions or properties of the theoretical concepts (Charmaz, 2014; Sbaraini et al., 2011). In other words, only partial saturation was reached.

**Phase Three: Theory Building**

During this stage, the goal was to construct a final, mid-range and process-based theoretical model based on the categories defined in earlier stages and their relations to each other and achieve theoretical integration of the categories from earlier stages into a model that demonstrates the complexity of the process (Charmaz, 2014). Instead, I returned to the survey data to selectively code text responses from participants to further flesh out the categories and theoretical relations. Selective coding involves identifying the core concept to the process and relating this concept to other categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and is not typically characteristic of Charmaz’s (2014) approach to grounded theory. In the survey, participants had the opportunity to provide open-ended text responses to three questions (*Would you like to share anything else about your experience coming out to a member of your sorority; Would you like to share anything else about your experience coming out to your entire sorority; Would you like to share anything else about your experience as a queer woman in a Panhellenic sorority*) if they wanted to provide additional details or context about their experiences. Twenty-eight participants provided responses to the open-ended questions.

**Ethical Treatment of Participants**

As with all research on human subjects, there were a number of ethical considerations central to the completion of this study. Maintaining confidentiality of study participants was of utmost importance. All data collected during the study were kept confidential within the research team and audio files were erased upon completion of the dissertation research. All printed data (survey results, transcriptions, etc.) were de-identified and stored in a locked filing cabinet in a university office accessible only to the members of the research team. The online survey and transcripts were stored on a secure Box file through the University of Illinois system accessible only to the research team and each survey participant was assigned a participant ID. This survey did not ask for personally identifiable information. Any identifying information referenced in the open-ended sections of the survey was replaced with pseudonyms, including specifically named organizations. To protect the privacy of participants, survey responses with the exception of open-ended text responses are only presented in aggregate and any potentially identifying information was disguised. Survey participants received information prior to beginning the survey about the intent of the study and their right to withdraw at any point. Survey participants were also asked to provide electronic consent. Participants were not asked to provide their names or contact information.
unless they were willing to participate in an interview, in which case their identifying information was stored separately from the survey data and accessible only to the research team. This identifying information was password protected and stored on a departmental shared drive. A second consent form was shared with interview participants for review and verbal consent was obtained prior to beginning the interview. Again, participants were informed about the intent of the study and their right to withdraw at any point. Interview participants were asked to provide verbal consent to audio record the interview. No deception was necessary for the successful collection of data and the study did not pose any immediate threat of physical harm to participants.

Due to the possibly sensitive nature of this study's questions about experiences as queer women in Panhellenic sororities, participants could potentially have experienced a minimal risk of psychological or emotional discomfort during participation. To mitigate this risk, participants had the opportunity to skip any question they felt uncomfortable answering, including demographic questions. No participants became emotionally upset during an interview; regardless, I responded to participants with sensitivity by checking in throughout the interview on their comfort with continuing. Resources for counseling and additional support were provided to participants at the conclusion of the study to mitigate the risk of continued psychological or emotional stress (see Appendix N). Additionally, all ethical guidelines of the University of Illinois’s IRB were strictly followed.

Trustworthiness

Consistent with a constructivist approach, I believe that as the researcher, I played an active role in interpreting the data. Never fully able to separate one’s experience and analyze without bias, I co-constructed meaning from the data and all interpretation was influenced by my own experience, beliefs, and background (Charmaz, 2014). As such, all conclusions are reflective of a constructed, rather than absolute truth. In qualitative research, demonstrating trustworthiness establishes the credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity of the research (Whittemore et al., 2001). I employed several validation strategies throughout the course of the study to enhance trustworthiness.

To reduce my presence and influence as a researcher, I practiced reflexivity and took active steps to evaluate the ways in which my experiences may have impacted analysis and interpretation throughout the study, as well as my interactions with participants. As a cisgender, queer woman from an upper-middle class family who came to understand her sexuality in her mid-twenties, I have my own set of experiences that have shaped my beliefs, values, assumptions, and biases about femininity, gender, and sexuality. As an alumna member of a Panhellenic sorority, I share an insider perspective with survey and interview participants about the sorority experience. I was very active as a collegiate member and can easily recall the many hours I spent practicing and participating in formal recruiting, attending philanthropy events, and going to social events. I continue to remain active as an alumna, serving as a
both a Director of Residence Life and Member Development Advisor. Though I recognize that fraternities and sororities are not flawless organizations, I had a positive experience as a collegian and continue to have a positive experience with sorority members today. Retrospectively, I am able to identify instances in my personal experience that privileged heteronormativity and failed to affirm diverse sexualities. This is both beneficial and challenging; the experience is one that is known and shared with participants, but consequently may bias my interpretations. To mitigate potential bias, I employed peer debriefing and member checking throughout the research process.

Member checking allows for the participants to provide clarification or expansion of responses in their transcripts (Charmaz, 2014; Taylor et al., 2015). Interview participants were sent a copy of their transcript to review for accuracy in the representation of their ideas. Participants were permitted to respond with any additions or clarifications that they would like included and these responses were considered supplemental to the original interview transcript. Only one of the nine participants responded with a correction to her transcript; I misheard her officer role and she provided the correct title. Three other participants responded and indicated that there were no corrections to make and the other five participants did not provide a response.

Additionally, peer debriefing allowed for my assumptions and biases due to positionality to be tested and challenged by outside researchers. I shared my interpretations of the data with two academic peers unfamiliar with the substantive area of the research topic—one with a background in Human Development and Family Studies but focused on young children, and one who focuses on college students but is from the Education Policy, Organization and Leadership field. Additionally, a full professor with a background in Human Development and Family Studies as well as expertise in grounded theory methods also served as a debriefer throughout the analytic process. This helped establish the credibility of the data; as the debriefers reviewed the findings and challenged any interpretations that may have reflected my personal experience rather than the participants’ experiences. For example, one participant reflected on her non-compliance with the prescribed theme of a social event. My interpretation was that this was a challenge to the communicated expectations for dress. However, one of my peer debriefers drew my attention to the participant’s choice of clothing for the event, a crop top and high-waisted jeans, which is currently considered trendy. At social events, it is broadly considered permissible to dress in costume, and the themes of some social events can even be considered “out there” (Veronica). Without knowing what the specific theme was, it is possible that the participant was opting for a more feminine dress than other sorority members, who may have been in costume. In this instance, I had to reconsider the extent to which this example represented a challenge to the sorority’s boundaries of femininity.
Triangulation of Results

A final analytical step, specific to multi-method studies, was the triangulation of the results. In quant + QUAL studies, the results of the qualitative study are supplemented by the results of the quantitative study (Morse, 2003). For the purposes of this study, quantitative data were used to support the qualitative findings by providing a descriptive context of the sorority experience. Although the findings from each study were presented independently, they are integrated in the discussion to provide a more complete picture of the complex intersections of gender and sexuality in the sorority experience.
Chapter 6: Qualitative Findings

In this chapter, I describe the results of the grounded theory analysis and address the second and third research questions: How does the Panhellenic sorority serve as a context for heterofemininity and how do queer women negotiate gender expectations in the context of Panhellenic sororities? These results constitute the core component of the study, which describes how queer women negotiated the expectations of heterofemininity in the sorority context through by staying in bounds (see Figure 5). I first present the broader context of the Panhellenic sorority as a policing agent of heterofemininity. Then, I discuss the strategies and conditions related to the process of staying in bounds. As individual members of the sorority, some women may have had elements of their identity that do not align with all parts of the collective identity, particularly as they related to heterofemininity. Specifically for participants, identifying as non-heterosexual contradicted the expectations of heterofemininity. However, these women navigated expectations by learning where the boundaries were, and demonstrated agency in presenting in a way that allowed them to stay within the bounds of expectations so that they could maintain good standing in their sororities. There was an overall tendency to comply with expectations, however, despite this tendency, participants also described incidents in which they challenged and contradicted expectations to make small-scale changes toward a more inclusive sorority environment. Findings are supported by evidence (i.e., quotes) from interviews and open-ended survey data. To distinguish the data source, pseudonyms are used for interview participants and unique IDs are used for survey participants.

Figure 5
Staying in Bounds in the Sorority Context

The Sorority Context: Creating Boundaries

As a collective unit, chapters established and policed the boundaries of permissible femininity for their members, playing an active role in the creation of a context that privileged heterofemininity over other expressions. Within this context, the standards of femininity were conveyed to individual sorority
members, and their compliance was consistently policed through institutional practices, beliefs, and expectations.

**Regulating Access to Sorority Membership**

The expectation of representing the sorority as a collective identity that reflects the values of traditional femininity began for participants during the recruitment process, when they were considered potential new members [PNMs]. PNMs were judged based on their ability to represent the sorority publicly. Sumni, for example, reflected on the way in which active members regulated access to sorority membership by judging the PNMs’ ability to visibly “do” heterofemininity:

> From the active member side of recruitment, it was very common amongst all the sororities to make judgments on some of the PNMs based on what they look like and how they presented themselves. . . .It was mostly who put effort in [their appearance] versus who didn't. Who wanted to make a good impression versus who didn't want to make a good impression. “They're not putting effort in, then why should we?” kind of thing.

Notably, a key criterion for approval by the sorority was the PNM’s ability to enact a public image of heterofemininity. Another member described the importance of a PNM’s appearance by outlining the parameters of acceptable performance:

> Well, there are a lot of expectations before you're in. You don't want to be too "slutty." You don't want to be too conservative, I guess. You can't be too edgy and you can't be. . .well, you can be really nice. You can show signs of moderate wealth. You can be more in neutral tones. Then you just don't want to do anything that's too out there unless there's an allotted time to do that, which would be parties or exchanges or a theme. They hold meetings [for PNMs]. . . .You find out what types of things you can wear for different types of events and times of day. (Veronica)

Informational meetings and recruitment guides given to PNMs prior to the start of recruitment also served as formal methods of enforcing femininity as they outlined outfit suggestions for each recruitment event.

Access to sorority membership depended heavily on a PNM’s ability to reproduce the expected femininity, regardless of whether this was an accurate representation of their individual identity. In fact, there were many instances in which individual behaviors and values were not aligned with traditional femininity or the image they projected as a part of their collective sorority identity. However, the public presentation of an identity that aligned with sorority expectations remained the priority. Another participant addressed this as she described the double standard imposed by chapter leadership, which frowned upon discussions of partying during recruitment despite its prevalence in the sorority experience. Talking about such behaviors actually inhibited a PNM’s access to sorority membership:

> [On why a PNM would be ranked low] Bringing up. . . .like a bad conversation or bringing up something that is, I think that probably doesn't represent—I don’t want to say represent “well”—
but I think it's also like sororities want girls who like have their, their values and their morals. They don't want to hear a girl talking about how she's like partying every day this week. Uhm but it's a very I think this is kind of random but I think sororities are so interesting because like they don't want to talk about that all [recruitment] week but then there's like parties all throughout the year. (Kelzee)

From their very first interaction during sorority recruitment, PNMs learned the sorority’s boundaries of permissible femininity and were judged based on their abilities to embody this femininity.

**Emphasizing a Collective Sorority Identity**

The importance of representing the sorority image publicly was later reinforced to active members, as they were told to adhere to standards that reflect the sorority’s collective values over their personal interests. In particular, there were regulations on conversational topics that active members could introduce during recruitment. For example, participants shared that they were prohibited from bringing up topics that broached expectations of traditional femininity, with directives such as “no booze, no boys” (Kelzee, Maleesha).

Similarly, active members had strict regulations placed on their appearance to ensure they represented the sorority identity in a way that was consistent with the expectations of heterofemininity. During recruitment, active members were often expected to properly “do gender” by adhering to a predetermined dress code, with many chapters indicating specific styles and colors for each member to wear, regardless of the individuals’ personal preferences. Chapters communicated these expectations directly through slideshows, fashion shows, and shopping lists. One member reflected on her chapter’s use of slideshows to police femininity:

I guess the values of like being in a sorority kind of leads back to being like feminine and being a good woman and having good values and morals and stuff. I think sometimes more in materialistic things. They like try to—I don't wanna say enforce femininity or anything like that—but you know, through recruitment you wear dresses, and you wear skirts, and you have to wear like wedges and stuff like that. . . .Before the year ends, they send out like your slideshow of what you have to wear for every day and what the sorority is wearing and everything. Uhm and that's kind of like required. (Kelzee)

Another participant, Mary, indicated that her chapter had “straight up, a fashion show in fall semester, right before break. So that way we could see what kinds of clothes we’re sort of expected for each of the rounds.” Additionally, one participant reflected on her observations of regulations in chapters across campus:

I have seen that like in other chapters, they're like, required to wear the exactly same piece of clothing uhm and it has to be like, bought from a particular store. So from what I understand,
whoever’s in charge of recruitment for that year or whatever, will like, go to a website and send everybody a link and they're like, “you just have to buy this.” (Aasma)

These explicit methods of communication indicated that only specific expressions of femininity, particularly as they related to dress, are considered acceptable during recruitment. However, the enforcement of heterofemininity was not restricted to the recruitment period. Individual expression was also limited in other avenues, such as at social functions, in day-to-day life, and even on social media. Clara reflected on her chapter’s policies regarding social media presence, sharing that “they have social media rules and we have to look quote, unquote ‘classy’ in our pictures, which is just—there are so many layers to that.” Descriptors such as “classy” or “nice” signaled permissible behaviors, actions, and appearances that were deemed traditional feminine.

At social functions, particularly events with fraternities, sorority members were expected to be active participants and engage with the male attendees, as these events were organized with the underlying heteronormative goal of forming relationships between fraternity men and sorority women:

When we show up for exchanges and stuff like everyone's supposed to look nice and like be fun and like interact with [fraternity men] and like I think they put a lot of pressure on the girls to like be active participants in the fun that is going on, like you can’t just go to go be there, like you have to go and actively participate. If I was just going out with my friends, like I could go out and like sit somewhere, and like, have a drink, and be fine. But if it's an exchange like they expect you to go and like, “oh, like there's a game going on over here so you should join” or “you should like be dancing or you should be talking to someone like you shouldn't just be sitting there, cause that reflects poorly on your chapter.” (Ezra)

Members were also expected to represent collective sorority identity in their day-to-day lives, even at times when they were not at specifically designated sorority functions. One participant explained, “we have expectations of like how we are supposed to hold ourselves. . .like ‘Oh, whenever you're out [in public, at a social event] like always remember that you're representing your sorority’” (Ezra). The participants’ individual identities came secondary to that of their sororities as they were consistently asked to consider and prioritize how their behavior, appearance, and actions reflected on the collective sorority identity.

**Communicating Expectations of Heterosexuality**

In addition to controlling elements of individual expression in a way that emphasized a collective sorority identity, chapters also established boundaries of permissible femininity by communicating expectations of heterosexuality to members. Although participants did not report many instances of blatantly discriminatory comments, both heteronormative practices as well as microaggressions against individuals with diverse sexualities were frequently observed among the women in their chapters.
Heteronormative Practices. Heteronormative assumptions were deeply rooted in the language used within sororities. These assumptions were particularly evident when it came to social events and dating. Many participants reflected on the use of language within the chapter that excluded consideration of non-heterosexual pairing. For example, one participant reflected on date events:

When it came to date dashes, it was “Okay, go grab a guy--or go ask a boy in your class,” or if we did any of the socials with other fraternities, it was like, “All right, girls, this is your time to go chat with guys, and maybe find yourself a boyfriend” kind of thing. (Maleesha)

In some instances, heteronormative expectations were more explicit. One survey respondent reported her chapter’s policies on date functions, sharing “same sex couples could not attend functions until 2018, two years after I was initiated (SR_53).”

The use of heteronormative language extended to the dating practices of sorority women. Often, the communicated practices were not only heterosexual in nature, but specifically focused on the pairing of a sorority woman with a fraternity man. For example, participants reported feeling like there was an underlying assumption that sorority women would date fraternity men. According to Sunmi, “there was a lot of... there are fraternities and sororities, and the sorority girls date the fraternity guys, and that's how it is. It's kind of the baseline. That's what was expected with everyone.” Some practices reinforced this assumption, such as the idea of wearing a fraternity t-shirt to indicate a relationship, as described by Clara:

I also noticed that girls will just spend money on buying fraternity shirts online even when they're not getting them [from a member of a fraternity]. . . .So there's this thing where like if you're sleeping with a guy in a certain fraternity, you're going to want a t-shirt that has his fraternity on it. It’s almost like a symbol of thing. Like, “yeah, I got this from a fraternity man” and there are girls in my chapter who will go out of their way to spend money on the internet for getting those t-shirts just to have.

The integration of heteronormativity into the daily practices surrounding date events and dating served to police boundaries of femininity for sorority members by centering heterosexual relationships as the norm and invalidating the diverse sexualities of other members.

Microaggressions. Microaggressions, or words and phrases that are subtly discriminatory, were often encountered by participants. These microaggressions attached a negative connotation to behaviors, actions, and appearances that were not within the boundaries of permissible femininity. Participants reported experiencing microaggressions that privileged a heterosexual identity. In many instances, these microaggressions conflated gender expression with sexuality, and associated non-traditionally feminine dress with a non-heterosexual identity, relegating both to a lower status. Sunmi reflected on the time when sorority members found out another member identified as non-heterosexual; someone commented that
they all “should have known based on how she [the queer member] dressed.” When attire was not aligned with the standards of heterofemininity, members’ sexuality was called into question, possibly indicating another transgression of heterofeminine values: heterosexuality. The notion of “looking queer” was described by participants as “kind of like, baggy unflattering jeans and band t-shirts (Sunmi)” or “denim on denim (Clara)” and was often used in a derogatory manner. Veronica, for example, had a straight-identifying roommate “who would look in the mirror, put on an outfit and look in the mirror and be like, ‘Do I look like a lesbian?,’” communicating concern that her sexuality may be misinterpreted based on her appearance, and implying that this would be negative.

Participants experience microaggressions that “othered” their sexual identities, even in instances when they were accepted at an individual level. For example, when Clara shared her sexuality with other members of her sorority:

People were really cool with [my sexuality]. But I mean, the microaggressions still happened. I mean, I've been asked questions by a couple of sisters afterwards. Like, I've heard the whole like “what percent are you?” thing a couple of times, which I personally really hate because I just don't think it works like that. I've been asked a lot of very basic questions that I feel like people are just asking for the sake of asking when it's just so accessible on Google. Like, "Oh, how do girls have sex? How does that happen?" I'm just like, "Oh my gosh. Stop asking me that. I am not your source for that."

This insensitivity and tokenization communicated to members that there was something unique and out of place about a non-heterosexual identity that is “other” to the sorority experience. Similarly, Kelzee encountered a microaggression when another member of her sorority pathologized her sexuality, commenting “isn’t it kind of weird that she’s in this sorority with all these girls and like she’s gay what if she wants to get with one of us,” and questioned the participant’s place as a sorority member.

**Hiding Transgressions of Permissible Femininity**

The final method chapters reportedly employed to establish boundaries was to hide any violations or transgressions of heterofemininity. By pretending that deviations from heterofemininity do not exist within the chapter, chapters could maintain a public image of collective adherence to the sorority identity, reflective of values of heterofemininity. This practice of keeping violations “hush-hush” occurred both when the overarching membership committed the violation and when the violation was committed by an individual. For example, although violations of the norm of abstinence from alcohol use was an accepted and well-known part of the sorority experience, it was kept hidden during recruitment to maintain a traditionally feminine public appearance of sororities as compliant and innocent.

In other instances, individual members committed violations of expected femininity. In these cases, the members were often brought to a meeting to discuss how their behaviors, actions, or
appearance crossed the boundaries and asked to make changes to realign to the permissible femininity. For example, one survey respondent indicated that her chapter policed social media to ensure that any transgressions of permissible femininity were hidden, sharing “at one point I was told to take down a photo of another queer sister and I [showing our sorority hand sign] at [LGBT] Pride because it violated our social media policy (SR_13).” However, these directives and meetings were kept private and the members’ violations were not addressed with other members of the chapter. Publicly, this maintained the image that violations did not occur when in fact such meetings occurred with regularity and for a variety of violations. One participant described both the frequency and the secrecy of these meetings:

If something happens, there's always going to be a meeting for it. There's way more [meetings] than I thought there were in the beginning, but it's like so under the table. They're [sorority leadership] like “you're not allowed to tell anybody that you had this meeting,” so it's like very “hush-hush.” Like saving face and all that. (Ezra)

Thus, these concealment practices preserved not only the member’s image in front of other members, but also that of the sorority by reinforcing a collective identity comprised of a compliant membership.

**Staying In Bounds**

As individual members, women learned the standards of femininity within the sorority context and negotiated these expectations through a process of staying in bounds. Within this context, individual sorority members negotiated expectations of permissible femininity – identifying, upholding, and sometimes pushing the boundaries as they balanced personal identity with the collective sorority identity.

**Member Strategies for Staying in Bounds**

Members often employed three strategies to stay in bounds: 1) playing the part of the ideal sorority woman; 2) intentionally hiding elements of their authentic self; or 3) gently pushing or stretching the boundaries. The choice of strategy was situational and women enacted the strategy or strategies that fit the context.

**Playing the Part.** One strategy employed by participants was to play the part of the ideal sorority woman. This strategy was used more often in outward-facing instances, such as during recruitment and at social events with fraternities. In these instances, participants complied with expectations even when they did not match their individual identity. This compliance worked to mitigate any risk of violation of permissible femininity by the members. These actions ranged from behavior to expression to language use, as described by Maleesha:

[At social events, we had] the standard “be on your best behavior” kind of thing. Maybe make sure you talk to the boys, but nothing very strict. I don't really have a filter when I talk to people, so it was more like “don't be raunchy, keep the conversation PC, and be social” kind of thing.
Another participant, Molly, reflected on the subtle pressures she felt to play the part during recruitment by explaining, “I don’t wear makeup on a regular basis, but I felt like I needed to wear makeup during recruitment to make like a good impression.” Similarly, Maleesha, reflecting on recruitment, shared, “at the time I wasn’t a very formal person. I put on a dress and I put on a little make-up, and I wore my favorite heels, and I just tried to do my best.” Despite the expectations for femininity not always aligning to individual personalities, participants played the part and stayed within the bounds of permissible femininity within their sororities.

Additionally, playing the part manifested when participants saw underlying injustices to the expectations for their behaviors, actions, and thoughts, but chose not to challenge them. In regards to differing behavioral expectations for fraternity and sorority members, Ezra noted: “I think that's unfair [that fraternities have different rules]. I don’t really understand why that's the case. . . .I don’t think I can really change that or do anything about it so, I am kind of just resigned to how it is.”

**Hiding Elements of the Self.** In many instances, participants actively chose to hide elements of their authentic self in order to comply with the expectations of heterofemininity. This strategy was frequently employed in front of other members within the chapter and allowed participants to blend in with others, protecting them from potentially negative responses. For example, one survey respondent shared, “I live in the house, so I sometimes feel like if someone were to find out that I’m bisexual I would be forced out” (SR_2). Participants also reported that the fear of ostracizing (SR_75), involuntary outing (SR_84), and lack of support (SR_10, SR_17, SR_22) contributed to their concealment of their sexualities.

In hiding their sexual identities, participants presented to other members in a way that was seemingly in compliance with the expected femininity as it related to sexuality and allowed them to maintain their status within the chapter. One participant reflected on her decision to hide her sexuality, hoping her reserved demeanor in conversations about (hetero)sexual activity gave the impression she was inexperienced or chaste, rather than queer:

There have been a few times when I've been hanging around with my sisters and things have wandered into the conversation about ya know our sexual life and that sort of thing and I just sit there and I stay quiet. And I hope that people just assume that I'm a prude or a virgin and don't know anything that's going on. . . .People aren’t as continuously able to mark me as an outsider. They can't mark me as an outsider because they can’t [see my identity]. So it's easier for me for acting straight than to let people assume things about my identity because otherwise I have to explain everything to them. (Mary)
Traditionally feminine expectations of chastity and heterosexual identity were not compatible with diverse sexualities of participants and, rather than challenging this expectation outright by disclosing their identities, they hid elements of their authentic selves to effectively stay in bounds.

**Pushing the Boundaries.** Pushing the boundaries occurred in instances when participants gently nudged or stretched, rather than outright challenged or contradicted, the existing boundaries or permissible femininity. These pushes tended to occur on a small scale, such as between a small group of peers or friends, or in subtle interactions. Some women gently pushed the boundaries by challenging heteronormative assumptions about the ideal woman, passively sharing messages without directing them at any one individual. Clara, for example, engaged with this strategy as it related to expectations of body image:

> But I'm kind of finally at a point where I've accepted body positivity. It's my life and that is so important to me and not a lot of people in my chapter on the same train, but like I'm trying to share as many informative things as I can to my social media very subtly to maybe make them not beat themselves up so much.

By subtly sharing messaging on her personal social media, Clara gently stretched the boundaries of permissible femininity.

Similarly, participants reported passive resistance to expectations that, while still complying with permissible femininity, did not perfectly align to the expectations in the given moment. For example, Clara reflected on her resistance to the specific dress codes of themed social events with fraternities:

> I don't like themes that much. Like the beach thing, like I don't really want to wear beachy things because that shows a lot of skin and I don't really want to show skin in a sweaty frat basement in October. I have my clothes that I want to wear. I'm really weird. I always, I kind of wear like everything to the same social. I wear high waisted jeans, a black crop top and a Jean jacket to walk there if it's cold.

Although still considered trendy and feminine, Clara’s outfit was not the prescribed dress for the event. By violating the expectations for participation in the theme, but remaining feminine in appearance, she gently pushed the boundary rather than blatantly crossing it.

In some instances, participants were more direct in their pushing. Veronica, for example, challenged the negative use of “lesbian” by her straight-identifying roommate:

> I had a roommate who would look in the mirror, put on an outfit and look in the mirror and be like, "Do I look like a lesbian?" I'd be like, "Maybe. Why do you care?" I would just always tell her “maybe” or “kind of” to put her back in her face because I don't know. That's such a weird question to ask.
Notably, these participants pushed the boundaries but still did not reveal their own sexual identities or transgress the expectations of heterofemininity.

Although less common, boundaries were sometimes pushed on a larger scale, either with groups of members or with the chapter as a whole. However, these instances still did not involve a disclosure of personal identity, but rather suggested an expansion of the boundaries of permissible femininity. This occurred in relation to expectations for dress, behaviors, and, in many cases, inclusive language use. For example, Kelzee pushed her chapter to use more inclusive date event language, stating “they’d be like, ‘okay you can bring like a guy’ and like I would be like, ‘can you just like bring a date, like it's much more accepting.’” Painted as efforts at being inclusive broadly, rather than efforts of self-advocacy for inclusion, situations like this pushed the boundaries gently without an outright challenge from the member.

**Conditions of Staying in Bounds**

The process of staying in bounds involved members actively regulating their behaviors, thoughts, actions, and gender expression in order to adhere to the established expectations of heterofemininity within their chapter. Despite the tendency to stay in bounds, there were occasions when participants decided to challenge and cross the boundaries that were established by the sorority. The decision to comply with or challenge the boundaries was impacted by conditions of chapter orientation toward inclusion of diverse sexualities and the individual member’s degree of confidence in their identity.

**Chapter Orientation toward Inclusion.** Although all participants discussed the ways in which heterofemininity was privileged within the chapter, the degree to which participants perceived chapter disapproval of non-heterosexual identities varied. This perception appeared to be based on observations of how the chapter responded to instances where diverse sexualities came into question.

Participants were most likely to stay in bounds in instances where chapters communicated an expectation of heterosexuality that disaffirmed diverse sexualities. These dismissals were more frequently observed in microaggressions, but at times involved more explicit homophobic messaging. These explicitly homophobic comments were not typically directed at other members within the chapter, but rather those who were not a part of the collective identity. These instances invalidated diverse sexualities within the sorority context and led to members’ decisions to stay in bounds with the expected femininity. Ezra reflected on her experience overhearing a homophobic comment, her chapter’s subsequent failure to address the comment as inappropriate, and its impact on her perception of the chapter:

I was like, kind of upset and felt that like, “oh, I guess our council doesn't really care about, queer rights and issues”...that's part of the reason that I've never, I haven't openly really discussed it— with anyone, like I don't know how. Like maybe other girls feel this way too but they're just not saying anything.
Chapter-level avoidance of personally significant events conveyed an implicit acceptance of homophobia to participants and created an environment in which they were not comfortable sharing their sexualities. Rather than expressing their authentic selves, they chose to stay in bounds with permissible femininity.

Not all participants were members of chapters that responded to diverse sexualities in ways that conveyed an acceptance of homophobia. In fact, several participants reported that they were more comfortable sharing their sexuality and pushing the boundaries after observing other members share their sexualities and be responded to with acceptance (SR_16, SR_118). Maleesha shared such an example:

There was a girl who was a year older than me who was also bi and very open and accepted with her sexuality, and I felt comfortable sharing mine, because she wasn't judged because of hers.

Similarly, Veronica was reaffirmed in her identity because other members were not homophobic toward an older member that was open with her sexuality:

Actually, yeah, it helped that there were a couple other girls and there was one girl that everybody loved and she was queer, so I was like okay. It's not a big deal. I knew that it would never be a big deal and no one would be out or be homophobic to me, but it was just easier to not because I have a boyfriend and that type of thing.

For these and other participants, the presence of another member with a shared and openly diverse sexual identity led to a degree of comfort in their ability to also express their sexuality and challenge the established norms of femininity.

**Self-Acceptance of Sexuality.** The degree to which a participant had developed and felt confident in their sexual identity impacted their tendency to stay in bounds or challenge established boundaries of femininity. Most often, participants reported staying in bounds in order to avoid feelings of discomfort, both for themselves and for other members of the sorority. In these instances, participants prioritized self-preservation over authentic expression. Veronica, for example, explained that she did not discuss her sexual identity during recruitment:

I didn't want to make myself feel uncomfortable by knowing that it's something that they [the recruiters] could be thinking about or that I am thinking about and that's just causing more stress in what could already be such a crazy time as meeting dozens and dozens of new people already is, so I just left it out for a little while, didn't really tell anyone unless it kind of came up.

Veronica’s worry about the recruiter’s preoccupation with her sexuality and the impression it could make, rather than confidence in her own identity, created a condition that necessitated staying in bounds in order to avoid standing out. Similarly, participants reflected on the discomfort that they and other queer members often encountered when considering whether to bring a date of the same gender to a social event:

[Other queer members of my chapter] definitely discuss[ed] before like feeling uncomfortable
bringing people to like our formal or informal dances—cause like you should bring a date but they sometimes feel uncomfortable about uhm bringing a date of the same uhm gender. (Ezra)

The inability to feel confident in bringing their date of choice led women to stay in bounds with the expectations of permissible femininity established by the chapter.

In other instances, participants sacrificed authentic self-expression in an attempt to protect the comfort of others, regardless of whether or not there was evidence that other members would feel uncomfortable. This pressure to maintain the status quo at the detriment of individual expression sometimes caused internal conflict within participants, as expressed by both Veronica and Clara. Veronica reflected on her concern about the perception of her sexuality as a potential source of discomfort to other female members:

I didn't want anyone to feel uncomfortable around me. Just I don't know how I feel about that, if that's something I should even worry about or people just need to grow the fuck up because I'm not interested in them just because they are female. Yeah, I didn't want to make anyone uncomfortable.

Clara attempted to mitigate risk of discomfort by seeking peer approval first:

I remember talking to my closer friends and being like, "Hey, would you guys be cool with me bringing my girlfriend at the time to formal?" They were like, "Yeah, I mean obviously", I don't know I just felt the need to ask and I'm not exactly sure why, but it was there.

In both of these instances, along with others, members prioritized the comfort of others over authentic self-expression and sacrificed personal power by opting to staying in bounds.

However, when participants had a fully developed confidence in their sexual identity, they appeared to be more likely to challenge the established boundaries of femininity and express their authentic self. One participant shared that she grew up in a liberal area and was exposed to diverse sexualities beginning at a young age:

I was surrounded by a lot of queer individuals so the idea that wasn't foreign to me and I wasn’t like, peeling away and not knowing how to identify. . . .Growing up in [the west coast], I was exposed to a lot more. . . .I kind of went out of my way to change some of the things that were like in our bylaws and like the wording, our chapter used in the way we talked about things. So I kind of went out of my way to change things that I think needed to be because they were outdated. (Kelzee)

As a result of her exposure, she had the opportunity to develop her confidence with the support of her friends, family, and community prior to attending college. When encountering an environment that was less liberal than what she grew up with, she was able to comfortably challenge the established boundaries of femininity.
Similarly, other participants did not want to “return to the closet” after they had already come out (SR_96, SR_118). Clara, for example, shared her experience, stating that “Because I was so heavily out before I joined, I really just wanted it to be a thing that was known so I could just kind of get that into the atmosphere” and this previously established identity resulted in her ability to express her sexuality in a way that transgressed the boundaries of permissible femininity within her chapter.

**Consequences of Staying in Bounds**

Staying in bounds and compromising elements of one’s authentic self had several implications for participants. One of the main reasons participants reported joining sororities was to find a group of friends and social support. However, as a result of staying within the bounds of permissible femininity, many participants felt like outsiders within their own organizations. Mary captured this feeling as she described her experience:

“I’m like ‘how many people in college actually don't have sex’ —it’s weird to think —even my friends who are certainly not uptight, but sort of a Christian people, probably are like not full on having sex, but like yeah ‘I’m gonna make out with you [in] my car’ sort of experiences and I never feel like I’ll ever have that because yeah. . . so like trying to end that situation, that is not something my sorority sisters are experiencing. It’s just, it makes me feel constantly like I’m an outsider.

Feelings of isolation, among an already marginalized population, can lead to several negative outcomes for queer college women. By staying in bounds, women may be inadvertently isolating themselves from valuable sources of social support.

Participants and other members of their sororities were already asked to work in order to meet the expectations of traditional femininity that are deeply rooted within the history of sorority practices. Queer women, specifically, had to work extra to make up for their violation of expected sexuality by meeting other expectations of femininity, much like Maleesha shared:

I felt like people wanted to be open and accepting to other sexualities, but still struggled with that idea. That girl who was older than me, who was bi, was a very bubbly personality, and she kind of picked other marks [checked other boxes] that made her fit in really well. There was a girl who was recruited after me and she was gay, and she ended up being a president at one point, so it felt like people were accepting. It just felt like there were some people within the chapter that weren't entirely accepting. The chapter as a whole was like, “whatever”. . .but there's still that gossip rumor mill that existed.

Finally, the emphasis on heterofemininity also impacted individual identity development. Veronica shared this sentiment: “I feel like my story kind of, like my sexuality story kind of paused when I was in a sorority. I just kind of didn't acknowledge it.” As a result of staying within bounds, Veronica,
like other participants, sacrificed an element of individual identity development in order to comply with the expectations of traditional femininity while her heterosexual peers were provided with sanctioned opportunities to explore and develop their sexual identities.

**Summary of Qualitative Findings**

For participants, the Panhellenic sorority served as a context that privileged and policed heterofemininity within its membership through regulation of access to membership, emphasizing the embodiment of the collective identity, communicating expectations of heterofemininity, and concealing transgressions to present a seemingly compliant membership. In response to the pressures of these expectations, and to maintain status within their chapter, participants engaged in the central process of staying in bounds by playing the part of the proper sorority woman, hiding parts of who they were to avoid standing out, and gently pushing—rather than outright challenging—boundaries of heterofemininity.
Chapter 7: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of queer women in Panhellenic sororities and to understand the process they engage in as they negotiate expectations of femininity. The study investigated an area of research that has received little attention. Despite the fact that the sorority experience has been sensationalized in the media (e.g., movies such as *Legally Blonde* and *The House Bunny*; television shows such as *GRΣΣK*), few academic studies have focused on gender or sexuality within the sorority context (Berbary & Johnson, 2012; Hevel & Bureau, 2014; Kahn, 2012). As such, the current study suggests preliminary theoretical relations in an otherwise understudied area. The findings of this study indicate that queer women do indeed seek and enjoy their membership in Panhellenic sororities. This occurred despite the overarching heteronormative expectations and homophobic microaggressions that happened within the sorority context. After obtaining membership in these elitist organizations, queer women engaged in a process of staying in bounds that allowed them to maintain inclusion and a good standing with their organizations but compromised aspects of their individual identities.

**Panhellenic Organizations: Perpetuating Heterofemininity**

Consistent with previous research, Panhellenic sororities, as elitist organizations, privilege traditional femininity and heteronormative values while continuing to marginalize other identities (Hughey, 2010; Matthews et al., 2009; Rankin et al., 2013; Stone & Gorga, 2014; Yeung, 2009). Expectations of traditional femininity are deeply ingrained into the sorority experience, reflecting the historical roots of Panhellenic sororities as organizations for “proper” women (White, middle to upper class, Christian, heterosexual; Boschini & Thompson, 1998) and actively exclusive of other femininities (Lee, 1955; Stone & Gorga, 2014; Syrett, 2009). Although many of the explicitly discriminatory practices and policies have since been abolished, the current findings indicate that exclusionary practices persist through sorority recruitment. Specifically, potential new members that visibly deviate from the expected feminine performance were deemed to be improperly “doing gender,” thereby disrupting social order. Active members restricted access to sorority membership for these potential members whose gender performance threatened the hegemonic status of their chapters. Those women who do gain access experience pressure to conform to standards of heterofemininity.

Sorority recruitment and regulation of members is aimed at maintaining a collective identity that reinforces traditionally feminine values and appearances. The influence of social class is undeniable. As access to sorority membership is regulated by semester dues and costs associated with mandatory live-in requirements, membership remains largely comprised of middle to upper class women (Stuber et al., 2011; Turk, 2004). Even if from a lower socioeconomic background, individual members are immersed in a culture of affluence (Levine, 2006) that shapes the values and practices of the sorority organization, and the pressures experienced by individual members. Existing studies document the overarching values of
perfectionism (Weitzman, 2000) and maintenance of status (e.g., keeping up appearances; Levine, 2006; Weitzman, 2000) that characterize the culture of affluence and serve to regulate individual behavior. Similar to other affluent communities (e.g., Cage & Howes, 2020; Johnson & Arbona, 2006; Rivera, 2012), gatekeeping efforts prioritize a cultural fit, often resulting in a relatively homogenous sorority membership, not only in terms of sexuality, but also in terms of race, class, and heterofeminine gender performance. Individuals who stand out may self-select out of membership in homogenous organizations (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Ross, 2015; Stuber et al., 2011), leaving the cultural system itself intact. Indeed, women in the current study rarely if at all challenged the system itself.

Institutional change among privileged systems is difficult as social stratification is deeply rooted in society (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Mills, 1956; Simpson, 1956). Participants in the current study began college in August 2015 or later, following the Supreme Court overturn of bans on same-sex marriage in the United States. Given the changing sociopolitical context in which participants and their peers were raised, with diversity issues more openly discussed, I anticipated that the sorority context would look different than in earlier studies. Yet, participants’ reports of acceptance and inclusivity were at the interactional level (e.g., among members in sorority residences) not at the larger institutional level. For the most part, though, participants stayed in bounds and maintained cultural expectations of heterofemininity, despite reporting relatively low levels of conformity to traditional feminine norms. In fact, the participants in the current study were less aligned to feminine norms than recent studies that investigated conformity to feminine norms in 1) college women broadly (Parent & Moradi, 2011) and 2) LGB women (Brown et al., 2020). However, the tendency to conform within the sorority context is consistent with recent work by Freeman (2020), who classifies Panhellenic sororities as a conservative grassroots movement. In her work, Freeman maintains that Panhellenic sororities were established under the façade of advancing women in higher education by creating a female-only space for social support. However, the strict regulations and continued exclusionary practices of these organizations serve to police the behaviors, actions, and appearances of women, perpetuating traditional heteronormative values. The continued emphasis on social pairings of fraternities and sororities privileges heterosexuality by discouraging same-sex relationships.

In contrast, others have suggested that female-only spaces may act as agents that challenge heteronormativity through the homosocial context and emphasis on female friendships (Rich, 1980; Scott, 2018). Scott (2018) argues that within sorority organizations, members demonstrate heteroflexibility and a deepened sense of emotional and physical intimacy that challenge heteronormativity by queering the understanding of kin relationships. Strictly considering the kinship aspect, the homosocial context and emphasis on intimacy in friendships may indeed have some queering effects, which in themselves challenge heteronormativity (Cohen, 1997). This queering potential was not reflected in the sorority
experiences of the current sample. The heavy emphasis on expected outward presentation perpetuated a cohesive and dominant narrative privileging heterosexuality and marginalizing diverse femininities and sexualities. These expectations are reinforced by the positioning of sorority women as the hegemonic counterpart to fraternity men. This oppressive narrative may effectively silence, pathologize, and invalidate the value of physical and emotional intimacy among women as anything other than friendship.

**Sorority Chapters: Presenting a Tolerant Climate**

The prioritization of status maintenance among privileged institutions can hinder institutional change, regardless of the individual ideologies held by those comprising the membership of the institution. As overarching discriminatory policies within sororities have been abolished (Hughey, 2010; Matthews et al., 2009; Rankin et al., 2013) and very few women reported explicitly homophobic experiences with others, it is possible that individual attitudes toward diverse sexualities have become generally tolerant over time. However, the collective emphasis on heterofemininity creates a tolerant, rather than supportive, experience for individuals embodying non-traditional variations of femininity. As a result, queer women may experience a contradiction in the tolerance they perceive on an individual level and the overarching pressures to conform, which invalidates their sexual identities.

Previous work documents the negative impact of a perceived tolerant climate on the experiences of sexual minorities (Oswald et al., 2017). In tolerant climates, individuals may be accepted for their diverse identities; however, supportive climates embrace differences, rather than simply accepting them (Twenge et al., 2015). The potential for negative impact may be compounded for queer sorority women, as the findings of the current study suggest they may not be likely to connect to LGB resources and organizations. Creating a more supportive climate may result in more positive outcomes for queer identifying sorority members; however institutional change from within may present challenges. Rather than place the onus of responsibility on individual members of chapters, organizational support is necessary to dismantle the larger system of privilege and create a more equitable environment.

The increased acceptance of individual variability in sexuality, however, appears to be limited in that it is most permissible when members can otherwise fit into the collective identity when expected to do so. The sentiment of being a “good queer” is consistent with other research on marginalized populations in privileged contexts; privileged populations may tolerate—rather than support—marginalized identities, just as long as they can blend in and perform gender to heteronormative standards. Some queer women may find it easier to blend into the sorority community than the LGBT community. In particular, the sorority community may be more inviting to those identifying as bisexual and with a heterofeminine presentation, and within the sorority context, bisexual women may have the opportunity to pass as heterosexual if pursuing or engaging with a male partner. However, without the opportunity to further probe this result, the ability to probe for further details is limited to speculation.
Previous research has indicated the subjugation of both the bisexual identity and heterofeminine presentation within queer communities (Blair & Hoskin 2015, 2016; McLean, 2007; Serano 2013), possibly because their gender performance complies with, rather than challenges, the heteronormative narrative. As masculinity or gender noncomformity have been found to be privileged in lesbian communities (Blair & Hoskin 2015, 2016; Serano 2013) and the sexuality of these identities is called into question more frequently (McLean, 2007), bisexual, heterofeminine women may gravitate toward a community that reaffirms their gender presentation. As a result, they may conceal elements of their sexuality to maintain an image of heterofemininity within their sororities. The relative proportion of bisexual-identifying women in the current study and the appearance-based regulations described by participants supports this explanation. Researchers have found similar patterns of concealment and status maintenance among other communities with a culture of affluence (Haselschwerdt & Hardesty, 2017; Wolfe & Fodor, 1996).

Queer Sorority Women: Negotiating Identity within Bounds

The findings of this study highlight several important ways that queer women’s membership in sororities may impede individual development. One of the key developmental milestones of emerging adulthood is identity exploration (Arnett, 2000). Women who stay within the bounds of permissible femininity as established by the sorority may experience delays in their personal development. Pressure to conceal or deny sexuality limits opportunities for exploration. For women who are at a time in their lives when exploring sexual identity is developmentally appropriate (Arnett, 2000, 2004; Floyd & Stein, 2002; Morgan, 2013), this process may stagnate. Indeed, sorority women may foreclosure to a heterosexual identity or experience a delay in queer identity development as they try blend into the collective identity. Foreclosure to an identity can increase the risk of negative outcomes later in life, such as a lack of clarity about one’s identity, as the accepted identity may not align directly with the individual’s true identity (Danish et al., 1993; Erikson, 1950; Marcia, 1966; Petitpas, 1987).

Queer sorority women who push the boundaries of unstated but widely understood expectations for behavior and appearance risk feeling like outsiders to the collective community. High pressures of expected conformity have been associated with stress (e.g., Cage & Howes, 2020; Haselschwerdt & Hardesty, 2017; Luthar, 2003; Wolfe & Fodor, 1996). In addition to pressures for feminine performance, sexual minorities may experience additional stress (Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 2003). The marginalization that sexual minorities experience, including their engagement in concealment practices, can have lasting negative effects on individual development (e.g., Oswalt & Wyatt, 2011; Przedworski et al., 2015; Woodford et al., 2014).
Limitations and Future Directions

The findings of this study, though a valuable contribution to a relatively understudied population, should be considered in the context of several limitations and unique circumstances. First, the sample size was limited relative to the estimated number of eligible participants. Organizational gatekeeping played a major role in limiting access to participants. The NPC Research Committee approved the study; however, the Board of Directors determined that a project seeking to assess member experience broadly, rather than targeting specific universities, was outside of the scope of their support. Additionally, all twenty-six NPC member organizations either declined or failed to respond to requests to support the research.

Not only did the lack of support from the NPC and their member organizations limit the number of participants in the study, but it also highlights a lack of willingness to engage in potentially sensitive topics by these privileged organizations, and perhaps a resistance to widespread change. In my own experience, I have observed NPC member organizations demonstrating similar patterns of concealment in addressing issues of equity, inclusion, and diversity in accessibility to membership, particularly in regards to legacy and recommendation policies. For example, social media posts about inequity of membership practices made on sorority pages generate a lot of emotional discussion and are often deleted under the guise of violating policies related to respect for political differences. Legacy policies privilege those who have familial connections to a specific organization and recommendation policies privilege those who know how to navigate the sorority system, likely because they also have a familial connection and a history of access to sorority organizations and higher education. Both practices work to perpetuate the homogenous membership and serve as an additional barrier to access for those traditionally excluded from sororities and first-generation college students. As a result, racial diversity is largely absent from the sample and the ability to understand the intersections of multiple identities, particularly as they relate to race, class, gender, and sexuality, was limited in scope. Suppositions about the role of race, class, and other marginalized identities in the context of this study are tangential at best and the intersection of these identities should be the subject of future study. For this research to hold merit, organizations must be willing to engage in difficult conversations and a critical analysis of the privileging practices that constitute their history. Without support at the organizational level, it can be difficult for individual chapters to make changes that support diversity and inclusion.

Additionally, sample size may have been limited due to the developmental stage of the target population (Arnett, 2000) and the fluid nature of sexual identity (Diamond, 2008). For many, college is a time of identity exploration and it is not uncommon for individuals at this time to still be figuring out who they are. There may have been a number of women who were still navigating their sexual identities or who had foreclosed to a heterosexual identity at the time of the study, particularly if they were subject to the expectations of heterofemininity within their sorority. These individuals may now, or later in life,
identify as non-heterosexual, but were missed in recruitment efforts that specifically required participants to identify as non-heterosexual at the time of participation in the study.

The lack of access to the target population resulted in heavy reliance on professional networks, convenience sampling, and snowball sampling for study participants. Convenience and snowball sampling were used to obtain participants for the quantitative survey. These sampling approaches were appropriate given the limited access to, lack of centralized organization of, and relative invisibility of the target population (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). However, self-selection bias may have resulted in a survey sample that does not represent the overall experience of queer women in Panhellenic sororities. Subsequently, the initial population for qualitative interviews only included participants who self-selected for the quantitative survey and also expressed willingness to complete an interview. Due to the difficulties in reaching the target population, theoretical saturation for the purposes of a grounded theory was not achieved. Instead, the findings are suggestive of preliminary theoretical relations in understanding how queer women negotiate expectations of femininity in the sorority context.

Despite these limitations, this study provides a valuable extension to previous research on the experiences of queer women in Panhellenic sororities and an exploration of the changing sorority context as well as the larger body of gender and sexuality literature. The majority of past research was conducted prior to the Supreme Court’s overturn of the ban on same-sex marriages, during a time when the socio-political climate was much different than today’s. Additionally, the limited past research with queer sorority members was conducted through surveys (Case, 1996; Rankin et al., 2007). This qualitative approach gave women an opportunity to share the intricate and nuanced details of their experience beyond what can be captured through survey responses (Creswell, 1998; Morse, 2003). Using a multi-method design that combined survey data and in-depth interview data is a strength in that it allowed for a more comprehensive depiction of the research problem than one method alone (Morse, 2003). Finally, the participants in this study represented a diverse geographic population, both in terms of home region and region of institution. The study was not limited to specific universities or sorority organizations, which allowed for a better picture of the sorority experience overall, rather than one that was influenced primarily by one specific local climate toward sexuality and gender.

Future research should continue to explore the ways in which the Panhellenic context impacts individual identity development, particularly as it relates to sexual identity. As anticipated, however, this study is limited in reflecting intersectional aspects other than gender and sexuality in the sorority experience, as collegiate members of the NPC and subsequently the participants of this study, are relatively homogenous in terms of race, class, and religious background. Although the individual participants were diverse in background and experience, the diversity of the sample is insufficient for considering how these aspects of identity intersect with gender and sexuality. Additionally, future
research could benefit from the inclusion of non-queer women as both a comparative sample as well as to explore the similarities in their developmental experience with the boundaries of permissible femininity.

**Conclusion**

This study contributes to the overall understanding of the process by which queer women in Panhellenic sororities negotiate expectations of heterofemininity. The experiences participants shared highlight how fitting into the collective identity may impede their individual identity development or cause them to hide elements of who they are. However, the experience of sorority membership as a whole is perceived as positive, emphasizing the value of participation in social organizations for women during the college experience and the potential for Panhellenic organizations to powerfully impact women’s experiences. As such powerful organizations, Panhellenic sororities should work to create environments that support and empower all women, not just those embodying a traditional gender performance.
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Appendix A: Alphabetical Listing of NPC Member Organizations

(approx. number of active chapters)

Alpha Chi Omega Fraternity ΑΧΩ (145)
Alpha Delta Pi Sorority ΑΔΠ (160)
Alpha Epsilon Phi Sorority ΑΕΦ (49)
Alpha Gamma Delta Fraternity ΑΓΔ (128)
Alpha Omicron Pi Fraternity ΑΟΠ (144)
Alpha Phi Fraternity ΑΦ (170)
Alpha Sigma Alpha Sorority ΑΣΑ (100)
Alpha Sigma Tau Sorority ΑΣΤ (90)
Alpha Xi Delta Fraternity ΑΞΔ (130)
Chi Omega Fraternity ΧΩ (181)
Delta Delta Delta Fraternity ∆∆∆ (141)
Delta Gamma Fraternity ∆Γ (151)
Delta Phi Epsilon Sorority ∆ΦΕ (103)
Delta Zeta Sorority ∆Ζ (170)
Gamma Phi Beta Sorority ΓΦΒ (139)
Kappa Alpha Theta Fraternity ΚΑΘ (146)
Kappa Delta Sorority ΚΔ (169)
Kappa Kappa Gamma Fraternity ΚΚΓ (144)
Phi Mu Fraternity ΦΜ (139)
Phi Sigma Sigma Fraternity ΦΣΣ (102)
Pi Beta Phi Fraternity ΠΒΦ (136)
Sigma Delta Tau Sorority ΣΔΤ (62)
Sigma Kappa Sorority ΣΚ (120)
Sigma Sigma Sigma Sorority ΣΣΣ (113)
Theta Phi Alpha Fraternity ΘΦΑ (57)
Zeta Tau Alpha Fraternity ΖΤΑ (173)
Appendix B: IRB Approval Letters

OFFICE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR FOR RESEARCH
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
805 W. Pennsylvania Ave., MC-095
Urbana, IL 61801-4822

Notice of Approval: New Submission

June 4, 2019

Principal Investigator  Kelly Bost
CC  Brianna Anderson
Protocol Title  A Closet Full of Dresses: Intersections of Femininity and Sexuality Among Women in Panhellenic Sororities
Protocol Number  19829
Funding Source  Association of Fraternity / Sorority Advisors
Review Type  Exempt 2 (iii)
Status  Active
Risk Determination  No more than minimal risk
Approval Date  June 4, 2019
Closure Date  June 3, 2024

This letter authorizes the use of human subjects in the above protocol. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved the research study as described.

The Principal Investigator of this study is responsible for:

- Conducting research in a manner consistent with the requirements of the University and federal regulations found at 45 CFR 46.
- Using the approved consent documents, with the footer, from this approved package.
- Requesting approval from the IRB prior to implementing modifications.
- Notifying OPRS of any problems involving human subjects, including unanticipated events, participant complaints, or protocol deviations.
- Notifying OPRS of the completion of the study.
Notice of Approval: Amendment 01

September 25, 2019

Principal Investigator: Kelly Bost
CC: Brianna Anderson
Protocol Title: A Closet Full of Dresses: Intersections of Femininity and Sexuality Among Women in Panhellenic Sororities
Protocol Number: 19829
Funding Source: Association of Fraternity / Sorority Advisors
Review Type: Exempt 2 (iii)
Amendment Requested: Revising eligibility criteria
Status: Active
Risk Determination: No more than minimal risk
Amendment Approval Date: September 25, 2019
Closure Date: June 3, 2024

This letter authorizes the use of human subjects in the above protocol. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved the research study as described.

The Principal Investigator of this study is responsible for:

- Conducting research in a manner consistent with the requirements of the University and federal regulations found at 45 CFR 46.
- Using the approved consent documents, with the footer, from this approved package.
- Requesting approval from the IRB prior to implementing modifications.
- Notifying OPRS of any problems involving human subjects, including unanticipated events, participant complaints, or protocol deviations.
- Notifying OPRS of the completion of the study.
Appendix C: Study Recruitment Letter

Dear [organization],

My name is Brianna Anderson and I am a PhD candidate in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Illinois. As a part of my doctoral research, I am conducting a study on the experiences of queer women in Panhellenic sororities.

I would like your support in recruiting participants through email listservs or social media. I have attached recruitment materials (i.e., email request, Facebook post) with a link to participate in the study. The study will consist of a 20-25 minute online questionnaire, with an opportunity for survey respondents to indicate an interest in participating in a phone interview. Participants completing the survey will be entered into a drawing for a $20 gift card for every 50 participants. Interview participants will each receive a $25 gift card as compensation.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and all data collected during the study will remain confidential. The decision to participate should not affect the relationship between your inter/national organization, the National Panhellenic Conference, chapters, and individual members. Additionally, data collected during the study will not be released to your agency. Participating in the online survey does not necessitate participation in the interview.

The Institutional Review Board at the University of Illinois has approved the study and I have attached (to be attached) their approval to this email. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me by phone (847-648-6606) or email (anders15@illinois.edu).

I kindly ask that you reply with any information pertaining to the distribution of the recruitment materials for my records. Thank you very much for your consideration and support.

Brianna Anderson, M.S.
Doctoral Candidate
Human Development and Family Studies
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Appendix D: Participant Recruitment Materials

For email listservs or Facebook:

Seeking non-heterosexual sorority members for study
We are seeking to explore the experiences of sexual minority women in Panhellenic sororities. Participants should identify as cisgender queer women, be 18 or older, and currently be active (initiated) or recently graduated members of Panhellenic sororities. The survey will take 20-25 minutes to complete. If you or someone you know is interested in participating, follow the link to the survey here (insert hyperlink). Participants will be entered into a drawing for a $20 gift card. One gift card will be drawn for every 50 participants. Please contact Brianna Anderson at anders15@illinois.edu with any questions.

For Twitter:
Non-heterosexual, cisgender members of Panhellenic sororities: Share your experiences in a brief survey (insert hyperlink). Chance to win a $20 gift card! For more information, email Brianna (insert hyperlink).
### Appendix E: Support Organizations for LGBT-Identifying Students in Fraternities and Sororities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greek Alliance</td>
<td>University of Maryland, College Park, MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Allies -at Mizzou-</td>
<td>University of Missouri, Columbia, MO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambda Q</td>
<td>Washington University, St. Louis, MO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTGreek</td>
<td>University of Illinois, Urbana, IL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer Greek Collective</td>
<td>American University, Washington, DC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queer Sorority Members Affinity Group</td>
<td>Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StAG (Student Athlete and Greek Alliance)</td>
<td>Northwestern University, Evanston, IL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F: Eligibility Screener

Prior to beginning the survey, please confirm your eligibility by responding to the statements below:

I am an initiated member of a Panhellenic sorority.
☐ yes
☐ no

I identify as non-heterosexual (e.g., lesbian, bisexual, queer, non-conforming).
☐ yes
☐ no

I identify as a cisgender (non-transgender) female.
☐ yes
☐ no

I am enrolled full-time as an undergraduate student or graduated no earlier than May 2019.
☐ yes
☐ no

I am at least 18 years of age.
☐ yes
☐ no

If all responses are yes: proceed to informed consent form

If any response is no: Thank you very much for your interest in participating. Unfortunately, you are not eligible to participate at this time. Please feel free to share this survey with anyone that may be interested. If you have questions, you can contact Brianna Anderson at anders15@illinois.edu.
Appendix G: Online Consent Form

A closet full of dresses: Intersections of femininity and sexuality among women in Panhellenic sororities

You are being asked to participate in a voluntary research study. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the experiences of queer women in Panhellenic sororities. Participating in this study will involve an online survey about your experiences and your participation will last approximately 20-25 minutes. To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life. Taking part in this research study may not benefit you personally, but we may learn new things that will help others.

Principal Investigator Name and Title: Brianna Anderson, Doctoral Student (Faculty Supervisor, Jennifer L. Hardesty, PhD)
Department and Institution: Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Contact Information: 847-648-6606; anders15@illinois.edu
Sponsor: Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors

What procedures are involved?
After reviewing and signing an informed consent document, you will participate in an online survey consisting of multiple choice and Likert-type questions about your experience. The survey is expected to last approximately 20-25 minutes.

Will my study-related information be kept confidential?
Research staff with permission or authority to see your study information will maintain its confidentiality to the extent permitted and required by laws and university policies. The names or personal identifiers of participants will not be published or presented.

Will I be reimbursed for any expenses or paid for my participation in this research?
Participants will be entered into a drawing for a $20 gift card. One gift card will be drawn for every 50 participants.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?
If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate, or to withdraw after beginning participation, will not affect your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The researchers also have the right to stop your participation in this study without your consent if they believe it is in your best interests.

Will data collected from me be used for any other research?
Your de-identified information could be used for future research without additional informed consent.

Who should I contact if I have questions?
If you have questions about this project, you may contact Brianna Anderson at 847-648-6606 or anders15@illinois.edu or Jennifer L. Hardesty (Faculty Supervisor) at hardesty@illinois.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 217-333-2670 or via email at irb@illinois.edu.
Please print this consent form if you would like to retain a copy for your records.

I have read and understand the above consent form. I certify that I am 18 years old or older. By clicking the “Submit” button to enter the survey, I indicate my willingness to voluntarily take part in this study.

SUBMIT
Appendix H: Interview Consent Form

To be emailed to participants prior to phone interview

A closet full of dresses: Intersections of femininity and sexuality among women in Panhellenic sororities

You are being asked to participate in a voluntary research study. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the process by which queer women in Panhellenic sororities negotiate gender. Participating in this study will involve a semi-structured phone interview about your experiences and your participation will last 60-90 minutes. To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life. Taking part in this research study may not benefit you personally, but we may learn new things that will help others.

Principal Investigator Name and Title: Brianna Anderson, Doctoral Student (Faculty Supervisor, Jennifer L. Hardesty, PhD)
Department and Institution: Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Contact Information: 847-648-6606; anders15@illinois.edu
Sponsor: Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors

What procedures are involved?
The study procedures are a review of the informed consent form and a semi-structured interview consisting of opened-ended questions about your experience. This research will be performed over the phone and audio recorded. The interview is expected to last approximately 60-90 minutes.

Will my study-related information be kept confidential?
Research staff with permission or authority to see your study information will maintain its confidentiality to the extent permitted and required by laws and university policies. The names or personal identifiers of participants will not be published or presented.

Will I be reimbursed for any expenses or paid for my participation in this research?
Participants will receive a $25 gift card as compensation for their time.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?
If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate, or to withdraw after beginning participation, will not affect your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The researchers also have the right to stop your participation in this study without your consent if they believe it is in your best interests.

Will data collected from me be used for any other research?
Your de-identified information could be used for future research without additional informed consent.

Who should I contact if I have questions?
If you have questions about this project, you may contact Brianna Anderson at 847-648-6606 or anders15@illinois.edu or Jennifer L. Hardesty (Faculty Supervisor) at hardesty@illinois.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact
the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 217-333-2670 or via email at irb@illinois.edu.

This form will be reviewed before the beginning of the interview. Please print this consent form if you would like to retain a copy for your records.
Appendix I: Interview Protocol
Adapted with permission from Gillan (2016)

Introduction
Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me. My name is Brianna Anderson and I am a doctoral student in Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Illinois. The purpose of this study is to learn more about your experiences with femininity in sorority life. These questions are going to be open-ended and I encourage you to just tell me about your experiences. There is no right or wrong answer and you can refuse to answer any question. Sorority members report a wide range of experiences and thoughts and I just want to learn about yours. I have an audio recorder here—is it okay with you if I continue to record the interview?

At this time, I want to review the Informed Consent form that I sent to you previously. This document states that your information will remain confidential, your participation is voluntary and you can stop at any time, and there is no risk beyond what you encounter in daily life expected from your participation in this study. The only times I would have to share information is if I am told about abuse or that you or someone else is so upset that they are thinking of hurting themselves or someone else. I won’t be asking you anything about those types of situations but it is important that I let you know of that responsibility. Before we being, I need to ask a few questions to obtain your verbal consent to participate. Have you received and read the informed consent form? [wait for participant to confirm; if participant does not confirm, conclude interview] Do you wish to participate in this study? [wait for participant to confirm; if participant does not confirm, conclude interview] Do you have any questions before we begin? [respond to any questions]

Background Information
Great. I’d like to first ask you some background information.
1. Tell me a little about yourself. [Probe for details about day-to-day experiences, current family structure, hobbies]
2. Where did you grow up? [Probe for details about moving, different houses, what the location was like, etc.]
3. Now, tell me a little about yourself as a college student. [Probe for details about major, clubs, overall satisfaction with college experience]

Sorority Experiences
Great, thank you for sharing that information. The next questions are about your experience while a member of a sorority.
4. First, I would like to hear a little about your experiences broadly. Can you describe your experience with your sorority? [Probe for satisfaction, involvement, friendships]
   a. Tell me about your participation in chapter events [Probe for details about recruitment, social events, philanthropy, sisterhood events, housing]
   b. Tell me about activities in which you like to participate
5. What was recruitment like for you? [Probe for details about formal/informal recruitment, information about perception of the process]
6. Have you lived in a chapter house or residence hall?
   a. If so, tell me about a typical day while you were living there. [Probe for details on sleeping arrangements, getting ready, interactions with other sorority members].
Femininity
Okay, you have given me a lot of really good information. Now I’d like to ask you about your perceptions of femininity.
7. What does it mean to be feminine? Do you consider yourself feminine?
   a. Can you tell me a little about your personal style?
   b. How did you develop your style of dress?
8. Members of sororities are sometimes referred to as “sorority girls” and sometimes “sorority women.”
   Is there a difference to you between girl and woman?
   a. What do these terms mean to you?
   b. Which do you prefer?
   c. Are they used differently in different contexts within sorority life?
      i. Are they used differently based on your other identities? [Probe for details about race, class, geographic location]
9. Next, I would like to hear about your perceptions of femininity in sororities. Is there a certain type of femininity valued by sororities?
10. In what ways do sororities teach or socialize their members about what it means to be feminine?
    a. In what particular ways are members expected to act?
    b. In what particular ways are members expected to dress?
    c. Tell me about a time you felt pressured to act, talk, or dress a certain way.
    d. What happens when someone doesn’t meet these expectations?
11. What are some of the stereotypes about sorority girls? [Probe for details about femininity, behaviors, beliefs]
    a. How do you see members of your sorority compared to this stereotype?
    b. How do you see yourself compared to this stereotype?
12. Tell me about the last time you went out with sorority sisters.
    a. What did you do to get ready to go out?
    b. Describe what you did while you were out.
13. Are there any feminine practices, such as a way of dressing or acting, within your sorority that are particularly meaningful to you?
    a. Are there any that you don’t care too much for?
14. How do you deal with other sorority members’ expectations of you?
    a. How do other sorority members’ expectations influence the way that you dress, the way you act, or the things you choose to say?

Sexuality
Great. As you know, I am also interested in understanding the experiences of queer women, so the next topic has more to do with your personal experience with your sexual identity. Remember, everything is confidential and you do not have to answer any questions you are not comfortable with. I understand that sexual identity is really complex and everyone has a different experience in figuring out who they are.
15. Can you tell me about your experience in figuring out your identity?
   a. How do you identify?
   b. When did you first realize that you were not straight?
16. How out are you in your sorority? [If participant has not told members of her sorority, skip this section.]
   a. What was it like talking to members of your sorority about your identity?
   b. What were some of the reactions? (probe for details about similarities and differences in what was expected and how people reacted)
   c. What was the hardest part about telling other sorority members?

17. How does your sexual identity play a role in your experience with sorority life?

18. How does your sexual identity play a role in other members’ expectations of you? (probe for details about dress, behavior, etc.)

**Relationships with Fraternities**

Thank you so much for sharing. I really appreciate your openness about your experience. For my next set of questions, I would like to ask a little more about relationships between fraternities and sororities.

19. Describe your experience with fraternity guys. [Probe for details about social events, parties, hanging out]

20. Tell me about the last time you went to a fraternity party.
   a. What did you do to get ready to go to the fraternity party?
   b. Describe what you did while you were at the fraternity party.

21. How would you describe the difference between fraternities and sororities?

22. How would you describe the similarities?

23. What are some of the stereotypes about fraternity guys? [Probe for details about masculinity, behaviors, beliefs]
   a. How do you see members of your sorority compared to this stereotype of fraternity guys?
   b. How would you respond if you saw another sorority member doing [insert stereotype]?
   c. How do you see yourself compared to this stereotype of fraternity guys?
   d. How would other sorority members respond if they saw you doing [insert stereotype]?

24. In what ways do fraternity members teach or socialize sorority members about what it means to be feminine?
   a. How do fraternity members expect sorority members to act?
   b. How do fraternity members expect sorority members to dress?
   c. What happens when someone doesn’t meet these expectations?

25. How do you deal with fraternity members’ expectations of you?
   a. How do fraternity members’ expectations influence the way that you dress, the way you act, or the things you choose to say?

**Conclusion**

This is really great information. I have just a few more questions for you.

26. What advice would you give to a new student interested in joining a sorority?
   a. What advice would you give to a new student interested in joining a sorority if you knew they identify as queer?

27. What has been the most rewarding aspect of being involved in a sorority?
28. When writing about this study, I will refer to you with a pseudonym instead of your real name. Is there one that you would like me to use for you?

Those are all the questions I have for you. I really learned a lot from our time together and I appreciate you taking the time to share your experiences. Is there something else you’d like me to know that I didn’t ask about? Do you have any questions for me? Thank you so much for taking the time to answer my questions. If I need any clarification or additional information, may I follow up with you? Also, if you have any questions for me, please feel free to contact me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Probes</th>
<th>Words of Encouragement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can you tell me more about that?</td>
<td>That is interesting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you give me an example?</td>
<td>That makes sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was that like?</td>
<td>You’re giving me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helpful information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J: National Resource List

U.S. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273-8255
- The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals.

Crisis Text Line (U.S.): Text “HOME” to 741741
- Crisis Text Line is free, 24/7 support for those in crisis. Text 741741 from anywhere in the US to text with a trained Crisis Counselor. Crisis Text Line trains volunteers to support people in crisis

Crisis Text Line (Canada): Text “HOME” to 686868
- Crisis Text Line is free, 24/7 support for those in crisis, connecting people in crisis to trained Crisis Responders.

TrevorLifeline (U.S.): (866) 488-7386
- Trained counselors are here to support you 24/7. If you are in crisis, feeling suicidal, or in need of a safe and judgment-free place to talk, call the TrevorLifeline now.

TrevorText (U.S.): Text “START” to 678678
- TrevorText is a confidential and secure resource that provides live help for LGBTQ people with a trained specialist, over text messages.

TrevorSpace (anywhere): Join online at https://www.trevorspace.org/register/
- TrevorSpace is a social networking site for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer & questioning (LGBTQ) people under 25 and their friends and allies.