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A Phenomenological Inquiry Into Gay Latino Fraternity Men's Views on Masculinities

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ABSTRACT

Using a phenomenological design, this paper describes the essence of how gay Latino fraternity men explained their views on masculinities. Featuring the perspectives of 15 individuals, participants' experiences coalesced around the following findings: (a) they entered into fraternities cognizant and informed by Latinx/a/o/e cultural values of masculinities, (b) they faced strict expectations from fraternity members regarding masculinities, and (c) in light of these norms, they made intentional decisions to navigate cultural and fraternal values.

Fraternities have long been a site of intrigue for how they shape members' perspectives on masculinities (e.g., Dancy & Hotchkins, 2015; McCready, 2020; Waterman et al., 2020). Although scholarship has exposed the toxic and hegemonic forms of masculinities (i.e., those positioning cisgender men as having power over women and other genders) that manifest within fraternal cultures (Zernechel & Perry, 2017), formative research has demonstrated that chapters and organizations can foster more inclusive and productive masculinities (i.e., those valuing emotional intimacy and an affirmation of different genders/sexualities; Anderson, 2008; Harris & Harper, 2014). Within this discourse, one group that has come to the forefront of the conversation is queer membership. For these individuals, navigating masculinities is connected to heteronormative and heterosexist beliefs (i.e., heterosexuality functions as the dominant sexuality; Blanco, 2014). Specifically, hegemonic forms of masculinities can position queer members in precarious positions, pushing them to the margins of what is considered a "fraternity man."

In recent years, scholars have complicated investigations of masculinities and heterosexism by spotlighting the experiences of queer men of Color (Barrera, 2022; Duran & Garcia, 2023; Johnson, 2022; Mahoney, 2019). This literature has demonstrated how negotiating one's status as a queer man of Color may cause these individuals to conform to oppressive beliefs around queerness, performing masculinities to compensate for their queerness (Duran & Garcia, 2023). Conversely, some resist these marginalizing behaviors (Duran & Garcia, 2023; Mahoney, 2019). Interestingly, most scholarship has not explored racial/ethnic differences within the queer men of Color category, instead grouping them under this umbrella. Consequently, practitioners need further nuance to support queer men of Color in managing masculinities with a lens informed by their racial/ethnic culture.

Therefore, the purpose of this phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994) was to examine how gay¹ Latino fraternity men viewed masculinities in light of their intersecting identities. Using an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1989) as a framework, we were interested in how gay Latino fraternity men discussed the essence of masculinities informed by overlapping systems of marginalization and

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¹Participants were recruited using the language of gay, and all individuals identified with this label. Consequently, we use the term "gay" when referring to the participants, but opt to use the more expansive label of "queer" when describing scholarship that encapsulated more sexually minoritized identities.

privilege. The research question for the project was: Informed by an attention to gendered norms and other systems of marginalization, how do gay Latino fraternity men describe the essence of their perspectives on masculinities? We hope this research contributes to the literature on college men's masculinities, while shaping practice within sorority and fraternity life (SFL) for those with intersecting marginalized identities. In addition, such scholarship can benefit student affairs educators broadly who support gay Latino men as they navigate cultural and campus-based contexts.

Theoretical Framework

We employed an intersectional framework (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) to guide the project. Intersectionality as an analytical tool emerged from the intersections of critical legal studies and Black feminist theorizing to understand how oppressive systems (e.g., racism and sexism) overlap and co-constitute one another to disproportionately affect Black women and women of Color. The framework has since traversed disciplinary boundaries to critique how systems of power and marginalization interact and impact multiply minoritized individuals. This being said, scholars like May (2015) have coined terms like intersectional agency to articulate how people challenge the barriers that disadvantage them. In doing so, intersectional agency emphasizes that people themselves are not powerless in the face of oppressive systems, but have the potential to act to combat discrimination. Thus, this concept was useful in this research as we analyzed how fraternity members possibly pushed back against the norms of masculinities they experienced.

Relevant to this project was Crenshaw's (1991) elaboration on her theorizing in which she defined three different forms of intersectionality: structural intersectionality (i.e., how oppression manifests in policies and practices), representational intersectionality (i.e., how cultures perpetuate norms and discourses regarding multiple minoritized groups), and political intersectionality (i.e., how social movements focused on identity fail to engage the needs of those multiply minoritized). These forms were important to how we operationalized the theory in this study.

Literature Review

To inform the study design, we relied upon two bodies of literature. First, we describe the scholarship on college men's masculinities with attention to how gender and race intersect for queer men of Color. Second, we detail the literature on fraternity cultures around masculinities, again amplifying a focus on queer men of Color.

Research on College Men's Masculinities

Researchers focused on masculinities in higher education have strived to understand how men make meaning of gendered norms and roles, together with how collegiate environments and outside influences inform these views (Tillapaugh & McGowan, 2019). Scholarship has named how college can be a crucial place to unlearn prior understandings of masculinities where peers can be meaningful influence in doing so (Harris, 2010), especially for gay men (Tillapaugh, 2015). Being able to work alongside individuals to think about how heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinities have shaped their lives is significant for how gay men view masculinities (Tillapaugh, 2015). Confronting how they have been socialized to comprehend gender is imperative when hegemonic masculinities emphasize marginalizing those who do not fit the norm (i.e., exerting power over women and those of other genders, being aggressive).

Within the broader literature on masculinities, scholars have started to investigate the experiences of queer Latino men as they navigate matters of sexuality, gender, and race/ethnicity (see Duran & Pérez, 2017; Patrón & Rodríguez, 2022; Peña-Talamantes, 2013). For instance, in their study on queer Latino men's relationship with their families, Duran and Pérez (2017) discovered how family members tried to minimize participants' sexualities by reinforcing these students'

masculinities (i.e., saying they were still very masculine in spite of being gay). Other studies have demonstrated how queer Latino men are acutely aware of the perceptions that exist about them as queer people; because of this understanding, they adapt their behaviors such that they may conform to dominant ideologies about masculinities to ensure their personal safety (Patrón & Rodriguez, 2022; Peña-Talamantes, 2013). However, lacking in the present scholarship is how queer Latino men negotiate discourses of masculinities within particular spaces on college campuses, including fraternities.

Fraternity Cultures of Masculinities

Fraternities have drawn attention from individuals who worry they foster hegemonic forms of masculinities (Zernechel & Perry, 2017). Interestingly, one study (Waterman et al., 2020) demonstrated how those who already adopted normative views of masculinities were more likely to affiliate with a fraternal organization compared to those who did not, suggesting a selection bias. However, others have described how fraternal organizations can actively foster different kinds of masculinities; on the one hand, they can promote norms leading to hazing motivations (McCready, 2020) or on the other hand, emotional intimacy that counters toxic manifestations of masculinities (Anderson, 2008; Harris & Harper, 2014).

Scholars have also sought to understand how minoritized groups—specifically, alongside axes of race/ethnicity, gender, and/or sexuality—experience masculinities within organizations. For instance, studies on Black fraternity men have detailed how these individuals are caught within hegemonic expectations of masculinities (Totten & Berbary, 2015), especially those regarding men of Color. Yet, these fraternity men find ways to work against these norms by resisting gendered racist ideas (McGuire et al., 2020). From an intersectional perspective, this scholarship underscores how men of Color are left out of conceptualizations of masculinities grounded in white hegemonic norms, meaning that individuals fail to take into account how culture plays a role in masculinities discourse (Flowers & Banda, 2015).

For queer men of Color, these challenges are amplified as they contend against discourses of masculinities that position them as lesser than, leading to some choosing to embody hegemonic norms of masculinities to fit in (Duran & Garcia, 2023; Johnson, 2022). Others resist these ideologies by performing masculinities in ways that feel more authentic to their selves and that do not endorse toxicity (Duran & Garcia, 2023; Mahoney, 2019). Ultimately, these studies show how gender is a performance in which people enact certain behaviors as tactics to negotiate contexts. In an investigation on Latino men starting a chapter of a Latino fraternity, Barrera (2022) highlighted how these members intentionally built a culture that embraced vulnerability and love, queering what others think about concerning Latino masculinities. In particular, they publicly performed (e.g., danced and sang), while they fostered emotional bonds among each other. Such perspectives open up the various ways queer Latino men can conceptualize the essence of masculinities, leading to the purpose of this present project.

Methodology

As a methodological tradition, phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) is unique in its attention on understanding the essence of an experience. Specifically, phenomenologists solicit perspectives from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation, attempting to explain what defines that reality. Their stories are meaningful to construct a clear and universal comprehension of the phenomenon, as opposed to other qualitative traditions where scholars are interested in the nuances and differences among participants' experiences. There are several hallmarks of phenomenological inquiry that we strove to attend to in our research, as we expand on below.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

To engage in phenomenological inquiry, researchers must seek out participants who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation (Moustakas, 1994). Accordingly, we developed a process to engage gay Latino men who were willing to share their perspectives on masculinities within fraternities—using purposeful and snowball sampling to do so (Patton, 2014). The study was conducted at a large public Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) in the Southeast. Such a site was relevant given the visibility of Latinx/a/o/e cultures on campus, meaning that even though many participants were part of historically white fraternal organizations, their chapters consisted of a large number of Latinx/a/o/e students. Current students and those who recently graduated (within five years) were eligible, because those who had graduated could still provide relevant information for the project and still had topical views on masculinities relevant to the fraternal culture at the institution. Furthermore, like other research on queer men of color in fraternal organizations has found, people may feel comfortable sharing their perspectives after no longer being close to their undergraduate chapters (Duran & Garcia, 2023).

The research team distributed information about the study through various institutional listservs, including to the SFL councils present on campus (representing more than 30 SFL organizations), and to a variety of student affairs offices and academic units (e.g., the LGBTQ+ Center). Those who were interested completed a form with information about their identities and their fraternity membership, making sure they fit the criteria. In total, 36 individuals responded to the initial form. We also employed snowball sampling by asking interviewed participants to inform others who would qualify of the opportunity to participate. In total, to attend to recommendations about sample size for phenomenological research (Creswell & Poth, 2017) while also keeping the project of a manageable size, 15 participants were selected for the study. For more information about the participants, including whether they were a current student or alumnus, see [Table 1](#).

Data Collection

The 15 participants engaged in a semi-structured interview lasting 75–150 min each, providing a rich amount of data to analyze from a phenomenological perspective. Interviews took place in person in one of the researcher's offices. We designed the interviews to have participants reflect on what they considered the essence of masculinities, aligning with the tradition of phenomenological research. Example questions included:

- How do you define masculinity?
- How does Greek life expect men to behave? Your fraternity?
- In what way does masculinity play a role in your various cultural identities?
- How would you describe the climate of the chapter toward nonheterosexual members?

Specific to their fraternity, we asked questions about situations in which they encountered heterosexism and/or the regulation of gendered behavior on a structural and interpersonal level, aligning the project with intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), together with inquiring about the messages they received concerning gender and sexuality.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Our process of data analysis aligned with phenomenological methodology (Moustakas, 1994), ensuring methodological congruence. We began by engaging in a process of horizontalization, a cornerstone of phenomenology, in which we identified “codable moments” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 9) at both the manifest-content (directly observable) and latent content (underlying the phenomenon) levels. This was done using open coding, looking for important words and phrases while making notes

Table 1. Demographic information for participants (shared in interest form).

Pseudonym	Organizational Type	Current Student or Alumnus?	Country of Birth
AJ	Jewish fraternity	Current Student	Left blank
Andres	Historically white fraternity	Current Student	Left blank
Benito	Historically white fraternity	Alumnus	Left blank
Cesar	Historically white fraternity	Alumnus	USA
Diego	Historically white fraternity	Current Student	USA with Cuban Parents
Elian	Historically white fraternity	Alumnus	Left blank
Emiliano	Historically white fraternity	Current Student	Left blank
Fernando	Historically white fraternity	Alumnus	USA
Francisco	Historically white fraternity	Alumnus	USA
Jorge	Historically white fraternity	Current Student	Left blank
Juan	Historically white fraternity	Alumnus	USA (Puerto Rican) with Dominican Parents
Leonel	Historically white fraternity	Current Student	Left blank
Manuel	Jewish fraternity	Current Student	Left blank
Miguel	Historically white fraternity	Current Student	USA (Puerto Rican) with Cuban Parents
Xavier	Historically white fraternity	Alumnus	Left blank

of initial impressions. From there, we discerned how these insights intersected with one another, also known as “thematizing the invariant constituents” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). We isolated particular quotes and excerpts exemplifying these patterns in the process. As a form of trustworthiness, Antonio was brought into the project to analyze the data again from a different perspective, a process further elaborated on in a subsequent positionality statement. As someone not involved with the original study creation, Antonio was able to provide a unique point-of-view, which was helpful in determining the essence in response to the research question. Specifically, the original research team and Antonio debriefed to determine the salient themes that characterized the phenomenon under investigation.

Researcher Positionalities

Central to our conceptualization of phenomenology is the process of bracketing (Moustakas, 1994), which requires researchers to place their presumptions about the phenomenon of interest aside. Throughout the study, both the original project team and the invited coresearcher attempted to accomplish this by engaging in collective conversations, as well as through individual reflection in which we identified our assumptions about Latinx/a/o/e masculinities and how they affected queer people. We find it important to illustrate what we had to isolate, making sure that we did not let our preconceived notions of the role that Latinx/a/o/e culture plays for queer people color our interpretations of the data. Four of the five authors have experiences working with students at the institution where participants were recruited, meaning that they have had interactions with individuals who may have fit the profile in this research. Moreover, we all identified differently in terms of our racial, sexual, and gender identity with many of us holding a particular minoritized identity—though only one identified as a queer Latino man Antonio. For example, Craig identifies as queer but white, meaning that he was especially mindful of how he did not have the cultural knowledge that others on the team had of Latinx/a/o/e people. Our social identities meant that we had to distinguish our firsthand or secondhand experiences of Latinx/a/o/e masculinities from what the participants themselves reported. Also relevant to this study, none of the team held a fraternal affiliation, though we each had varying degrees of working with fraternities (e.g., Antonio serving as a fraternity house director and advising a fraternity).

Findings

The participants’ views on masculinities were complex and shaped by different cultural norms and behaviors rooted in oppressive systems. Although their experiences were altogether unique, they all coalesced around several themes. The findings described below thus characterized the essence of their

perspectives on masculinities: (a) they entered into fraternities cognizant and informed by Latinx/a/o/e cultural values of masculinities, (b) they faced expectations from fraternity members regarding masculinities, and (c) in light of these norms, they made intentional decisions to navigate these cultural and fraternal values. Such dynamics were representative of the precarious positions gay Latino men find themselves in given their social location.

Entering Into Fraternities With Latinx/a/o/e Cultural Values of Masculinities

The participants' views on masculinities were always shaped by the cultural values they saw associated with masculinities in Latinx/a/o/e communities. Namely, participants articulated how stringent gender roles and heteronormativity characterized Latinx/a/o/e masculinities with many opting to describe them broadly without much attention to ethnic differences. To be clear, the participants themselves did not always endorse these values as positive or as their own, but they were certainly crucial to their understanding of how masculinities function. To exemplify this point, Cesar was one participant who explicitly stated: "I define masculinity more through actions rather than that sense of machismo." Describing actions like aggression or sexual behaviors, he stated, "I'm just not impressed by any of it." Thus, though he did not personally adopt this view, it was certainly present in his way of understanding masculinities.

The gay Latino men named attitudes and behaviors that emphasized gendered roles, power over women, and heterosexuality. In fact, some individuals specifically used the language of "machismo" (i.e., a Latinx/a/o/e cultural conceptualization that emphasizes hypermasculinity) to describe these values. AJ, for example, shared, "Hispanic culture wants men to be men. Every sense of the word that entails . . . I mean, machismo is still very much prevalent." Specifically, learning from Nicaraguan father and family, he elaborated:

Hispanics believe that men have to be rash, and uncouth, and they have to be leaders, and they have to be this, and they have to be that, they can't cry, they can't show emotion, can't be sensitive to events that occur. They can't find protection; they can't be submissive. They can't be scared.

Participants like Manuel echoed this belief: "It's the typical, Latin-inspired, macho man idea. The man being strong and the woman being weak. The man being emotionally intelligent and the woman being just loving and a little more on the caring side." Others coalesced around similar images like Fernando who stated, "The man fixes the house. The man stands up for his woman," or Xavier who described his role models as being "very much promiscuous and aggressive and dominant." These experiences demonstrate how participants viewed the masculinities they grew up in as Latino men as one-dimensional.

Connected to these gender norms, participants similarly recounted how Latinx/a/o/e masculinities are heteronormative. Both Jorge and Andres used almost identical language in defining Latinx/a/o/e masculinities as "very straight" or being "expected to be straight," respectively. Importantly, for some participants, these gendered dynamics did play out in to whom they were attracted. For instance, Benito recounted: "I was raised in such a way—like you're a guy, act like a guy—my whole thing, I like guys because they're guys, I don't like girls because they're girls, you know what I mean?" In this excerpt, Benito identified with the norms that he grew up with—in which his father was as farmer who would work out in the field and his mother would be a housewife—both in his romantic and platonic interactions with men. As Benito named, "I'm not gonna judge or be like, 'Stay away from me you're weird, no.' It's just my personal preference." Leonel also named how relationships with other gay Latino men is "about your appearances, who you associate with, how you act . . . It's very superficial." In expounding on this point, he shared that the biggest obstacle in being both gay and Latino is "maintain a level of machismo" among fellow gay Latinos.

Like Benito and Leonel, other participants described how ideas of masculinities intersected with sexuality. Francisco was one who reflected on how the performance of a particular kind of masculinity dictated ideas of sexual positions:

For the most part, in some Hispanic communities, tops aren't associated as to what your sexual position preference is, tops are associated based on how masculine you are. So, you could be the one who penetrates but be completely feminine, and that'll consider you a bottom. Verses, you could be someone who likes to be penetrated but be completely masculine and they'll consider that a top. So . . . within our own culture, I guess embracing both being gay and Latin, it's difficult cause you have the whole machismo factor.

In this excerpt, Francisco captured how gender is perceived based on performance and sexual positions in spite of how someone may view themselves. Elian also shared how people perceive gender based on how people are situated in the home. Specifically, he noted, "I'd be fine being a house husband. That would be like ideal, I would love that. But at the same time, a lot of people wouldn't consider that to be masculine, especially in Hispanic culture." Here, like other participants, Elian is hyperaware of what it means to be masculine in Latinx/a/o/e cultures, caught between his own desires and what others expect of him. Elian and other participants carried such understandings with them as they encountered fraternal values of masculinities.

Facing Strict Expectations from Fraternity Culture Regarding Masculinities

Coming into college, participants carried with them the ways they saw a particular kind of masculinities play out in Latinx/a/o/e cultures. Entering into fraternal cultures, they similarly faced an overwhelming perception of masculinities that did not account for more expansive understanding of gendered roles. This being said, in a perhaps more positive lens, participants did briefly comment on how fraternity men were associated with leaders. Echoing his earlier comments on "Hispanic" culture emphasizing men being dominant, AJ said, "the men definitely have to be the leaders; they should be protective." Jorge also named fraternity members "as leaders," with men assuming responsibilities for others. Like AJ and Jorge, Juan named that in a fraternity, the ideal of being a man involves "being open to helping people." However, he then contrasted this with what is also present and more dominant: "But then you have like the high and mighty, sleeping with half the sorority women, or you're the cool guy if you're promiscuous, or if you're a dick to women." Such harmful pictures of masculinities thus dominated participants' views of masculinities.

For example, participants largely described how their fraternal culture reinforced relationships with women and hypersexuality as primary ways that men asserted their masculinity. Andres reflected on this point:

If I was straight and I slept with a bunch of people and my fraternity prioritized those kinds of things then they would definitely praise me and they'd be like: yeah, like that's definitely a brother, like he's the bomb, you know whatever, he sleeps with a bunch of girls.

When asked if whether he believed his fraternity prioritized this, Andres responded, "Unfortunately because they're a bunch of children"—though he did concede that not every fraternity is like this. Francisco was another individual who described his historically white fraternity by referencing hypermasculine individuals:

As far as what my chapter is, we had a good amount of "John Wayne's" in our chapter. And where everyone's a hero everyone's masculine, everyone rides horses and drinks whiskey. That was their perception of their masculinity. You had a lot of Ricky Ricardo's that felt that they should be out there doing their degrees and their women should be at home popping babies.

Elaborating on this perspective, Francisco brought in Latinx/a/o/e culture: "You had some people that had a very Latin mentality of masculinity." In fact, his mobilization of Ricky Ricardo, a popular Latinx/a/o/e icon representing masculinity furthered the unique cultural focus on gender. Because the institution these men attended was an HSI that had a large enrollment of Latinx/a/o/e students, such demographics also were reflected in SFL.

Gay Latino men also saw these views of masculinities playing out in how people engaged with aggressive behaviors. Cesar articulated how hazing was connected to understandings of masculinities, especially for Latinx/a/o/e people:

The whole masculinity/femininity thing kind of played a role in that if you didn't make yourself subject to hazing or hazing related activities, then you were seen as less than and if you participated in such activities then you were seen as macho and worthy of that status of being brother.

Cesar's usage of "macho" was specifically tied to the ideals of machismo emphasized in Latinx/a/o/e cultures. Miguel also detailed a very hypermasculine vision of a fraternity man informed by a Latinx/a/o/e perspective:

When it comes to Greek life, they expect men to be very just . . . in American Greek life you gotta take your shirt off man, you gotta have sort of presences to you and you can't look too feminine or you gotta be like big and you have to be a dominant provider.

In elaborating on this perspective, Miguel even explicitly brought in aspects of sexuality by stating, "Greek life [is] mostly run by heterosexual people." In addition, he referenced Latinx/a/o/e culture by sharing how fraternity life mirrored these norms: "It's like the men have to be the bigger ones and the providers and I feel like when it comes to Hispanics it's kind of like men have to be the providers." Therefore, fraternity masculinities were defined by the same types of hypermasculine behaviors in Latinx/a/o/e communities that rendered queer individuals invisible.

This belief in what a fraternity member should embody when it comes to masculinities played out in how this culture reinforced itself through recruitment practices, for instance. Benito, in reflecting upon fraternities at the institution, stated: "They're very big top guys on campus, very jocks . . . They really wouldn't go for someone who's gay or exudes feminine . . . traits . . . and they are able to select out of the pool." Jorge echoed these realities:

There was one time when somebody rushed and they were saying that he was too feminine. And yeah that, it did bother me that they were saying he was too feminine but we also had another one that was just as feminine but I guess as times progressed, they regressed.

Therefore, not only did chapters at the institution perpetuate these realities, they also reproduced these cycles by who they invited to join fraternal organizations. Consequently, these visions of what fraternal masculinities embodied were part of the gay Latino men's views, which they then had to make decisions about how to navigate.

Intentional Decisions to Adapt to Cultural and Fraternal Values on Masculinities

Shaped by both familial/cultural expectations of masculinities, as well as those established by their fraternities, the gay Latino men detailed how they modified their behaviors pertaining to masculinities depending on the context. The gay Latino men were acutely aware of the damaging nature of masculinities adopted across different contexts with some like Xavier admitting "my view of masculinity is tainted."

That being said, many gay Latino men commented on how they started to mimic behaviors or those around them in order to negotiate their identities in different spaces. Emiliano explained:

When I'm around my friend—she's a lesbian—I feel like I can act more like myself and around women and I can act more myself. But around fraternity men, I have to act more macho. It's not really that I do it intentionally anymore. I've just been conditioned.

Such phrasing of conditioning exemplifies the understanding that such a view is external to themselves, but one that they actively performed to survive in particular contexts. Diego echoed this: "Cultural identity wise . . . I just act the way I act and it tends to fit my culture's view of masculinity probably cause I kept that up for so long that's who I am now." In this statement, Diego acknowledged how Latinx/a/o/e's norms around masculinities shaped his own performances over time. Miguel also communicated,

If I'm gonna introduce myself to someone I don't want to be like "Oh my god, hi" cause then I don't want to come off as super gay but I would wanna come off as normal. Not that I feel the need to hide it but I don't want the fact

of me being gay be the first thing that you think of. It's kinda like a defense mechanism. That's how I would express it to be.

Miguel's "defense mechanism" exemplifies the tactics that gay Latino men use to navigate spaces. Namely, Miguel discusses the active desire to not want to perform in a way that strays away from heteronormativity, exemplified by his use of the word "normal." Consequently, this excerpt emphasizes the potential ways that such tactics in fact represent an internalized homophobia stemming from toxic cultures that prioritize heteronormativity and specific gendered presentations.

Other participants shared examples of how their views of masculinities translated to behaviors. For instance, Elian named this dynamic when it came to interacting with straight men: "I do find myself having to act more masculine around straight men." He expanded on this by describing particular body language:

I think the way I sit differently, I kind of stretch myself out more, like both legs on the floor, I don't cross my legs, or if I do it's more masculine like instead of the knee over the knee, it's the leg over the knee, like it would be like this.

Jorge echoed Elian's comments: "Around straight men, I'm more masculine. Straight men that don't know I'm gay I'm more masculine." This phrasing brings to light how Jorge, like Elian, made active decisions to acculturate to others' views of masculinities.

Participants also described how they performed masculinities, especially for their brothers. Elian stated, "I have to act a little bit more masculine with my straight fraternity brothers." Benito noted, "I would play sports with these people during rush week and I'm not one to play sports. I would just give it my best shot." Benito was careful not to talk about his sexuality, observing: "I wouldn't really talk about my personal life . . . and some brothers did." However, these tactics also proved to be harmful. AJ described an instance in which he regulated other brothers' masculinities when viewing their relationship with women:

When I came out, I almost became that stereotypical fraternity man. Ironic, extremely ironic . . . say we're having a party, I would look at some of my brothers and they were mingling between each other but they were maybe a group of girls that they weren't talking to. And I would sometimes lash out on them and be like, "What is your problem? Blah blah blah" And sometimes, as ignorant as I'm going to sound, I would say this, "Are you gay? Go talk to them. Blah blah."

In distancing himself from what he perceived as feminine behaviors, AJ reinforced hegemonic masculinities. Again, this type of example showcases how gendered norms served to further marginalize queer people, which AJ then used to disadvantage someone hoping to join his organization.

Discussion

Findings from this phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994) illustrated how gay Latino men described their views of masculinities as influenced by different cultural contexts—specifically, their Latinx/a/o/e communities and the fraternity chapters with which they were associated. Their experiences suggest that gay Latino men were located in a precarious position within overlapping structures of oppression. Specifically, considering representational and political forms of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), gay Latino men were often positioned outside of Latinx/a/o/e communities, with feminine Latino men being perceived as less than in social discourses. In response, these individuals responded with particular actions to best negotiate their identities.

To begin, gay Latino men in this research described how the Latinx/a/o/e communities they came from defined masculinities. As noted above, they did not necessarily endorse these views, as described by Cesar who explicitly named his definition as existing outside of these norms. However, these cultural influences did shape the essence of their understandings of masculinities. Their perspectives ultimately echoed the existing literature on gay Latino men's masculinities, which positions them as always pushing back against singular ways of conceptualizing masculinities (e.g., power over women,

aggressive; Duran & Pérez, 2017; Patrón & Rodriguez, 2022; Peña-Talamantes, 2013). For participants like Jorge and Andres, masculinities in Latinx/a/o/e communities were inherently straight—thus affecting those who fit outside of those normative constraints. Consequently, from a representational intersectionality view (Crenshaw, 1991), queer Latino men did not exist within the boundaries and thus were situated as contrary to these beliefs.

Related, participants encountered stringent views on masculinities from their fraternity cultures as well. Such findings were unsurprising, given the extensive literature on hypermasculinities within fraternal organizations (Zernechel & Perry, 2017). Participants named how they encountered these toxic manifestations of masculinities, whether it was through hypersexuality (as seen through Andres and Francisco's quotes), aggressiveness (exemplified by Cesar and Miguel), or recruitment practices (as named by Benito). These patterns showcase how even at an HSI, which reasonably would support Latinx/a/o/e people, they may overlook the needs of gay Latino men—showcasing the need of a political intersectionality lens (Crenshaw, 1991). These perspectives of how HSIs do not attend to matters of sexuality have been highlighted in other scholarship (Vega et al., 2022). Although some participants stated that masculinities in fraternities were associated with leadership (i.e., AJ, Jorge, and Juan), toxic forms of masculinities were dominant.

Finally, this project illustrated how participants made decisions based on Latinx/a/o/e cultures they had interacted with prior to coming to college, as well as the fraternity organizational culture they encountered at an HSI. Of note, their behaviors were responsive to the oppressive realities they encountered, as participants like Diego had stated that he had built up his performances over time based on his Latinx/a/o/e background, representing a form of intersectional agency (May, 2015). Participants described how they enacted “defense mechanisms,” as in the case of Miguel. These perspectives resembled existing scholarship that detailed how queer men of Color performed masculinity to acculturate to behaviors around them (Duran & Garcia, 2023). Yet, in some cases, these behaviors proved to be harmful, as illustrated by AJ regulating potential members based on their feminine behaviors. Therefore, this knowledge equips practitioners to challenge individuals' views of masculinities that may be oppressive.

Implications

Informed by the participants' experiences, we find it important to offer implications for research and practice to create inclusive fraternal environments for gay Latino men. Concerning research, we recognize that participants were largely associated with historically white fraternal organizations, but they all attended an HSI. Therefore, we believe that two potential lines of inquiry emerge given this context. On the one hand, researchers can better understand the unique experience of gay Latino fraternity men at HSIs using case study methodology, which would provide a different perspective than our phenomenological approach. On the other hand, we assert there is an opportunity to focus attention on gay Latino men within culturally based organizations, and even more specifically, those within Latinx/o-based and Jewish fraternities. Such examinations could bring forth how the cultural values held within an institution or organization/chapter give rise to views on masculinities. We name the desire to examine Jewish fraternities specifically, because two participants were affiliated with these organizations. However, they did not expand on what these specific histories meant for the norms of masculinities within the groups, leaving room to understand the ethnic and religious implications of these spaces.

When it comes to practice, we contend that SFL practitioners would benefit greatly from these participants' views. In particular, campus-based SFL offices are increasingly offering programming around men and masculinities, helping students learn more productive and inclusive point of views on masculinities. However, much like other critical scholars (e.g., Tillapaugh & McGowan, 2019), we argue that interventions must be done with an attention to overlapping systems of marginalization. What this looks like in practice is that workshops or curricula designed with masculinities in mind must be done with a lens toward past comprehensions of masculinities

inspired by culture. This recommendation stems from the finding that participants were entering college with Latinx/a/o/e conceptualizations of masculinities. Therefore, programmatic interventions must center how one's social location has informed fraternity men's views on masculinities. Moreover, it is imperative that campus-based SFL practitioners do not reify heteronormative views on masculinities in their work. They should instead ask, "What does it mean to adopt perspectives of masculinities that do not conform to heteronormativity?" to all members—both those who identify as queer and heterosexual. These questions must be asked on an institutional and an organizational level; however, it is also imperative that practitioners do their own work in reflecting upon their socialization regarding gender and masculinities to ensure that they are equipped to support their students' journeys.

We also see this study shaping how practitioners support gay Latino men, and queer men of Color in fraternities generally. The final finding illustrated how these participants often performed masculinities to align with their fraternity brothers' expectations of them. Such decisions should not be seen as decisions rooted in deficits, but rather, those appropriate to navigating these realities. That being said, practitioners should be advocates for gay Latino men as they reason through these decisions, checking to see if these are methods they want to use to enact their agency. Some may want to challenge these behaviors, and others may not be at the place to—either way must be supported. As exemplified in the case of AJ who started to surveil other's gendered behaviors, practitioners should feel comfortable in questioning these behaviors to see what is valid to enact.

Conclusion

In unpacking the views of queer Latino fraternity men on masculinities, it is evident these individuals navigate complex cultural influences pertaining to gendered systems. Their realities resemble that of queer fraternity men of color broadly, as they negotiate gendered discourses that position masculinities in a particular light (Duran & Garcia, 2023; Johnson, 2022; Mahoney, 2019); these make it difficult to respond in ways contrary to sexualization, power over women, and other hypermasculine traits. In recognizing these structures, gay Latino men enact a form of agency, but one constrained by oppressive systems. Hence, SFL practitioners must respond by helping fraternity organizations challenge preunderstandings of masculinities, as well as gendered norms perpetuated within individual chapters/organizations.

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