"Brunch So Hard:" Liquid Bonding and Unspoken Rules of Feminine Hegemony Through Alcohol Use Among National Panhellenic Conference Sorority Women

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"BRUNCH SO HARD:" LIQUID BONDING AND UNSPOKEN RULES OF FEMININE HEGEMONY THROUGH ALCOHOL USE AMONG NATIONAL PANHELLENIC CONFERENCE SORORITY WOMEN

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This qualitative study used a descriptive psychological phenomenological method with a poststructural feminist lens to better understand experiences of National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) sorority women with fraternity men and alcohol use. Findings suggest that members were unapologetic about their purveyance of alcohol-related behaviors. They used empowering feminist discourses to describe the ways in which they bonded through alcohol use and to differentiate themselves as sorority women. Chapter leadership often used alcohol to construct a system of gendered hegemony which heavily indoctrinated new members. These experiences are nuanced for NPC women who differently experienced alcohol use as a gendered instrument to transmit feminine norms and expectations. Salient study findings offer implications for practice about alcohol misuse and wellness related to supporting identity development and power relationships with fraternity men.

Keywords: Sorority, Alcohol, Feminism, Identity, Sexuality

Member organizations within the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) have offered undergraduate sorority women opportunities to cultivate interpersonal relationships and as spaces to develop their identities as women for over 100 years. NPC sororities began as a "creation of a few individuals who had similar values and ideals and who wanted to maintain close associations while in college" (Torbenson, 2009, p 20). However, for NPC sorority women, much of this association between members is often supported by alcohol misuse and can be heavily influenced by fraternity men (McCready & Radimer, 2020; Sasso, 2015; Sasso et al., 2018).

In particular, NPC sorority women drink more than non-members (Rancourt et al., 2020; Russett, 2017). Sorority members socialize new members to conform in chapter cultures through expectations of alcohol use where heavy drinking environments are normalized (Russett, 2017). Specifically, NPC sorority women experience more tertiary health effects and attempt to compete in drinking alcohol with fraternity men at parties (Hughey, 2020). These trends are part of a larger increasing pattern of problematic NPC sorority alcohol use that is frequently interconnected with fraternity men (Cook & Reisling, 2020). Their responses for harm-reduction approaches also suggests gendered interconnections with alcohol use, but

differences between how sorority women and fraternity men engage in alcohol safety (Myers & Sasso, 2022). Additionally, alcohol is ceded to social status is used to distribute social capital, transmit culture, and centralize power among NPC sorority women through bullying or hazing which forms a hegemonic system (DeSantis, 2007). Thus, the ways in which NPC members use alcohol is potentially more nuanced and contains a gendered context with within chapters and with fraternity men (McCready & Radimer, 2020; Sasso, 2018). Previous researchers suggested considering constructs of alcohol beyond frequency and volume to explore its symbolism across sorority/fraternity culture (Biddix, 2016; Barber et al., 2019). Some previous studies have examined fraternity men in their experiences with alcohol and construction of masculine performativity (McCready, 2019; Sasso, 2015; Sasso, 2018). Similarly, no known existing studies have replicated these methodologies to explore NPC sorority women and their interconnected relationships with fraternity men through alcohol use.

The purpose of this study was to extend the current research to better understand experiences of NPC sorority women with fraternity men and alcohol use. This study used the descriptive psychological phenomenological method with a poststructural feminist lens to address the following research questions: (1) How do undergraduate NPC sorority women describe their experiences with alcohol? and (2) How do undergraduate NPC sorority women describe interacting with each other among fraternity men with alcohol?

Literature Review

The authors grounded this study and literature review in a poststructural feminist lens which is further described in the next section. This lens was used to explore how systems of patriarchy influence the behaviors of sorority women. The research identifies that fraternity masculinity influences how NPC sorority women describe their own identities and relationships with each other through the socialization of their undergraduate chapter experience (McCready, 2019; Sasso, 2015; 2018). Sorority hazing and bullying often involves alcohol which is used to reinforce hegemony (Sasso, 2018; Russett, 2017). Therefore, these socialization experiences are reinforced through sorority drinking and hazing/bullying which are highlighted in this literature review to explore the context of alcohol use and related behaviors (DeSantis, 2007).

Sorority Drinking

Early research on sorority alcohol use does not nuance between racial or other social identities and describes white NPC sorority members engagement in white drinking cultures. This research illuminated sorority alcohol usage trends, particularly binge drinking (Wechsler et al., 2002). Research about the ways in which sorority women use alcohol suggests it is more complicated than drinking

games (Sasso et al., 2020). Extant research also suggests that alcohol is a significant indicator of sisterhood and socialization within members' organizations (Labrie et al., 2008). Most alcohol studies focused on both fraternity and sorority drinking, which helps us understand the effect alcohol has on members of sororities.

Research has suggested that sorority members drink more heavily than their non-affiliated peers due to their perceived environment (Russett, 2017). Sorority members see their peers consuming large amounts of alcohol, fellow members perceive this to be the norm and that they are also expected to engage in heavy drinking (Capone et al., 2007; Huchting et al., 2008). Alcohol use is also strongly tethered to pre-contemplated expectations, and these are influenced by senior chapter leaders (Cashin et al., 1998; Sasso & Schwitzer, 2016).

Huchting et al. (2008) found that the perceived consumption rates of alcohol among other sorority organizations influences individual members' consumption. Individual sorority members are also more likely to not only accept heavy drinking as normal and expected of them, but to also engage in consuming more alcohol than non-affiliated students (Smith & Berger, 2010). Some sorority women will increase their drinking because of their membership as affiliation is a predictor of increased frequency and volume consumption of alcohol (LaBrie & Cail, 2011). This is particularly salient for women if they affiliate in the first two years of their undergraduate experience (Capone et al., 2007).

For some sorority women, Capone et. al. (2007) also found that level of alcohol use among individuals before entering college and sorority life is predictive of increased expectations for future heavy alcohol use in their undergraduate experience. Sorority women with established precollege alcohol consumption patterns will self-select into heavy drinking chapter cultures (DeSimone, 2009). These sorority women will also seek friendships with others who engage in heavy episodic drinking (Cohen et al., 2017). From these experiences with alcohol, sorority women experience more tertiary related consequences than men (Clark et al., 2015). These problems include missing responsibilities like homework or more serious effects such as levels of alcohol dependence (Clark et al., 2013).

Hazing & Bullying

Sasso (2015) suggested that fraternities and sororities use alcohol in hazing to reinforce a system of stratification or hegemony. For sorority women, alcohol use is based on foundational socialization experiences or indirect socializers such as "offering to get a peer a drink, buying a round" (Borsari & Carey, 2001, p. 393) or in direct ways such as "forcing others to drink during drinking games" (Borsari & Carey, 2001, p. 393). In socialization, students encourage others to also maintain or increase the amount of alcohol they drink and will "find themselves in an environment in which alcohol use and misuse are accepted, prevalent, and normative" (Capone et al., 2007, p. 317). Sorority members also

consider alcohol to be an important part of their sisterhood and how they establish and sustain bonds between them (Smith & Berger, 2010).

Sorority members have suggested that pre-gaming and getting ready together before going out is an important ritual of bonding for sorority women (Cohen et al., 2017). Thus, sorority women often describe their sisterhood in relation to alcohol to include those that: (1) they would "party with on the weekend;" (2) "the women that drive me home from the bar;" or as (3) "the person that holds my hair back when I drink too much" (Cohen et al., 2017, p. 34). For some sorority women, sisterhood is interchangeable with socialization and alcohol, but can also lead to the normalization of binge drinking (Russett, 2017).

There are also noted gender differences in hazing which, particularly for NPC sorority women, involve harassment and bullying (Alvarez, 2015). The majority of NPC women often describe their hazing as psychological in nature or as ways in which they are socialized into their chapter culture such as by being mandated to spend time with other sisters (Veliz & Allen, 2012). Other common forms of hazing for sorority women include sleep deprivation or forced consumption of food (Veliz & Allen, 2012) as well as personal servitude and social isolation (Allan et al., 2019). Parks et al. (2015) noted that sorority hazing can be both physical and psychological such as through binge drinking or humiliation. These forms of hazing also occur across different types of sororities and fraternities and even within culturally-based organizations (Salinas & Boettcher, 2018). Just like within culturally-based sororities and fraternities, NPC sorority hazing typically does not usually include ritualistic forced consumption of alcohol more frequently experienced within predominately white fraternities which often results in death (Salinas & Boettcher, 2018; Sasso et al., 2015).

Such forms of hazing are often described by women as "bonding," "tradition," or "building group unity" as proxies (Veliz & Allen, 2012. p.12). Sorority women are often unable to define hazing and peer pressure from fellow sorority sisters, which perpetuates the cycle of hazing (Allan & Maddan, 2012). Many members choose to participate in the hazing ritual the following year once they are initiated members (Parks & Spangenburg, 2019). Sorority women are more likely to participate in hazing activities if they felt the majority of their sisters were supportive of the hazing behavior (Parks & Spangenburg, 2019). They considered hazing as "friendship bonds perceived as an outcome of sharing the secret of doing something wrong through hazing activities" (Parks & Spangenburg, 2019, p. 18-19).

Past studies are typically quantitative and describe frequency and volume of alcohol use, aggregate gender, or membership, or are critical scholarship deconstructing sorority culture (Biddix, 2012, 2016; Biddix et al., 2014; Biddix et al., 2016). However, some research suggests a greater understanding is needed, particularly about both sorority and fraternity cultures and the role of alcohol and how patriarchy and other male systems influence individual student learning

and development (Biddix, 2016).

Conceptual Framework

To gain a deeper understanding about NPC sorority alcohol use and their relationships with fraternity men, this phenomenological qualitative study was informed by a poststructural feminist framework to explore the NPC sorority member perspectives with fraternity men and experiences with alcohol. The researchers selected poststructural feminism to guide the study because gender identity is socially constructed. Gender identity was conceptualized as, "the interface between the individual and the world, defining as it does what the individual will stand for and be recognized as" (Josselson, 1987, p. 8). The theory has been used in other qualitative research studies about women and gender and positions the contemporary undergraduate woman identity in relation to systems and social structure (Danielson, 2011; Foor & Walden, 2009).

We assumed that gender is a social construct which is situational and performative (Butler, 1990; Connell, 2005; McCready & Radimer, 2020). The gender binary was intentionally selected for this research because alcohol reinforces gender norms and identity formation in undergraduate sorority/fraternity members (Alcoff, 1988; McCready & Radimer, 2020). Previous theorists (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Josselson, 1987) undergird the notion that men's experiences are universal and that relationships between women are sites of identity development.

Feminist poststructualism holds that identity is fluid, subjective, and bound to context in which there is not a singularity of identity but can be compartmentalized; identity experiences are not monolithic for women (Tisdell, 2000). Identify shifts and is constantly constructed and there is no permanence of identities. This framework suggests that language is used which constructs identity and culture to form the foundation of identity (Weedon, 1997).

Language constructs meaning through signs, power, symbols, and institutions which can all concurrently exist. This means that as language shifts, identity can become fluid or unstable because value labels provide power (Weedon, 1997). Language provides a voice in which feminist poststructuralism suggests privileges men and dismisses or silences women (Hall & Sandler, 1982; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Thus, this impacts how identity is expressed, developed, and formed by undergraduate women. Identity is connected to socially constructed structures and systems which identity shifts across (Tisdell, 2000). Society places women into socially constructed oppressive systems and positions (Weedon, 1997).

Previous research does not explicitly identify feminist poststructuralism, but employs its tenets in which they complicate bounded gender norms by addressing the complexity of meaning and

the shifting nature of gendered identity expressed through alcohol. Alcohol provides women currency and symbolic power (Borsari & Carey, 2001; Russett, 2017). It is also used to express gender and reinforce traditional gendered norms among single-gender institutions (Cohen et al., 2017; McCready & Radimer, 2020). Thus, the researchers assumed that undergraduate sorority women used alcohol to express different components of their multiple identities as oppressive systems of patriarchy and male privilege across multiple constructed spaces and social systems with fraternity chapters.

In this study, feminist poststructuralism was selected to define women's identity and better understand the positionality of college sorority women across shifting contexts that may facilitate oppression and marginality. Poststructural feminism informed the design of questions used in the semi-structured interview guide and was applied to those questions specifically associated with how sorority women use alcohol across shifting socially constructed spaces and patriarchal systems.

Methods

Research Design

This study explored the experiences of undergraduate women through individual semi-structured interviews to better understand their experiences with fraternity men and alcohol use. This was a phenomenological qualitative study (Giorgi, 2009). It was informed by the tenets of feminist poststructuralism (Weedon, 1997). This research design was selected because it centers around participant experiences and voices, which allow the researcher(s) to understand how these perceptions and experiences relate to the phenomenon being studied (Giorgi, 2009). Similar approaches have been used to develop an enhanced understanding of the perspectives and experiences with alcohol (Sasso, 2015) and masculine gender norms (Danielson, 2011). This study was guided by the following research question: (1) How do undergraduate sorority women describe their experiences with alcohol? and (2) How do undergraduate sorority women interact among fraternity men with alcohol?

Positionality

Foste (2020) suggested a process of reflexivity when engaging in qualitative research. Therefore, the primary researcher engaged in a process of considering their positionality in relation to the participants in this study to avoid complicity, invalidate patriarchal beliefs, and avoid reinforcing hegemony as suggested by Foste (2020). The co-authors consider different intersecting womenist identities of race, gender, and social class. The authors also acknowledge the privilege and power we hold due to our dominant identities and the responsibility that comes with those identities to advocate for sorority reform.

The authors are all current or previous campus-based professionals as sorority/fraternity advisors. The male-identified researcher is mixed-heritage Latino and the women-identified researchers are collectively white, and identify as heterosexual and cisgender. Given that systems of oppression constantly reinforce dehumanizing patterns of thought, we acknowledge our respective positionalities which limit our perspectives and require us to continually deconstruct internalized hegemonies.

These collective identities and approaches to this study helped provide a nuanced understanding of the gendered spaces and culture of alcohol use ingrained in hegemonies of NPC sororities. It was assumed that fraternity men held power to subordinate women who, in turn, attempted to equalize this power differential through the control of alcohol use within their own chapters. To bracket our subjectivity, we approached this study using the poststructural feminist lens to collectively better understand the symbolic power of alcohol leveraged by women and how it is interconnected in their relationships with fraternity men.

Participants

Participant recruitment was facilitated using snowball sampling using protocols outlined by Jones et al. (2014) for historically marginalized and underrepresented populations to construct an intentional purposive sample ($n = 18$). No gatekeepers were used to reduce sampling bias (Patton, 2015). Inclusion criterion included active undergraduate sorority membership affiliated with National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) organizations, in full-time academic standing with their institution and undergraduate chapter, and being between the ages of 18 and 23. Legal drinking age (over 21) was not required to explore experiences of all participants. All of the participants verbally selected their own pseudonyms before the interview to protect confidentiality and shared their multiple social identities (see Table 1).

Data Collection

Participants were solicited through email after referral until there was saturation of the data as suggested by Patton (2015) which occurs when no new data is obtained and there is "data satisfaction." A semi-structured interview guide with probing questions varied slightly between participants depending on comfort level and rapport during each individual interview which lasted approximately 60 minutes. Participants were informed about alcohol consumption by those under the legal drinking age. The topics explored through the interview guide were informed by previous research related to relationships with fraternity men and experiences with alcohol (Myers & Sasso, 2022; Sasso, 2015). Clarification of meaning was used when vague language was introduced by the participants or when they used institutional specific vernacular. Participants were interviewed by a singular primary researcher in which results were not a single or double-blinded to the other study researchers. Interviews took place on campus in sorority

houses, residence hall rooms, and various other on-campus residential areas such as theme housing to facilitate increased authenticity of responses in which they were presented with a standard informed consent form. Transcription of the interviews was performed by a professional third party for data analysis.

Data Analysis & Trustworthiness

Participant data was first maximized through saturation which was determined by redundancy (Jones et al., 2014). The descriptive psychological phenomenological method was selected for data analysis because it centers participant experiences and voice which allowed the researchers to understand how perceptions and experiences relate to the phenomenon being studied (Giorgi, 2009). DPPM is "more appropriate for psychological analyses of human beings since the purpose of psychology as a human science is precisely the clarification of the meanings of phenomena experienced by human persons" (Giorgi, 2009, p. 98). Data analysis followed the descriptive psychological phenomenological method (DPPM) for coding which was interpreted through the interpretive relativist ontology paradigm in which epistemology assumes that the researcher cannot separate themselves from what they know (Giorgi, 2009).

Relativist ontology proposes that reality is also subjectively socially and experientially constructed through individual understandings and meanings (Angen, 2000). Similarly, in DPPM, the voice of the participant cannot be separated from their meaning making of experiences (Giorgi, 2003). The depth and richness of the information provided should take precedence over sample sizes to help uncover the phenomenon through the DPPM five-step process (Giorgi, 2009; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003).

The DPPM process starts with bracketing of *a priori* knowledge and assumptions and then continues with three rounds of coding through *interpretive phenomenological analysis* to generate final themes (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Giorgi (2009) also noted that DPPM places emphasis on the words expressed by the participants and not their own interpretations. The first phase or *epoche* allowed the researchers to locate their previous assumptions In congruence with feminist poststructuralism, the researchers assumed that alcohol is ceded to social status in which male patriarchy subordinates a female hegemony among NPC members. These assumptions were acknowledged through reflexive journaling in which they described their own experiences with the study phenomenon to bracket these from informing the phenomenon and remain open to new ways of understanding.

Meaning units were identified through initial coding in DPPM which phenomenology considers as "horizons of experience" to develop a list of initial open codes (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). This open coding began with line-by-line open coding. The researchers grounded open codes based on poststructuralist feminism to recognize the socially

constructed boundaries imposed by a history of patriarchy and oppression (Weedon, 1997).

The second phase of coding used axial coding in which open codes are grouped into more abstract/complex categories through textural and structural descriptions. Textural descriptions were specific language from the participants to show how they were discussing the phenomenon of alcohol use and fraternity men (Moustakas, 1994). Structural descriptions were based on researcher interpretations of the participants' language within hegemonies.

The final phase of coding used selective coding was used to collapse themes (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Selective coding was applied by, "selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development" (Jones et al., 2014, p. 45). This is what phenomenology refers to as the "thematizing the invariant constituents" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). However, in DPPM this is referred to this as *imaginative variation* to distinctively explicate the structures of participant experiences in which the researchers used code mapping as an organizing heuristic using validated by an external auditor as part of trustworthiness strategies (Giorgi, 2009). The researchers continuously reflected on their subjectivities to remain aware of how they influence data analysis.

Then Jones et al.'s (2014) trustworthiness strategies were employed: (1) an external auditor, who was a retired university professor from a student affairs graduate program with *a priori* experience and knowledge in that area; (2) a subject matter expert, who assisted in reviewing and questioning the main themes and questions to clarify researcher bias; and (3) member checking using the interview transcript data.

Findings

Each sorority member shared their perspectives about fraternity men and described the different ways in which they experienced alcohol use. Sorority women used alcohol to reinforce their own hegemony within chapters and create demand characteristics to influence conformity towards traditional norms of femininity. They highlighted a larger culture of partying as a form of femininity. Sorority Women of Color experienced alcohol use and party environments differently from their white peers. Sorority members felt that their membership was synonymous with drinking and embraced the experience which helped bring them closer to their chapter sisters.

Liquid Bonding

The sorority members broadly discussed the social benefits of their alcohol use. They discussed "liquid bonding" because they felt it made them closer to their sorority sisters and helped them

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feel more connected to fraternities to be a part of their fraternity/ sorority community. The white sorority members did not share any narratives of experiences beyond NIC fraternities and when prompted, they were unable to share any experiences with more diverse party settings. While the Women of Color in sororities suggested they did drink alcohol with some of their same race peers, but often were chastised by them for being "white girl wasted" or "drinking with Karens." Therefore, Women of Color indicated they primarily drank with their white sorority sisters and felt like they had to even drink more to fit in sometimes. These women and others commented on such performativity as being somewhat surface. A Latina-identified sorority woman offered her opinion by suggesting, "We do it for the Gram so we can get the likes for drinking pics. One time I got on Total Sorority Move." To sorority women, this status and recognition was important from peers on social media and in party spaces with fraternity men.

Sorority women discussed their drinking patterns and behaviors as attempts to gain notoriety or popularity amongst their fraternal campus community. Others felt like they had to drink more to increase their social status. One sorority member described why they needed to expand their chapter party reputation, "We were trying to get my sorority a better social rep, so we get out there and pull up with the glow up. I think we are so fire." Alcohol use was ceded to social status which sorority women felt would grant them greater notoriety and relationships with fraternity men.

This same confidence and bravado about alcohol use was consistent across the chapters. In particular, the sororities again noted that they had to usurp the policies of the NPC because they are not allowed to host events with alcohol. Rather, sorority women shared the perspective that this policy gives power to the fraternity men to host parties for sororities which can place them in dangerous environments. They also had to negotiate gendered relationships with fraternity men and the double standards they receive because they are women who drink. One participant summarized this collective perspective about the double standards imposed by NPC alcohol polices and being criticized for drinking too much, but challenged the discourse by suggesting it should be empowering:

NPC guidelines say that we cannot host parties, but we use the fraternities to host the parties and we do most of our recruitment in the fall for COB and for spring formal recruitment this way. I mean, to be honest, I think alcohol is part of the sorority experience and sorry, not sorry, it's just a thing. We do all these things to hide it, because if a woman drinks she is not ladylike or gets slut-shamed. I think it's empowering and intimidating to see a bunch of sorority girls getting shitfaced and drinking. This is an ultimate college power more and is #GirlBoss.

Other sorority members discussed how they connect with others

through alcohol use. They discussed drinking games as a central, common way to socialize with others. Drinking games often involve competition. One sorority member described their experience with drinking games and competition:

> Lowkey, it's the drinking for me. We try a lot to keep up with the boys. We can outdrink all of the boys with games like flip cup, beer pong, ladders, it don't matter. All we do is win.

Alcohol also involved forms of indoctrinated into the chapters through traditions as established patterns of drinking. These often involved big-little drinking challenges or informal drinking clubs within chapters. Many sorority members suggested that most drinking occurred within their family trees, "My family tree has a drink, 7 & 7, and so you take 7 shots of 7 & 7. It really gets you twisted." Forced alcohol consumption as a form of hazing was frequently reported by sorority members. This hazing was typically presented by their big sister or within their family tree. However, the women rationalized that there was an educational purpose to the forced drinking, rather than as a socialization or bonding rationale. One sorority member as a big sister described their common approach, "I make my little sister drink with the fam, so they learn how to be a woman. We have squad goals and they need to learn them."

There was a subtle embracing of sorority stereotypes by the women in this study. They pointed out to prospective members that because the expectation is that they will have access to fraternity men, parties, and social opportunities, sisterhood experiences will all involve alcohol. Women of color strongly supported the notion that the undergraduate sorority experience is culturally ingrained with alcohol. They suggested that in many instances it is used a form of control to reinforce hegemony, and in other ways it promotes sex. However, the women did suggest that alcohol helped them discover their friends for life through their liquid bonding. The sorority experience with alcohol was summarized by one sorority chapter leader in which she clarified, "My big sister makes me drink all the time. We have to drink these basic bitch drinks like Skinny ones or mimosas, but I like that we hashtag (#) BrunchSoHard."

During these experiences the women indicated they sat for two to three hours on Sunday mornings gossiping about others and discussing issues in their personal lives. This rhetoric accurately described the ways in which women engaged in a performativity of alcohol use and connected these behaviors to a gendered discourse. However, such experiences made them feel more connected to each other as women in which they engaged in a very specific gendered form of alcohol use. Alcohol is used as a mediational tool to transmit feminine norms and expectations. The sorority women used alcohol to socially construct a culture to project a favorable image of themselves to other people such as through social media. Thus, they used alcohol

to curate an image and acculturate a larger undergraduate sorority subculture. Alcohol was also used to acculturate other women into this subculture through experiences of liquid bonding. Several participants colorfully described this liquid bonding interchangeably as "#BrunchSoHard" when sharing experiences in which alcohol was used to promote connectedness between sorority women.

Unspoken Rules of Feminine Hegemony

The sorority women expressed language and perspectives as well as shared personal narratives which suggested there were social tiers within their fraternal campus communities. These tiers existed within a socially constructed subculture in which alcohol was ceded to social status. A ubiquitous response from every participant was their ordinal ranking of chapters in which their criteria was anchored in who was the most attractive and had the most frequent or best parties. Moreover, fraternity chapters were given primacy in the ranking and then participants ranked their own chapter or other sororities.

Sororities were frequently ranked according to who had the most campus leaders, philanthropy dollars raised, adhered to traditional sorority feminine or beauty norms, associated with the higher ranked fraternities, and had the most attractive women as externally ranked by fraternity men. Sorority women compartmentalized a separate combined list related to partying, sex, and drugs. They ranked chapters according who had the most mixers, best "top shelf" liquor, who could drink the most to "hold their liquor," had sex with "hot" fraternity men, and were able to consume prescription drugs such as Adderall. This party prestige ranking was grounded in the perspective of not "getting caught," and remaining ladylike in which these behaviors were to be kept "on the downlow" according to participants.

These attempts to keep party behaviors underground or silenced was rooted in a larger system for fear of negative public perception by fraternity men. They did not want to be labeled as the "heifer sorority" or "cocaine sluts." They wanted to appear to fraternity men to be demure and subservient. This socially constructed culture created demand characteristics and a larger system of an unspoken code of conduct for sorority women. This code of conduct was supposedly formalized in their organizational bylaws and levied by their chapter executive board. Chapter leadership policed public or front-facing sorority member behaviors, especially with alcohol. All of this policing was in relation to compliance with public perceptions by fraternity members and access to parties. One sorority member describe this policing:

> This might hit different, but like I feel sometimes the women on the exec change over each year with slate. They set limits on how, when, and what we drink. They are usually pretty strict about drinking in your letters or in public.

There was also a system of fines and sanctions for women who violated the unspoken policies about reinforcing the social stigmas in fear of fraternity perceptions. Sorority women in non-leadership roles often suggested that the biggest perpetrators of their rules were chapter leaders. A sorority chapter leader described this system of sanctions:

> The biggest flex any of the sororities have is J board and then fining you. They add the fines to your sorority bill and then a credit agency (debt collector) comes after you if you don't pay it.

Sorority members described differences in power, prestige, and popularity from non-leaders on the executive board. They described cliques and exclusionary social circles. This was particularly salient in chapters that had larger chapter sizes or were perceived to party with alcohol more. Sorority women are unable to host their own parties with alcohol due to national rules and insurance policy limitations. Therefore, they are going out to party in other spaces that are not a sorority house and presenting in these spaces was important. Another chapter leader observed these behaviors which presented a difference in rhetoric in public spaces versus intimidating behaviors in private spaces:

> I have noticed a lot of women on exec use this empowering women's feminist language we get from our classes, social media, or like even in our trainings from nationals. But even behind our backs or in closed doors when they get drunk they call women lesbos, bitch, or cunt.

Sorority women described a social pattern of retribution that was informal between chapter members. More popular women were cited as using intimidation to maintain their positionality within a larger chapter hegemony which centered around alcohol use and events with drinking. There were several narratives that discussed how women used alcohol and other related experiences with alcohol as retribution against other sorority chapter members. One sorority shared her perspective:

> We are often our own worst enemy and I have seen women call each other out through slut shaming, gossiping, or straight up verbal harassment. It is never usually physical. But sometimes the women challenge each other by getting drunk or sleeping with people they know.

The chapter leaders across sorority chapters did not want to endanger their social standing across the socially constructed system of ranking in which alcohol use is ceded to social status. They reinforced gender norms of feminine vulnerability and subservience to not jeopardize relationships with fraternities. Chapter members

enforced a system of policing and intimidation in private spaces to produce a more public, friendly face. These women across sorority chapters marginalized their identities to conform towards traditional expectations set by the fraternity members which established a hegemony within and across sorority chapters.

Discussion

This study both brings new knowledge to practitioners as well as builds on existing research. This study also extends the boundaries of existing research related to how women strengthen the hegemonic structure existing in their organizations by controlling how their members use alcohol and adds to existing research by exploring how women utilize power in spaces. It is important to note that there has been a lack of research on this subject specifically, but many outcomes and implications can be gleaned from previous studies in relation to the findings of this study. Sorority women used alcohol to reinforce their own hegemony within chapters and create demand characteristics to influence conformity towards traditional norms of femininity. They highlighted a larger culture of partying as a form of femininity. Women of Color experienced alcohol and hegemony differently from their white sorority peers. Sorority members felt that their membership was synonymous with drinking and embraced the experience which helps bring them closer to their chapter sisters.

Prior research regarding alcohol use within sororities was limited, though was supported by the women interviewed for this study. Supporting the theory of socialization, where women who surrounded themselves with heavy drinkers were also more likely to drink more themselves, was the feeling of many members that they needed to drink more to fit into the group, particularly Women of Color. Consistent with previous research (Cohen et al, 2017; LaBrie & Cail, 2011), members also indicated that they drank more heavily to gain popularity and notoriety, and one participant indicated that she felt it was "empowering and intimidating" to see sorority women consuming alcohol at such a high level. In addition, women reported that drinking games were a great way to socialize with sisters and fraternity men, as well as participating in family or big/little drinks in order to fit in with their sorority family.

This study also supports previous research that alcohol use is an important part of sisterhood (Capone et al., 2007; Cohen et al., 2017). Participants reported that they felt closer to sisters and the wider fraternity/sorority community when they drank with them. They also indicated that drinking was an important way to learn how to be a woman and this was utilized within family drinking. Alcohol related problems were also prevalent and supported by this study. Some women reported low-level problems, like being fined by their judicial board or issues with fellow sorority sisters. This study adds to prior research in regard to the women's attitudes toward embracing sorority

stereotypes (Cohen et al., 2017; Sasso, 2018). Many participants acknowledged stereotypes about sororities, including that alcohol use is ingrained in the sorority experience, and that they use it to reinforce chapter and community hegemony. They also indicated that they "#BrunchSoHard" and actively participate in day drinking and gossiping, which made them feel more connected as sisters.

Hazing by means of alcohol consumption was also a common theme throughout the interviews. This study supports previous research in multiple areas of hazing, such as women using words such as bonding, unity, or tradition in describing why they consume alcohol with others (Alvarez, 2015; Parks et al., 2015; Veliz & Allen, 2012). Participants reported that the friends they would have for the rest of their lives were the ones they drank with. Prior studies also indicated that while new members felt that alcohol hazing was harmless, they still included alcohol consumption in their definition of hazing (Parks et al., 2015). The women interviewed for this study echoed the same sentiments by speaking about big and little drinking challenges, a drink designated for their family tree, and being forced by their big sister to drink. Finally, new members felt they needed to prove they were worthy of membership and felt that there was an educational component to their hazing, such as teaching members the proper way to be a woman.

Limitations

There are limitations associated with the study and its findings. This study featured a heterogeneous sample drawn only from NPC sororities from specific five institutional types. The researchers did not inquire about sexual orientation and most participants assumed heteronormativity. This may limit the transferability of the sample. The researchers of this study are past or current members of national NIC and NPC organizations and may have *a priori* participant knowledge which may have influenced the responses of the participants. Also, some participants may have selectively disclosed because of fear of stigma. Given these considerations, the results are not necessarily transferable across all sorority member populations and their experiences with alcohol and fraternity men.

The authors recognize lack of representation among members of National Pan-Hellenic Council, Inc. (NPHC), National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO), the National APIDA Panhellenic Association (NAPA), and the National Multicultural Greek Council (NMGC) within this research. NPC and discussion about NIC members were selected because the majority of the alcohol research suggests that they are engaged in the heavy episodic drinking, rather than members of other councils (Biddix et al., 2014). Future research should address the limitations of this research study and explore the power dynamics between fraternity men and sorority women among specific council types such as NPHC or NALFO.

Implications for Practice

This study provides several implications for practice that are grounded in the findings. Hazing and other forms of socialization were connected to identity formation in which these experiences for sorority women validated their feminity. They found embracing these experiences as liberating and empowering. However, alcohol was directly controlled to reinforce and limit the ways in which women's identity was expressed which established hegemony within chapters. This was particularly salient for Women of Color who experienced racialized experiences with alcohol use. Additional emphasis should be placed on the role of alcohol and diversity/inclusion in the new member process by continuing to enforce reform of how alcohol is culturally ingrained.

There was also a symbiotic relationship between fraternity men and sorority women. Fraternity men have space, and sorority women have control over construction of this space. In the examples given by women interviewed, they indicated that they utilize fraternity spaces for drinking and parties because they feel their inter/national policies and NPC policies state they cannot use their own spaces. Sorority women are exhibiting the power in these situations because they are able to control what kind of alcohol and/or drugs are available at the party. Fraternity men can deliver on the alcohol or drugs and sorority women will attend the events. While most fraternities also have policies regarding alcohol and drugs, their policies clearly are not as tightly ingrained into the organizations as they are into the sororities. Inter/national fraternities should review their policies, as well as reporting and accountability standards. If the men are not following the social event/alcohol and drug policies, then reinforcement of those policies and accountability is necessary (Parks et al., 2015). The symbiotic relationship between the two genders and their organizations creates a power dynamic that can result in dangerous situations (Sasso, 2015).

Harm reduction education about substance abuse is necessary for sorority members (Allen et al., 2019). Participants openly discussed using cocaine and Adderall. Behaviors like these are often not spoken about in formal spaces, like inter/national retreats and trainings, or chapter meetings. Multiple resources from Zeta Tau Alpha Women's Fraternity program "My Sister, My Responsibility," offer training and activities regarding safe prescription drug use and opioid use that are available to all chapters, regardless of affiliation, and all campuses free of charge through their website. In addition to beginning conversations and expanding the educational approach surrounding drug use in more formal spaces, inter/national organizations should encourage the use of intervention approaches within standards boards, rather than punitive approaches.

Drug and alcohol use and abuse can be a sensitive topic, and standards board members should approach the topic with care and concern, rather than the intention of holding individuals accountable

with fines or the loss of privileges, particularly if it is the first offense. Avoid removing members because they have symptoms of addiction and instead offer a community of support. Sisterhood can serve as a powerful form of peer protection for sorority women. Sororities can serve as a powerful space of student persistence and institutional retention (Biddix et al., 2016). An educational approach will demonstrate to members who are struggling or unsure of where to go for help that the organization and its members care about their health and well-being, rather than sanctioning them without providing any resources, education, or support.

Conclusion

This study concludes with nuanced findings that suggest that sorority women use alcohol to reinforce their own hegemony over their sisters in which alcohol is used as a form of hazing. Sexual behaviors, drug use, and other party experiences were shared by sorority women. This study illuminates a problematic culture of substance misuse among NPC women. This was also highlighted in a 1990 when it was "recommend more education be conducted on various women's issues to assist in developing and building a young woman's self-worth as soon as she begins college. This should help reduce incidents of hazing and other forms of abuse" (Shaw & Morgan, 1990, p.64). Yet, little has changed to address these concerns in the 30 plus years between Shaw & Morgan's findings in 1990 and the authorship of this study. Future researchers should continue to explore the individual themes of this study across more diverse samples of chapters.

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