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# Being Bromo in a Heterosexual Dominated Culture: A Qualitative Approach

Nathan J. Wehr

*Eastern Illinois University*

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Being Bromo in a Heterosexual Dominated Culture:

A Qualitative Approach

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BY

Nathan J. Wehr

**THESIS**

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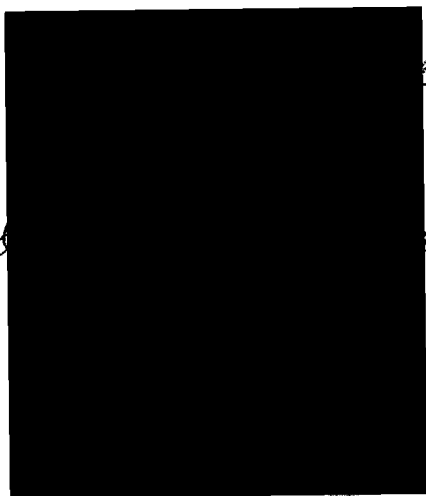
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IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
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Running Head: BEING BROMO IN A HETEROSEXUAL DOMINATED CULTURE

Being Bromo in a Heterosexual Dominated Culture: A Qualitative Approach

Graduate Thesis

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## ABSTRACT

Homosexual males want to be a part of a social fraternity for the same reasons heterosexual males want to join a social fraternity, however, homosexual males going through recruitment could soon be welcomed into an environment that is not supportive of homosexual males. Studies have proven that unwelcoming and unsupportive environments can hinder identity development of males who are either homosexual, questioning their sexual identity, or bisexual (Long, 2011). This study was designed to focus on the support fraternities have for homosexual members joining fraternities and the level of support as a fraternity community. Using a qualitative approach, the researcher interviewed four men who varied in sexual orientation, experiences within a social fraternity, and analyzed the data for common themes and trends. The participants represented two homosexual males and two heterosexual males who are members of a social fraternity and held leadership roles within their social fraternity and the wider campus community. Results varied in the support for homosexual males in a social fraternity at a mid-sized, Mid-Western university. Participants expressed that homophobic terminology is frequently used within the social fraternity setting, expressed their concerns concerning chapter reputation and being labeled the “gay fraternity,” and a social adjustment function (Aber, 2010; Hall & France, 2007) impacted a majority of social fraternity members and their support of homosexual members. However, three of the four participants expressed that their social fraternity would be open to homosexual diversity programming.

Key words: bromo, social fraternity, homophobic, identity, sexual orientation

### Dedication

For those who know me, know that I am not an emotional individual and a man of few words, so please do not expect a full long eulogy within this thesis. When it comes to expressing emotions I am usually lost for words, unless it is something I am defending and for which I feel truly passionate. With the last statement being made I want to take a moment and thank those who challenged and supported me throughout my graduate school and thesis journey. Here is to you:

- ☐ The Wehr Family
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- ☐ Mr. David Stetter
- ☐ Phi-Xi Zeta, Lambda Chi Alpha, University of Southern Indiana
- ☐ Marshall Cody Williams
- ☐ Andy Cox
- ☐ Ceci Brinker
- ☐ Class of 2015 College Student Affairs Cohort

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

If a man is not open about his sexuality as member of a college fraternity, where being gay is grounds for isolation, he has two immediate options. He can stay closeted about his sexuality and constantly be on guard to monitor his behavior lest he be exposed, or two, he can be fully open about his sexuality and accept the approval or disapproval of other members. Depending on the level of approval he receives, he can continue as an active member or be isolated and ultimately resign from the group (Ashworth, 2010). Young males in an all-male setting frequently use the term, “*gay*,” as a pejorative word to state that something is dumb, not worthwhile, not strong, and / or womanly (Hall & France, 2012). Other pejorative terms such as “*queer*,” “*faggot*,” and “*fag*,” are similarly used by young males in the presence of their male peers (Coates, 2003; Plummer, 2001; Spitzack, 1998). These terms are directly linked to homosexuality, including, the expression of negative attitudes about non-masculine males, objects, and situations. Research based on observations of homophobic behavior in social fraternities indicates the use of homophobic language as a purpose of male’s sexual prejudice made clear by men’s hetero-identity concerns (Hall & France, 2012).

The issue of homosexuals as members of a college social fraternity is not new (Aber, 2010, Ashworth, 2010; Bossart, 1998; Case, Hesp, & Eberly, 2005; Cohen & Sherrill, 1993; Collins, 2011; DeQuine, 2003; Dilley, 2006; Dodge, 1991; Hall, 2002; Long, 2011; Reisberg, 1998; Syrett, 2009; Trump & Wallace, 2006; Vary, 2004; Welter, 2012; & Yeung, Stomler, & Wharton, 2006). Homosexual students want to join a social fraternity for the friendship and to be a part of a group who can offer support during their

college years; however, many homosexual students enter a negative environment when they pledge (Long, 2011). A negative and unfriendly setting can push back the identity development of gay, bisexual, and questioning (GBQ) students (Long, 2011). A negative environment can lead to a bad self-image and push those students to not come-out as being homosexual (Aber, 2010; Case, Hesp, & Eberly, 2005; Hall & France, 2007; Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Long, 2011; Rhoads, 1995; Stevens, 2004; and Trump & Wallace, 2006). Mr. Hammer, a participant in Reisberg's 2008 study, said he was confused about his sexuality when he pledged the fraternity, and joined the Greek system "to be normal," but says he still feels like an outcast. "If I had to do it all over again, I would never would have pledged, it pushed me further into the closet before I came out" (p. 6).

One possible explanation behind Hammer's comment is the conception of hegemonic masculinity which emphasizes the theory of opposition in masculinity within a dual male identity spectrum. One can theorize that at one end of the spectrum is the hyper-masculine individual who has muscles, sex appeal, and social status, while on the opposing end of the spectrum is an individual that is skinny and not socially able to connect to society (Jenkins, 2012). Creation of masculinity in fraternities is based off of the institutionalized gender roles created by the wider society. Hyper-masculinity is an ideology that enhances the rule that a man should be prejudiced against homosexuality, thinks in a patriarchal manner, and actively objectifies women (Jenkins, 2012).

Social adjustment function indicates that people in a group will go with ideas or status of members that go with the identity and objectives of that group (Aber, 2010; Hall & France, 2007). The social adjustment function is the foundation for members in a

social fraternity concerning attitudes about homosexuality. When a member succumbs to the idea or status, the member acquires support in taking on the position and changes his or her own ideals to fit with those of his organization. Social adjustment function happens when the said group is ranked high in priorities and important to the member. The members want to keep safe and uphold solid male-male relationships in the idea of brotherhood, aid in recruiting new members, and keep a positive social scene with sororities (Hall & France, 2007).

### **Purpose of the Study**

In this study, a select group of social fraternity members at a Mid-size, mid-western university will be interviewed about their acceptance and support of homosexual individuals as members within their chapter and the overall fraternity community.

### **Research Questions**

To further understand homosexuality within a heterosexual dominated culture, this study will focus on the level of support fraternities have for homosexual members joining fraternities and the general level of support as a fraternity community. The fraternity and sorority community has seen an increase in the creation of homosexual fraternal organizations on university campuses (Cohen & Sherrill, 1993, DeQuine, 2003, Dodge, 1991, Hauswirth, 2005, & Welter, 2012). This increase has been attributed to the non-acceptance of potential new members who identify as LGBTQ (Welter, 2012) within existing college fraternal groups. The role of being heterosexual, homophobic atmosphere, bias, and not accepting students who have different sexual orientations that happens in a social fraternity is scary for any potential new member, especially, when

one's sexual orientation is not the norm of society (Welter, 2012). The proposed study seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1.) How does the fraternity community support homosexual individuals?
- 2.) What are the factors that influence support or nonsupport for homosexual individuals?

These research questions aim to further understand the level of support fraternities have for homosexual members and level of support as a community.

### **Significance of the Study**

By further understanding the role that individual fraternity chapters play in supporting and accepting homosexual individuals within their fraternal community, student affairs professionals can develop programs targeting and addressing the issues of accepting diversity within the fraternal community. Having students who are gay in a social fraternity or sorority on a college campus can make a difference in the acceptance of students who identify their sexuality differently than those who are heterosexual. Potential new members join fraternities and sororities to meet new people, become involved, and connect to the social fraternity social scene on a university campus. Involvement could have an effect on being seen as more sociable and increase the individual's social status, but for some it is just an organization that provides activities and programs that are based on tradition, brotherhood and sisterhood, and community mixing (Welter, 2012).

**Research Participants**

For this study, the framework and population that will be studied is the fraternity community and homosexual and heterosexual individuals that have membership within a social fraternity. The goal of this research is to provide information to further the understanding of how open social fraternities are to accepting homosexual members. Another goal is to understand how supportive social fraternities on a mid-size, Midwestern campus is to homosexual individuals joining the community and the subsequent acceptance of those individuals. First, the study will investigate how supportive the social fraternities on campus are to accepting homosexual individuals. Second, the study will investigate the factors that influence support or nonsupport for homosexual individuals.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study carried out qualitative research at a midsize, Midwestern university in which interviews were conducted with students. There is a risk that the researcher will not receive enough participation in the interviews to provide adequate results. The goal was to survey three homosexual individuals and three heterosexual individuals that are members in Interfraternity Council social fraternities at the research site.

Another limitation that affected the research is that the research takes place at midsized, Midwestern University and will not be a full representation of how each fraternity community is supportive of homosexual individuals within their social fraternities.

A third limitation was the researcher's involvement in fraternity and sorority life. The researcher experienced fraternity life as a member of a fraternity at a midsize,

Midwestern university. The study analyzed fraternity and sorority life at a midsize, Midwestern university in which the campus culture is not the same from the researcher's previous experience.

A fourth limitation is bias on the subject and rapport with the researcher. Participants may have shared what they believed was the appropriate answer related to issues concerning hazing and sexuality.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following is a list of definitions of terms and concepts important to understanding the present study:

**Bromo.** Bromo's are individuals that are homosexual, but are not flamboyant.

They prefer to drink at a friend's house rather, than go to a gay bar. Not conceited in their looks, but properly attired and groomed. Bromo derives from combining the words "homo" and "brother." (Retrieved from [www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com))

**Brotherhood.** Brotherhood is a group or organization of people who have the same interests, jobs, etc. Feelings of friendship, support, and understanding between people (Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/brotherhood>).

**Closeted.** A state in which someone will not talk about something or admit something specifically in concerning being a homosexual. (Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/closet>).

**Dirty Rush.** In the context of this study, dirty rush is considered when another fraternity talks negatively about another fraternity to a potential new member during recruitment.

**Fraternity.** A fraternity is a group of people associated or formally organized for a purpose, interest, or pleasure. A fraternity is a men's student organization formed specifically for social purposes having secret rites and a name consisting of Greek letters. (Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fraternity>).

**Heterosexual.** An individual who is sexually attracted to the opposite sex. Intercourse between individuals of the opposite sex. (Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heterosexual>)

**Homosexual.** Homosexual is an individual that is capable of feeling attracted to those of the same gender. In a male situation, an individual may also be referred to as gay (Sykes, 1985).

**Homophobic.** Irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality or homosexuals. (Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/homophobia>)

**Hyper masculinity.** Hyper masculinity represents an extreme form of adherence to the masculine gender role and encompasses calloused sexual attitudes towards women and beliefs that danger is exciting and violence is manly. (Reidy, Shirk, Sloan, & Zeichner, 2009, p.1).

**Identity.** Identity is the link connecting a person to the social and interpersonal world. A change in sexual orientation identity can lead to changes in individual's relationships with others (Rust, 1996). A person's identity is in constant change as a person reflects on the exchange of information about his/her own behavior and the feedback they receive from others. This means that an identity can

change with an individual depending on situation or timing of situation (Eliason, 1996).

**LGBQT.** LGBQT is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Questioning, and Transgender individuals.

**Members.** A member is an individual that is associated with a group or organization. (Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/member>).

**Potential New Member.** A potential new member is a person who is interested in joining a social fraternity or sorority, and will participate in rush, intake, and recruitment. Abbreviated to PNM. (Retrieved from <http://www.greeks.psu.edu/abc.htm>)

**Sexual Orientation.** Sexual orientation is an individual's inborn, innate predisposition to amorous or erotic desires, fantasies, and feelings (Eliason, 1996). A person's sexual orientation is most often classified by the gender(s) one is oriented towards. Sexual orientation is not the same as sexual preference since preference suggests a degree of voluntary choice that is not necessarily reported by lesbians and gay men and that has not been demonstrated in psychological research. Sexual behavior is another separate term that refers to the physical interaction that occurs regardless of sexual orientation (American Psychological Association, 2003).

**Socialization.** Socialization is the adoption of the behavior patterns of the surrounding culture. (Retrieved from <http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/socialization>)

**Summary**

To further understand the acceptance of homosexuality within fraternity life, this study will explore how accepting social fraternities are along with how accepting the community is to homosexual individuals. Fraternities tend to have a negative response towards homosexual males wanting to join (Long, 2011). Fraternities may turn away a potential new member (PNM) if members of the chapter believe the individual acts too feminine, maybe gay, and not athletic; avoid confrontation, or dresses gay. Fraternities are worried that a gay member could affect the social status of the chapter on campus if the chapter is labeled the “gay” fraternity (Long, 2011; Reisberg, 1998; Sullivan, 2010). When members become really worried about their heterosexuality they start becoming more negative toward their opinions on homosexuality; which results in membership of a fraternity partially limited to hyper-masculine men (Long, 2011). This topic is important because it may provide results that could help the fraternity community provide programs to become more diverse and accepting of homosexual individuals into the community. It is important to gain knowledge to better understand the minority of homosexual individuals and how they perceive the fraternity community in 2014.

Chapter 1 presented an overview of the study. Chapter 1 presented the purpose of the study, research questions, hypotheses, significance of the study, limitations of the study, and definitions of terms. Chapter 2 will present a detailed review of the relevant literature on homosexual membership in fraternities, as well as the theoretical conceptual framework that will guide the present study.

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of Literature**

This literature review will explore the history of social fraternities, reasons for joining social fraternities, visibility of the LGBTQ population within the college fraternity, identity development of male homosexuals in college, and social adjustment of members within social fraternities. The overall purpose is to understand how supportive social fraternity members are of homosexual individuals within their organizations and the factors that offer support or nonsupport for homosexual individuals within social fraternities.

#### **Social Fraternities**

During the 1800's, Americans who were supporters of fraternalism went against their European founders and created independent Odd Fellows, Masons, Elks, Knights of Pythias, and other fraternal orders. Nearing the end of the nineteenth century, there were an estimated 350 fraternal orders that had members totaling more than 6 million members, which represented more than a third of the nation's adult men (Trotter, 2004). Five students in the senior class at Union College in Schenectady, New York met on November 25, 1825 to form a secret society. All five of the students were members of a military company at Union, which had recently been dissolved; thus the students decided to form a secret society based on literary and social needs. The student met, conducted a formal initiation, and named their society Kappa Alpha Society, and thus begins the history of college fraternities in the United States (Syrett, 2009). The fraternal orders started rituals of brotherhood, created gender and class identifications, and helped

members through the hard times of unemployment, health, deaths, and widow's funds (Trotter, 2004).

Halfway through the nineteenth century, the increase of college fraternities became an integral staple in a student's experience during college (Syrett, 2009). Students on college campuses created social Greek organizations to create an atmosphere for a social alternative, which provided a release from academic requirements of attending a university. Social fraternities gave individuals the opportunity to network with other peers and release from everyday stress (Garrett, 2002). Fraternities met many needs for the men who became a part of them. Fraternities allowed members to create rebellion against the controlling faculty. "Secret societies" or "fraternities" helped members create independence and autonomy that was rarely awarded to them. This independence allowed males to express their manliness. Being a member of a fraternity created a break from the daily rituals of the college lifestyle, which at the time was filled with prayer, recitation, and study. Fraternities provided an escape from the everyday routine and the lifestyle of college. Fraternities and social clubs were created to satisfy an emotional and social void. The fraternal community provided a major part in a student's experience when attending college. Through brotherhood members developed strong bonds with fellow members and established a sense of belonging within the fraternity and campus community. Since that time social fraternities have engaged in rich traditions and loyalty, with individuals taking major pride in their fraternity (Garrett, 2002).

**Reasons for Joining Social Fraternities**

Men joined social fraternities to be among like-minded individuals, and gay and bisexual men have joined fraternities to develop friendships with like-minded individuals (Vary, 2004). Gay men have not desired to join social fraternities to find a date or romantic partner; they have joined fraternities for the same reasons any heterosexual male does; friends, development of leadership skills, the social aspect, and to be a part of an organization (Bossart, 1998). Case, Hesp, and Eberly (2005) conducted a quantitative study of 524 participants that identified as gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) fraternity and sorority members on their reasons for joining. Both males and females listed three reasons for wanting to join social fraternities, which were friendship/camaraderie, social life, parties, having fun, and support group/sense of belonging. Males reported leadership as a fourth reason to join. Only 3% of males indicated they wanted to join to find partners of the same sex (Case, Hesp, & Eberly). As men entered the fraternity recruitment process, they were defined by their social identity rather than other characteristics (Vary, 2004).

**Visibility of Homosexuals in Social Fraternities**

Researchers have noted the small amount of gay students in social fraternities have affected stereotypes of the Fraternity/Sorority community (Aber, 2010, Case, Hesp, & Eberly, 2005, Collins, 2011, DeQuine, 2003, & Lipka, 2011). Homosexual students indicated they did not feel safe coming out to their brothers and because of that, many did not open up about their sexuality (Aber, 2010). As a result, other students on campus did not realize that there were gay students in the fraternity and sorority community. Gay individuals, who were members of a fraternity that were openly gay, or only openly gay

to a few members in the fraternity, shared their experiences of being gay in a fraternity. Additionally, they shared their experiences to potential new members that were thinking about going through recruitment, who may think that they needed to modify aspects of their identity. There was not a huge support for LGBT individuals in a fraternity community. Just having students who do not feel safe coming out to their house shows that programs, such as ally training, which is training that provides volunteers the resources to be an ally for the LGBT community, were needed to provide a sense of safety (Aber, 2010). Even though the population of homosexual students in fraternities has grown, the responsibility of educating an entire university community that does not have enough proper resources on gay issues to provide a supportive environment has fallen on students attending the institution (Lipka, 2011). Case, Hesp, and Eberly (2005) conducted a quantitative study that researched the visibility of GLB students in social fraternities and sororities. Results showed that visibility was hard to determine because students were still developing their sexual identities while attending college and most students had not stated their sexual identity to fellow members of their fraternity or sorority. Males reported their knowledge of gay or bisexual members in their chapter was up to an average of 3.5 per chapter (4.5 if the male included themselves). The average chapter size recorded was 52 among students who took the survey. The researchers stated that it was possible that the average male taking the survey interacted with 70-90 different fraternity members during college, assuming that they were an active member for 2.5 years. Students taking the survey knew 5-6% of their membership was homosexual. Many of the individuals who completed the survey did come out while being in college and did not state their sexual orientation to any members of their

fraternity. About 75% of the males indicated no member of their fraternity knew of their sexual identity. The visibility of homosexual individuals in a social fraternity impacts the understanding of social fraternities and their support for homosexual individuals.

Universities have become more supportive of homosexual and lesbian organizations on campus (Lipka, 2011 & Reisberg, 1998). However, gay and lesbian individuals have yet to become completely welcomed within the fraternity community; Shane Windmeyer, co-editor of *Out on Fraternity Row*, suggested that only 10% of males in social fraternities were homosexual, but many stay closeted because of the fear of retaliations from heterosexual members with whom they shared common quarters. As more and more young males come out with their sexual identity in high school, they have assumed universities have a social climate that will align with their sexual identity (DeQuine, 2003). There were approximately 24 chapters of gay IFC social fraternities around the country at the time Windmeyer's book was published. Windmeyer discussed that having homosexuals join the Greek system could be a great solution in fighting against homophobia (DeQuine, 2003). The research indicates homosexual individuals that are not comfortable in their identity when coming to college have a difficult time assimilating to the campus environment.

### **Identity Development in College**

Known mostly as homosexual identity formation, resocialization, sexual identity development, and identity acquisition, the topic has been defined, first, as the process which individuals identify themselves as homosexual; meaning individuals take on the self-image of homosexual (Cass, 1984). Secondly, homosexual individuals transition from a homosexual self-image into a full homosexual identity due to interaction within

society. Thirdly, the approaches used by homosexual individuals to cope with daily life are affective, cognitive, and behavioral. Lastly, homosexual identity formation is the way a new identity becomes assimilated into an individual's overall sense of self during the process (Cass, 1984). For some gay men, their sexual identity development has occurred simultaneously and in conjunction with race, gender, and religious identity development (Stevens, 2004). However, current sexual orientation models have not readily addressed religious, cultural, ethnic, or racial dimensions as they relate to the development of a gay identity (Stevens). Rhoads (1994) suggested that the perceived freedom of choice in college, the diminished constraints of high school norms, and the visibility of gay social networks provided environments in which these men were more comfortable exploring and disclosing gay or bisexual identities. Within Rhoads' research, the method of exploring identity and approval differed with each participant, but pronounced supportive situations created ease in the assimilation of their sexual orientation within the university atmosphere. The research also discovered that assimilation happened during many stages within the university atmosphere and for a few of the participants being "okay" with their sexual orientation spread through sub-settings in the university atmosphere, such as classrooms, residence halls, and eating places (Stevens, 2004). Sexual identity during an individual's time in college impacts the way an individual develops and how comfortable students are in showing their sexual identity within different groups.

### **Gender Identity Development**

Male development of gender identity has been explained as a system of participating in today's society with high expectations, placing a mask on to assimilate to those expectations, sporting the mask, and experiencing conflicting expectations of when

to start taking off the mask (Edwards & Jones, 2009). Participants in this study explained their “male” identity as socially constructed. Men who feel oppressed believed they are not a man because of racism, classism, or homophobia they encountered and wore their mask to reclaim their heterosexual stance. Males were unhappy about society’s expectations and tried to modify these expectations. Males have tried to design their own rules and expectations of what it means to be a heterosexual male in society. Participants never stated being a heterosexual male was determined by biological, hormonal, or phenotypically spirit; however, participants explained it as public actions that included feelings, thoughts, and actions. Participants also expressed that society’s development of gender in what it means to be a male changed over a period of time and includes racial, socioeconomic, and sexual identity contexts (Edwards & Jones, 2009).

### **Sexual Identity Development**

Homosexual identity is an example of typological identity. Typological identities were created out of mixture of a person’s own perception of self in conjunction with the views of how others see them, where one views himself as homosexual and reflects cognitively with images of sexual preference believed to be held by others. When both images align together, identity is fully formed (Cass, 1984). The information concerning development of homosexual identity was consistent with research suggesting that a major percentage of gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals go through stages from being aware through the execution of assimilated homosexual orientation (Erikson, 1968). Erikson (1968) stated that identity grows through the communication between a person and their collective relationships. Erikson noticed that society and culture have impacted how individuals think about defining themselves. As a result, membership in a social fraternity

has a huge place in the development of GLB students who chose to join a social fraternity (Erikson, 1968).

### **Vivienne Cass's Model of Sexual Orientation Identity Formation**

The model created by Cass has been the most widely known model for homosexual identity development and states that the surroundings of an individual had a great impact on the process of coming out. Process in realizing homosexual identity was based off of identity change, in which a formerly held idea of sexual orientation was swapped with a homosexual image. The previous image was more than likely that of a heterosexual image (Cass, 1984). Developmental processes marked by changes, growth, stages, and certain experiences shaped creating of an identity. The overall process was characterized, firstly, by acceptance of homosexuality; secondly, positive attitude of homosexuality and self; thirdly, desire to share new identity to other homosexuals and heterosexuals; and fourthly, increased contact with homosexuals (Cass, 1984). Cass's model differed from other models in rejecting the assumption that individuals think that being homosexual was a negative image. In each stage, numerous tracks of development were projected. Other models were for either male or female, but the homosexual identity development model was for both genders. Cass's model was described by using six stages of development, or points of growth along the developmental spectrum. Stages can be described by experiences that were present and by the individuals/importance given to the experiences (Cass, 1984). Stage 1: *Identity Confusion*, individuals think their behaviors or actions could be described as homosexual. Individual will either consider the homosexual identity or reject the identity entirely, which closes any further development (Cass, 1984; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). Stage 2: *Identity*

*Comparison*, with the individual accepting the potential idea of a homosexual identity, the individual is then faced with feelings of division between self and heterosexuals. If individual does not foreclose their sexual orientation, individual may contemplate making contacts with homosexuals to loosen the feeling of being alienated (Cass, 1984; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). Stage 3: *Identity Tolerance*, with increasing commitment of being a homosexual, the individual searches for other homosexuals to fulfill social, sexual, and emotional needs. Quality of contact with other homosexuals becomes a significant factor that leads to different practices of behavior, depending if the contact is seen as positive or negative. Telling heterosexuals of sexual identity is very limited. (Cass, 1984; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). Stage 4: *Identity Acceptance*, increased contact with the homosexual culture encourages the individual with a more positive view of homosexuality and increase in homosexual contacts. Disclosure to other individuals becomes more selective, particular to friends and family. (Cass, 1984; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). Stage 5: *Identity Pride*, individual takes more pride in homosexual identity and becomes more loyal to the homosexual culture. The individual also engages with heterosexuals to explain the validity and equality of homosexuals (Cass, 1984; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). Stage 6: *Identity Synthesis*, positive interactions with heterosexuals help to create mindfulness of stiffness and incorrectness of dividing the world into good homosexuals and bad heterosexuals. Individuals see themselves as people having many sides to their character, with only one part related to homosexuality. Having this type of bond gives rise to feelings of peace and stability, and with this process identity formation is completed (Cass, 1984; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010).

### **D'Augelli's Model of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Development**

D'Augelli introduced a model that extends across life that includes gay, lesbian, and bisexual identity development. The model is based on the impression that identity is a “social construction” that is molded by varying degrees by social circumstances, environment, and can be changed throughout one’s life (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). D'Augelli stated that the social hiddenness of sexual orientation and the social and legal drawbacks associated with same-sex sexual design represents two exclusive and influential obstacles to self-definition as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Oppression by society can cause an individual to have feelings of panic, anxiety, and denial when the individual firsts discovers thoughts and longings representing same-sex temptation (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). This model takes into consideration the complicated factors that sway the growth of people in context over ancient times. Three variables that are related in identity formation are personal actions and subjective, interactive intimacies, and sociohistorical connections (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010).

Personal subjectivities and actions are actions that include how individuals perceive and feel about their sexual identity, including sexual behaviors and the meanings that are attached to those behaviors. Interactive intimacies are influences that family, friends, and intimate partnerships have on an individual. It also includes the meanings attached to the experiences with an individual’s significant other. Sociohistorical connections are the social norms, policies, and laws that are found in geographical locations and cultures, as well as the values existing during particular historical periods. Students today have more of an opportunity to live in a society that is more accepting of

sexual orientation than did students of the early twentieth century (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010).

D'Augelli viewed sexual orientation development as a life-long process and that changes occur over time depending on attitudes, feelings, and behaviors. Developmental plasticity is an idea that is related to human responsiveness to changes in the environment and biological changes. This concept is important to D'Augelli's model. It's important because at certain times sexual identity can be unsolidified, and at other times sexual identity can be more solidified. Three factors at different life stages that influence development are hormonal changes, social circumstances, and peer relationships (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010).

D'Augelli appropriated from the life span viewpoint that the developmental pathway for each individual is different from the other. D'Augelli believed there are more similarities in sexual self-definition in certain periods of life. These periods of life include late adulthood, in certain family dynamics, for example, those that do not value difference; certain communities, for example, those that are highly homogeneous; and certain historical periods, for example the 1950s (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). Difference increases in late adolescence and adulthood as individuals become engaged with different models of behaviors and choices about how to live their own life. D'Augelli believes that individuals have a great impact on their own development. Individuals not only react to social situations, individuals make a choice and then take action. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals shape their own identity since heterosexual society provides very small or no socialization for individuals to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). Process 1: *Exiting heterosexual*

*identity*, individuals recognize that their feelings and attractions are not heterosexual and begin telling others they are lesbian, gay, or bisexual (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). Process 2: *Developing personal LGB identity status*, where an individual determines the meaning of being gay, lesbian, or bisexual will have in their life. It is important that individuals develop a personal identity that must be in connection with others who agree with what it means to be homosexual (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). Process 3: *Developing lesbian, gay, and bisexual social identity*, this stage of the process entails forming a support network of people who know and accept an individual's sexual orientation. People's reactions to an individual's sexual orientation can change over time, such as if an individual is involved in a relationship (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). Process 4: *Becoming a lesbian, gay, or bisexual offspring*, means coming out to one's parents and redefining the relationship after coming out. This process is a hard development in that college students that are homosexual are afraid to come out to their parents because of financial and emotional support during college. LGB students struggle with being themselves in their home environment so as to not risk losing their parent's love and acceptance (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). Process 5: *Developing lesbian, gay, or bisexual intimacy status*, this process is difficult because it is harder for LGB individuals to engage in a relationship because of the visibility of LGBTQ couples in society. The lack of cultural norms in relation to LGB individuals leads to ambiguity and hesitation, however it forces the development of personal, couple specific, and community norms, which can be adapted to each individual's thoughts (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010). Process 6: *Entering a lesbian, gay, or bisexual community*, this process involves making commitments to

social and political action in relation to the LGBTQA community. Some individuals never reach this step in the process, whereas other individuals engage at great risk, meaning they could lose their job or even housing (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010).

Sexual identity development theories relate to the study in that it allows for understanding of where individuals are in their homosexual identity formation. Each individual may be at different places when they join a social fraternity. The theories give a better depth of understanding how to effectively work with an individual that is in the process of forming their sexual identity.

### **Social Adjustment Function in Relation to Fraternities**

The social adjustment function (SAF) indicated that individuals in a group accept approaches that were in line with the identity and objectives of the group (Hall & France, 2007, Aber, 2010). Individual attitudes were important because they created relationships with others who are alike or advertised rejection of people who were different from them. This sponsored the foundation for the social adjustment function (Aber, 2010; Hall & France, 2007). Approaches driven by the social adjustment function gave individuals the right to feel privileged in receiving social acknowledgement and a sense of belonging (Hall & France, 2007). Members in a social fraternity defined brotherhood as upholding a great fraternal experience, and members bragged that cohesive brotherhood through involvement in certain behaviors, maintaining relationships with other members, and having a contribution to achieving the goals of the group (Hall & France, 2007). The “culture of dude (Aber, 2010, pg. 5)” led to the opinion that a fraternity system on a campus was against homosexual individuals. Most individuals in the IFC have not

accepted homosexual individuals, and when you look at the global view of the fraternity and sorority community members change their view on LGBT people. Gabe Javier, Assistant Director of the Spectrum Center, said,

“I would imagine that people in fraternities and sororities feel that they individually would be really affirming or supportive of an LGBT friend or person, but as they got further out from themselves, so perhaps a small group or their chapter, or the Greek system in general, they might feel like it is less affirming (Aber, 2010, pg. 5).

Once a new chapter has been established, winning awards after awards, women have stated the new chapter to be their new favorite. Heterosexual males in the social fraternity created an atmosphere of fear in that they could become known as the “gay fraternity” because gay members were founders for the chapter (Sullivan, 2010). The heterosexual males fought for recruitment activities to strongly resemble heterosexual activities for example. The new and successful social fraternity that had great accomplishments because of the contributions of homosexual brothers at its beginnings started to see an increase of homophobia as heterosexual members tried to remove the perceived “gay” label. As a result, the social fraternity became an uncomfortable environment for a homosexual member of that social fraternity. Wil Forrest, a Pi Kappa Phi brother that graduated from college in the 1990s, wrote about how he came out to a fraternity brother by exploding from a closet (Reisberg, 1998). To Wil’s astonishment, not one of his fraternity brothers cared about his big news. Wil stated that he felt bad about his judgment of his brothers as fraternity members who were not accepting of his

sexual orientation. Instead they were heterosexual males that saw past his sexual orientation and viewed him as a friend and brother. Even social fraternities that were really open to the idea of having homosexual members had anxiety in possibly being labeled the “gay fraternity” and worried that it could hurt the recruitment of potential new members (Reisberg, 1998). Social adjustment function is related to the idea of groupthink (Aber, 2010; Hall & France, 2007). This concept is relevant because individuals can state they are supportive of a homosexual individual; however, when they are around other members or another organization, whose viewpoints are opposite of theirs, they tend to side with the group instead of maintaining their own beliefs and values.

### **Summary**

Chapter 2 presented a thoughtful review of the literature found during research. Chapter 2 presented the background on social fraternities in relation to the role of a fraternity and visibility of homosexual individuals in social fraternities, identity development in college, and the social adjustment function. Chapter 3 will present a detailed explanation of the methodology that will be used to investigate and conduct the study.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Methodology**

This chapter outlines the methodology of the study exploring the experiences of homosexuality and acceptance within the social fraternity at an undergraduate institution in the Midwest. This study utilized a qualitative approach. The design of the study was phenomenology with qualitative interviews being conducted.

#### **Design of the Study**

A qualitative approach was utilized to collect experiences pertaining to homosexuality and support for homosexual members in fraternities. A phenomenological study, where a researcher studies individual responses to particular phenomena and looks to identify common themes among individual perceptions, was utilized in this study (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). Interviews were conducted with four male college students that were members of a social fraternity at a midsized, Midwestern University. To prevent the researcher's personal bias from intruding on the outcome of the study, a committee and thesis advisor reviewed the data once the interviews were conducted and transcribed. The interview process assessed the support of homosexual individuals as members in a social fraternity. Six themes emerged throughout the interviews, beliefs about fraternity membership and what it means to be a member, chapter culture, and membership and recruitment, homosexual identity, personal experiences, and what the future holds for homosexual males in social fraternities.

#### **Research Site**

For this study four undergraduate males were interviewed at a public, predominantly White, mid-size, Midwestern university. The average enrollment is 8,913

undergraduate students. This study focused on Interfraternity Council social fraternities. There are currently 12 Interfraternity Council fraternities, which comprise 22% of the male campus male population. Interviews were conducted in a closed room on-campus. Locations were chosen to make the interviewee feel comfortable and open to speak freely. After interviews were conducted the interviews were transcribed and returned to the interviewee to member check for accuracy (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012).

### **Participants**

Participants who identified as a homosexual or a heterosexual male, and a member of a social fraternity were interviewed. The four males were members for at least two academic semesters and each held a leadership position within their fraternity. The researcher interviewed two participants who identified as homosexual and two who identified as heterosexual, to ensure a representation of the fraternity community and culture. The current male population of those who identify as a member of a social fraternity, both Interfraternity Council and National Pan-Hellenic Council, was 627. Interview participants were contacted by snowball sampling through suggestions from campus administrators, advisors, and fellow peers (Creswell, 2009). Interview participants were each given a pseudonym to protect their personal identity.

**Participant 1 (Adam):** Adam was a 22-year-old White male that is a fifth year senior and was a member for eight semesters within his social fraternity. Within his chapter, he has held the role of New Member Educator, Recruitment Chair, and captain for multiple Greek Week and Homecoming events. Outside of his fraternity he was involved as Philanthropy Chair for Interfraternity Council, Student Government Representative for Interfraternity Council, University Development and Recycling Chairman for Student

Government, Night Assistant Supervisor, and Debut Leader. He has lived in his chapter house and identifies as a heterosexual male. Adam's fraternity indicates that the definition of diversity encompasses race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin and political beliefs. When asked why he joined his social fraternity Adam replied:

I was pretty anti-Greek going into college, however, a great deal of family on my father's side is Greek. They used to tell me stories of hazing and I was not a fan of Greek life. However, when going through orientation my Debut Leader was in a fraternity and from there I decided I needed to get involved. Going through recruitment I met two fraternities that I really liked and felt really welcomed and were not the stereotypical frat. They actually wanted me for me and not what I could contribute to the fraternity.

**Participant 2 (Cody):** Cody was a 21-year-old White male that is a senior and in his seventh semester within his fraternity. Within the chapter, he has held the role of Secretary, Chairman for Standards, and Executive-At-Large for Executive Committee, and Internal Vice President. Outside of his fraternity he was involved in Steering Committee for Greek Week, Treasurer for Steering Committee for Greek Week, and currently Chairman of Steering Committee for Greek Week. He has lived in his chapter house for a year and a half and currently lives off-campus. Cody's fraternity has a statement regarding discrimination in that selection on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or disability has no place within the fraternity.

He identifies as a heterosexual male. When asked why he joined his social fraternity

Cody replied:

The reason I joined just any fraternity is that I hated being a part of something and not using all the resources that are available. I have to be a part of something more than just the general population. I joined my fraternity in that I was on [the institution] website looking up social fraternities and I was a senior in high school and I narrowed it down to two fraternities. I looked at member profiles for both of them and a kid from my high school was going to be a senior in the fraternity that I am currently a member of and I called him. He got me to meet a couple of the guys and I just fit in pretty well.

**Participant 3 (August):** August was a 23-year-old White male that is a graduate student and was involved in his social fraternity for eight semesters. Within his chapter, he held the roles of New Member Educator, Vice President of Recruitment, and Standards Boards. Outside of his fraternity he was involved in the programming board, Honors Choir, and was secretary for the Honors Choir. He has lived in his chapter house and identifies as a homosexual male. August's fraternity will operate in such a manner as to exhibit respect, care, and concern and the fraternity dislikes any form of sexually abusive behavior collectively or by an individual, be it physical, mental, or emotional in nature.

When asked why he joined his social fraternity August stated:

I wanted to join a fraternity before going to college. I joined my social fraternity because of an influential person within the chapter and because of other individuals who convinced me to be in the chapter. I also joined my chapter because that's where I felt most comfortable.

**Participant 4 (Alek):** Alek was a 20-year-old White male that is a junior and was involved in his social fraternity for two-and-a-half semesters. Within his chapter, he held the roles of Art and Social Chair. Outside of his fraternity, he was involved in homecoming committee and Panther Pride. Alek has held multiple advisory board positions for student government and member of student standards boards. He is currently a Residence Assistant and involved in the Residence Hall Honorary Association. He was on the Executive Boards for Merchandising and Apparel Design Association, Couture Models, and G.L.A.M Modeling. He has never lived in the chapter house and identifies as a homosexual male. Alek's fraternity had no statement concerning discrimination against potential new members or current members. When asked why he joined his social fraternity Alek stated:

I was originally was not going to join because I thought it was dumb. I already knew a lot of the guys and I was at a party one night and they just asked me to join and I was like why not, screw it. After joining I got to know everyone and going through the process it just seemed like a lot of good benefits. Plus, my fraternity is founded on religious values and I come from a very devout family.

### **Data Collection**

The research questions, how does the fraternity community support homosexual individuals and what are the factors that influence support or nonsupport for homosexual individuals, were addressed using the qualitative approach. Interviews were conducted and lasted between 25-30 minutes per interview. The interview instrument is located in Appendix C. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Interviews were coded for themes in relation to the support/nonsupport of homosexual individuals in social

fraternities (Saldaña, 2012). The results from the study were coded and grouped into themes and interpreted in the results and discussion section. The use of open-ended questions allowed the interviewee to open up about their belief on the support of homosexual individuals in a social fraternity.

For qualitative research, the interviews were transcribed by the researcher and coded to find themes (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). According to Saldaña (2012), the process of coding data is used to identify prominent themes and developments across participants' interviews. Through the four participant's interviews, the transcribed data were grouped together in similar themes. The themes were listed under the two research questions to help complete the study. While transcribing and coding the data, the researcher open coded reoccurring words and phrases (Saldaña, 2012). These themes were used in understanding the support of homosexual individuals in a social fraternity and identity factors that influenced support or nonsupport.

### **Treatment of Data**

All data were kept confidential through a personal database located on the researcher's computer that was password protected. Data will also be kept for three years per the Institutional Review Board's protocol before it was destroyed.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Within qualitative research it is significant the researcher identifies his or her values, assumptions, and biases within the study. As the researcher, it is important that I express characteristics of my identity and experiences that could influence the results of this study. I have revealed my role as related to this research study in the paragraph below.

My interest in the support of homosexual individuals within a social fraternity began as an undergraduate student, however, it became more salient when I witnessed a discussion concerning giving a homosexual potential new member a bid during recruitment within my chapter at my undergraduate institution. This experience was really eye opening for me because my chapter had always been more than accepting of homosexual individuals within the chapter. I also became more interested with this topic after discussing homosexual identity theories within the College Student Affairs program. In terms of my racial and ethnic background, I am a White, middle-class male college graduate. I also identify as a member of a social fraternity and a homosexual male, which connects me to the participants of this study and their experiences within a social fraternity. When collecting and interpreting data, I made a conscious effort to not make assumptions or make meaning of data that was articulated by participants of this study, as an alternative prompting participants to elaborate or clarify when necessary.

### **Summary**

Chapter three presented the methodology of the study. Chapter three presented the design of the study and demographics concerning research site. Four individuals were interviewed along with demographics of each participant, quantitative measures, data collection, data analysis, and treatment of data. Chapter 4 will present the results of the study.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The primary purpose of the current study was to analyze the perceptions of social fraternity members at a Mid-sized, mid-western university about their acceptance and support of homosexual individuals as members within their chapter and the overall fraternity community. The secondary purpose of this study was to analyze factors that influenced support or nonsupport for homosexual individuals. Throughout Chapter IV, the different themes that emerged from qualitative analysis of one-on-one interviews with the four participants of the study are presented. A variety of themes were discovered; however, only the major ones are reported. Multiple themes for each research question were explored from the experiences that each of the participants shared in the semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The themes are organized by research questions in this chapter. The first research question is how the fraternity community supports homosexual individuals. The main themes that emerged from the first research question included the following:

- *Chapter culture*, which explains the chapter culture of each participant's social fraternity,
- *Membership and recruitment*, explains recruitment practices, relationship between recruitment and core values, how criteria for membership is established within the chapter, offering a bid to an openly gay potential new member, and sexual orientation and how that fits within the chapter's values.

- *Homophobic terminology*, which explains the use of homophobic terminology within the chapter.

**Research Question #1: How does the fraternity community support homosexual individuals?**

***Chapter Culture***

Participants were asked to describe the culture of their respective social fraternities. Each participant had a different way of explaining their individual chapter culture. Adam and Cody described their view of chapter culture in an interesting way. Adam expressed chapter culture in relation to diversity, whereas Cody described chapter culture as how members use their membership within a social fraternity. Adam stated:

Pretty diverse and diverse with each new pledge class, or now we do not have anymore, but each fall we bring in a whole new different type of person. More like people who are still respectful men who are not stereotypical douche frat guy that you see on TV shows and movies and that Total Frat Move prides itself on. Guys who are just still willing to be involved that are leaders and guys who are hardworking and some guys are a little more about socializing as in parties and athletics, but its college and I think that as long as it is in moderation it is still fine.

Cody described that his chapter is diverse in how members used it. Cody stated:

Very...diverse in what people use it for. Good 15 of us use it how I'd expect us to use it like in the right reasons to excel and take opportunities they didn't have before. Good 20 of them that just try hard and be the best at what they can do. The other half does not do what they really should and just use it as a social gathering.

***Membership and Recruitment***

Participants were asked questions concerning membership and recruitment practices. One item concerning recruitment practices was if someone wants to join your chapter, what you would tell them about your chapter. An item that fell under this theme was the relationship between recruitment and chapter core values. Another item within this theme was how criteria for membership become established within the chapter. The final item within this theme concerned offering a bid to an openly gay potential member and if a chapter were to do so and under what conditions.

When interviewed about beliefs concerning fraternity membership Adam and August both stated that academics, leadership, and involvement enhanced their beliefs about fraternity membership. Adam felt that being in a fraternity is good for maturing, learning, and growing. He first joined to get involved and develop a resume booster, however, he learned that there is more to being just a member in a fraternity. Adam stated:

Members were leaders and they were just people who did well academically. Just people that I felt I identified myself with. Now being a member I definitely believe that any membership in any fraternity regardless is very good for maturing, learning, and growing. At first, it was just so I could know people and get more involved and a resume booster. I have learned there is more with philanthropy, community service, and leadership and learning and how to hold a position and hold responsibility and be accountable.

August stated: "Members were academically sound and leaders on campus. Academics and involvement were important and all the men in my fraternity were also leaders in

other organizations.” Cody believes that fraternity membership is about doing the best a person decides on and to pay attention to that. Cody stated:

I think that every person should do the best they, not really can, but the best at what they decide. I think everybody just needs to pay attention to what they are best at. It means that you have the opportunity to basically excel. You are given a chance that a lot of people on this campus aren't.

Alek believes that fraternity membership is holding yourself to a higher standard and representing your organization goes beyond just yourself. Alek stated:

As a member I always held myself to a higher standard than anyone else that I knew and especially when I was wearing letters because you are representing an organization that goes beyond yourself. Felt that as a member I had to conduct myself in a certain way. Acting more diplomatic. My membership was earned and my membership was something that is exclusive to a few people.

When explaining what he would say to a potential new member, Adam and Cody both suggested that they would tell the participant to visit different fraternities and events to make sure it is the right fit for that participant. Adam stated:

If they are just new to school and just heard about us, I would definitely say to go to a couple of recruitment events, get to know more people, and really make sure it's where you belong, talk to some other fraternities as well. If they were rushing and were interested and we extend them a bid and think they would fit in perfectly then this is the fraternity that would benefit you the greatest and I think it will be a decision you won't regret.

Cody also described that his chapter does not push potential new members to singly rush his individual chapter, which Cody believes aides in the success of their recruitment of potential new members. Cody stated:

I usually tell them that I know a lot of other fraternities try and push rush us, rush us, I feel like our numbers are so well because we don't do that. We put in a lot of go check out other houses, if you don't fit in here you'll fit somewhere and if you don't like any of the other houses come back and check us out again.

August also described their recruitment plan concerning potential members in advising them to check-out other chapters, however he discussed more of his chapter's scholarship and academic plan. August stated: "Keep your eyes open to all fraternities. I would talk about scholarship and academic soundness and how our GPA requirement was higher than other fraternities." Alek described his recruitment plan and what his chapter would to tell a potential new members as members in his fraternity hold themselves to a higher standard. Alek stated: "Beta Alpha Chi fraternity believes that our members should hold themselves to a higher standard. Participate in different events on campus."

Each participant described their chapter's relationship between recruitment and core values in a distinctive way. Adam described the relationship between recruitment and chapter core values as newly incorporating core values within the chapter's recruitment plan. Adam also explained that his chapter just added a community service event within their recruitment week and is trying not to "dirty rush." Adam stated:

I know last year we started to implement a lot more information about our core values while we are recruiting and do stuff where we do not shit talk or however you want to word it or what is it dirty rush. Mention right from the start we

require the most service hours of all the fraternities with 10 hours of service each semester and that GPA is a huge factor in giving a bid as well as being an active member. This semester we actually included a community service event in our recruitment.

Cody described the relationship between core values and recruitment as only being connected when it comes to making a decision on whether or not to give a potential new member a bid to join. Cody stated: "We realistically only use the core values when it comes to a tough decision. A lot of it is initial thought on a guy and we don't really go to core values unless it's necessary, but it should be necessary for every time." August described the relationship as being truly values based. August stated: "It was values based and we really thought well about it." Alek just described the relationship between recruitment and core values as everything his chapter does is around recruitment. Alek stated: "Everything revolves around recruitment."

Among the participants, each one had a different way for describing and maintaining what and how criteria for membership were established within their individual chapters. Adam described criteria for membership being established by potential new members filling out a form when attending an event and then the chapter taking into account potential new members GPA, reason for going Greek, and activities the potential new member was/is involved in. Adam stated:

When you come into a recruitment event we have a flyer or handout that you fill out. We ask your name, GPA, what activities you are involved in on campus or what you did in high school and what you are interested getting involved in. We take GPA, reason for going Greek, and activities involved in are three things we

look for or combination of the three. Then we usually do two rounds of voting. So we actually just had our first round and our first bid ceremony and we do it halfway through recruitment and those are just all the guys we basically know from the beginning we want them and are good and we don't have to waste our energy trying to recruit them anymore.

Cody described that membership in his chapter is established by brothers speaking about the potential new member and their experiences with the potential new member. After brothers have shared their opinion the chapter then votes and if it is a majority the potential new member will then get a bid. Cody stated:

We will have a chapter discussion after every open house and usually lasts about 10 minute per potential new member and we will just go through experiences we have had with the potential new member and if someone hasn't talked to him we try to make it a point. We encourage every member that is voicing an opinion to get to know that member better and so we want everyone to have a good initial and little past initial experience with a potential new member and then we just have a vote and if its majority we usually go straight to a bid.

August explained that there were GPA requirements that potential new members had to meet. August stated: "There were GPA requirements that all new members have to meet so we did have that aspect and was written in our bylaws and wasn't a decision the entire fraternity made it was specifically in our bylaws." Alek shared that his chapter formulates a bullet list of characteristics that they are looking for to establish how criteria is created within the chapter. Alek stated: "Formulate a bullet list of characteristics that

we are looking for. If you are not an asshole and if you know how to hold a conversation, we are too small for that.”

Participants were asked if their individual chapter would offer a bid to an openly gay potential new member, each participant spoke about how their chapter would go about offering the bid and if their chapter would offer a bid. Adam explained that he felt that his chapter would 100 percent offer a bid to an openly gay potential new member. Adam stated:

I am 100 percent confident in saying yes to the fact that we actually had two in my fraternity at one point. One incident concerning a new member during a recruitment event Adam mentioned, he said he really liked to get straight guys drunk and have sex with them. So, that was a little bit too much for our organization and I felt like it was too much for any organization for just that situation or even if they were straight because that's rape and that's not okay.

Cody hesitated when he stated his chapter would offer a bid to an openly potential gay member. Within Cody's hesitation he also explained that it would be outside of the mold for the brothers in his chapter. Cody stated:

I feel like we could. I don't potentially think a gay member would take away a bid 100% at all, I feel like he's a little, for a lot of our guys it would be outside of the mold which could hurt his chances of getting a bid super quick. It might just be a little bit harder to get in if you were openly gay.

August explained his chapter would; however, they have never had an openly gay member go through recruitment. August stated: “Yes, they would. Then after me I think I was the only openly gay male in the chapter and then a couple other guys came out later.

We never had an openly gay member go through recruitment.” Alek was blunt and explained if a potential new member is a dick and he has had problems with them in the past that he would not let the potential new member in, however, he explained that his chapter probably would not care. Alek stated: “If you’re a dick and I’ve had problems with you in the past I’m not going to let you in. So that would probably be the only thing. I don’t think our chapter would have cared.”

Each participant described that sexual orientation and how it fits within their chapter’s values was not an issue. Participants explained that sexual orientation did not have anything to do with chapter’s values or how there was really nothing written about sexual orientation and values. Adam explained that sexual orientation and fit within his chapter’s values is that orientation is not really an issue, unless it makes individuals feel uncomfortable from the start. Adam stated: “Sexual orientation really isn’t the issue usually for us, the only way it becomes an issues is if they make people feel uncomfortable right from the start.” Cody explained that his chapter treats every person as a respectable human being and anything else that isn’t a good judge of character is put by the way side. Cody stated: “Go straight to our values and basically treat him as every man a man like our open motto says and kind of just put stuff along those lines and anything else that isn’t really good judge of character kind of put those behind us.” August explained that he always felt love within his chapter because the brothers accepted him for who he was. August stated: “Being gay I’ve always felt love because I always had a group of brothers who accepted me and loved me for being who I was and that was part of our core value.” Alek explained that he does not think there is anything written anywhere that explains sexual orientation and the fit within fraternity values.

Alek stated: "I don't think there is anything with that. There's not anything in any written text of our fraternity that would have delayed or impeded my membership requests."

### *Homophobic Terminology*

Participants were asked to describe homophobic terminology and its usage within their individual chapters. Each participant explained that homophobic terminology was used within their individual chapters, how it affects the chapter culture, and themselves as individuals. Adam explained that he does hear homophobic terminology within the chapter and it is something that still bothers him. Adam stated:

Definitely, just like when people say gay instead of stupid and this is something that still kind of bothers me and I know a lot of people have been mentioning it a lot more and we have a bunch of Facebook pages and people post stuff and say something about like that and someone will comment and say that wasn't necessary and delete it. Now a lot of the fraternities on this campus are really trying to be very fratty and I think a lot of them think that it is very alpha male and very anti-gay and a lot of them recently have been and I don't think its everyone I think it's just the loudest people in the organization or the people who are just giving their organization a bad name and just saying things like that. I have confronted it multiple times. I was explaining that for the other types of people that go through that or hide for years and just like hate their lives, like why would anyone choose that and I just got really offended by it, I confronted it and I argued a little bit and just made have it ended with that it's just your opinion and you are very small minded and you are not very open.

Cody explained that homophobic terminology is used frequently within his chapter and that if someone were thinking about coming out it would be very tough to do so. Cody stated:

A lot of our homophobic terminology and stuff is used very easily in our chapter, but I think it's because first off we do not have an openly gay active and second off if we did I think it would still be joked around about. If there was a member that was/is gay and was trying to think about coming out or something it would be very tough to do because of our terminology and how we act.

August explained after having a discussion with his boyfriend it opened his eyes on homophobic comments and their use within the chapter and by chapter members. August stated:

Like oh that's so gay... I didn't defend it so my boyfriend got really upset so we had a discussion saying like he just said that your sexuality and something that is a part of you was stupid. So that really brightened my eyes to homophobic comments and things of that nature.

Participants stated that sexual orientation and how it fits within a chapter's values does not play a factor and is really not an issue to any of them or their individual chapters, but based on the usage of homophobic terminology that does not seem to be the case. Adam stated that sexual orientation really is not an issue for his chapter, but individuals within the chapter post homophobic terminology on social media pages and use "gay" instead of the word stupid. Cody stated that his chapter treats every man as a man, but if his chapter were to have a gay member it would be hard for him to come out to the chapter because of the homophobic terminology that is frequently used within the chapter, and how is that

treating every man as a man? August explained that he was loved by his brothers because they accepted him for who he was, however they used homophobic terminology in the sense of “that’s so gay.” To him, this did not seem offensive until his boyfriend explained to him that the brothers who accepted him for who he was, were stating that something that was a part of him was stupid.

Participants also suggested that their individual chapters would offer a bid to an openly gay potential new member, however based on the usage of homophobic terminology within their chapters that is not providing a safe space for individuals that are wanting to join their social fraternity.

**Research Question #2: What are the factors that influence support or nonsupport for homosexual individuals?**

There were four themes that emerged from the second research question, what are the factors that influence support or nonsupport for homosexual individuals. The four themes that emerged from the second research question included: socialization, education and programming, chapter reputation, and what does the future hold for homosexual individuals within a social fraternity.

- *Socialization*, which explains how participants and their individual chapters would handle brothers and new members coming out, the sexual orientation of either brothers or prospective members and is it an issue for the participants, what would happen if two brothers started dating within the chapter, and if their individual chapters implicitly or explicitly placed expectations or limitations on a homosexual brother.

- *Education and Programming*, explains the education and programming surrounding homosexual identity, homosexual culture, and homosexual individuals educating heterosexuals within the social fraternity.
- *Chapter Reputation*, explains how participants felt about being labeled as “the gay fraternity,” the stereotypes that are associated with that label, and if participants believe their chapter is a safe space for homosexual individuals.
- *Future of homosexual individuals within a social fraternity*, participants explain what they think the next five years holds for homosexual males within a social fraternity.

### ***Socialization***

Participants were asked to describe how their individual chapters would handle an initiated brother coming out. Adam and Cody had very different explanations concerning how their chapter would handle an initiated undergraduate brother coming out. Compared to Adam and Cody’s explanation, August described his chapter as being very accepting of initiated undergraduate brothers coming out, whereas Alek just stated that his chapter would not really care and just move on after an undergraduate initiated brother came out. Adam explained that his chapter would handle an initiated undergraduate brother coming out by taking it fine, but that some brothers might think differently about him, but that it is a cultural thing and maturing issue. Adam stated:

One guy in the pledge class before me came out during our time or at least to some people, but like everyone already knew. There is actually a current member that is open, wait no, actually just graduated but is still on campus. I don't know,

he is open to some of us, but not the whole fraternity and he's not even open to his family and stuff yet, so it's just to close friends and I think we all took it totally fine and like I said I hang out with him all the time and I have no issues. They might think differently about him and I think that's just a cultural thing or growing up thing because some people are from different areas where you know they never met someone who was gay.

Cody explained that it would depend on which side of the chapter you ask and their opinion. Cody stated:

Depends on what side of our chapter you ask, there would be some guys that openly didn't like that. There would be some guys that would be 100% fine with it, but I don't think it would hurt him as a member at all. There would be some jokes at the end of chapter about him and there would be stuff along those lines and maybe subconsciously it might hurt that member and stuff along those lines. It would be just kind of like everybody knows it, but not like don't ask, don't tell but kind of more we are all aware of it and don't want to make it an issue.

August explained that brothers in the chapter were accepting of brothers coming out.

August stated: "In my opinion everybody was accepting of an undergraduate coming out at a later date in the chapter." Alek stated: "I think they would just be shocked and then just move on. No one would really care."

Participants were also asked how their individual chapters would handle a new member coming out. Cody and August had very distinctive ways in how their individual chapters would handle new members coming out, whereas Alek explained it as being the same as an initiated undergraduate brother coming out. Cody explained that his chapter

would handle a new member coming out by thinking it could have been told beforehand or during recruitment and that brothers would make jokes about the new member class having a gay member within their class. Cody stated:

It could have been kind of maybe told to us beforehand, I'm not saying that any potentially gay new member should have to tell us, but I mean there are a lot of things going on during rush where throwing something like that would be a pretty big shock on our end in the middle of rush. A lot of jokes going around with like pledge class being the pledge class with one openly gay new member.

August stated: "So once you sign your bid 48 hours later you go through a ritual to where you are a full member. They would treat them the same way." Alek stated: "Same thing probably as an initiated undergraduate brother coming out."

Participants were asked if sexual orientation of either a brother or a potential new member were an issue for them. Adam and Cody differed in their answers. Adam explained that it is not an issue for him personally, however, as Cody explained it, he does not think that sexual orientation has anything to do with operations of a social fraternity. Adam explained that sexual orientation of either brothers or prospective members are not a huge issue for him. Adam stated:

For the most part it isn't going to be a huge issue for me, like if they are a good person and they are a person that is like, like we have the true gentleman creed, which is what we are supposed to look for during recruitment and if they fit that then that's supposed to be the criteria and it shouldn't be anything else and I would personally be okay with it and have no problem with it.

Cody explained that he does not think sexual orientation has anything to do with any operations of a social organization. Cody stated:

I mean I don't think sexual orientation has anything to do with any operations of a social organization. I don't think it has anything to do with anything my fraternity stands for. If he pulls out well I think you are doing this because I am gay and I think that would be the only time it would cause a problem, but also be exec can't make judgments just because he's gay too so I feel like both ways if it's kind of just understood both ways then there should be no problems ever.

Each participant was asked how their chapter would handle two brothers if they started dating. Participants stated that sexual orientation is not an issue for them, however, when answering what would happen if two chapter brothers started dating it seemed that their viewpoint on sexual orientation and its relation to the social fraternity had changed. Also, each participant had explained that it would not be a big deal if an initiated undergraduate brother or a potential new member came out to the chapter, however if they started dating within the chapter or interfraternal community it would then become an issue. It seems that the issue is not with sexual orientation of individual members, but when the lines of homosexuality and brotherhood becomes blurred. Adam explained that two brothers did start dating and that brothers thought it was kind of weird and you are supposed to be brothers. Adam stated:

Actually, two guys did. It was kind of weird for most people, I even heard people openly say like it's one thing if you are going to date someone outside of the fraternity, but within its kind of like you're supposed to be brothers and it's kind

of weird. If you really have a problem with it you don't have to interact with them or you don't have to hang out with them 24/7.

Cody said he would pull both of the chapter brothers who are dating into executive committee and suggest they do not make a scene. Cody stated:

I feel like I would like to kind of pull them both into exec and say let's not make this a scene. I mean it's not really right to tell people they can't like be open with that, but I feel like the operations that go on within a fraternity is just like business and something that goes on in a business kind of needs to be left outside. I'm not saying if they did attend a function that one of our guys would punch them or something like that I just feel like that it would kind of be understood kind of maybe both of them go and that their shift is sober security which shouldn't have to do, but I feel like both parties would kind of feel uncomfortable having both parties in attendance.

August explained that he does not agree with Interfraternity dating. August stated:

I don't agree with dating interfraternally because if you were to break up then it would be really difficult to see each other. However, August also stated that, I always said I would never date a brother, but I have fooled around with a couple. Personally, never date a brother.

Alek thinks it would be awkward if two brothers started dating. Alek stated: "I feel like that would be awkward as hell. I feel like being a brother and being a boyfriend are like two separate sides of the damn coin that shouldn't even be on the same coin."

Participants were asked to describe if their individual chapters implicitly or explicitly place any expectations or limitations on homosexual brothers. Adam and

August explained that they have never heard of their chapter placing any expectations or limitations on homosexual brothers, however Cody explained that the implicit stuff would be understood between the homosexual brother and the chapter. Cody explained that their chapter would not take the time or effort to understand where the homosexual brother was coming from, however, the homosexual brother needs to understand that the views that are expressed by the chapter are not those solely of every brother in the chapter. Cody also explained that a homosexual member should “tone it down” when it comes to recruitment of potential new members. Adam explained that he never heard of his chapter implicitly or explicitly placing any expectations or limitations on a homosexual brother. Adam stated: “There has never been explicit rules to put in place or told to them they hey don't talk or he don't recruit type thing. I've never heard of anything like that.”

Cody suggested that the implicit stuff would be understood, but that some brothers might be uncomfortable and to tone it down when it comes to recruitment. Cody stated:

I think the implicit for that kind of stuff would be you understand we are kind of....not really working with you but like it is not something where we want you to run in front of everyone cause not a majority shares the same interest as you. These aren't our views as a majority maybe but we are alright with telling people anything you want, we are alright with you bringing a guy to a function, but we are letting you know there are going to be people that are uncomfortable with it so maybe just kind of like tone it down till you get like with recruiting you kind of get to know members. Just don't run up in front of like an open house and just stand on a table and yell it, we might get angry with that.

August explained that his chapter did not implicitly or explicitly place any expectations or limitations on him regarding his homosexual identity. August stated: “No, they haven’t. No problems or discussions.”

### ***Education and Programming***

Participants were asked to describe education and programming that includes homosexual culture and homosexual identity within their individual chapters. Adam described that his individual chapter participates in safe zone training once a year, however Cody’s chapter does not have any education or programming that includes homosexual culture or homosexual identity. August believed he did not need to educate his chapter surrounding homosexual culture or homosexual identity because they were accepting of homosexual individuals. However, August stated that his chapter was never negative towards homosexuality, but his chapter used homophobic terminology within their chapter. Alek explained that they used his homosexual identity to help hook-up with women and to educate brothers on fashion. Adam explained that his chapter does safe zone training once a year and required brothers to attend the seminar. Adam stated:

We actually once a year do safe zone training and that's one of our biggest things we do being one of the few fraternities that actually require brothers to attend the seminar. They don't have to register but we do have the speaker come to our chapter once a year in the fall right after we do recruitment to put that mindset into the new members as well as that we are accepting of all people and we aren't the stereotypical frat and that we are going to be supportive and always hear other peoples identities and where they are coming from as well.

Cody simply stated that his chapter does not have any education surrounding matters of gay identity or gay culture. August explained that his chapter was accepting of homosexuality so he did not feel the need to educate them. August stated: "They were accepting of homosexuality so I never felt the need to educate them because there was never a time where they were negative towards homosexuality." Alek stated that his chapter used his homosexual identity for help with hooking up with women and educating brothers on fashion. Alek stated: "Since I was gay I was expected to hook them up with whatever "hoe" they thought was cute at a party. I was expected to teach them about clothes."

Participants were also asked to describe how open their individual chapters would be to homosexual diversity programming. Adam and August stated that their chapters would be open to homosexual diversity programming. Cody explained that his chapter would be willing, but they would just make a joke of the program being provided. Alek explained based on his experiences that his chapter would not be willing to attend any type of homosexual diversity programming. Adam and Cody also explained that their chapters would be open to attending, however, that anything mandatory within the fraternity community no one would want to attend and most members would make fun of the homosexual diversity programming. Adam stated: "Like I said earlier, I honestly think there is people in every fraternity that would actually be okay with it. I think anything mandatory is always going to make most Greek life upset and whenever there is any mandatory educational no one wants to go."

Cody explained his chapter would attend, but they would probably just make fun of it. Cody stated: "I feel like our chapter would and accept it and everything. We just

take every educational in that we have to go and let us make it kind of fun so we just make fun of every educational.” August explained: “I would say they are willing based on a few members.”

Alek stated: “No, not at all. Just based on the way I was treated.”

### ***Chapter Reputation***

Participants were asked to explain how they feared about being labeled as the “gay fraternity” on campus. Both Adam and August explained that their chapters had been rumored to be the “gay fraternity” on campus. Both Adam and August explained that rumors played a huge part in the stereotype of being labeled as the “gay fraternity” and that social media played a part in it as well. Cody explained it as just having a single homosexual individual within the chapter your chapter could become labeled as the “gay fraternity” Alek explained that there are worse things to be labeled than the “gay fraternity.” Alek’s viewpoint of this is because his chapter used him as a recruitment tool. Adam stated: “Well, if you go on Yik Yak we actually have a lot of posts about our fraternity being the gay fraternity. People see for themselves.” Cody explained that the stereotype could come from just having one gay member within the chapter. Cody stated:

I mean that stereotype might come with having just one gay member, but it is just ridiculous to keep a member from being openly gay just because our house might fall to that. I mean there are worse things you can be stereotyped for.

August explained that there were already rumors about his chapter being the gay fraternity before he joined. August stated:

There were rumors that chapter brothers before I even got there that would fool around with each other. That information leaked out and rumors before initiation.

They might have been a few times they might have felt that way or they were afraid of getting that stigma.

Alek stated: “No, there are worse, trust me. No, because they used me as a recruitment tool.”

Participants were asked to describe if they believed that their social fraternity was a safe space for homosexual individuals. Cody explained that it is a safe space, however, just not a prosperous place. Cody explained that his chapter is really not demeaning towards anything or anyone, but previously he explained how frequently homophobic remarks are used within the chapter setting. Alek explained that he would not classify his chapter as a safe space because of the homophobic remarks and jokes that are frequently used by chapter members. Alek also explained that he had to break down some barriers to be comfortable enough to talk to brothers about homosexual issues. Cody stated:

It's a safe place, but not really a prosperous place. It's not going to be a place where you can kind of flourish like homosexual stuff. I mean you can be gay and be safe there and since we are so diverse everybody just kind of takes other peoples beliefs and demographics and everything and just actually puts them on themselves and kind of just goes with it and everybody really understands where everybody is from and what everybody's actions are and everything and our chapter really is not demeaning towards anything.

Alek would not classify his chapter as a safe space because of the jokes that are always being tossed around. Alek stated: “No, because there are always jokes. It's half a space because I can talk to them about stuff but I had to get through some barriers to get there.”

*Future of homosexual individuals within a social fraternity*

Participants were asked to describe what the next five years holds for homosexual males within a social fraternity. Each participant was very diverse in the answering of this question. It was interesting to see the contrast between answers to this question based upon previous questions. Adam and August both believed that there will be less negative attitudes homosexual individuals and that social fraternities are moving in a positive direction. Cody explained that he does not see fraternities catching up with modern times and that there will be no such thing as social fraternities made-up of singly homosexual individuals. Alek explained that it is in the hands of homosexual members and the direction they decide to take concerning what the future holds for homosexual members within a social fraternity. Adam believed that overall the world is moving in a more positive direction where people are accepting other people and whom they love.

Adam stated:

I think in the world overall that we are moving to a positive direction where people are finally accepting peoples' love and I am very excited about and I know my sister was so excited when Illinois and Wisconsin both passed the law of legalizing same-sex marriage and I'm very proud of the country that we are finally moving toward that direction.

Cody believed that fraternities have not changed with the times and that there will not be chapters of just straight homosexual members. Cody stated:

I feel like fraternities have kind of not really changed with the times too much. I feel like it's kind of always going to be an understood thing at least for the next five years it's going to be understood by both parties. I don't think it would ever get that

segregated or anything, but I don't think it'll ever be, well at least in the next five years, I don't think there's going to be just chapters of just straight homosexual members.

August thinks there will be less negativity towards homosexuals and that society is more accepting as a whole. August stated:

I don't think there will be as much negativity towards homosexuals as there was in the past because I feel that society as a whole is more accepting.

Alek explained that it is up to the homosexual members themselves to decide what direction they want to go in and need to act on it. Alek stated:

It's really hard to say because again it's the same thing with the world. Some people will pay no attention and treat you like a normal human being and some people will treat you like shit because they think you are like some Satan worshipper person who fornicates on the regular. As far as the next five years I would say it really falls on the members themselves like the homosexual fraternity members themselves who need to decide where and what direction they want to go in and they need to act on it like you can't expect your chapter to accept you without, number one, accepting yourself and number two, accepting your chapter and then number three, doing something to bring those two together.

### **Summary**

Themes found during individual one-on-one interviews concerning support for homosexual individuals in a social fraternity were explored in Chapter IV. Different themes emerged under each research question. From research question one the themes that emerged were chapter culture, membership and recruitment, and homophobic

terminology. From research question two the themes that emerged were socialization, education and programming, chapter reputation, and the future of homosexual individuals within a social fraternity. Chapter V will conclude by providing a summary of previous chapters, provide recommendations for social fraternity affiliates, provide recommendations for Student Affairs professionals, and include suggestions for future researchers on the topic of support for homosexual individuals in a social fraternity.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSIONS

This study was designed to examine the support of social fraternity members at a Mid-size, mid-western university about their acceptance and support of homosexual individuals as members within their chapter and the overall fraternity community. The following research questions guided the study: 1.) How does the fraternity community support homosexual individuals and 2.) What are the factors that influence support or nonsupport for homosexual individuals? This chapter will discuss how the findings of this study relate to prior literature on homosexual identity and social fraternities. In addition, this chapter will provide recommendations for Directors of Fraternity and Sorority Life Advisors, International Fraternity Headquarters, and Student Affairs Professionals related to offering support for homosexual individuals within a social fraternity, as well as directions for future research.

#### **Discussion**

#### **Research Question #1: How does the fraternity community support homosexual individuals?**

##### ***Chapter Culture***

Students on college campuses created social Greek organizations to create an atmosphere for a social alternative, which provided a release from academic requirements of attending a university. Social fraternities give individuals the opportunity to network with other peers and release from everyday stress (Garrett, 2002). Participants were asked to describe the culture of their respected social fraternities. Each participant had a different way of explaining their individual chapter culture. Participants described their

view of chapter culture in an interesting way. Adam expressed chapter culture in relation to diversity, whereas Cody described chapter culture as how members use their membership within a social fraternity. Adam stated that his chapter is pretty diverse and with each new pledge class brings a new person and perspective to his social fraternity.

Fraternities provided an escape from the everyday routine and the lifestyle of college. Fraternities and social clubs were created to satisfy an emotional and social void. The fraternal community provides a major part in a student's experience when attending college (Garrett, 2002). Through brotherhood members developed strong bonds with fellow members and established a sense of belonging within the fraternity and campus community. Social fraternities have engaged in rich traditions and loyalty, with individuals taking major pride in their fraternity (Garrett, 2002). Cody described that his chapter is diverse in how members used it and that only a small number of individuals within the chapter use the resources, as he would expect members in a social fraternity to use the resources.

### ***Membership and Recruitment***

Men joined social fraternities to be among like-minded individuals and gay and bisexual men have joined fraternities to develop friendships with like-minded individuals (Vary, 2004). When asked why he joined his social fraternity Adam stated that he was anti-Greek coming into college, however, when going through freshman orientation his orientation leader was a fraternity member and from there he decided he wanted to get involved. When asked why he joined his social fraternity Cody stated that he hated being a part of something and not taking full advantage of the resources that are available. He joined his social fraternity because of the research he did before coming to college and

that he knew someone from high school that was a member of his social fraternity. He met some of the guys and stated he fit right in. When asked why he joined his social fraternity August stated that he wanted to join a fraternity before going to college and that he joined his social fraternity because of an influential person within the chapter, because of other brothers, and it is where he was most comfortable. When asked why he joined his social fraternity Alek stated that he was originally not going to join his social fraternity because he thought it was dumb. He knew many of the brothers and he was at a social event one night and asked him to join and he stated "Why not?" After joining he stated he noticed many of the good benefits a social fraternity offers and his fraternity was founded on religious values and Alek comes from a very devout family. Each participant joined his social fraternity because of an individual they knew either within their social fraternity or someone that was involved in a social fraternity. Participants wanted to be surrounded by individuals who shared the same values and could develop friendships with more like-minded individuals.

Gay men have not desired to join social fraternities to find a date or romantic partner; they have joined fraternities for the same reasons any heterosexual male does; friends, development of leadership skills, the social aspect, and to be a part of an organization (Bossart, 1998). When interviewing August and Alek prior research was confirmed that homosexual men join social fraternities not to find a date or romantic partner, but for the same reasons any heterosexual male joins. Case, Hesp, and Eberly (2005) conducted a quantitative study of 524 participants that identified as gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) fraternity and sorority members on their reasons for joining. Both males and females listed three reasons for wanting to join social fraternities, which were

friendship/camaraderie, social life, parties, having fun, and support group/sense of belonging. Males reported leadership as a fourth reason to join (Case, Hesp, & Eberly).

### ***Homophobic Terminology***

Homosexual students indicated they did not feel safe coming out to their brothers and because of that, many did not open up about their sexuality (Aber, 2010). August explained after having a discussion with his boyfriend it opened his eyes on homophobic comments and their use within the chapter and by chapter members. August stated that he did not defend his chapter brothers when they said like, “Oh that is so gay,” and that his boyfriend got really upset. As a result, other students on campus did not realize that there were gay students in the fraternity and sorority community. Gay individuals, who were members of a fraternity that were openly gay, or only openly gay to a few members in the fraternity, shared their experiences of being gay in a fraternity. Additionally, they shared their experiences to potential new members that were thinking about going through recruitment, who may think that they needed to modify aspects of their identity. There was not a huge support for LGBT individuals in a fraternity community (Aber, 2010). Adam explained that he does hear homophobic terminology within the chapter and it is something that still bothers him. Adam stated that members within the fraternity use it on social media pages, however, that some brothers stated that it is not necessary and that it gets deleted.

Universities have become more supportive of homosexual and lesbian organizations on campus (Lipka, 2011 & Reisberg, 1998). However, gay and lesbian individuals have yet to become completely welcomed within the fraternity community, Shane Windmeyer (2003), co-editor of *Out on Fraternity Row*, suggested that only 10%

of males in social fraternities were homosexual, but many stay closeted because of the fear of retaliation from heterosexual members with whom they shared common quarters. As more and more young males come out with their sexual identity in high school, they have assumed universities have a social climate that will align with their sexual identity (DeQuine, 2003). Cody explained that homophobic terminology is used frequently within his chapter and that if someone were thinking about coming out it would be very tough to do so. Cody stated that he believed it is because his chapter does not have an openly gay active.

**Research Question #2: What are the factors that influence support or nonsupport for homosexual individuals?**

***Socialization***

The social adjustment function (SAF) indicated that individuals in a group accept approaches that were in line with the identity and objectives of the group (Hall & France, 2007, Aber, 2010). Individual attitudes were important because they created relationships with others who were similar or rejection of people who had different viewpoints from them. This served as the foundation for the social adjustment function (Aber, 2010; Hall & France, 2007). Approaches driven by the social adjustment function gave individuals the right to feel privileged in receiving social acknowledgement and a sense of belonging (Hall & France, 2007). Members in a social fraternity defined brotherhood as upholding a great fraternal experience, and members boast that cohesive brotherhood through involvement in certain behaviors, maintaining relationships with other members, and having a contribution to achieving the goals of the group (Hall & France, 2007). The “culture of dude” (Aber, pg.2) led to the opinion that a fraternity system on a campus was

against homosexual individuals. Most individuals in the Interfraternity Council have not accepted homosexual individuals, and when you look at the campus-wide view of the fraternity community members change their view on LGBT individuals (Aber, 2010).

Adam explained that his chapter would handle an initiated undergraduate brother coming out by taking it fine, but that some brothers might think differently about him, but that it is a cultural thing and maturing issue. Cody explained that it would depend on which side of the chapter you ask and their opinion. Cody stated that there would be some guys that would be 100 percent fine with it, however, subconsciously it might hurt a member. Cody also explained that it would be like do not ask, do not tell and do not make an issue of it.

Each participant was asked how their chapter would handle two brothers if they started dating. Participants stated that sexual orientation is not an issue for them, but when answering what would happen if two chapter brothers started dating it seemed that their viewpoint on sexual orientation and its relationship to the social fraternity had changed. Also, each participant had explained that it would not be a big deal if an initiated undergraduate brother or a potential new member came out to the chapter, however, if they started dating within the chapter or fraternal community it would become an issue. It seems that the issue is not with sexual orientation of individual members, but when the boundary lines of homosexuality and brotherhood becomes blurred. Adam explained that two brothers did start dating and that brothers thought it was kind of weird and you are supposed to be brothers. Cody said he would pull both of the chapter brothers who are dating into executive committee and suggest they do not make a scene. Cody explained that it is not really right to tell people they cannot be open

about it, but that he feels that the operations that go on within a social fraternity is business and that situations like this need to be left outside of a business. August explained that he does not agree with Interfraternity dating and that if you were to break-up it would be really difficult to see each other. Alek thinks it would be awkward if two brothers started dating.

Social adjustment function is related to the idea of groupthink. This is relevant because individuals can state they are supportive of a homosexual individual, however when they are around other members or organization, whose viewpoints are opposite of theirs, they tend to side with the group instead of maintaining their own beliefs and values.

### ***Education and Programming***

Just having students who do not feel safe coming out to their house shows that programs, such as ally training, which provides volunteers and resources to be an ally for the LGBT community, were needed to provide a sense of safety (Aber, 2010). Participants were asked to describe education and programming that includes homosexual culture and homosexual identity within their individual chapters. Adam described that his individual chapter participates in safe zone training once a year, however, Cody's chapter does not have any education or programming that includes homosexual culture or homosexual identity. August believed he did not need to educate his chapter surrounding homosexual culture or homosexual identity because they were accepting of homosexual individuals, however, August stated that his chapter was never negative towards homosexuality, but his chapter used homophobic terminology within their chapter. Alek explained that they used his homosexual identity to help hook-up with women and to

educate brothers on fashion. Adam explained that his chapter does safe zone training once a year and requires brothers to attend the seminar and that his social fraternity is one of the few fraternities that require it and they provide safe zone training right after fall recruitment. They provide safe zone training to put the mindset into new members that the fraternity is accepting of all people and that they are not the stereotypical fraternity. Cody simply stated that his chapter does not have any education surrounding matters of gay identity or gay culture. August explained that his chapter was accepting of homosexuality so he did not feel the need to educate them. Alek stated that his chapter used his homosexual identity for help with hooking up with women and educating brothers on fashion.

Even though the population of homosexual students in fraternities has grown, the responsibility of educating an entire university community that does not have enough proper resources on gay issues to provide a supportive environment has fallen on students attending the institution (Lipka, 2011). Participants were also asked to describe how open their individual chapters would be to homosexual diversity programming. Responses between the participants varied. Three participants stated that their chapters would be open to homosexual diversity programming; however, one participant stated that their chapter would not be open to homosexual diversity programming. Two of three participants also stated that whereas their chapter would be open to homosexual diversity programming their chapters would make fun of the educational programming.

*Chapter Reputation*

Researchers have noted the small amount of gay students in social fraternities have affected stereotypes of the Fraternity/Sorority community (Aber, 2010, Case, Hesp, & Eberly, 2005, Collins, 2011, DeQuine, 2003, & Lipka, 2011). Once a new chapter has been established, winning awards after awards, women have stated the new chapter to be their new favorite. Heterosexual males in the social fraternity created an atmosphere of fear in that they could become known as the “gay fraternity” because gay members were founders for the chapter (Sullivan, 2010). The new and successful social fraternity that had great accomplishments because of the homosexual brothers at the start of its beginnings started to see an increase of homophobia as members tried to remove the gay label. As a result, the social fraternity became an uncomfortable surrounding for a homosexual member of that social fraternity (Sullivan, 2010). Even social fraternities that were really open to idea of having homosexual members had anxiety in possibly being labeled the “gay fraternity” and worried that it could hurt the recruitment of potential new members (Reisberg, 1998). Participants were asked to explain how they feared about being labeled as the “gay fraternity” on campus. Two participants explained that their chapters had been rumored to be the “gay fraternity” on campus and that rumors played a huge part in the stereotype of being labeled as the “gay fraternity” and that social media played a part in it as well. One participant explained it as just having a single homosexual individual within the chapter your chapter could become labeled as the “gay fraternity” Alek explained that there are worse things to be labeled as than the “gay fraternity.” Alek’s viewpoint of this is because his chapter used him as a recruitment tool. Adam explained that if you go on social media his social fraternity would be labeled as the gay

fraternity. Cody explained that the stereotype could come from just having one gay member within the chapter; however, it is ridiculous to keep a member from being openly gay just because a social chapter might fall to being labeled as the gay fraternity. August explained that there were already rumors about his chapter being the gay fraternity before he joined.

Participants were asked to describe if they believed that their social fraternity was a safe space for homosexual individuals. Cody explained that it is a safe space, however, just not a prosperous place; also not a place where you could flourish as a homosexual member. Cody explained that his chapter is really not demeaning towards anything, but previously he explained how frequently homophobic remarks are used within the chapter setting. Alek explained that he would not classify his chapter as a safe space because of the homophobic remarks and jokes that are frequently used by chapter members. Alek also explained that he had to break down some barriers to be comfortable enough to talk to brothers about homosexual issues.

#### ***The future of homosexual individuals within a social fraternity***

Shane Windmeyer discussed that having homosexuals join the Greek system could be a great solution in fighting against homophobia (DeQuine, 2003). Participants were asked to describe what the next five years holds for homosexual males within a social fraternity. Each participant was very diverse in answering this question. It was interesting to see the contrast between answers to this question based upon previous questions.

Adam and August both believed that there will be less negative attitudes toward homosexual individuals and that social fraternities are moving in a positive direction. Cody explained that he does not see fraternities catching up with modern times and that

there will be no such thing as social fraternities made-up of singly homosexual individuals. Alek explained that it is in the hands of homosexual members and the direction they decide to take concerning what the future holds for homosexual members within a social fraternity. Adam believes that overall the world is moving in a more positive direction where people are accepting other people and who they love. Cody believes that fraternities have not changed with the times and that there will not be chapters of just straight homosexual members, and that it would never get that segregated. August thinks there will be less negativity towards homosexuals and that society is more accepting as a whole. Alek explained that it is up to the homosexual members themselves to decide what direction they want to go in and need to act on it.

### **Recommendations for Directors of Fraternity and Sorority Life**

*Collaboration with LGBTQA Office to provide Safe Zone training requirement for all Interfraternity Council chapters.* Even though the population of homosexual students in fraternities has grown, the responsibility of educating an entire university community that does not have enough proper resources on gay issues to provide a supportive environment has fallen on students attending the institution (Lipka, 2011). Chapters should be highly encouraged to participate in Safe Zone I and Safe Zone II training to provide a safe space for homosexual individuals. This training could provide social fraternities with the ability to be educated on inclusive speech, a supportive atmosphere for openly gay members who are within the chapter, and/or thinking about participating in recruitment. Just having students who do not feel safe coming out to their house shows that programs, such as ally training, which provides volunteers resources to be an ally for the LGBT community, were needed to provide a sense of safety (Aber, 2010).

*Diversity Training.* Members within a social fraternity should be mandated to attend a diversity training in collaboration with a Minority Affairs office. This mandated training will allow for members within a social fraternity to provide a safe space for individuals who consider themselves a member of a minority population. Diversity training could provide members within a social fraternity the ability to be educated on inclusive speech, a supportive atmosphere for members of a minority population who are members of a social fraternity and/or thinking about participating in recruitment.

### **Recommendations for International Fraternity Headquarters**

- ☐ Encouraging collaboration between chapter and LGBTQA office.
- ☐ Encourage chapters to provide safe space for homosexual individuals.
- ☐ Requiring chapters to participate in Safe Zone I and Safe Zone II training.
- ☐ Sexual orientation and its connection to fraternities' values.

### **Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals**

*Understanding homosexual development theories.* The information concerning development of homosexual identity was consistent with research suggesting that a major percentage of gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals go through stages from being aware through the execution of assimilated homosexual orientation (Erikson, 1968). Erikson (1968) stated that identity grows through the communication between a person and their collective relationships. Erikson noticed that society and culture have impacted how individuals think about defining themselves. As a result, membership in a social fraternity has a huge place in the development of GLB students who chose to join a social fraternity (Erikson, 1968). Sexual identity development theories relate to the study in that it allows for understanding of where individuals are in their homosexual identity formation. Each

individual may be at different places when they join a social fraternity. The theories give a better depth of understanding how to effectively work with an individual that is forming their sexual identity.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The current study focused on two heterosexual participants and two homosexual individuals in a social fraternity on the support of homosexual individuals within a social fraternity. The following bullets are recommendations for future research in this particular area of study:

- ☐ Interview more than two homosexual individuals and two heterosexual individuals to provide more diversity within the present study.
- ☐ Interview homosexual and heterosexual alumni who were active in a social fraternity during their undergraduate career.
- ☐ Conduct this study across different universities across the nation to increase diversity within the study. This would allow the research to examine support of homosexual individuals in a social fraternity in a broader scale
- ☐ Include members from social fraternities within the National Pan-Hellenic Council (The Divine Nine).

### **Conclusion**

The current study was carried out, utilizing a qualitative approach, in order to understand the support of homosexual individuals in social a fraternity. Chapter V contained a discussion of the results from the current study. Results found that support of homosexual individuals within a social fraternity depends on the climate of the chapter and attitudes of individuals within the social fraternity. Recommendations for Directors

of Fraternity and Sorority Life, International Headquarters, and Student Affairs

Professionals were provided to gain insight into the challenges of offering support for homosexual individuals within a social fraternity.

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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Approval

July 7, 2014

Nathan Wehr  
Counseling and Student Development

Thank you for submitting the research protocol titled, "Being Bromo in a Heterosexual Dominated Culture: A Qualitative Approach" for review by the Eastern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has approved this research protocol following an expedited review procedure. IRB review has determined that the protocol involves no more than minimal risk to subjects and satisfies all of the criteria for approval of research.

This protocol has been given the IRB number 14-094. You may proceed with this study from 7/7/2014 to 7/6/2015. You must submit Form E, Continuation Request, to the IRB by 6/6/2015 if you wish to continue the project beyond the approval expiration date. Upon completion of your research project, please submit Form G, Completion of Research Activities, to the IRB, c/o the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

This approval is valid only for the research activities, timeline, and subjects described in the above named protocol. IRB policy requires that any changes to this protocol be reported to, and approved by, the IRB before being implemented. You are also required to inform the IRB immediately of any problems encountered that could adversely affect the health or welfare of the subjects in this study. Please contact me, or the Compliance Coordinator at 581-8576, in the event of an emergency. All correspondence should be sent to:

Institutional Review Board  
C/o Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
Telephone: 581-8576  
Fax: 217-581-7181  
Email: [eiuirb@www.eiu.edu](mailto:eiuirb@www.eiu.edu)

Thank you for your assistance, and the best of success with your research.

Richard Cavanaugh, Chairperson  
Institutional Review Board  
Telephone: 581-6205  
Email: [recavanaugh@eiu.edu](mailto:recavanaugh@eiu.edu)

APPENDIX B

E-mail Template for Potential Participants

Dear Potential Interviewee,

You are invited and have been recommended to participate in a research study that focuses on the support of homosexual individuals as members within a social fraternity. The Principal Investigator is gathering data from both heterosexual and homosexual individuals. This research is being conducted as part of an assignment for the course CSD 5950, Thesis and Research, as a requirement for the Masters of Science program in College Student Affairs at Eastern Illinois University. Dr. Dena Kniess is the course instructor and I, Nathan Wehr, am the Principal Investigator on the project.

Your decision to participate is completely voluntary. Should you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to interview with the primary investigator of the study for approximately one hour on the topic of the support of homosexual individuals as members within a social fraternity. The interview will be audio recorded; however the researcher will not place your name on any documents resulting from the interview. You will be asked to provide a pseudonym for your names to be used in analysis. You have the right to terminate your participation at any time without penalty.

There are no foreseeable risks to the participants. All responses will remain confidential. Identification in surveys will only be through demographic information, and the identification for the interviews will only be through pseudonyms. Participants may benefit from being a participant in this study from getting to express their concerns or feelings about the support of homosexual individuals as members in a social fraternity. Additional benefits participants would receive could include the opportunity to reflect on their perceptions of current practices for the support of homosexual individuals in a social fraternity. The potential benefits outweigh any risks to the participants, and the risks and benefits are both minor. The findings of the proposed study may help the Fraternity and Sorority Life office, Multicultural Resource Center, PRIDE, and student affairs administrators to reflect and offer support to homosexual individuals and to social fraternities at Eastern Illinois University.

All data will be reported in the aggregate and by the use of participant self-selected pseudonyms. The computer used by the primary investigator is password protected and only the primary investigator has access to the files stored on this computer. Transcriptions will be kept on a separate USB drive and will be password protected as well as stored in a locked drawer. If participants formally withdraw from the study at any point in time, their feedback will be destroyed and not be included in the final reporting. After the research is completed, the raw data will be kept for three years. After three years, data will be destroyed in compliance with EIU IRB requirements.

If you have questions about this project, you may contact the course instructor, Dr. Dena Kniess at 217-581-7420, or at [drkniess@eiu.edu](mailto:drkniess@eiu.edu).

Your decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will not affect your current status or future relations with Eastern Illinois University.

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write: Institutional Review Board, Eastern Illinois University, 600 Lincoln Ave., Charleston, IL 61920, and Telephone: (217) 581-8576, E-mail: [eiuirb@www.eiu.edu](mailto:eiuirb@www.eiu.edu). You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

**If you are interested, could you please send me your availability for next week so that we may set up an interview time.**

Thank you for your consideration,

Nathan Wehr  
Department of Counseling and Student Development  
Eastern Illinois University

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Protocol

Gay Fraternity Member QuestionsDemographic Questions:

- ☐ Year in school
- ☐ How many semesters in social fraternity
- ☐ Age
- ☐ What office or leadership positions have you held or hold in your chapter?
- ☐ What campus-wide leadership positions have you held, both fraternity and non-fraternity related?
- ☐ Have you or do you currently live in your chapter house?
- ☐ How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Why did you decide to join a fraternity?

- ☐ Why your particular fraternity?

What are your beliefs about fraternity membership? What contributed to your beliefs?

- ☐ What does it mean to be a member of your chapter?

Describe the chapter culture?Tell me about members who rush your chapter?

- ☐ If someone wants to join your chapter, what would you tell him?
- ☐ What is the relationship between recruitment and chapters core values?
- ☐ How does criteria for membership become established in your chapter?
- ☐ Would your chapter offer a bid to an openly gay potential new member? If so, under what conditions?

Gay Identity

- ☐ How does sexual orientation fit within your fraternities' values?
- ☐ How would your chapter handle an initiated undergraduate brother coming out?
- ☐ How would your chapter handle a new member coming out?
- ☐ Is sexual orientation of either brothers or prospective members an issue for you? Why or why not?
- ☐ What would happen if two chapter brothers started dating?
- ☐ How would your chapter handle some form of "hate crime" against a gay fraternity member based on sexual orientation by members of the fraternity community?

Your Experiences

- ☐ During your time as an undergraduate member of your fraternity, how would you rate the climate for your chapter in terms of:
  - o Attitude to gay sexual orientation
- ☐ How would you classify your sexual orientation?

- In the closet to everyone
  - Gay and everyone knows
  - Out to a few people
  - Out to all my chapter brothers
  - Out to most people, but not my family
- ☐ What was your sexual orientation when you first started here on campus?
- ☐ If participant has come out to the chapter:
  - When did you first come out to a chapter brother?
  - What were the reactions of the chapter brothers?
  - Has your chapter implicitly or explicitly placed any expectations or limitations on you regarding your gay identity?
  - Did/do you have a fear of stereotyping your chapter as the “gay” fraternity on campus?
    - ☐ Did/do your chapter brothers share this fear?
  - Did coming out make a difference in your chapter?
  - Do you feel any responsibility to educate your brothers on matters surrounding gay identity and gay culture?
- ☐ If participant has NOT come out to anyone in the chapter:
  - Why have you not come out to any chapter brother?
  - What do you think might happen if you told one brother?
  - Do you foresee a time when you can/will come out to the entire chapter? How would you make the announcement?
  - What do you believe would be the collective reaction of the chapter?
- ☐ Would you classify your fraternity as a “safe space” for you as a gay male? Why/why not?
- ☐ When you hear homophobic comment how does that make you feel?
- ☐ How open do you believe your chapter is to gay diversity programming?
- ☐ Have you ever been intimidated by homophobic attitudes and remarks

### Wrap Up

- ☐ What do you think the next 5 years hold for gay males in the fraternity world?

Heterosexual Fraternity Member QuestionsDemographic Questions:

- ☐ Year in school
- ☐ How many semesters in social fraternity
- ☐ Age
- ☐ What office or leadership positions have you held or hold in your chapter?
- ☐ What campus-wide leadership positions have you held, both fraternity and non-fraternity related?
- ☐ Have you or do you currently live in your chapter house?
- ☐ How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Why did you decide to join a social fraternity?

- ☐ Why your particular fraternity?

What are your beliefs about fraternity membership? What contributed to your beliefs?

- ☐ What does it mean to be a member of your chapter?

Describe the chapter culture?Tell me about members who rush your chapter?

- ☐ If someone what to join your chapter, what would you tell him?
- ☐ What is the relationship between recruitment and chapters core values?
- ☐ How does criteria for membership become established in your chapter?

Gay Identity

- ☐ Would your chapter offer a bid to an openly gay potential new member?
- ☐ How does sexual orientation fit within your fraternity's values?
- ☐ How would your chapter handle an initiated undergraduate brother coming out?
- ☐ How would your chapter handle a new member coming out?
- ☐ Is sexual orientation of either brothers or prospective members an issue for you?
  - ☐ Why or why not? Is there a difference between the two?
- ☐ What would happen if two chapter brothers started dating?
- ☐ How would your chapter handle some form of "hate crime" against a gay fraternity member based on sexual orientation by members of the fraternity community?

Your Experiences

- ☐ During your time as an undergraduate member of your fraternity, how would you rate the climate for your chapter in terms of:
  - ☐ Attitude towards gay sexual orientation?

- ☐ What would change for a gay brother in the chapter after coming out?
- ☐ Would your chapter implicitly or explicitly place any expectations or limitations on a gay brother?
  - ☐ Would he be able to talk about his gay identity to potential members if the topic came up?
  - ☐ Did/do you have a fear of stereotyping of your chapter as the “gay” fraternity on campus?
  - ☐ Has there been any education of brothers on matters surrounding gay identity and gay culture?
- ☐ Would you classify your fraternity as a “safe space” for a gay male? How?
- ☐ Do you hear homophobic terminology with the chapter? The larger fraternity community?
  - ☐ Do you confront it? What happens if you do?
- ☐ How open do you believe your chapter is to gay diversity programming?
  - ☐ Is the fraternity community open to such programming?

### Wrap Up

- ☐ What do you think the next 5 years hold for gay males in the fraternity world?

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form for Participants

## Informed Consent

Dear Potential Interviewee,

You are invited to participate in a research study that focuses on the support of homosexual individuals as members within a social fraternity. This research is being conducted as part of an assignment for the course CSD 5950, Thesis and Research, as a requirement for the Masters of Science program in College Student Affairs at Eastern Illinois University. Dr. Dena Kniess is the course instructor and I, Nathan Wehr, am the Principal Investigator on the project.

Your decision to participate is completely voluntary. Should you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to interview with the primary investigator of the study for approximately one hour on the topic of the support of homosexual individuals as members within a social fraternity. The interview will be audio recorded; however the researcher will not place your name on any documents resulting from the interview. You will be asked to provide a pseudonym for your names to be used in analysis. You have the right to terminate your participation at any time without penalty.

There are no foreseeable risks to the participants. All responses will remain confidential. Identification in surveys will only be through demographic information, and the identification for the interviews will only be through pseudonyms. Participants may benefit from being a participant in this study from getting to express their concerns or feelings about the support of homosexual individuals as members in a social fraternity. Additional benefits participants would receive could include the opportunity to reflect on their perceptions of current practices for the support of homosexual individuals in a social fraternity. The potential benefits outweigh any risks to the participants, and the risks and benefits are both minor. The findings of the proposed study may help the Fraternity and Sorority Life office, Multicultural Resource Center, PRIDE, and student affairs administrators to reflect and offer support to homosexual individuals and to social fraternities at Eastern Illinois University.

All data will be reported in the aggregate and by the use of participant self-selected pseudonyms. The computer used by the primary investigator is password protected and only the primary investigator has access to the files stored on this computer. Transcriptions will be kept on a separate USB drive and will be password protected as well as stored in a locked drawer. If participants formally withdraw from the study at any point in time, their feedback will be destroyed and not be included in the final reporting. After the research is completed, the raw data will be kept for three years. After three years, data will be destroyed in compliance with EIU IRB requirements.

If you have questions about this project, you may contact the course instructor, Dr. Dena Kniess at 217-581-7420, or at [drkniess@eiu.edu](mailto:drkniess@eiu.edu).

Your decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will not affect your current status or future relations with Eastern Illinois University.

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write: Institutional Review Board, Eastern Illinois University, 600 Lincoln Ave., Charleston, IL 61920, and Telephone: (217) 581-8576, E-mail: [eiuirb@www.eiu.edu](mailto:eiuirb@www.eiu.edu). You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

Thank you for your consideration,

Nathan Wehr

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Signature

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Date

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Signature

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Date

**Counseling Center Information:**

Located on the first floor of the Human Services Building. Open Monday through Friday from 8:00am-4:30pm. You may also contact them at 217-581-3413.