

The Highest Ratio of Orgasms to Drama:
Group Influences on Men's Approaches to Sex in College
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Abstract

This study investigates the sexual attitudes and group influences of college aged heterosexual men who are members of different kinds of institutional living communities: fraternities (Interfraternity Council: IFC) or co-operative residences (Inter-Cooperative Council: ICC). I interviewed 24 men, 12 from each community, and asked (1) how they perceived college sexuality before they arrived on the college campus, and whether or not their views changed while in college, (2) their feelings towards their community within the IFC or the ICC, (3) how they perceive themselves as similar and/or different from their fellow community members, and (4) their experiences with different types of sexual relationships. Findings showed that heterosexual men in these communities have similar mentalities with regards to sexual commitment behavior and attitudes. However, their institutional membership affects their navigation of gender and gender dynamics, which causes differences in the sex discourse that arise within their communities. Ultimately I found that fraternity sex discourse encourages hook up culture through its emphasis on sex, especially the quality of sexual partners and encounters. Co-operative discourse, on the other hand, emphasizes sexual understanding, safety, positivity, and self-motivated exploration.

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Introduction

For many, college is both a culmination of childhood and the commencement of adulthood. It is an exploratory time, when many begin acting independently, not under the jurisdiction of parents or other guardians. However, college campuses are not simple places. Beyond the intense course loads, young adults begin seeking out communities where they feel they belong. It is the complex social dynamics that make the college experience so transformative. Particularly important are opportunities to engage in sexual activity, and the navigation of dating, hookup culture and party scenes. While exciting and new, these spaces and interactions can be harmful, as college campuses have high rates of sexual assault. A 2015 University of Michigan campus climate on sexual misconduct survey found that 22.5% of undergraduate women – compared to 6.8% of undergraduate men – had experienced some form of non-consensual touching and kissing or oral, vaginal or anal penetration. This same survey found that in “most cases, the unwanted sexual penetration occurred primarily after verbal pressure and under the influence of drugs or alcohol.” “Verbal pressure” was described in the survey as “continually verbally pressuring you after you said they didn’t want to. This includes telling lies, threatening to end the relationship, threatening to spread rumors about them, showing displeasure, criticizing your sexuality or attractiveness or getting angry but not using physical force.”

Findings such as these, especially considering the gender differential in experiencing non-consensual sexual behavior and emphasis on verbal pressure, have led me to wonder how heterosexual college aged men think about and experience sexual relations with women on campus. Literature in this area has focused on women’s experience of college sexuality and men’s contribution to sexual assault but has not

extensively explored how men view and engage with non-violent sexual interaction. In this thesis, I investigate *how college-aged heterosexual men navigate engaging with sexual partners, the meanings they make of these relationships, and the effects of their residential communities on their sexual behavior and sex discourse.*

Through in-depth qualitative interviews, I discover that mentalities towards sexual relationship commitment are relatively the same between men who are affiliated with the IFC (Interfraternity Council) and the ICC (Inter-Cooperative Council), the local governing bodies of the University of Michigan fraternity system and co-operative housing. However, the differential gender dynamics in these residential spaces lead to sex discourse that is emblematic of differing mentalities towards sex, gender, sexual orientation and (hetero) gender politics. Such findings suggest that fraternal cultural dynamics may lead to a greater emphasis on hook up culture and a greater risk for sexual assault.

Literature Review

Research regarding sex and sexuality on the college campus has primarily focused on women's experience of sexuality and men's contribution to sexual assault. However, 'normal' sexual interaction of college men has not been addressed to a great degree. Below I outline existing literature regarding forms of masculinity and relationship tendencies among college men. Furthermore, I discuss research regarding fraternity organizations and co-operative communities and suggest how these may correlate with men and masculinity. Finally, I consider where further research could contribute to existing bodies of literature and how my project may fill these gaps.

College Masculinities

As boys leave adolescence and enter adulthood, they form peer communities. These are formative years as many young men are away from their parents for the first time and as "... individuals learn who they are and how they ought to behave in interaction with those around them" (Risman, 1982, p. 231). Whether young men want to or not, they are learning the norms of their community, including expectations surrounding masculinity.

Men find competing ideals in this realm as they "wrestle with the cultural meanings that connect manhood to sexual performance and objectification of women" some men are very aware of cultural expectations and peer pressure to create performances of ... masculinity," however "others disavow public displays of hetero - masculinity" that "promote sexist constructions of men's sexuality, typically predicated on the sexual objectification of women" (Sweeney, 2013, p.216-217). Differing enactments of masculinity have been researched extensively, most notably, Connell (1997) outlines three forms of masculinity, as they exist in contemporary society.

Hegemonic masculinity is representative of heterosexuality, aggression, competition, and homo-sociality (i.e., excluding women from social networks). This type of masculinity “emphasizes hierarchy and the capacity to dominate other men as well as women” (Connell, 1997, p.8) and is reproduced through sports, videogames, superhero depictions, and other hyper-masculine media depictions. The second type of masculinity, contrasting with the first, is subordinate masculinity. Subordinate masculinity is “formed at the bottom of the gender hierarchy among men. The most obvious example in our culture is the masculinity of gay men, though effeminate straights may also be counted here” (Connell, 1997, p.8). This type of masculinity is reproduced through challenging “conventional masculinity and conventional stereotypes of gays” (Connell, 1997, p.8). Lastly, complicit masculinity, “possibly, the largest group,” represents “men who are complicit in the patriarchal system. They accept the patriarchal dividend, but are not directly involved in wielding power, in personal violence, or in displays of prowess” (Connell, 1997, p.8). Complicit masculinity is reproduced due to “the pain that heterosexual men feel and their uncertainties about masculinity,” leading them to contemplate their own troubles and “marginalize or ignore inequality” (Connell, 1997, p.8). An important aspect of these categories of masculinity is that they “exist in definite social relations, often relations of hierarchy and exclusion” (Connell, 1998, p.5). It is through the lens of these masculinities that college fraternity and co-op men will be examined with regards to sex and sexuality.

Men, Commitment, and Sex

Olmstead (2012) argues that college men fall into three distinct thought categories in how they connect sex and commitment; committers, flexibles, and recreationers. Those who fall in the committer category strongly connect commitment to the perceived benefits

of sex and sexual activity; they hold the view that commitment makes sex better. Flexibles, on the other hand, recognize a pleasurable link between sexual activity and commitment, but also recognize sexual pleasure as a primal or physical phenomenon. This group tends not to discuss how their sexual attitudes affect their sexual behaviors, but instead focuses on how they feel about themselves or how their attitude allows them greater flexibility. Finally, recreationers place no meaning on sex beyond it being a form of entertainment. For this group, the primary motivation for sex is pleasure.

Olmstead collected mixed method survey data to form these categories and to correlate them with sexual commitment behavior over the past 12 months. These last two groups, flexibles and recreationers, participated more in casual relationships, including 'hookups' and 'friends with benefits relationships (FWBRs)' (Olmstead, 2012). He found no significant differences between Flexibles and Recreationers in terms of their reported numbers of hookups or FWBRs. Those who fell in the committer category, however, engaged in significantly fewer of these two types of sexual relationships. Olmstead argues that more engagement in FWBRs and hookups is a result of seeing sex as pleasurable and satisfying outside of a commitment framework.

Olmstead's findings make perfect sense. If sex were not seen as something that is pleasurable or acceptable outside of a relationship, then individuals would likely not engage in this type of behavior. Therefore, they would be unlikely to engage in the hookup culture that is prevalent on the contemporary college campus. Yet, while the correlation exists between having a stronger connection between sex and commitment and having fewer casual sexual relationships, people who fell within the committer category still engaged in hookups and FWBRs in Olmstead's study. Thus, it seems that Olmstead's

categories do not completely define how men navigate the sexual space of college, especially among those that don't see sex and commitment as strongly linked, the flexibles and the recreationers. Furthermore, while Olmstead acknowledges that committers engage with sexuality to a lesser degree than those in the other categories, his findings do not display that *no* committers engage in sexual activity and therefore, my research can still offer insight into how these men navigate sexual activity.

“Contemporary discussions on sexuality – perhaps that on young people’s sexuality in particular – is intersected by different discourses and theories concerning how we can or even should view sexuality and physicality” (Johansson, 2007, p. 8). McGann (2013) describes how “... social groups ‘package’ the most basic components of sexuality – behavior, desire and identity – in different ways” (p. 1) and this differentiation appears frequently in research on how various groups engage in sex and sexuality (Connell, 1992, p.738; Boker, Diamond, and Far, 2014, p. 1789). More importantly, Olmstead does not take into account the social environment of these men beyond social identity and social desirability, thus, he underestimates the influence of group dynamics and affiliation on individuals’ behavior.

Considering that men who fall in the committer category connect sex and commitment and are less likely to engage in casual relationships, this group may also separate themselves from the behavior of dominating other women, which is representative of hegemonic masculinity. Instead, these individuals are more likely to align with subordinate masculinities, also known as “protest masculinities” as evident of some men “have attempted to reconstruct their personality in total to escape conventional masculinity ... [leading them to] engag[e] in only non-penetrative sex” (Holter, 1996, p.338;

Connell, 1997, p.9). Furthermore, those who embody hyper-masculine traits such as a focus on sexual prowess, more common among hegemonic masculinities, are “more likely to engage in penetrative ... if they hold more permissive attitudes towards sex” (Olmstead, Pasley, and Fincham, 2013, p. 573) Such evidence would suggest that those that fall within Olmstead’s categories of flexibles and recreationers are more likely to display behavior indicative of hegemonic masculinity.

Institutional Residential Community Cultures at Universities

Different kinds of institutionally sanctioned residential communities are available for college men. Among these are co-operative communities, which tend to consist of more alternative cultures, and fraternities, which represent more traditional spaces. Little to no research exists concerning co-operative residence but there is an extensive body of literature that addresses fraternity residential situations and how these relate to masculinity and college sex culture.

Co-operative housing cultures. Co-operative theory “is generally [made up of] only such men [people] as are not wanted by the ordinary trade” and based on the idea of “mutual aid and solidarity” (Gide, 1921, p156, p.4). Some theorists strongly believe that “in consumer co-operation we have, for the first time, an example of economic democracy” (Fowler, 1947, p. 10). Though this co-op theory is based on consumer and not residential co-operative organization, “in a broad sense a ... cooperative society exists every time that a number of persons feeling the same need join together collectively to satisfy it better than they could do by individual means” (Gide, 1921, p.1).

Due to co-operative ideological focus on working together and the ideas of democracy, it is unlikely that the men in these living situations will express strong patterns

of hegemonic masculinity as this is characterized mainly through domination. However, it is possible that patterns of complicit or subordinate masculinity will be present. Due to the previously discussed likelihood of connections these later types of masculinity and committer relationships styles, co-operatives are more likely to contain men who have stronger connections between sex and commitment.

Fraternity cultures. Fraternities and male athletic groups often endorse 'traditional double standards' with regards to how they viewed other people participating in hookup culture. This means that women engaging in hook up culture are judged more harshly for promiscuous behavior while men are praised for it. These groups also have high levels of hyper-masculinity, and this has been shown to be the strongest factor in separating these communities from others on campus (Murnen and Kohlman, 2007). This suggests that fraternities are likely to support ideals of hegemonic masculinity along with the possibility of complicit masculinity. Furthermore, because fraternities have been shown to be more permissive of male promiscuity, there are likely to be a greater number of individuals that fall into Olmstead's flexible and recreationer categories with regards to sexual commitment.

Martin & Hummer (1989) discovered evidence for such patterns in their study of fraternities. They found that "...fraternities are vitally concerned, more than anything else, with masculinity," furthermore, they discovered that it was a "narrow conception of masculinity that stresses competition, athleticism, dominance, winning, conflict, wealth, material possessions, willingness to drink alcohol, and sexual prowess" (Martin & Hummer, 1989). These finding seems near analogous to Connell's (1997) idea of hegemonic masculinity, even more-so considering that "[coercion against condom use in several ways]

implicate that fraternity men have assumed inappropriate power, underscoring the gender power imbalance in Greek life” (Benyas, 2014, p.60).

This power imbalance could have drastic health and safety implications for sorority women as “fraternity norms and practices [have been shown to] contribute to the approval and use of sexual coercion as an accepted tactic in relations with women... and encourage fraternity men to see women as objects of sexual coercion as sport... [played] between men and men... [to] prove that a fraternity is successful or prestigious” (Martin & Hummer, 1989, p.470). Even more so considering that “men’s peer groups ... promote binge drinking and the sexual assault of women” (Abbey et al., 2002; Sanday, 1996, cited in Sweeney, 2007).

Addressing the Research Gap

Understanding the ways that men in college think about and behave towards sexuality, and how their residential communities condition these thoughts and behaviors, is an important part of sociological understanding. Knowledge in this area is extremely important in understanding various methods of community formation and peer culture formation.

There has been little to no research concerning co-operative housing communities, information in this area concerned mainly market economies and ideological formations of these spaces. Fraternities however, have been studied extensively and have been shown to display patterns of hegemonic masculinity that contribute to and sexual violence. In comparing the residential spaces of fraternities and co-ops, my research stands to add pioneering knowledge concerning co-operative residential communities and offer comparison in how fraternity and co-operative communities influence the formations of

masculinity and sexual practice. Furthermore, my research contributes to exiting literature concerning men's conceptions of sex in a non-violent lens, how sex relates to commitment and also gives some indication of how these conceptions may be related to various forms of masculinity. The combination of these two concepts may also have implications regarding sexual assault as it occurs on the college campus and how community could contribute to such problems.

Methods

My goal in this project was to investigate *how college-aged heterosexual men navigate engaging with sexual partners, the meanings they make of these relationships, and the effects of their residential communities on their sexual behavior and sex discourse*. In-depth interviews allow access to the meanings individuals attribute to their circumstances. In order to investigate how participation in campus organizations shapes men's ways of navigating sexuality, I sampled from co-operative housing communities and fraternity communities, governed locally by the ICC (Inter-Cooperative Council) and the IFC (Interfraternity Council). These spaces must be acknowledged as fundamentally different in their goals as organizations. The ICC promotes itself as a residential community that "create[s] and maintain[s] a safe and affordable environment where [their] members feel comfortable and at home,"¹ and as a result the money that they collect constitutes members' rent. While the IFC "promote[s] the highest ideals of scholarship, leadership, service, and fraternalism"² it is more colloquially known as a social organization, and the money they collect is for association rather than housing. As a result, members of the ICC and IFC pay to be a part of their organizations but for IFC members, this does not necessarily mean that they live in a fraternity house. However, these spaces are still comparable due to their foundations as group living situations that are locally governed through larger institutions. Furthermore, they are made up of multiple residences that are operated by their members.

¹ <http://www.icc.coop/story/mission/>

² <https://greeklife.umich.edu/article/interfraternity-council>

I conducted in-depth interviews with men who were affiliated with the ICC and IFC. Due to the project's emphasis on mentalities and sexual navigation, this was an appropriate method to discover how college men assign meaning to their sexual experiences and how institutional group living spaces influence their perception of these experiences. These interviews were aimed at discovering (1) how men perceived college sexuality before they arrived on the college campus and whether or not their views changed while in college, (2) their feelings towards their community within the IFC or the ICC, (3) how these men perceive themselves as similar and/or different from their fellow community members, and (4) their experiences with different types of sexual relationships.³ I conducted 24 interviews in total, 12 with men who were a part of the IFC community and 12 with men who were a part of the ICC community, all of whom identified as heterosexual at the time of the interview.

Data Collection and Analysis

I conducted and recorded all interviews with the consent⁴ of the participants involved. At the beginning of each interview, I explained my procedures for protecting their confidentiality and asked for their consent to participate and to be recorded. I then asked participants to fill out a survey aimed at obtaining general demographic information, campus affiliation, and living situation.⁵

Due to the inductive nature of my research, the analysis phase of this project did not have a coding scheme prior the start of analyzing material. Thus, my process of research was exploratory and required several steps of refinement before I arrived at the set of

³ See Appendix A for the full Interview Guide

⁴ See Appendix B for the Consent Form

⁵ See Appendix C for the Entrance Survey

categories that I wanted to address in my work. Following each interview, I wrote a quick journal entry that contained the prominent ideas that were present in that interview. These memos contained whatever was salient for me at the time, which sometimes meant my impression of the individual while other times they contained a major idea or theme of ideas that the participant expressed. Once I completed the interview process I listened to all of my interviews and took detailed notes on prevailing themes as well as time stamps for quote location purposes. Lastly, I read through these notes that I took and marked down themes that I had missed or where they applied to multiple participants.

Recruiting Participants

I recruited participants through a variety of channels.⁶ I emailed ICC and IFC house presidents to request that they forward the information to their residents. I asked permission to attend chapter meetings (among the IFC) and house dinners or meetings (among the ICC) to give a short pitch on my project and distribute recruitment materials. Several professors in the Department of Sociology distributed this information to their classes. These methods were, however, less productive than word of mouth interactions with my own friends and acquaintances in these communities. Snowball sampling proved to be a particularly effective technique for recruiting IFC affiliates.

Standpoint

I identify as a college age, white, able bodied, heterosexual, cis-gendered man. These place me close to the population that I studied. At the outset, I was worried that these identities might bias my research even though I am not a member of a fraternity or co-op

⁶ See Appendix D for the distributed recruitment information. Originally this study included a focus group component. Due to time constraints and scheduling challenges, this part of the study was eliminated and only interviews were conducted. The recruitment information that was distributed and approved by the IRB refers to this component.

housing. I am studying a group of which I am a member and a set of cultural norms that apply to me.

My identity also influenced how study participants perceived me. They responded differently to me, a similar aged white man, than they would have to a much older woman of color, for example. I believe that my identity generated genuine responses because they saw me as taking part in the cultural experiences under discussion. As Carl, a fraternity member, expressed I was “very easy to talk to and [I could] relate because [I was] a senior in college too.” On the other hand, I differed from them in consequential ways. I am not a member of a fraternity or a co-op; I am also a former member of SAPAC (the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center) and have conducted sexual assault trainings with various campus communities, including fraternities and co-ops. This affiliation affected at least one of my participants. Steven, a member of a fraternity, recognized me from a training that I conducted for their members regarding sexual assault and bystander intervention. Throughout his interview, he mentioned consent to a great degree, nearly every time he mentioned engaging in sex or sexual acts.

My affiliation with SAPAC calls into question my status as an in-group member. Many Greek affiliated people have told me, both outside of my study as well as within, that the Greek system is extremely exclusive and private. Fraternity men may not have been entirely open with me. There is no easy answer to this conundrum. Participants may have recognized me as a SAPAC member and presented themselves as more attuned to consent and sexual respect than they typically are. Or they could have seen me as a fellow college student and come to the conclusion that I understand hookups or hookup culture. I

attempted to take into account the ways my identity may have affected what respondents told me as I analyzed the data.

Results

Fraternity men and co-op men held different views about how to behave towards one another as well as toward people outside of their community. Most notably, they talked about women, sex, and relationships in different ways. Despite these differences in views and discourse, there were few differences in the behaviors of these men with respect to the commitment level of their sexual relationships. Below I discuss the sample, then I describe the similarities among the men, as well as what this may imply for the broader college community. In the second section, I discuss the differing gender politics that fraternity and co-op men engage in. I take into account the differing gender composition of these residential spaces, as well as the practices that they shared around sex, sexuality and relationships. In the third section, I discuss the influences of the (hetero) gender politics on the sex discourse that arises among the members and residents of these two spaces.

Sample Description

The men in my study came from the institutional spaces of the ICC or IFC based on residence or membership. They were between the ages of 18 and 24 and were students of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. There are two participants that I interviewed despite being outside of these parameters. From my fraternity sample, Akarsh, a former fraternity member, no longer held his fraternity affiliation as he removed himself after his sophomore year. I interviewed him nonetheless based on the logic that he would still provide insight into the IFC experience as well as into college men in general. Howard, a co-op resident, also fell outside the standard parameters of age and was 28 at the time of his interview. I still interviewed him despite this due to the fact that he is still a resident in the co-operative housing community and therefore experienced and contributed to the ICC

culture. The size of my sample is too small to discuss any demographic patterns to a great extent, however noticeable patterns are discussed here.

Of the men who were affiliated with the IFC, 11 of the 12 lived with only men at the time of their interview, whereas my entire co-operative sample lived in multi-gendered housing, as this is a mandatory quality of all undergraduate co-ops. All fraternity members except for one listed that their parental income was above \$150,000/year, six of whom listed theirs as above \$250,000/year, and the remaining respondent was Akarsh, who discussed that money was one of the main reasons he removed himself from the community. This contrasted with the ICC half of my sample where all but one listed their parental income was under \$100,000/year and the remaining co-op member listed theirs at above \$250,000/year. Eight of my twelve fraternity participants also listed that they were Jewish –one of the fraternities that I received many participants from signifies itself as a Jewish fraternity, though not all of my Jewish participants came from this fraternity – two listed a Christian denomination, and two listed that they were not religious. Eight of my twelve co-op residents listed that they were non-religious or agnostic, three identified themselves as some denomination of Christianity and one listed himself as Jewish. Nine of my twelve fraternity men were Seniors, two were Juniors and one a Sophomore while in my co-op sample five were seniors, four were Juniors, two were sophomores and one was a 3rd year masters student. Lastly, my entire sample was made up of white men, except for Kyle, in my co-op sample who is of East Asian descent, though raised in America, and Akarsh, in my fraternity sample, who is of South Asian, and also raised in America.

Section 1: Commitment Behavioral Similarity

What became clear early on in my interviews was that the college environment had a profound effect on the sexual navigation of these men. Based upon their pre-college perception, the men shared a strong sense of college as a sexual space and in turn this contributed to their treatment of the space as such. They also were intensely aware of college time constraints and viewed the campus as a temporary space, a sentiment which was stronger among individuals who were less locally based. These ideas led to a sense of relationship avoidance that was present among many in my sample.

College as a sexual space. Most men arrived on campus with an idea about how the college space was constructed sexually and that this was tied into the party culture of the college campus. These types of comments ranged from college being a “looser time, [where] people are more active sexually and looking to seek new partners more frequently,” (Frank, Co-op Resident) to comments like “having sex would be the easiest thing ever.” (Daniel, Fraternity member). One participant even described the college environment as a “seedbed for laying seed” (Thomas, Co-op Resident). Once again, these perceptions were present both before and during the experiences of heterosexual men from co-operative communities and fraternity communities.

Expectation. These ideas of college as a sexual or party space disseminate to teens who have not yet started college, with the media being a major contributor. Such media influence became clear after several participants referenced “[buying] into the notion that it was going to be like American Pie⁷” (Steven, Fraternity Member), or that it was going to

⁷ The *American Pie* film series currently consists of four movies – *American Pie* (1999), *American Pie 2* (2001), *American Wedding* (2003), *American Reunion* (2012) – and is a series

be like “Hollywood and TV ... [where] everyone’s always going out and everyone’s doing cocaine and then finding random sluts and having sex with them” (James, Co-op Resident). As another participant discusses, “its not like there’s been any college movie in the last 30 years that hasn’t implied that its been [a very sexual space], *Animal House* started it all” (Thomas, co-op resident). Such discussion of the media displays that media had a strong influence on them as they approached college. The media is not alone in this portrayal, however, there are other ways that teens are exposed to the notion that college is a sexual space. Carl, a fraternity member, explained how multiple factors coalesce into ideas of college as a sexual space.

Do you remember what idea you had about sex in college before you got here?

I think we’re heavily influenced by sources of media, whether that be in the movies or the news or stories from friends. You come in with this notion that its all about sex all the time and your goal is to be with as many different girls as possible. So that’s the notion I sortof came in with.

Before I came to college I went to an overnight camp, so you’re exposed to all different ages, not just kids your age but your counselors who are in college. You know, they want to seem cool so they tell you all these stories about what they’re doing in college and you’re young so you look up to them. ... They were sharing one night stands and the typical sex stories and they’d try and get a rise out of the kids and whatnot. Typically it wasn’t with relationships... mostly one night stands and an arrangement of stories over the years... it really pushed the hookup culture ... in addition to the media, I think that heavily influenced what I thought about college going into it. I always thought that [sex] was really important in school and you wanted to do as much of it as possible.
(Carl, fraternity member)

It is not only the media, but interaction with older friends and mentors that also contributed to Carl’s perception of sex in college. Others among my participants shared their own experiences of encountering college and college sexuality before they came to

of sex comedy films. Sex is a major plot point within these movies and is often pursued by the main characters.

college themselves. Aside from figures like camp mentors, this occurred through contact with older siblings, friends and partners who had already entered the college scene. These contacts not only shared stories, but also opportunities for visits where my respondents might have encountered sex on campus before they themselves are a part of the community. Henry, a fraternity member, shares an experience like this when he discussed visiting his girlfriend, who was in college.

I feel like being there, that was where I had my first experience of what supposed college sex life was like. It was pretty shocking to me one time when her roommate got really drunk and then had sex with some guy who she had just met, and I had kinda met too because we'd all been talking. Later that night she comes out and me and my girlfriend are still hanging out and she's crying about it, and was like 'that was so bad,' and I was like 'Yeah, that was really bad.'

(Henry, fraternity member)

We can see here that not being in college does not preclude someone from experiencing sexuality within the college sphere. In this case, seeing an instance of hookup culture under the influence of alcohol and the possible regret that can occur and carry implications of sexual assault unbeknownst to this participant. The presence of experiences like this for pre-college men may send the message that such experiences are normal or acceptable. Even though Henry acknowledges that 'that was really bad,' this experience still sent a message to him about what sex in college is all about. In this case, a message that sex has to do with drinking and a lack of concern on the part of the man for women's experiences.

The preconception of college as a sexual space stayed with my respondents long after they had entered college, and they mentioned various methods of discovering such information, from learning about it through media, friends and mentors sharing their experiences and even being in the space and connecting with how sex in college occurs.

Thus, even before entering into the college community, some individuals are gaining ideas of the types of sexual behaviors that are occurring on campus as well as learning that such a culture actually exists in a form more definite than stories or films. In the case of Henry, he also learned about the relationship between alcohol and sex on the college campus and who may be negatively impacted by these experiences.

Implied navigation of sexual culture. Another theme that emerged from my interviews was that men were aware of the sexual culture once they appeared on the college campus. However, this did not necessarily mean that they personally were engaging with it and for some, the sex culture was less apparent than for others. However, everyone shared experiences where they encountered or observed sex culture within the University of Michigan campus. This was frequently discussed among my participants in the context of parties and drinking culture during their early campus experiences.

An example of a less participatory individual was Floyd, a co-op resident, who comes from a conservative Christian high school. He expressed that his friends from home look down upon partying and drinking and they would probably judge him if they found out that he drank at all. He expressed that he had only had a couple of hook-ups, which he defined as a fling that's just kissing. He had not had any experience on campus beyond a couple of dates and with his girlfriend in high school, though that was a non-sexual relationship, as sexual behavior was 'frowned upon.' Even though Floyd had not participated extensively in sexuality practice or hook-up culture, he became aware of "the culture shock of welcome week" which he describes below:

People all of a sudden were all talking about all these hookups and stuff and I still thought they were making stuff up to sound cool or something. So I still didn't think it was that big of a thing.

So even though people talked about it you would be like, ‘you’re bull shitting’

A couple of my friends would talk about it and I was like ‘cool man, whatever you say.’

So you heard [about hook-up culture], but you didn’t quite believe it?

I still didn’t yeah.
(Floyd, co-op resident)

Whether or not he believed that hookups or other sexual activity were happening, this respondent was still being exposed to college as a sexual space, further showing that the college campus does exist as a sexual space even for those that are not engaging with sexuality extensively. This displays that the college sexual space affects everyone regardless of their level of participation. Therefore, men in college are implicated in sexual navigation regardless of whether or not they are actively engaging with sex and sexuality.

This holds true even for my least sexually engaged participant, Mac, another co-op member who, in his case, reported that he had no time outside of classes and was very overwhelmed with his course load. A self identified virgin, he hadn’t engaged in hook-ups, FWBRs, or committed relationships. He expresses that he “[did not think] he [could] think a time in his life when [he] was pursuing sex” and that he was “so busy that he can’t even think about people, friends even.” Yet, even with his non-engagement and barriers to engaging with sexuality and partner finding, he still felt like he was “missing out on something” in regards to his not having had a committed sexual relationship. Even though he was not engaged with sexuality and spent little to no time searching for partners, he still shared an experience where he heard other people “having sex in the room next door” when he was living in the dorm. Thus, even a non-active member of the sexual world that was overburdened with school was experiencing college as a sexual space due to other

members of his community, even if this means those that live in close proximity to him, were engaging in the sexual space of college.

Rikard, a resident of the co-operative system, was studying abroad and is originally from Germany. While he had a lot to say in regards to the differences between Germany and the United States, he had just as much to say about the existence of the university Party culture as anyone else did. He expressed that “sex is seen more open and casual in the [United States], [in the sense that] it’s more of a topic of conversations ... and happens more frequently as well, like going out and going home with someone the same night, short term stuff.” (Rikard, co-op resident). Given that his experience was being drawn from his time in America as a college student, it is likely that he was discussing his experiences on the college campus. He also went on to explain the frequency of sex in regards to “lots of things happening, and many parties [they] attended, so [sex is] ... a pretty frequent thing.” (Rikard, co-op resident).

Even though some individuals are detached from the culture of sex within the college campus, either through lack of participation or a large geographical distance before their attendance, they still have experiences with sex and sexuality within the borders of the college campus community. Their discussion of these experiences and how they view sex occurring on the college campus shows that this phenomenon is more than just rumors or media exaggeration or happenstance experiences that influenced my participants before they were a part of the college community. Instead, there is a real phenomenon of large scale sex and party culture in the university setting and that this is readily apparent even among individuals who do not engage in it extensively. The existence of such a space means that college age heterosexual men are navigating this space in desire and awareness. This

remains true whether or not their behavior is indicative of this navigation and whether they are a member of a fraternity or they live in a co-operative residence. This offers evidence that men in both communities are influenced in a broader sense by the college sexual space, and group influence is not isolated to their college-sub communities.

Creation and maintenance of the college party/sexual space. It is apparent that a college sexual culture exists and that students are impacted by it before they arrive at the college campus through social connection and media influence. Such a culture is also present and something that individuals navigate as they enter and attend the university, regardless of the extent to which they are sexually active. However, it is important to remember that while individuals experience a culture, they also take part in that culture and contribute to it. In this way, individuals have agency in creating the college campus as a sexual space, and that there are social factors that influence individuals in contributing to the college sexual culture.

One unique aspect of the college environment is that there is a drastic increase in the amount of independence that young adults gain while also creating a high density peer environment, as John, a co-op resident, discusses here.

Can you remember what your impressions of sex on the college campus were during your first week?

Well that's an interesting one because I'm from Ann Arbor. I did go to welcome week, I don't think they changed all that drastically in being at the University. Well I guess actually, what did change that first week is that I'd moved out of my parents's house... so I had my own bedroom albeit a tiny little hole in the wall and there was more of an attitude just because I was with my peers who were having sex ... and so then there was maybe a little more pressure, because everyone's going out, that [sex] is kind of a goal. It was just in my face a little bit more that my peers were having sex.

These influences are even more pronounced on a college campus such as the University of Michigan where 98% of 1st year students live in student housing.⁸ When so many newly independent young adults become exposed to one another, one of their major desires is to find a group of people that they enjoy being around. This is a major benefit of fraternity and co-operative housing environments as institutional group living situations they provide community. As expressed below by Steven, a fraternity member, and Charlie, a co-op resident, this is a major draw of these living situations.

What would you say is the biggest factor that led you to joining your community?

The fact that I didn't have a community when I first got here.

Why would you say that was the biggest factor?

It sucked, you know? I didn't know anyone, I wasn't having a good time, I was living on North Campus, in Northwood. It just sucked. And I had family members who did Greek Life, I was familiar with Greek Life, the idea of Greek Life and I knew that this would be a quick way to meet people.
(Steven, fraternity member)

I really didn't make many close friends my freshmen year when I lived in my dorm. I felt like my dorm was very Greek Life heavy, and I didn't really connect with a lot of people. So, I didn't really have many options for housing the following year ... [and] during my orientation here when I was living in South Quad for a couple of nights, I ended up at [my co-op] one of those nights because my orientation roommate knew someone there. So I've known about this place since I've been at Michigan and one night I went up there and was like 'woah, this seems like a really cool community filled with awesome people so I should live here so I can make some friends.'...

What would you say is the biggest factor that led you to joining a co-op?

The need for support and a social circle cause I really didn't have much. Most of the people I hung out with freshmen year I do not see ever. If at all since

⁸ Cited from the college board website

freshmen year. I kinda used the people that I hung out with freshmen year as a way to not feel completely alone.
(Charlie, co-op resident)

Both of these individuals were drawn to their communities as a result of an inability to find a community during their first year at the university. However, based on the commentary by Charlie at the beginning of his comments, it is clear that there are differences in what determines the choice to take part in co-ops versus fraternities. It is in these differences that begin to appear how these two living situations are formed as different cultural environments. These differences will be explored later on but right now, what is important to understand is that both co-operative housing and fraternities allow for strong senses of community where people find acceptance and group well being.

Fraternity men often talked about how impactful their brothers were to their college experience and how much they value their presence. This appeared many times in the appreciation of 'making a large community smaller' or 'being a part of something larger than yourself.' In some cases this was even discussed in direct comparison with their sexual behavior, as Michael, a fraternity member, "would probably trade all [his] sex for still having these relationships with [his fraternity brothers]." Co-operative members express similar sentiments of enjoying their community such as enjoying that there are 'always people around to hang out with' or that co-op people "are always on the lookout for one another" (Mac, co-op resident). Mac goes on to explain that "at the co-op there is always a lot of life and just a lot of things happening and it's a good model for people living together and dealing with conflict" (Mac, co-op resident). Once again, these quotations display differences with how members of the IFC and the ICC see their communities, fraternities

being more focused on the group itself and co-ops having more emphasis on the care that they provide. These differences will be expanded upon below.

Based on these sentiments of appreciating the communities that they've found, it is reasonable to infer that members of the IFC and ICC do absorb other members of their communities into their social circles. Thus, these spaces provide a sense of community to college students who decide to join them. They also provide a residential space that allows those living there access to a level of party culture that they have not had access to in the past. This type of connection was discussed in various capacities such as Frank, a co-op resident, whose biggest reason for joining a co-operative community was because he "wanted to smoke weed indoors." Fraternity members, such as Daniel, also expressed desire for party culture, and whose sense of party culture is gleaned through his idea of brotherhood.

You mentioned feeling the brotherhood, what does that mean to you?

Just a bunch of guys who you can fuck around with and have fun and go and party with. It's more than just partying but that's also a big part of it, 3 nights a week, that's half the week.

We can see that Daniel's sense of community in his fraternity, his sense of brotherhood, is tied in with the party culture. Overall, this pattern of partying within the community was much more pronounced in reports of my fraternity respondents exemplified by Carl when he shares "the organized consumption of [alcohol and drugs through] parties is ... definitely the cornerstone of Greek Life" (Carl, fraternity member).

However, party culture did appear in both types of communities, as co-op members expressed having parties in their places of residence, although this was particularly present in one of the co-operative communities that is "on [a main campus street] which is like the

party street ... frat row [and they have] probably 12 parties a year” (Frank, co-op resident). The difference is party cultures between fraternities and co-ops are perceptible for individuals in this community in the sense that [his co-op] “has the party co-op name and ... other co-ops [probably] look at [them] poorly” as a result of this type of culture (Frank, co-op resident). Described by another member of that house;

We’re probably the frattiest of the co-ops ... we’re not the ‘socially aware woke’⁹ alternative co-op types. There are a lot of very socially active and aware people and politically active people in our co-op, but [there are] a lot more people in it for ... being able to hang out with a lot of friends all at once and an easy going partyish atmosphere available a lot of the times. Sort of a less alternative co-op than a lot of the other ones ... like the vegan co-ops, we’re more like a group of party people except we’re not really like that. There are still aware and socially conscious people, it’s just in general less concentrated than in some of the other co-ops.
(Fredrick, co-op resident)

While it is important to remember that the IFC and ICC are made up of many sub-houses that can contain different cultural norms, patterns of party culture existed in both of these residential spaces. This suggests that party culture is not isolated to either one of them and therefore is likely part of the broader culture of the college space.

Beyond being a part of the party culture, my participants also saw the college sexual space as related to meeting women and dating. While there were a variety of answers that occurred, a frequent response to the question ‘where, do you think, is the best place to meet a girl?’ was at a party. This mentality is epitomized by several fraternity members who expressed sentiments similar to Michael in his explanation that sex “is more accessible ... I mean we have a party four times a week, girls are coming to us four times a week, they’re there and I live upstairs in the house” (Michael, fraternity member).

⁹ “Woke” is a description of people who feel they have an understanding of a concept that is greater than those around them. In this context, Fredrick is referring to those that feel they are more socially aware than others.

Through the description of these environments in my sample, we can see that the experience of sexuality in these communities is very much tied in with the party culture. Thus, these large group living situations contribute to the creation of the college campus as a sexual space. Simply by being a part of these communities we can see that my participants are simultaneously experiencing and creating the college sexual space. As individuals, they are experiencing this spaces through social interactions that set sex as the norm, as well as having instances of interaction with the sexuality on campus. However, as groups, they are holding parties, which have been linked to hookup culture, and therefore creating institutional perpetuation of the college campus as a sexual space.

The college environment is thus seen in my data to embody social constructions of sexuality. This is due to both newfound independence of college and community formation, allowing for sexual engagement, as well as through media depictions and representations from older siblings or parents. Furthermore, there are simply a lot of incoming 1st year students, so there are many opportunities to experience sexuality in new communities, whether this comes from the existing party culture or from finding a new group of friends. The men in my sample also had become part of institutional residential communities that played a hand in perpetuating and creating party culture and therefore contributed to the college campus as a sexual and party space.

All of the men in my study report experiencing a similar party and sex culture on the college campus, this was largely due to the social construction of college as a sexual and party space. Similarly, the men in my study discuss and share experiences of sex and commitment in similar ways as well. These are going to be their decisions of engaging in hookup culture, seeking out short term Friends with Benefits relationships, or seeking out

more committed relationships. Due to the college campus existing as a sexual space, this means that all men in this space are also engaging in interaction with potential partners, sexuality, and commitment

The relationship continuum. While my work did not explicitly analyze the degree to which men in my sample connected sex and commitment, it became clear that Olmstead's categories, committers, flexibles and recreationers, existed in my sample as well. Furthermore, they were all present in both fraternity and co-operative communities. Some men did outright express their connection of sex and commitment, such as Alexander, who discussed his definition of a hookup and that "a lot of people mean sex ... [but] hookup sounds too ... menial [of] a term for sex ... sex is supposed to mean something more than just a quick little thing" (Alexander, fraternity member). Mac, a member of a co-op, expresses similar ideology:

What are you looking for in terms of your sex life, are you looking for a hookup, or a girlfriend or friends with benefits, or something else?

Um, I really think just a [long term] girlfriend ... its kind of a foreign world to me so ... I can't really answer I guess ... I've never really been in a relationship... but what I'm looking for in a relationship is someone that would make me less selfish I guess. I'd want to be in a really meaningful relationship so I think sex would be a part of that and nothing else.

Alexander and Mac fell within the committer category of Olmstead's framework; however, this was not all of Olmstead's categories that became apparent. I also noticed distinct indications of recreationers as well. One such example was Daniel who talks about friends with benefits relationships as being a "convenient to always have something if he needed to blow some steam off" (Daniel, fraternity member). He also discussed how he was "surrounded by 10, 20 thousand girls... and [hooking-up was] a way to see what you like[d] and d[id not] like, and it [was] just fun" (Daniel, fraternity member). Daniel appeared to

engage in sex for exploration or having 'fun' and it did not seem to have any inclination towards a relationship or otherwise. These characteristics put him in Olmstead's recreationer category. Lastly, there were participants who discussed behaviors and ideas that would fit more along the lines of someone with a flexible connotation towards sexuality. For Charlie, hooking up is simply "making memories" something to "look back on years later and just laugh, like oh remember that time I hooked up with 3 girls at that party, that was funny" (Charlie, co-op resident). However, he also mentioned many times throughout his interview that once he moved into co-ops he "started meeting really cool people [and] had a better understanding of relationships and meaningful sex" (Charlie, co-op resident). This seems to be a contradiction, where sex and sexual activity can be both as insignificant as 'making memories' and can also have some meaning to it. This ideology aligns more with what Olmstead might call a flexible.

However, Olmstead does acknowledge that his findings may be contingent upon the developing mentalities of men as they progress throughout their college experience and cites this as an area for future research. Charlie's explanation of his changing definitions of sexuality when entering the co-operative community lends support to this possibility. Furthermore, this comment suggests that it is not simply college being a sexual space that influences the behavior of men, but instead that they can be impacted by organizational affiliation. The extent and meaning of this impact will be explored in greater detail in later sections, however this organizational influence is emblematic of changing levels of behavior and desire with regards to sexual commitment.

(Sexual) commitment behavior and desire. While some men expressed their feelings about sex and commitment, my study did not explicitly ask about the degree to

which the men in my study view sex as a subset of commitment. However, many men, regardless of whether or not they were in a relationship, described their behavior in college as engaging in many FWBRs or hook-ups. In this sense, my data is consistent with Olmstead's findings that college age men, in my study heterosexual men, engaged in a variety of causal sexual practices. My findings do challenge Olmstead in other ways, especially in the differentiation between committers, flexibles, and recreationers. While the discussed relationship desires in my sample varied greatly, from people simply wanting relationships, to people just wanting some female interaction to others wanting to make memories, all of my participants expressed interest in relationships, to some degree or another.

Daniel, a fraternity member, who seemed to be more involved in hook-up than many of my participants, still displayed feelings of relationship desire in various ways. He described himself as "not a relationship type guy, [he] get[s] bored pretty quickly so [he was] more [into] hookups or maybe friends with benefits but ... if the right girl came along [he] would definitely be down for a relationship." With this in mind we can see that he was more oriented towards casual relationships, but a committed relationship isn't out of his head. He even goes on to discuss someone that was more important to him.

Have you ever had a committed sexual relationship?

Like, a girlfriend?

Yeah, more along the lines of a girlfriend.

I guess, I don't know, I was in camp; it was 10th grade so I wasn't having sex yet. So probably not.

Ok, and how does that make you feel?

Um, I wish either we were having sex at that point or, but she's a special girl to me cause I've known her for a while, like I went to camp with her, so there's a little bit more there. We don't always talk all the time but when I got my job she texted me and was like 'hey I heard, I'm so happy for you.'

How would you describe the nature of that relationship for you? Would you describe it as special or romantic? Were you exclusive, were you dating other people at the same time?

Yeah, it was a little more exclusive. We were at camp so everything everyone did was everyone else's business. I mean like I said, we were young. So it wasn't anything as complex as it would be now ... but still it was like 'oh they're going out,' like everyone knew it. So we were kind of exclusive I guess.

How do you feel about her now?

I wish we could pick up where we left off ... we've hooked up a few times since, not sex cause she's had a few boyfriends, but every time she breaks up we kinda end up hooking up, [kissing and a little more but not sex]. Yeah, I don't know, I feel like everyone has that one girl and she's mine.

It is clear that Daniel engages in hookups quite a bit, he even talks about his best experiences hooking up with several girls in a single weekend, which, for him, meant kissing or making out. However, he still has the girl that he wishes he could have been with on a more serious level. He even alluded that their relationship was not based at all in sex and this is antithetical to his other behaviors in regards to college dating and relationship practice.

Another example seen in my data of the complication between commitment desire and commitment behavior was Conrad, a fraternity member who, based upon his behavior, could very much be placed in the committer category. The only hookups that he had engaged in were in the first 6 months of his 1st year in college and these came as a result of a hiatus in his committed relationship that he has had since his 1st year in high school. He explains this time below.

I had sex right when I got here ... I had a girlfriend all through high school, pretty much four years, we broke up [and I] came here. We were single for about 6 months freshmen year, we've been together since, she doesn't go here though.

...

We broke up basically [because] we were like 'we're gonna be far away, [we're] probably gonna want to have sex with people.' We both did [have sex with people] and now we're back together. So yeah, going into that freshmen year I was pretty intent on [having sex] I was like "... if I'm gonna break up with my girlfriend I'm gonna have sex."

Ok ... do you want to tell me a little bit about how that time was for you?

Yeah, it was weird. I wanted to stay together more than she did in the beginning... once I got here I was just like 'I'm gonna do me and let it be.' I kinda knew we were gonna be back together at some point so I was just letting me be free for a little bit.

Conrad goes on to explain that he "had sex with two girls during welcome week and afterward [he thought] that was kind of fucked up ... it was weird. [He] didn't really like it. [He] didn't know whether or not to reach out to them because [he] didn't want to be with them but [he] also didn't want to be an asshole." He found casual relationships unsatisfying and confusing but he absolutely "enjoy[ed] knowing that someone [was] committed to [him] and [he was] committed to her." Even though he and his girlfriend had gotten back together and he had found the committed relationship that he enjoys again, we can see that when this was not as stable he still engaged in low commitment hook-ups.

From these two cases, it becomes clear that the commitment desire and the commitment behavior of my participants are different concepts. Thus, it is necessary to rethink Olmstead's model of categorization to examine both sexual behavior among college age (heterosexual) men that also expresses their desire in relationships with commitment. In analyzing my data, I've begun to think of this as *The (Sexual) Relationship Continuum*.

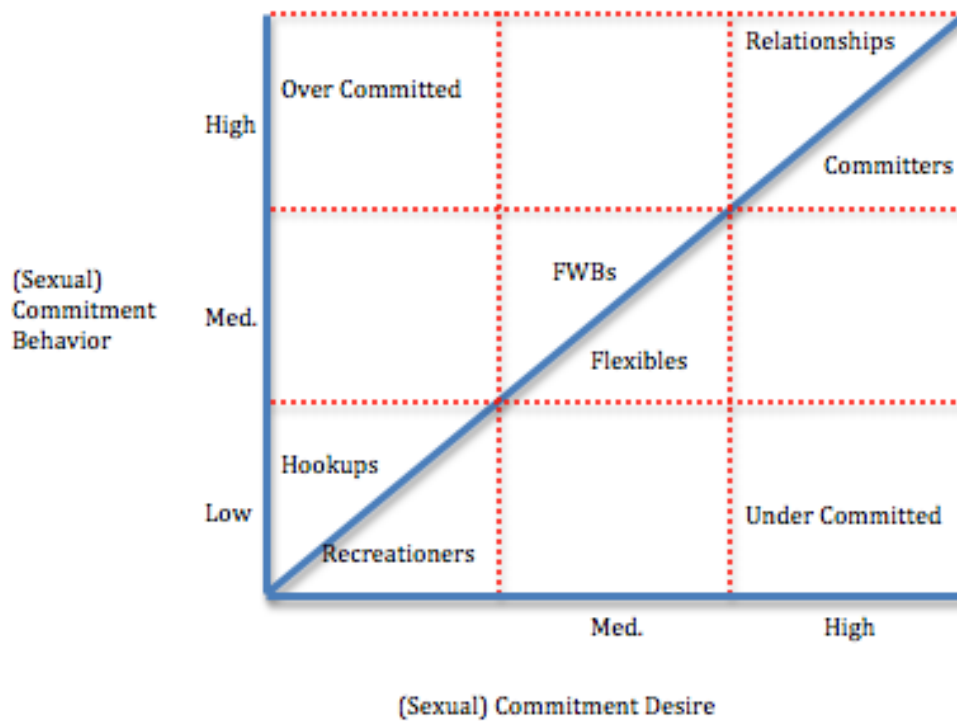


Figure 1. The (sexual) relationship continuum

Figure 1 describes The (Sexual) Relationship Continuum with desire situated on the x-axis and behavior on the y-axis. When a person’s level of desire matches their level of behavior on this scale, theoretically that person would find themselves along the line shown, they would find themselves in the actualized version of commitment that they desire. Olmstead’s categories become apparent at their intersection. Olmstead’s findings were not wrong, they just failed to account for the desire aspect that may influence behavior. By this logic, if a person’s behavior matches their desire, assuming a consensual/willing partner, they would find themselves in the categories that Olmstead outlined originally, that of recreationers, flexibles and committers.

However, relationships are more complicated than these categories. There are factors that affect commitment desire as well as commitment behavior. As stated above,

there are men who express desire in a high level of commitment yet engage in low level commitment behaviors and vice versa, where men desire hookups, but are engaging in more commitment. All of these people fall within the (Sexual) Relationship Continuum, including those who do not engage a lot with sex and sexuality. Thus the Relationship Continuum provides a model to analyze the commitment of an individual engaging with partners from both a behavioral and a desire standpoint.

Beyond the comparison of behavior and desire, it is important to remember that this model is looking at two different concepts and attempting to make sense of how they interact. This is an analysis of (1) men in my population's engagement in hookup culture and (2) their engagement in relationships. By and large, these concepts are not usually considered together. However, my data shows that they are much more connected than normally thought to be, particularly for heterosexual men on the college campus. Conrad, a fraternity member, expresses the connection between these two categories of behavior here;

There definitely is a strong hookup culture here that I see a lot, but I think a lot of the people partaking in that also have long term goals of being in a relationship and its just sort of one mechanism to getting to a relationship that doesn't always work out but sometimes does ... I don't think the two are exclusive from each other, and aiming for both ... [so] people have goals to be in a relationship but on any given night the goal is to hookup

Conrad sees behavior as having multiple motives and sees individuals as being capable of more than one type of goal. Such a mentality was present elsewhere in my sample in that "there [were] times when [men] go out for hookups and ... times when [men] want to continue them ... if [they] end up liking [girls] ... [they are] not necessarily looking for one thing" (Tyson, fraternity member). For some participants this duplicity of motivation was explained through loneliness where "promiscuity [was considered] a

symptom of loneliness” (James, co-op resident), implying that the real intent in hooking up is to assuage desire for a relationship. Others shared more radical views of how these two behaviors can be happening simultaneously:

Does what you’re looking for change whether you’re looking for more of a hookup versus more of a dating situation?

I guess I’m always looking for the dating situation but I also believe in an open relationship ... in all terms because if you really, truly are totally into each other in every way, you would never want to hook up with someone else and your open relationship would stay closed. That’s what I’m looking for.

(Frank, co-op resident)

Overall, it seems that hookups are almost an aspect of dating and relationship culture on the college campus as some participants “[could not] think of one relationship ... in college that didn’t start drunk” as a result of a hook-up (Conrad, fraternity member). This was explained many times throughout my sample among fraternity men as well as co-op men. John, a co-op resident articulated this dynamic well in that “initially [he] started [his] relationship because [he] was sexually interested in [his girlfriend] as well as her personality but [he] didn’t know her that well.” He went on to explain that “generally, whenever [he] start[s] any type of relationship, it starts in some type of physical attraction and then [sees] if [there is] compatible personality. It’s just easier to quickly determine if [two people] are physically compatible [rather] than emotionally or mentally; something that [he] use[d] to screen any type of relationship with.” This type of opinion among my participants necessitates a continuum approach to developing a model to assess commitment desire and behavior.

A continuum style is also necessary due to many of my participants’ description of ambiguous distinctions between hook-ups, FWBRs and committed relationships. Some

participants talked about how “what they look[ed] for in a hook-up is basically what [they] look[ed] for in a friendship” (Thomas, co-op resident) where as others discussed that “sometimes [they] enjoy[ed] the hook-up better than others ... [they] establish[ed] instances] where [they would] hook-up with a girl consistently which [was not] that different from friends with benefits” (Michael, fraternity member). This begins to dissolve the line between a hookup and a FWBR and a similar connection can be seen between FWBRs and committed sexual relationships as some people described that this type of relationship gets a “little more involved ... and friends with benefits push[es] a little more towards romantic connection” (Carl, fraternity member). Carl went on to explain further about his feelings towards the various commitment levels of relationships:

Why do you think you tend towards [friends with benefits relationships]?

If I’m out, and if I’m hitting it off with a girl and in my mind I’m saying “wow, I would never want to be with this girl long term,” I’d still bring her home if the opportunity presented itself. So, I guess by me saying that I’m looking for a friends with benefits isn’t 100% true ‘cause I wouldn’t pass up an opportunity to spend the night with somebody. So I guess ... I’m looking for a hookup, I realize in my head that a relationship would be more fulfilling, and if that hookup turns into a friends with benefit situation then everyone wins.

...

I don’t want to be hypocritical ‘cause I know I said that I value [relationships] but I’m [engaging in hookups], it’s kinda all connected for me at this point in my life in some way, shape, or form.

...

The more I talked about my experiences and heard myself talking about perspectives on my community and outside my community, between a hookup friends with benefit and being in a relationship, I think they’re more connected than I previously anticipated ... I feel like there’s more interconnection between all of those experiences than I previously treated them with.

Along with other evidence that I’ve gathered around the blending of (sexual) relationship categories, Carl’s comments solidify display the messiness of the relationship

categories of hook-ups, FWBRs and committed relationships. This solidifies my comfort in using the (Sexual) Relationship Continuum as a tool to describe the commitment behavior and desire among heterosexual men.

Relationship avoidance. My participants described relationships as desirable and more fulfilling than hook-ups. So, if they described relationships as better, more comfortable and more desirable, why then do we see such a prevalent hookup culture on college campuses? Based on my findings, I propose that, alongside more expected responses such as not being able to find someone they want to be with, this is due to a strong sense of relationship avoidance that exists during college that comes about as a result of the impermanent and hectic nature of the college environment. This simultaneously gives people within the college community the sense that they're too busy for relationships and a feeling of 'why bother becoming engaged in a relationship when I'm going to be leaving soon and won't be back.' Yet, when coupled with the desire for connection of my participants, this will lend to the hook-up culture in that men are not willing to commit but do want to find people to connect with.

Throughout my interaction with my sample, there were many instances in which my participants discussed college as a bad time to become romantically involved with a woman, a time when "life is ... really about struggling to figure out things and figure out where you belong and what you're aiming for" (Thomas, co-op resident). For some of the men in my sample, this meant a concern about how much they are trying to accomplish during this time in their lives. For Frank, a co-op resident, this meant that he was more oriented towards FWBRs and this was due to the fact that this type of relationship is "not that much work and [he] has a lot of time constraints." Another participant, Alexander, who

is a member of a fraternity, explained that he thinks relationships are realistic, but hard to find. He goes on to explain that he “d[id not] have a lot of time to think about [relationships] ... [since] school takes over [his] life ... [and he feels like] it [was] just not a priority.” It appears that since college is such a busy time for men, they are turned off of the idea of engaging in a relationship. This seems to also be a partial motivator in hookup culture as the same fraternity member explains:

What kinds of sexual relationships to you look for on campus ... do you tend towards relationships or tend towards hook-ups or somewhere in between?

I guess it depends on timing. Like, if I’m really busy in life and I don’t have time for relationships I’m more of a hookup guy but if I have time to get to know the girl, I’m more of a relationship type person.

Alexander would [have] much prefer[ed] to be in a relationship. However, during the hustle and bustle of his college life he did not have the time to dedicate to a relationship and therefore he did not spend mental energy dedicated to them. His resulting behavior leads him more towards hook-ups, and he is one of several men that expressed similar sentiments. Thus, we see the reinforcement of hook-up culture due to some men’s unwillingness to commit as a result of busy schedules.

The business of the college environment not only affect[ed] men who are not in committed relationships but also had an effect on those college men that had found a relationship. When confronted with a question about how realistic his relationship was, John admits that his relationship “is kind of a pipe dream” and that one of his frustrations of past relationships or potential partners was when they “expected more time than [he was] able to give,” (John, co-op resident) as this quickly devolved into his feelings of guilt that he was not as dedicated as his partner. For Phillip, a fraternity member who was also

in a relationship, this same question exposed that he and his girlfriend were “going to different places [after college and] ... it [was] one of those ‘lets just not talk about it now and cross that bridge when it comes’ kinda things.” He further expressed that “it was probably not gonna end up well.” Not only were these experiences present within my sample, but they were also representative of many other men who discussed the difficulties of having a relationship and how these were major factors in their relationship avoidance.

This last example of preparing to leave the college campus was one of the biggest reasons discussed for members of my sample not to engage in relationship commitment. As Frank explains, “[he was] in a state of transition ... [since] in 4 months he ha[d] to leave the state” and he would not be able to sustain a FWBR like he would want to” (Frank, co-op resident). This concept of locality was arguably more noticeable among the fraternity members of my sample, largely due to “all these kids from out of state [winding] up joining Greek Life because it was an easy way for all these kids ... to get together [with people from similar areas] and ... that’s kinda what drives Greek Life” (Francis, fraternity member). As a result of this high out-of-state presence, the fraternity men in my sample were much more aware of college as a temporary space, a time for them to be young “to grow as a person [and] let you try new things” (Phillip, fraternity member). This seemed to be a major contributing factor to relationship avoidance among my fraternity population.

Such an idea is reinforced by the fact that two members of the co-op community that were most relationship avoidant were both studying abroad from foreign countries. Though neither of them were particularly focused on engaging in excessive hookups or other casual sexual relationships, they were also very relationship avoidant due to the fact that they were far from home and did not have a long time horizon at U of M. As Ansel, a

French foreign exchange student explained, “in France [he] would try to find a good girl for a relationship and would be more sensitive and less about hookups, but [in America] he [was more focused on] ... sex without long-term commitments, though [he was not] particularly trying” (Ansel, co-op resident). Locality appears to have a large effect on whether or not people are willing to commit to relationships.

I want to reiterate however, that the relationships avoidance that men in my sample felt did not mitigate their relationship desire. Many of these men still desired the closeness that is associated with relationships despite their perceived inability or unwillingness to commit to one. Francis, a fraternity member, exemplified such contradicting feelings when he described his thoughts about what he was looking for in terms of a relationship:

I think its hard, I kinda got a little sad the other day ‘cause one of my friends went to date party with this girl that he really wanted to ask. He went and had an awesome time and he was like ‘yeah, I think I might text her later, just invite her over to see if she wants to hang out and watch a movie and chill and I was like ‘oh, I can’t even think of a girl that I’d want to invite over and do that with’ ... that’s kinda upsetting because I wish there was someone that I had those feelings towards. So, I think deep down we’re all kinda looking for that person but at the same time it’s senior year, I’m going to be going away to New York, I’m not really looking for anything serious.

As seen here, there are many factors that contributed to college age men being avoidant of relationships. Among them were simply aspects of college such as feeling too busy to engage in a relationship, but also there may be some indication that there was more relationship avoidance among fraternity members due to the higher concentration of out of state students meaning that they will be less locally based and therefore more likely to be moving away after their college experience.

Considering that men in both co-ops and fraternities desired and behaved in various levels of commitment, it is reasonable to assume that there are larger societal factors at

play in their relationship navigation. I contend that college is constructed within our society as a sexual space, and therefore, by entering this space, men have already begun their navigation of relationship commitment. This depends largely on their level of relationship avoidance which as displayed, is very much dependent on men's perception of college as a hectic and temporary space.

Section 2: (Hetero) Gender Politics

One of the major ways that these two communities differ is in the sense of who has access to membership. To be a member of the IFC you must be a man, meaning that during their stay in the house, fraternity men only engaged with male peers in their household and thus it is an entire community occupied, governed, operated and maintained by men. The ICC on the other hand is a multi-gendered institution, which means that the co-operative men in my sample had experiences where women and people who do not identify with the gender binary also live and have autonomy in their community and who have partial say in its governance. In fact, while each co-operative house has its own house constitution, the ICC recognizes gender as a social factor and all undergraduate oriented houses are mandated to have no more than 60 -70% one gender.

Such a difference in the makeup of communities changes the behavior of the men who reside in them. During their stay in the house, fraternity members existed with only men sharing their community living space. There was no discussion among my sample about their interaction with people of non-binary gender and their interaction with women was, for the most part, discussed through the lens of Greek Life interaction. This is the interaction between fraternities and sororities and this interaction had an influence in everything from joining the community, existing within the community, and whom they chose to interact with and engage with sexually. The deliberate mixed-gender makeup of ICC housing however creates a very different type of interaction around gender, coexisting, sexuality and sex discourse.

Joining communities. As expressed earlier a major reason why men in these communities chose to join them was due to the fact their search for a community in general, people they felt comfortable with and with whom they would be able to make the U of M community smaller. However, looking beyond this commonality other motivations begin to become apparent that differentiate ICC and IFC members in their motivations for joining their community. ICC members tended to err on the side of finding a practical living situation and discussed trying to find a community in which they felt comfortable and, more importantly, where cost was low. On the contrary, IFC members were much more focused on the social aspect and saw joining a fraternity as something that would gain them access to party scenes, women, and sex.

Joining co-operative housing. Looking beyond the motivation of finding a community, Co-operative housing men were primarily focused on the feasibility of their living environments, they discussed finding a community that they felt comfortable in and was cost effective. This feeling of comfort was discussed by many men in my co-operative housing sample and is epitomized by James who was slightly older than other members of my sample, in grad school at the time, and had lived in a co-op during his undergraduate education.

If you had to pick out one big, “oh, I joined a co-op for this reason” what do you think about in regards to that?

I would say I joined a co-op because it's a kind of place where you can really do anything [and] by do anything I mean if there's any project big or small or idea that you have for how to improve anything ... Its just a place where ideas can come to life and flourish ... and it's just the most empowering sort of living environment ... in every way that I can think of. That's why I'm all about it.

His perception of the co-operative community is that it gives a strong sense of support and empowers you to achieve the things that you want to achieve. This sense came in conjunction with a multitude of voices that expressed cost being a major factor in their joining of co-operative housing. This was especially a factor for Floyd, who “was a little on the fence, but it [was] so much cheaper ... 5,000 dollars cheaper than the dorms, and that’s about as much money as [he was] gonna make all summer.”

Whatever other reasons existed, it became clear throughout my interviews with ICC men was that gaining access to women was not a part of why they decided to join their communities. When posed with the question ‘was love or sex a factor in why you joined your community?’ their responses tended to be along the lines of “no, none at all” (Floyd, co-op resident) or “sex didn’t really play a role in [joining]” (Fredrick, co-op resident). When co-operative members did respond affirmatively to this question, they elaborated in ways that had more emphasis what its like to exist in the community; the feeling of unity that resulted from communities or having women as roommates which they enjoyed because, in the case of Charlie, he was “more in touch with [his] feminine side than other guys would be willing to acknowledge.” These types of responses have more to do with the gender politics that these men encounter while existing in ICC housing. Fraternity men answered this question very differently, which displays the differing gender politics that these men are engaging in when deciding to live in their respective residential organization.

Joining a fraternity. Just as with co-operative members, fraternity members discussed community friends at length as reasons for joining their community. However,

for fraternity members, this concept was much more connected to the concept of access to parties, women and sex. Alexander expresses that “being able to get into parties” was a factor in why he joined a fraternity and he further expresses that he knew that “[he] knew [love or sex] was a part of [the party scene].” For other members such as Akarsh, this connection was expressed more explicitly in the sense that he “Love[d] the parties ... just meeting girls all the time.” Once again, the connection between party culture and sex is reiterated. Even if community or parties were expressed as the main goal for joining a fraternity, “the girls [were] always a thought in the back of our[their] heads,” and they tend to be of the mentality of “there [are] gonna be girls there? Sign me up” (Carl, fraternity member). Therefore, fraternity membership is partially approached to gain access to women and sex.

One of the most emphasized examples of this was in the reasoning of Tyson, a member of a fraternity who shares experiences that suggest his decision to join a fraternity was directly related to receiving female attention.

Was having access to love or sex a factor in why you joined your community?

I want to say no for of the recording, but yeah. And not necessarily right away. I rushed in the fall and didn't get bid ... but when I experienced the four months of not being in Greek Life and saw every girl say “Hi, what's your name? Are you a freshmen? What frat are you in?” me saying “none” and them walking away, [it] got old fast.

So, I want to say no because that looks bad, but yeah. Not one of the ... top factors, but it definitely influenced my decision. I mean there is just more access and more opportunity to that and girls are more open to speaking with you and doing sexual stuff with you if you're involved ... people don't just turn their nose away when I say, “yeah, I'm involved in this Greek Life organization.”

Even though Tyson expresses that it was not a ‘top factor’ he also expresses that it had a large influence in his idealization of Greek Life affiliation. Furthermore, he expresses

that such a mentality 'looks bad' and he 'wanted to say no because of the recording' which may call into question how forthcoming he or other fraternity members were with this motivation for joining a fraternity. Tyson goes on to discuss this type of instance as his worst experience as well.

What would you say is your worst experience with regards to securing a sexual partner?

Freshmen year when I would tell girls that I wasn't involved in Greek Life and it was an automatic turn away ... I think that has to do with some of the ideas, the stigmas with Greek Life. Like, "oh you're Greek Life, you're hooking up with a geed¹⁰. Ugh" And that was definitely the worst cause I couldn't lie, but girls don't even know me but they know I'm not affiliated with anything so they just cancel me out.

...

Can you explain why you think that was the worst?

Yeah, just because I wasn't given the opportunity to prove myself as a good person. I showed no attributes, just my name, how old I was and what I was affiliated with. As soon as it was "none" [their response] was "goodbye." Even if they stuck around for conversation they weren't trying.

In Tyson's discussion of his worst experience on campus, his lack of affiliation to Greek Life led him to be dismissed by potential partners. This made him feel like he had no chance to get to know them through no fault of his own. Through his discussion of this experience, Tyson also offers a glimpse into how sex and partner acquisition is translated to a concept of status for those that exist within Greek Life. This holds consistent with findings that sorority women have reported that "hook ups occur most within the same tier[status] or in close proximity to one's tier[status]" (Benyas, 2014, p. 48). Furthermore, 15 of 23 respondents in this same study reported having boyfriends and 14 of these had partners within Greek Life. These findings suggest a pattern in sororities of prioritization of

¹⁰ "Geed" or G.D.I. stands for 'God Damn Independent,' a colloquial name among fraternity and sorority members for non-Greek Life affiliated college students.

fraternity men over non-affiliated men for both hook ups and relationships (Benyas, 2014, p.79). Status is a huge topic that, in its entirety, is beyond the scope of this project; however, it is briefly discussed below as it applies to fraternity and co-operative housing men and sexual activity.

Members of these two communities present themselves as different when it comes to their reasoning for joining the living situations that they did. While both fraternity men and co-operative men express the importance of their community to them and how finding that community was a method to make U of M smaller, co-operative members were much more focused on keeping costs low and finding a community that was supportive. Very few co-operative residents expressed gender in regards to sex as an aspect of joining their communities. Fraternity members on the other hand, whether explicitly or as a background thought, were interested in gaining access to women and sex as a part of their association with the IFC. Thus, there is evidence that fraternity men are engaging in (hetero) gender politics through an attempt to elevate one's status in pursuit of women or sex.

Existing within communities. While (hetero) gender politics appears as a motivation of fraternity men to join their communities for the purposes of access to women and sex, co-op men are less focused on this dynamic. However, once in these communities, men who were a part of both the IFC and the ICC were obligated to engage in (hetero) gender politics, as they existed as a part of the culture of both spaces. For fraternity men, this was expressed as an interaction largely with sororities and contained dynamics both among the fraternity members and between men and women. Co-op men on the other hand, encountered a broader definition of gender and a less structured format of (hetero) gender politics.

Mono gender experience. A huge factor in fraternity men's experience is that residents live only with other men and the gender politics that they experience with women are not in the context of living with them. Instead, women exist in a separate residential space. Such a dynamic allows for separate gender politics to take place; those amongst fraternity men and those between fraternity men and sorority women.

Hegemonic masculinity. Chief among the gender dynamics between men in fraternities was hegemonic masculinity. This was seen both from the men who felt as if they were constrained in their personality as well as those who seemed to be doing the constraining. Alexander was one of those men who felt as if he tends to be on the receiving end of this type of behavior. He describes his interaction with this dynamic below:

Can you walk me through an example ... [of] a time when you felt like you could really be yourself or maybe a time when you felt a little more constrained?

There are certain people that I can really be myself around, like my roommate is someone I can always be myself around. Its bad to say some people I don't feel comfortable being myself around, which is really bad to say ... It's not that I don't feel comfortable with it, its just that I'd rather not deal with the pain of them making fun, messing with me for it. It's just not worth my time.

Messing with you for being you?

Yeah, it's just not worth my time.

Such a dynamic clearly prevents individuals from feeling as if they can participate as full members of the group and have to hide who they are from people that are considered their brothers. This type of mentality, emblematic of complicit masculinity (Connell, 1997) discourages discord or disagreement and encourages yielding to the status quo. In other instances, hegemonic masculinity goes beyond discouraging deviance and into encouraging conformity. Michael gives a hypothetical example of such a situation:

Lets say we're playing beer pong, pre-gaming for a party on a Friday night and we see one of our brothers and we're like "come play beer pong." And he's like 'no, I have to go to the library.' We might be like "oh, pussy" or whatever. But we understand he needs to go to the library. We're not gonna be like, "dude, you have to come play" ... We're not discouraging you to go to the library, like, "you can't go to the library, you have to come party" ... we are kinda encouraging you to come play beer pong, but we understand.

While in this scenario the interaction may seem fairly innocuous, there were other examples where group enforcement of the status quo had a stronger effect. Some fraternity men refer to this type of behavior as 'the rabble' in which "people really quickly and dramatically will shoot down anything you say" in large groups (Henry, fraternity member). As Henry explains further:

You'd send out emails or something to the whole frat and people will eat you alive, they'll tear up everything that you say just because they think its funny. That's what you don't realize at first, it's just cause they think its funny ... the older guys who are used to it, like you'll say something and immediately 10 people will just crush you. So I was like, horrified by this but so I'm like "wow, like nobody is ok with the things that I think are socially alright." But the second that you learn to immediately be like "fuck you guys," to stand up for yourself and shoot all of their bullshit back at them, they immediately sort of respect it.

And the thing that was interesting to me going off of that, I'd been getting this vibe that the culture was kinda like that, but then I talked to someone individually and one of my friends was like "yeah, we should take Tango classes." So I ended up taking Tango classes with one of my friends from the frat. That's something that everyone else would be like "that's so fucking gay why are you doing that?" But then you're like "fuck you man, Tango is sick," and people will be like "it is kinda sick."

So, it's limiting in the way that people get in this culture where it's funny to shoot other people down because they don't know how to handle it. But once you learn to handle the constant rabble and everyone poking and prodding ... in the larger group ... learning to deal with that is really opening because now, compared to what I was like when I was younger, I'm way more comfortable if people say something offensive to shoot me down.

Here we see that the group culture in fraternities is filled with this type of hegemonic masculinity in which members are intentionally downplaying other men. Interestingly though, Michael's response to this behavior also displayed sentiments of

hegemonic masculinity. Thus, the reproduction of this hypermasculine behavior becomes apparent not only through group enforcement but also in respectable ways to respond to 'the rabble.' Instead, the message is sent that to counter hegemonic masculine behavior you must reciprocate.

While this practice of hegemonic masculinity may have the benefit of making some individuals more confident, it also has the added effect of influencing individuals' views about how they should be interacting sexually. Several participants brought up comments such as "If someone has sex with a really ugly girl, we make fun of them" (Daniel, fraternity member). As explained by other participants "there are a few kids that are like, 'you should be having so much sex ... those girls aren't that hot'" (Francis, fraternity member). So, there was some discussion of men being discouraged to engage in sexual behavior with women because they're not up to the standards of other men in the fraternity. This was also coupled with an idea that men should be having as much sex as possible – a clear indication of the prevalence of hookup culture in the fraternity system. Especially since, regardless of whether or not my participants reported enjoying hookup culture, men in both fraternities and co-ops described appearance as having a greater importance in hookup scenarios.

While some men discussed hooking up making them feel "special" (Daniel, fraternity member), other participants expressed that "there are some things that [they were] not intellectually proud of, but [they would] get fist bumps from the boys anyways" (Henry, fraternity member). This suggests that the cultivated mentality is towards sexual activity being positive, no matter what. However, there are many men throughout my study that suggested the exact opposite and in fact, discussed having bad experiences with hookups. Phillip shares an experience that could be categorized as sexual assault.

What do you think is your worst experience on campus with regards to securing a sexual partner?

I would probably say sophomore year, I blacked out one night and woke up with a girl in my bed who I did not want to hook up with but had been trying to hook up with me for a week or two. She made it very apparent that she wanted to hook up ... I was like "god damn it," checked my phone, saw her text being like "I'm coming over, lets hook up." I guess I was just drunk and did it.

Why do you think of that was the worst?

Just because I didn't consciously do it. I didn't remember it at all. It was kinda just like "well, what the hell?"

Like you felt like you were blacked out? You didn't even know what was happening? You didn't want to?

Nah, yeah, I mean, I don't know. I don't know if I would have [hooked up with her] if I was conscious about it. It was just not a great thing to wake up to.

Phillip was not interested in getting sexually or romantically involved with this individual. He appeared uncomfortable with the idea that this had happened and he didn't remember what had happened. Though he did not label this as sexual assault, this does call into question how fraternity men assess these types of situations.

In fraternity gender politics there are clear indications of hegemonic masculinity in men attempting to enforce sexual behavior or standards of female beauty onto their fraternity brothers. Furthermore, some men such as Alexander were representative of complicit masculinity, not actively addressing or pushing back against the controlling behavior of hegemonic masculinity, but simply ignoring it and letting it pass because it was less of a bother. These behaviors in combination suggests that not all men in fraternities exemplify hegemonic masculine ideals, yet the narrative is still maintained that a sex in general is a desirable activity and furthermore, that men in this community should want a higher 'class' of woman denoted by her appearance. The prevalence of this narrative

contributes the status culture of Greek Life and status between Greek men, as well as contributes to an expectation of hookup culture.

Mixers and Date Parties. While fraternity men engage in gender politics among themselves through hierarchical masculinities, largely driven by hegemonic masculinities and allowed by complicit masculinities, another set of gender politics became apparent when the fraternity men in my sample interacted with sororities. This behavior constitutes (hetero) gender politics as these are centered on sex and partner acquisition. Such interactions were expressed primarily in the forms of mixers and date parties¹¹ a large aspect of Greek Life. As Akarsh shared, “guys in fraternities almost exclusively hook up or have relationships with girls in sororities.” Akarsh also discussed how “the whole fraternity sorority system, it literally ... just promotes sex. That’s the whole point of it, to breed between fraternity and sorority people.” With this in mind, fraternity men are engaging with (hetero) gender practices through their interactions with sororities and influenced by a culture driven by hegemonic masculinity, which defines much of how they behave toward sex, sexuality, and women.

Several of my participants discussed how this was not simply a latent expectation, but instead “if you’re going to a mixer with a sorority girl ... especially the higher tiers ... you’re going to hookup, and they’ll be explicit [about] that” (Cooper, fraternity member). This is not exclusive to the fraternity system however as Akarsh shared how he had “seen ... emails [sent] to their littles¹² [that say] ‘be slutty tonight’ stuff like that.” The organized interactions between fraternities and sororities seem to be constructed around hooking up.

¹¹ ‘Mixers’ are organized social events in which a fraternity house hosts the members of a sorority and ‘Date Parties’ are more formal events where a member of a fraternity or a sorority ask someone to accompany them, usually to an off campus location.

¹² A ‘little’ in the context of a sorority is a newly initiated member.

“Date parties for example, that’s like a huge thing, [men] are just like ‘yeah, it’s a guaranteed lay” (Akarsh, former fraternity member). It’s easy to see that this begins to become an expected part of the culture for these men and sexual activity coincides with these (hetero) gender politics. However, these are more complicated than they originally appear though and fraternities and sororities are not created equal. However, this does call into question research that has displayed the prominence of the ‘traditional double standard,’ suggesting that fraternity men may be more accepting of women’s promiscuity than has been shown in the past.

Throughout Greek Life, there exists a tier system that defines their status. One aspect of Greek Life this defines is which sororities and fraternities go on mixers or date parties. These institutions vie for status amongst one another in an attempt to have the parties that they would like with the girls that they would like. As Conrad explains, his fraternity “mixed with three or four sororities, there [are] about 30 on campus, and [he] didn’t like that [some] wouldn’t even text [their] their social chair back.” The hierarchy of sororities and fraternities does not only have an effect on event planning on an institutional level however, this also has an effect on interpersonal selections of partners. In my sample of fraternity men, this meant having an influence on men’s interpersonal partner selection and goals. Henry, a former social chair for his fraternity shared an explicit story where sorority affiliation had an affect on men’s desire for that individual.

Do you know of men in your community who have not hooked up with someone because [she’s] a part of a certain community?

There’s definitely an undertone of [that] depending the age and how seriously someone takes the Greek community. [Guys] will avoid hooking up with someone just because of the sorority [she’s] in just because it’s a bad sorority or will hook up with someone that doesn’t meet their normal standards just because [she’s] in a good sorority.

I like to think that I don't abide by those rules but the sorority [and] fraternity system, there are very clear social classes almost within the fraternities and sororities. So some people take that to heart and would be really excited to talk to someone whose more 'upper class' than our usual suspects, I guess.

Can you think of an example of that?

I was the social chair so I'd set up people for date parties and people would be like 'eh, she's not very good' and I'd be like 'well she's in like Alpha Phi,' and they'd be like 'I'll do it.' Or they'd be like 'eh, I'm interested' and I'd be like 'ok, she's in Delta Phi Epsilon,' and they'd be like 'eh, no.' So, [there was] a very direct correlation often, especially when all you know is what the person looks like and what sorority they're in.

Not only does Henry's discussion of date party matching display how the status of various sororities have an effect on men's selection of who to interact with for organized Greek Life functions, it also reaffirms the level of (hetero) gender politics as an institutionalized aspect of Greek Life, as they have a designated person to organize date party partners. This type of status dynamic does not stop at selecting a date for a party; however, it also plays into who these men are interested in hooking up with.

Many throughout my sample of fraternity men discussed their potential female partners' sorority affiliation having an effect upon whether or not they were interested in pursuing a relationship with her. This ranged from a discussion of members of top tier sororities and how "all the guys [would] be like 'holy crap' and they'[d] all try to start and talk to her" (Alexander, fraternity member) to larger discussions of fraternity brothers and their mentalities towards hooking up with women in sororities.

Do you know of men in your community that have not hooked up with someone because of the community [the girl] is a part of?

...

I have some friends who ... are hooked on status. They only want to hook up with girls who are from the top tier sororities because they want people to know they're hooking up with some good-looking girls. So they might

disregard some people in other sororities because they don't like the status that they have.

Can you think of any examples of that? I know you mentioned some of your friends not wanting to hook up with some lower tier sororities but do you have any more specific examples?

Yeah, I had ... a friend who thought this girl was really cute and didn't know what sorority she was in. So they got together and they had a one-night stand and he found out during the one-night stand that she was in a certain organization that didn't fit his mold and he stopped seeing her because of it. He didn't really want to be affiliated with that ... I think if that same situation were to arise today rather than when it happened a few years ago, I think he would feel differently about it and realize how stupid it is to think about thing in that way. But that definitely happened.

(Carl, fraternity member)

Through such testimony, we can see that this type of mentality of aiming to have sexual relations with a 'higher class' of girl and avoiding a 'lower class' of girl is very much a part of the fraternity culture. These status dynamics with potential sexual partners and sex competitions among men in fraternities, as seen in later sections, are major ways in which these men interact with gender on a daily basis. Such dynamics are a clear way that IFC communities differ from ICC communities, where such dynamics appear to be absent. Not only are these dynamics less present, ICC communities actively reject these dynamics. However, this does not mean that men within the ICC do not navigate their own (hetero) gender dynamics that can cause their own complications.

Multi-gender experience. Living situations in the ICC, first and foremost, are different in regards to gender makeup. As discussed before, the ICC has specific requirements that each house must meet in regards to their residents' gender makeup. This means that, unlike fraternities where having solely men as residents allows for a separate category of gender politics, that of hegemonic masculinity, co-operative houses do not have such an exclusive space where men could be alone together and create such behavior. In

fact, men among my co-operative housing sample expressed strong anti-Greek Life sentiment, especially anti-fraternity sentiment, which was a reflection of these men's opinion on gender dynamics in general.

'Frat hate' and multi-gender dynamics. An aspect of co-op culture that came as a surprise to me was how much these spaces were against Greek affiliation as displayed with the (hetero) gender politics that occur among fraternity men, the status of potential partners is a factor in how they choose whether or not they want to engage sexually with a woman. This sentiment is different among the co-operative men that I interviewed and is summarized by Kyle in his discussion of his time rushing a fraternity and being around fraternity men.

How do you think your sex life or experiences differ from men in different communities from you?

...

I would say that we definitely see [sex] as less of a status thing ... From what I gathered from being with guys in fraternities and rushing a fraternity there's definitely a status, even with the girls that you're hanging out with; "are they attractive?" "Are they not attractive?" Whereas [co-op] stuff is more "oh you're hooking up with that person? Cool. Oh you're not? Cool." That's definitely a thing.

Cause their whole fraternity thing of "who are you mixing with?" and stuff like that, and that's a status symbol ...

I've talked about this with people in my house ... that for a lot of people [sex] is a status thing; "was she attractive?" "was she not attractive?" Whereas in the co-ops its more like "oh, she was really attractive. Cool. Good on you." But its not something that people actively seek out as a status thing.

For Kyle, there is a difference in the way that fraternity men and co-operative men perceive gender and how they interact with women and sex. Others among my co-operative sample describe this difference with disgust. "It's a big thing in co-operatives to have 'frat hate' ... [as] its an entirely different sort of culture involved in [fraternities] and even if the party and that sort of thing is similar" (Thomas, co-op resident) where fraternity

men have elected to live in an all male environment, and pay dues to live in this environment, some co-operative men express disliking this type of situation and instead feel “so awkward ... when... in a room with all males” (Thomas, co-op resident). This is reflected in other co-op members who discussed how “when a bunch of girls live together or a bunch of guys live together, there’s a certain divide and then they act differently” (Mac, co-op resident). Thus, what appears to be especially different between fraternity men and co-operative men is the treatment of gender and gender dynamics.

There is some evidence that suggests the difference may go beyond fraternity men and extend to Greek Life in general as “many [co-operative members] have bad opinions about frat guys or sorority girls being very superficial or rich douche bags” and that people “could judge you about [hooking up with a Greek Life member]” (Ansel, co-op resident). Another co-op member heard another man in the house had shared how “as soon as he found out that chick he was talking to was in a sorority he kinda let it fizzle out” (James, co-op resident). There is clearly some stigma in the co-ops around Greek affiliation or the attitudes that co-operative communities associate with these individuals. Yet in general, group expectation is something that individuals within co-ops dislike and is a large criticism of fraternities.

Do your peers ever express certain expectations about how your love life or your sex life should go?

No, not really ... When I talk to people about relationship issues they’ll give me suggestions about what they think I should do but nobody is creating expectations like, “you should be fucking this person at a party that you meet” or “you should be dating this person.” No one does that. I’m assuming it could be different for like a fraternity where people are like “if you’re not fucking a girl after a party then like, what are you doing here?” [Co-ops are] not like that at all. Nobody really cares what other people are doing. Its just like, each person is on their own journey and everyone understands that and accepts that.

(Charlie, co-op resident)

The act of sex for co-operative members is something they view as a personal choice and something that should be navigated without the influence of others on decisions. “[Co-op members] don’t have expectations for you, they’re more wondering what are your expectations” (Kyle, co-op resident). This is different than the dynamics seen within fraternity communities and it is interesting to note that the behaviors that co-operative men cite as creating this difference or creating a gender divide are exemplary of those found as a part of hegemonic masculinity, a category that relies heavily on displaying one’s own masculinity. Co-op men actively reject these types of characteristics as Charlie shared, “I never feel like I have to prove my masculinity” or in the case of Fredrick:

I want to convey to the people that I hook up with, just how strongly I don’t care if you go out and have sex with someone else. I’m not at all possessive that way. Like, I don’t care.

This concept of hegemonic masculinity means having more sexual conquests than other men. Men in co-ops did not endorse this view as strongly. This might suggest that co-operative communities do not have sex as a part of their (hetero) gender dynamics. However, this inference would be incorrect as co-operative, members frequently share experiences and ideology reflective of their sexual activity.

‘House hookups and house relationships. Even though men in co-operative communities do not accept behavior or ideas emblematic of hegemonic masculinity, hookup culture is still present in the space. In fact, many of my ICC participants felt that this was even more present within co-operative housing. When responding to the question ‘do you think that being a part of your community allows you more sexual opportunities than men from other communities?’ those among my ICC sample who said yes always cited the

mixed gendered quality of co-ops as having a major contributing factor, partially in the sense that women invite their female friends to parties and that allows “[co-op] parties to be more of a melting pot” (John, co-op resident) and partially in the sense that there is the opportunity for men in co-ops to engage in what some call a ‘house hookup,’ sexual encounters with other members of the house.

This is a very different gender dynamic than what occurs within fraternity communities, as it is not a type of (hetero) gender politic that is accessible to them. This type of interaction can happen as a one-time hookup or more along the lines of a FWB relationship. John experienced this type of relationship as he shares below.

[This was] The first hookup I ever had with anyone in my house ... There was a big group of people from the house and we all went out to a show at [a local bar] and when we were at the show there was a girl that I was attracted to but I didn’t think she was really all that sexually active or interested in pursuing anything sexually. So we were all dancing on the dance floor and there was that momentary excitement where we made eye contact and started dancing together and then started making out on the dance floor and then when we got home ... we had sex.

At that point ... for probably three or four months, it would happen once every week or two ... it was really eye contact based. If we were at the same place at the same time, which happened often because we were housemates, and it was the right time of night and we both had our work done then we would give each other a look and go to one of our bedrooms.

This type of behavior, given the multi-gendered living situation, happens spontaneously and can continue in a casual manner. Such a dynamic suggests that sex and sexuality is less centered in co-operative men’s interaction with (hetero) gender dynamics and therefore relationships exist sexually through proximity and in a non-sexual manner as a result of being housemates. As Fredrick discusses, about a relationship he had with a housemate, “[they] were kinda hooking up, but [they] also lived together, so [they would] just go to bed together sometimes [they] wouldn’t have sex or do anything [they would]

just sleep together in the same bed or hang out a little bit outside” (Fredrick, co-op resident). In this manner, hook ups and FWBRs in co-ops necessitate a greater sense of partner humanization due to their partners’ dual status as housemates. However, this is not to say that the ideal situation is to have someone in the same living space as a partner. In fact, Fredrick continues to share that “[he] didn’t want a relationship and it was getting too close and ... and it ended messily.”

This is also not a singular experience and Charlie shares another experience where having potential partners in the same living space can cause problems.

I generally meet people and get with people that are within my friend group. Which is like, not always the best thing because I’ll be in a room with like a bunch of my friends and be like ‘oh god, I’ve hooked up with like half the girls in this room.’ And they’re all aware of it too!

Do you want to tell me a little bit more about that type of situation? Does that feel uncomfortable for you?

Well let me tell you the drama that’s been happening. So, the guy that you interviewed ... Kyle ... he’s part of my close group of friends with the artists in the house. One of these girls I had hooked up with briefly over the summer but decided not to pursue things. Then we had a party last Friday and they hooked up and that really upset me and I was like ‘shit, I didn’t know I had these feelings, and I do, and this sucks!’ So, I was really upset for a couple of days. He was aware of it, the girl was aware of it. I expressed my emotions to her and ... I don’t know it was weird, and then two nights ago we had sex and it was just like ‘fuck.’

So those are some of the dynamics that happen in a co-op. There is intra-house drama like some years are much more incestuous where people are hooking up, multiple partners, polyamory, people are fucking, people are dating and sometimes that can lead into weird situations like the one that I’m currently in.

Charlie’s lament at his current situation and other comments about hooking up with other members of the house “being a bad idea” (Charlie, co-op resident) display some of the complications that can occur from the (hetero) gender politics that occur in co-operative housing communities. Despite these complications, co-operative members consistently

discussed having mixed gender housing as something that they most enjoyed about their living situation.

Men in co-ops, certainly express having quite a different set of (hetero) gender politics within their living situation than those in fraternities. The interaction with potential partners for fraternity members is much more planned out and scripted in the form of date parties and mixers, which means that their living spaces is made up entirely of men. This type of (hetero) gender politic allows for hegemonic masculinity to be present within the fraternity system. Co-operative housing, on the other hand experiences a space that is not exclusive to men. The multi-gendered aspect of their living situation is part of why they joined and why they enjoy their space. It also causes complications when they engage sexually or in romantic relationships with members of their house. Such differences in how these spaces interact with gender and (hetero) gender politics not only provides a different platform from which these men are shaping their college sexual relationships, but it also drastically influences how sex is discussed and addressed within these spaces.

Section 3: Sex Discourse

The practice of sexuality and how people engage in it is relatively similar across heterosexual men who are members of co-ops and fraternities. This is due primarily to the construction of college as a sexual space. However, the sex discourse in these two communities is vastly different, particularly with respect to these community members' introspection, discussion of sexual practices, and understanding of differing perspectives. While in co-operative communities, a large amount of time is spent understanding different sexual practices, orientations, and activity levels, fraternity communities spend little to no time engaged in these sorts of discussions, or, at the very least, this conversation is not as in-depth.

Co-operative discourse. Within co-operative communities, it is common to engage in conversation about sexuality. This occurs first and foremost around emphasizing the sexual safety, as well as understanding people's differences with regards to sexuality, such as understanding variation in attractiveness¹³ or sexual orientation. These discussions happen both on a one-on-one basis, but can also become part of the group culture. Participation in these types of conversations and activities is up to the individual void of active social pressure.

Safety and positivity. An important aspect of living in a Co-Operative community is respecting one another and helping people to be comfortable in their living space. With

¹³ 'Attractiveness' is sometimes considered synonymous with 'sexual orientation,' however it is more encompassing of other identities that a person may hold and doesn't necessitate sexual activity. This term is frequently used among LGBTQIA+ communities, especially among gender-non-conforming people, to describe their attraction to others.

<http://elixher.com/from-isolation-to-creation-dr-kofi-adoma-on-attractiveness-and-intersectionality/>

regards to sex, there is a strong norm that people should engage with sex in a safe, consensual and mindful way. As John explains, this is a main tenet of living in the co-op. It doesn't just stop with consent. It informs how people within the co-ops care for one another.

We all believe that you should be able to have sex with who you want to, when you want to, that consent is a big big deal. A big thing about the co-ops is promoting safe places to live, and safe places for your mental well-being. So we all believe that sex is a lot of fun but it needs to be safe.
(Kyle, co-op resident)

Engaging in sex in a safe way is an important part of being in the community.

Furthermore, Kyle expressed a sex positive view, which appears to be an important part of being in the co-ops:

Do your peers ever express certain aspects of how your love life or your sex life should go?

[Chuckle] No, definitely not. My friends know that I have this tenuous thing in New York that's been on and off for a while as well as my non-exclusive relationships here and no one ever questions each other really. If people start to get kinda cute and cuddly people are just like 'that's really cute.'
I think that's the ... general thing. We're well aware of each other's [connections]. Particularly if people are couples, house couples or people have a partner outside the house that spends a ton of time in the house; people are aware and very supportive. We generally just become friends with each other's partners. That's the nature of it I think.
I think people just assume you know what you're doing and you're loving how you love and living how you live.
(Thomas, co-op resident)

While living in the co-op clearly contains sex positive messages, ensuring the safety and comfort of other people in the house doesn't stop at being positive about sex. It also includes understanding that people have different mindsets or mentalities towards sex, depending on their social identities. As formerly shown gender is clearly one that is particularly apparent in the co-operative system and there is an awareness different

experiences resulting from gender identity. John displayed this when explained that sex and parties have very different meanings for women.

Do you think your idea of sex on the college campus changed throughout your time here?

Not necessarily as much through my own interactions as much as things I heard. I wasn't as aware of the rape culture on campus when I was coming in as I am now because its something that is a lot more discussed among my peers. I kinda had an idealistic view of [sex on campus] coming in. Of everyone being pro sex as opposed to some people being pro sex and other people feeling pressured to engage... [I've become] more aware of the dangers that come with the expectations of having sex. ... It's something that's talked about more among college students than high school students. Its just something that you see on Facebook, people share it, its just in the social sphere that its pretty commonly known, at least among my social spheres that there's kinda a big problem with the way that parties put women at risk.

Notice here that he is discussing how dominant culture does not address the dangers of party culture for women. Being able to understand party culture from a woman's perspective is at least partially due to his participation in co-operative communities and culture. Therefore, this learning seems to be an overall part of being in co-operative housing.

Understanding. In a group sense, the co-operative culture provides opportunities to engage further in this understanding or learning oriented sex discourse. This occurs very strongly with the topic of attractionality. This is apparent when with multiple discussions of the Kinsey scale among participants who live in different co-ops. One such interaction with this concept is when Charlie mentions having a "Kinsey Scale¹⁴ up on the chalk board [where] everyone wrote where they [fell on the scale]." This is not only representative that

¹⁴ The Kinsey Scale, also called the Heterosexual-Homosexual rating scale attempts to describe a persons sexual experience or attraction at a given time. Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell R. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin published this in 1948 as a part of *Sexual Behavior of the Human Male*.

the co-operative community actively spends time trying to understand the differences between them, the fact that “it was really evenly distributed,” displays that there are different types of attractionality that are present in the community for others to understand. (Charlie, co-op resident) This participant even goes on to say, “I’m trying to count the number of straight guys in my house”, and determines that he “thinks there’s about six of [them]” (Charlie, co-op resident). This displays that heterosexual identifying men not only are the non-majority in his house, this is also known and sought to be understood.

Here we are seeing the active intention of the group to understand one another on the level of attractionality. While it is not clear from my data if this was an official aspect of the house discourse or something that arose naturally in conversation, having group sex discourse such as this helps to provide a culture in which conversations among individuals can take place. As seen below, this participant shares an example of discussing with his housemate about specific likes and dislikes of sexuality.

Do you think that members of your community have similar or different views towards sex that you do?

I was actually just talking about this last night, because we had an open mic and I was talking about this with one of my good friends, I think that we all have a similar view, but its not the exact same ... I think [consent and safety] a[re] common theme[s], and how people go about having sex, what they do during sex, that’s completely different for each person. Like there are girls who are into much more weirder stuff and I’m into much more normal stuff and everything in between.

Can you give examples of what’s some of that weirder stuff?

Yeah! Alright, so there’s someone in the house that’s into BDSM, or whatever that is, like being tied up and everything, but she goes about it very safe. Like, they fill out contracts before they do all that stuff. But, then, I think that’s on the weirder end, ‘weird’ makes it sound bad, but its not a bad thing, you’re into what you’re into. Whereas, me, I’m just kinda basic, we’re gonna do what

we're gonna do and I know there's a lot of guys in the house that are just like me, and I also know there are a lot of people that are into Kinkier stuff like being tied up, playing with ice and shit. I don't know what goes on.
(Kyle, co-op resident)

Notice here that he is not only discussing understanding of other people's behaviors. He is doing much more than just that. He is working to understand those differences while also mixing that understanding with other important values within the co-op community including those that we've discussed already; sex positivity and safety. Kyle even follows this explanation with how he appreciates the ability to understand that culture as displayed below.

How do you feel about those similarities and differences between yourself and your fellow co-op members?

I like it, I think its cool. Even though I would never participate in it, its nice to see or get a perspective on what that is actually like. I feel like sex is so taboo to talk about with guys, especially if you're into weirder stuff, that people are just like 'yeah, we don't want to hear about it, we do like 4 positions and then we're done.' But I think its so interesting that there's a whole subculture of that that I get to be exposed to without being actually in it. Which I think is really cool. I like it a lot.

See here that this participant is excited by the fact that he can be exposed to that culture and he appreciates his ability to have that type of conversation which he feels is usually not acceptable for men to engage in. Furthermore, he is humanizing a person within the culture with the idea of 'weird' sound like a bad thing but it's not. While he may not be interested in participating in BDSM or Kink culture, he has the opportunity to engage knowledgably with the people that are. The effect of this is both the humanization of people that are different and provides an opportunity to explore if one should choose to do so.

Exploration. Beyond simply understanding of one another and different identities, the co-operative community also provides opportunities to explore different ways of

thinking about or enacting sex. However, it is important to remember that individuals are able to take part in this exploration completely to the extent that they wish to.

One example of this type of exploration is with same sex sexuality. For the men in my study, this was generally nothing beyond kissing, and although occasionally fraternity men expressed engaging in this type of behavior, this primarily was found in the co-operative side of my sample. In fact, 7 of my 12 co-operative housing participants, who are all identifying as heterosexual by taking part in my study, reported engaging in kissing another man or would consider engaging in same sex sexuality to some degree. This compares to 3 of my 12 fraternity men, 2 of whom qualified their willingness to engage in same sex sexuality on if “there was a woman involved too,” (Tyson, fraternity member) and “there was no touching” (Daniel, fraternity member). Such contrast could indicate people with different mentalities being attracted to co-ops and fraternities but also contributes to the notion of co-ops as a more experimental space.

The experiences with kissing other men among co-op residents largely occurred in party settings and under the influence of alcohol. Thomas, a co-op member, discusses one such instance below.

Have you ever had a sexual experience with another man?

Not a sexual experience but [I] made out with [another man] and things like that, that’s about it.

Ok, would you mind telling me a little bit about that?

Yeah ... the first two times it was at one party and then, I don’t know, one of my friend’s boyfriends and her when she was right there and she basically told us to make out and I was like ‘yeah, I’m that kind of person, I don’t see why not,’ so I did. Then, pretty soon after that a friend of mine ... who I’ve known since freshmen year was making out with a girl, a housemate of mine, and then, kinda strange, I made out with her, and she made out with him, and

then I made out with him. It was a whole thing. It was in our kitchen it wasn't a nice exclusive thing, it was just, sort of, a happening thing.

Then, since that, I've made out with one of my housemates ... just for funsies I guess, at a bar. Not even drunk just like 'he he he...' I don't internalize them as like things I'm looking for sexually so much as I just look at them as experiences.

This participant clearly has had several experiences where he is open about displaying sexuality towards other men, even though he views "making out as fundamentally different than sex" he is still comfortable displaying same sex sexuality. However, it is important to remember that these types of behaviors are voluntary and those that do not want to take part in them by no means have an obligation to do so. Fredrick for instance shares an experience where he had this opportunity but decides not to take it.

Would you ever consider engaging in a sexual act with another man?

No. We were talking about the Kinsey Scale the other night, and how sexuality is on a continuum and everything. I wouldn't consider myself the straightest of the straight ... I can find other men attractive I guess. There's this guy that I live with, who I'm pretty good friends with and he was really drunk, and I'd always thought that he was a pretty straight guy, but there's this freewheeling sexuality idea in the co-ops and so he was making out with some dudes that night. Half as a joke, but I also think he was giving it a shot, he had just gone through a breakup and stuff. So he was like "hey Fredrick, we haven't made out tonight" and I was like "yeah, not for me ... but I find you attractive [and] you're a good-looking man. I admire you and you're a cool guy and I find you attractive but I searched within myself and I don't want to make out with you right now."

Here we see that it is not necessary to engage in same sex exploration if the individual does not want to. Furthermore, this interaction is very engaged with sex safety and living comfort as discussed before as a major part of the sex discourse within co-ops. Because the friend of Fredrick engaged in consent practices in this interaction, this was

truly posed as an opportunity and therefore the option was also given for Fredrick to deny this request and maintain his boundary of same sex sexuality.

John was another participant who had engaged in same sex kissing fairly frequently, though only in “goofy party setting[s],” and he had one such instance fairly recently before his interview. In this instance, “he [had a kiss] recently with a guy who was completely naked ... [though] he had his underpants on.” This experience of same-sex sexual interaction is emblematic of another unique aspect of the co-operative sexual culture and discourse; the practice of social nudity. This “happens most frequently late at night, 2 am and there’s a group of six people still awake and probably three of them would be fine getting naked in a group of people that they didn’t know as well. So then those three get naked first and then everyone else kinda eases into it” (John, co-op resident). Yet again, we see that this is a challenge by choice type behavior and there is not a social obligation to engage in such a way.

Such social nudity was sometimes discussed as bordering on orgy culture, this was described as an “orgy ghost culture” in that “it no longer really exists but everyone talks about it an jokes about it” (John, co-op resident). This participant even talked about the potential of how he would behave in regards to an orgy given that he has a girlfriend. So, while they may be jokes, they are also emblematic of a real possibility that this participant may have to navigate in the future based upon his planning. These jokes are emblematic of a level of comfort that co-op members would like to encourage as Thomas, explains “a [co-op] orgy was sort of a joke for a while. Not that [he] wanted to get an orgy off the ground, but [he] did want to make people more comfortable for a while and sure enough” this type of joke eventually led to a social nudity situation after people had come back from a party

one night. Such discourse seems to connect social nudity with sexuality by means of group sex. However, while social nudity is fairly common within co-op communities, it is also important to recognize it is not necessarily this way. As Howard, another co-op resident described some of his “housemates are into hanging out without clothes ... and [he doesn’t] think that people [outside his community] ... could perceive [social nudity] as not sexual [but] that’s how it is”.

Ultimately, this type of exploration dynamic is characterized by something John said in that he “just wants everyone to be happy... [to achieve] the highest ratio of orgasms to drama.” Some people are more sex positive than he is and some people are more concerned about drama, everyone should “do what they want, and if they want to tell [him] about it then tell [him] about it, but if they’re not happy, then we’ll do what we can to help them out.” However, even though a low amount of drama is desired within co-operative communities, this does not always mean that a low amount of drama is achieved as shown earlier in the (hetero) gender politics in these communities.

Fraternity discourse. While co-operative sex discourse centers on safety, understanding and exploration, the conversation within fraternities is far less intellectual and exploratory. As Henry expressed, “people don’t really have any serious conversations about their personal views about sex.” However, this does not mean that fraternity sex discourse doesn’t happen. Quite the contrary, sex is a common staple of their intra-group discussion. As another fraternity member, Michael, discusses:

Do you think that members of your community have similar or different viewpoints towards sex as you do?

Similar, I mean, it depends on the person, but yeah. It’s just this whole like, do you have a girlfriend. Are you having love sex or random sex ... everyone

understands that there's different kinds of sex. So I'm pretty sure everyone's in the same boat.

...

What makes you say that in terms of people having similar viewpoints?

Just through my experiences, talking to people about sex. Sex is probably one of the most talked about subjects. So I just gain peoples' ideas and they seem pretty similar. I don't have anyone that's waiting until marriage or anything, that's sort of an outdated [concept].

You said that [sex] is one of the most talked about things. How do those conversations usually go?

People are just curious. Like, lets say they saw you with a girl last night, they'll be like 'yo, did you end up having sex with her?' ... people are just generally curious [about] what goes on and what people are doing. People are always trying to figure out whose hooking up with who, what's going on ... its always interesting to see who [has sex].

From this participant's commentary, we can see that fraternity discussion about sex generally consists of whether or not you are in a relationship or not and whether or not you're having 'love sex or random sex.' After some prodding, Henry also mentioned that fraternity brothers might ask questions like "Was she crazy? And things like that" but other than that he feels that "everyone pretty much has similar sex at this point." Furthermore, fraternity sex discourse on the other hand has strong tones of dehumanization of partners and group expectation, which are also very heavily influenced by individuals' navigation of status within their community. This has the effect of encouraging conformity to the social norm when it comes to the topics of sex, sexuality and relationships.

Dehumanization of partners. As suggested earlier, due to the multi-gender quality of ICC living situations, co-op men had a tendency to view their partners in humanizing ways. Fraternity men, on the other hand, had an antithetical way of addressing discussing their partners. Frequently, women were referred to in a dehumanizing manner in fraternities such as being counted as a part of a weekend hookup tally. For Daniel, this

becomes “a competition [between him and his friends on] who can have sex with the most girls ... with a quality component” where the prize bragging rights for those friends to say something along the lines of “I fucked two girls this weekend, what’d you do? Bitch.” This type of dehumanization and competition appears in other language that is used by fraternity members as well. As Tyson describes below,

Do your peers ever express certain expectations about how your love life or your sex life should go?

Yes, now here’s where the stigmas come in. There are people who use the term ‘bodies,’ like get ‘get bodies’ in terms of girls, like ‘add ‘em to the count.’ There [are] all these phrases that come in and they’re more like jokes ... not jokes at girls’ expense, don’t get me wrong here recording. But they’re phrases that people say in passing and they’re not taken seriously, at least not by me. But that stuff exists.

This behavior could simply be enacted because, in the case of Daniel, hooking up makes him feel “special,” however, they then go on to enact hegemonic masculinity practices in their presentation of this to their peer group both with their friends and “bragging about how many [women] or who they’ve slept with [in group messages]” (Conrad, fraternity member). Thus, engaging in this type of discourse among fraternity brothers appears to be a method to bolster one’s status among peers, not just to be with women. Notice that in these instances, hooking up with women is quantified and discussed among fraternity brothers in a way that bolsters their own status as opposed to one that defines the woman in any way beyond objectification. In this way, these members are creating a social status that is enhanced by the act of hooking up with women, and therefore, there is a social precedent established where engaging in hook up culture is socially deigned as desirable.

As I am part of the same college community as the population that I am studying, I have also encountered the term ‘bodies’ being used to count one’s sexual partners. However, those that I have encountered using such terminology have been members of sororities rather than fraternities. This is still language that dehumanizes, but this experience calls into question whether this is a fraternity phenomenon or a Greek Life phenomenon.

Social expectation. With aspects of intra-group status beginning to materialize in regards to keeping track of the number and quality of sexual partners, this begins to show how the practice of hegemonic masculinity plays out within fraternities. There is an expectation that everyone tries to become the most masculine of men and this discourse was only present within my fraternity sample. As one participant explains, “when I was single and living in the house, the expectation was to be with a lot of people.” (Michael, fraternity member) In the eyes of this participant, now that he has a girlfriend, he doesn’t have to acquire as many new partners. However, being in a relationship does not preclude an individual from this expectation of promiscuity. Conrad, the fraternity member who had been in the same relationship since high school, only being separated for a brief period during his first year at the university had the following to say about his fraternity brothers’ expectation:

Do your peers ever express certain expectations about how your love life or your sex life should go?

Not to me personally, my relationship is pretty set in stone. But I think people definitely have expectations of other people. So like, the kid in our pledge class that always hooked up with the most girls, he has a girlfriend now and people make fun of him. It’s just kinda funny because no one ever makes fun of me for having a girlfriend. But since he’s expected, since he has this reputation where he’s hooking up with lots of girls, he gets made fun of for it. Not with harmful intent, just sorta jabbing at him. But still, its there and

there's a reason it happens with him and not with me and with other people's girlfriends.

So yeah, I think expectations are definitely there for other people to have a lot of sex or hook up with a lot of girls.

Conrad clearly sees the expectation of being sexually promiscuous within the fraternity system. While he may not experience it himself due to his longstanding relationship, he still sees how it affects others, especially those individuals who have been sexually promiscuous in the past. As discussed earlier, college is constructed by society as a sexual space. Assuming the necessary capital resources are available, those who are particularly interested in taking part in such a space are more likely to find themselves a part of the fraternity scene because of the fraternities' social reputation. Given this information of the social expectation to continue such behavior, when combined with the evident contribution of hegemonic masculinity, fraternities' perpetuation of hook up culture becomes more apparent and, while extremely hard to categorize, fraternity members' enforcement of conformity to the social norm emerges.

In regards to the discourses around sex and sexuality in fraternity and co-op housing, what appears to be truly different is the way in which these groups engage in the conversation. For fraternities, this discussion is much more focused around 'if,' and 'with who' type questions. This inquiry when combined with hyper-masculine practices sets a precedent and higher status association to the practice of hooking up. Co-operative communities on the other hand engage in much deeper conversations that are focused on the 'how' and 'what' type questions. They inquire about likes and dislikes of sex and sexuality as well as delving deeper into topics such as attractionality, sexual orientation as

well as place a high emphasis on the safety around sexual practice; discourse focused on understanding and comfort

Discussion and Conclusion

This project was motivated by the surprisingly scant research on non-violent sexual behavior of college men. I sought to understand *how college-aged heterosexual men navigate engaging with sexual partners, the meanings they make of these relationships, and the effects of their residential communities on their sexual behavior and sex discourse.*

Throughout my research, I found that men in college—irrespective of their affiliation to co-operative housing or fraternity membership—interact in similar ways with regards to sexuality and relationships. This behavior is promoted by the college party culture and its connection both to hook ups and dating. These cultural influences lead college age men to have casual sex in college and to avoid relationships, despite their interest in relationships and outside evidence that suggests hooking up is not an experience that most college students fe[el] positively about” (Owen et al., 2010, p.661). Men avoid relationships because they perceive college as a temporary space. In addition, men have high course loads and little time leading them to dislike the idea of committing to one person. This idea of relationships avoidance contributes to the hook-up culture of the college space in general. However, this mentality is more pronounced among fraternity men, which may be a result of higher out-of-state student presence leading to a greater cultural awareness of the temporary nature of their college environment. Foreign exchange students who lived in co-ops expressed similar sentiments lending support to this possibility.

Though IFC and ICC residents were similar in regards to thoughts on sex and relationships and how they engaged with their level of commitment on the college campus, the fraternity and co-op spaces were different in regards to gender of residents and

therefore influenced how these men interacted with (hetero) gender politics. Fraternity men, who live in a single gendered space, show indications of hegemonic masculinity and complicit masculinity influencing their social dynamics. Their interactions with women are often planned, scripted, and very much focused on sex. Co-op men, on the other hand, live in a multi - gendered living situation, where not only are there anti-Greek Life sentiments, but there is also a more spontaneous version of hookup culture, even though this does cause some issues for these men in sharing living spaces with their past or potential partners.

Given that these two spaces have different gender make ups, the sexual discourse among IFC and ICC communities is also different. While fraternity members are more focused on questions such as 'if' and 'with who,' questions aimed primarily at comparison with one another or between fraternities, co-op members are more interested in 'how' and 'why' questions that are more emblematic of understanding one another's' likes, dislikes, gender and sexual orientations. These discourses support differential conceptualizations of partners, sex and sexual activity. Fraternity discourse promotes dehumanization of partners as well as encouraging engagement in hook up culture. Co-operative discourse however, generates an emphasis on sex safety and positivity as well as understanding along with providing space for exploration without active peer pressure to do so.

All of these men interact in the same college community geared towards partying and sex, and individually navigate the range of commitment, from one time hook ups to committed relationships. However, residential community affiliation had a profound effect on how these men view hookup culture, gender, and (hetero) gender politics. The practices that occur within fraternities tend to lead behavior to be influenced more towards hook

ups, regardless of individual preference, where as co-ops leave this navigation of behavior and desire largely to the individual doing the navigating.

Though some men in this study did address the amount of sexual interaction they had experienced, my interview guide did not address quantity of sexual interaction to a great degree. Instead, it focused on the types of relationships that men in college interacted with. Despite the limited analysis of sexual quantity, co-operative housing men seemed less focused on sexual behavior as a whole as there were several men in co-operative residences who described not having extensive sexual experience. Further research should focus specifically on how much sexual interaction men in these communities engage with and could seek to confirm the implication of my study that fraternities have a greater emphasis on sex and sexual behavior, especially hook up behavior.

Furthermore, sexual assault seems to be present in both fraternities and co-operative residences. Despite this, the ways in which fraternity men interact with one another and promote discourse among their community seems to suggest a higher prominence of categories of masculinities and mentalities that contribute to sexual assault, even in their interaction and conceptualization of non-violent sexual behavior. Research should continue to investigate the connection between sexual assault and different forms of sex discourse, masculinities, or group living communities.

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Appendix A

Individual Interview Guide¹⁵

- I. Rapport Building
 - a. Spending some time connecting with the participant
 - i. “How have you been since the group interview?”
 - ii. “What Kinds of things have you been doing?”
 - iii. etc.
 - b. “Great! Shall we get started?”
- II. Introduction
 - a. “Again, I’d like to thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as a part of my project. You’re definitely helping me out a great deal and I appreciate it so much! Plus, you get to earn a little money! So that’s awesome!”
 - b. “As we talked about last time, I’m conducting research on sex as it occurs on college campuses, especially how members of the community think and interact with it. I’m really interested to learn more about your ideas and experiences as a straight man in college. So this is really going to be totally focused on your thoughts and opinions. Your participation today will last roughly an hour, for which you will be paid \$15 at the conclusion of your participation.

Please keep in mind that your participation is completely voluntary and you can choose to leave at any time or not answer a question. Doing that also won’t affect your compensation at all. Also, I’ll be doing everything in my power to preserve your privacy, your identity or personal information will not be included in any publication that may arise from my research and any notes that I take during this time will be kept secure.

In order for me to adequately conduct my research I will be recording this session, but again that I won’t be exposing your identity for any reason. Are you ok with that? Ok (Make sure recorder is on/off depending on answer)
- III. Focus Group Dialogue Review
 - a. “How do you think that the group discussion went last time we met?”
 - b. “Is there anything that’s happened to you or that you’ve thought about since that reminded you of our conversation?”
 - c. “Was there anything that surprised you? Why was that surprising?”
 - d. “How did you feel having that group discussion? Were you (un)comfortable? What do you think made it that way?”
 - e. “Did you find that the groups’ thoughts generally aligned or didn’t align with your viewpoints? How so?”
 - f. “Do you have any other thoughts on the group discussion?”
- IV. Reflection on College Arrival
 1. Do you remember what ideas you had about sex in college before you got here?
 - a. Can you give an example?

¹⁵ Adapted from Benyas, 2014.

2. Can you remember what your impressions of sex on the college campus were during your first week here?
 3. Do you think your understanding of sex on the college campus changed throughout your time here?
 - a. How so?
 - b. Why do you think that this change came about?
 - 4.
- V. Feelings Towards Community (Co-op/RC/Athlete/Fraternity)
1. What do you [dis]like about being a part of your Community?
 - a. What are the benefits/advantages of being a part of your community?
 2. What is the reputation of your community?
 - a. What do you think is unique about your community?
 3. What are the generalizations or myths about your community as said by others?
 - a. Do you agree or disagree with those generalizations?
 4. What do you think is the span of backgrounds in your community (in terms of wealth, neighborhood, parenting, etc.)?
 - a. Do you think of yourself as coming from a similar background as other members of your community?
 - b. What makes you say that?
 - c. How does that make you feel?
 5. Do you think that members of your community have similar or different viewpoints towards sex that you do?
 - a. What makes you say that?
 - b. How does that make you feel?
 6. Do you think that members of your community have similar methods of finding sexual partners as you?
 - a. What makes you say that?
 - b. How does that make you feel?
- VI. Peer Culture
1. How are you similar and different from the other members of your community in terms of personality?
 2. Have you and other members of your community ever done things together that you would not have done in a different crowd for good or for bad?
 - a. How does that make you feel?
 3. Do you think that being a part of your community encourages you to be yourself, constrains your personality? Maybe Both?
 - a. Could you please walk me through an example?
 4. Do your peers ever express certain expectations about how your love life or sex life should go?
 5. Are there certain topics you don't feel comfortable discussing with members of your community? Can you think of any examples?
- VII. Relationships

1. What are you looking for in terms of your sex life: a hook up, a girlfriend, friends with benefits, something else?
 - a. What do you think is your primary motivation behind this selection?
 - b. Why do you think that is?
2. Do you think what you're looking for is realistic?
3. Where do you think is the best place to meet a girl?
 - a. What makes you say that?
4. What qualities make you interested in a girl?
 - a. What qualities are deal breakers?
 - b. Do you have any examples to help illustrate?
5. Do you always go for girls who have those qualities?
 - a. Does what you're looking for change when it is a hook up vs. dating?
6. What rules do you have for yourself?
 - a. Do you always end up following those rules?
7. Do you find that guys in your community generally hook up with a specific type of girl?
 - a. How would you describe that type?
 - b. Are they generally part of another specific community?
8. Do you know of men in your community who have not hooked up with someone because of the community that they're a part of?
 - a. Can you think of examples?
9. Do you know any men in your community who have hooked up with someone because of the community that they're a part of?
 - a. Can you think of any examples?
10. How do you think your sex life or experiences differ from men in different communities than you? How so?
11. Do you think being a part of your community allows you more sexual opportunities than men from other communities? How so?
12. Was having access to a love life or sex a factor in why you joined your community?
13. What would you say is the biggest factor that led to you joining your community? Why?
14. How do you reflect upon your college sexual experiences/relationships?
 - a. Positively or negatively? Satisfied or unsatisfied?

DISCLAIMER: These next few questions are personal questions. I just want to reiterate that you do not have to answer any of the following questions, but whatever you share would be helpful to my study. All of your answers will remain completely confidential.

15. What kinds of sexual relationships do you look for on campus? (Hookups/Relationships/etc.)

- a. Why do you think you tend towards this type?
 - b. Do you think this is different from when you first arrived at college?
 - c. How/Why not?
16. Have you ever had a hook up?
- IF NO
- a. How does that make you feel?
- IF YES
- b. How does that make you feel?
 - c. More than one?
 - d. Would you mind describing the/an instance you're referring to?
 - e. Did this/those instance(s) ever lead to anything beyond that hook up?
 - f. How do you feel about that person/those people now?
17. Have you ever had a friend with benefits?
- IF NO
- a. How does that make you feel?
- IF YES
- b. How does that make you feel?
 - c. More than one?
 - d. Would you mind describing how you came to that arrangement with that person/ those people?
 - e. Did this/those relationship(s) ever lead to anything beyond friends with benefits?
 - f. How do you feel about that person/those people now?
18. Have you ever had a committed sexual relationship?
- IF NO
- a. How does that make you feel?
- IF YES
- b. How does that make you feel?
 - c. More than one?
 - d. Would you mind describing how you came to that arrangement with that person/ those people?
 - e. How would you describe the nature of that relationship?
 - i. Special? Romantic? Polyamorous? Monogamous? Etc?
 - f. How do you feel about that person/those people now?
19. What was your best experience on campus in regards to securing a sexual partner?
- a. Can you explain why you think it was the best?
20. What was your worst experience on campus with regards to securing a sexual partner?
- a. Can you explain why you think it was the worst?

21. Have members of your community had similar or dissimilar experiences from you regarding hook ups?
 - a. How does that make you feel?
22. Have you ever had a sexual experience with another man?
 - a. Yes: Would you mind telling me a little bit about that?
 - b. No: Would you ever consider engaging in sexual acts with another man?

VIII. Exit Interview Questions

1. What did you think of this interview?
2. Did you have any reservations in answering questions?
3. Was there anything I could do to make the interview experience better for future participants?
4. Are there any answers that you gave that you would like to change?

IX. Closing

- a. "Thank you so much for your participation!"

Appendix B Consent Form

Consent to Participate in Research Study

Title of Project: Navigating Sex

Principle Investigator: Benjamin Frey, Sociology Honors Undergraduate, the University of Michigan

Faculty Advisor: Elizabeth Armstrong Ph.D., Professor of Sociology & Organizational Studies, The University of Michigan

Hello!

Today we invite you to participate in a research study about heterosexual male sexuality during college in order to better understand how college age heterosexual men make sense of their sexual worlds and navigate finding sexual partners. Gaining information in this area can aid in our understanding of topics such as sexual health, campus climate, and social dynamics men encounter in the college setting.

If you agree to be a part of this research study we will ask you to participate in a one-on-one interview lasting roughly 60 minutes. During this interview, you will, at your discretion, be sharing and discussing your thoughts and opinions on sex and sexuality.

Risks & Discomforts of Participation

The topics that we will be discussing during this interview are generally considered private and it may be uncomfortable at times to participate. While this risk is present, the amount that you decide to participate during the interview is entirely up to you. You may choose not to answer any question posed to the group and you may choose to leave at any point during the interview without affecting your compensation. Furthermore, we will do everything in our power to maintain your confidentiality. You can see more about this under the confidentiality section below.

Benefits of Participation

While you may not receive any direct benefits from your participation you will be discussing topics that are usually considered private. As a result, you may receive insight into your own opinions or the opinions of others. On a societal level, you will be contributing to sociological research that could aid in our understanding of college men and their interaction with sex and sexuality. This understanding may provide insight into ways that we can better prepare college freshmen or the college campus to encourage healthy environments.

Compensation for Participation

For participation in the interview phase of my research, participants will receive compensation of \$15. This compensation will not be affected if you choose not to answer a question or if you decide to leave before the completion of the interview.

Confidentiality

We plan to publish the results of this study. We will not include any information that would identify you. Your privacy will be protected and your research records will remain confidential.

It is possible that other people may need to see the information you give us as a part of the study, such as organizations responsible for making sure the research is done safely and properly like the University of Michigan or government offices.

Storage and Future Use of Data

For record keeping purposes, our interview will be audio recorded, and will then be turned into written transcripts for analyzation. All identifying information will be removed from all data collected and it will be maintained and password protected. Once the transcripts are generated, the original audio recordings will be deleted and the transcripts will be stored in my own files until the completion of my work, and in the files of Professor Elizabeth Armstrong for future sociological work that she may undergo. None of what is recorded as a part of your participation or published as a part of my own or future research will be connectable back to you in any way.

Based on these qualifications, if you DO NOT wish to be recorded, you will be unable to take part in this study, and therefore, should not sign this document.

Contact Information for the Study Team

If you have any questions about this research, including questions about scheduling or your compensation for participating, you may contact:

Benjamin Frey – Principle Investigator

(734) 996-8566

benfrey@umich.edu

OR

Elizabeth Armstrong – Faculty Advisor, Sociology Dept.

elarmstr@umich.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researchers, please contact the:

University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board
2800 Plymouth Road

Building 520, Room 1169

Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2800

Phone: (734) 936-0933 or toll free, (866) 936-0933

Email: irbhsbs@umich.edu

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in the study. We will give you a copy of this document for your records. We will keep one copy with the study records. Be sure that

we have answered any questions you have about the study and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researcher if you think of a question later.

By signing below I hereby, as a heterosexual man, agree to participate in this study.

Printed Name_____

Signature_____ **Date**_____

Appendix D
Participant Solicitation Information

College Men!
Come discuss your views about sex on
campus!!!

Hi!

My name is Benjamin Frey and I'm conducting a senior sociological honors thesis here at the University of Michigan. My topic of study is how straight men think about sex during their time in college. To be eligible for this study, you must be enrolled at the University of Michigan, male, heterosexual, between the ages of 18 and 24 and a member of one of the following groups.

- Michigan Athletics
- Michigan Greek Life
- Co-operative Living
- Michigan Residential College

This event is expected to take between 60 and 90 minutes. Please consider joining a group of your peers for **pizza and snacks** as well as an interesting discussion.

Upon completion of this discussion participants have the opportunity to sign up for an individual interview for which they would be compensated \$15.

For more information or to learn meeting times please contact me by email at benfrey@umich.edu

Thank you and I hope to hear from you soon!