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Assessing the Needs of Non-Monosexual Students Related to Campus LGBT Services

Sidney R. Gardner
St. Cloud State University, smsi0701@stcloudstate.edu

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by

Sidney R. Gardner

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Michael Mills, Chairperson
Steven McCullar
Daniel Macari
Anne Phibbs

Abstract

This research looked at the current campus climate for non-monosexual people and whether or not non-monosexual students felt understood and supported through current LGBTQ programs, services, and resources on their campus. The purpose of this research was to understand how LGBTQ centers/offices/services could best serve non-monosexual student populations. Ten undergraduate, mostly female identified, non-monosexual students at a large research intensive institution in the south participated in this basic qualitative research study. This research showed that non-monosexual students' needs are not entirely being addressed through current programs, resources, and services on campus. According to this research, students were able to find spaces that were affirming to their identities as LGBTQ, yet they still had to learn to navigate all of the mircoaggressions and biphobia that exists both within and outside of the LGBTQ community. What this research showed is that LGBTQ centers need to be more attuned to the needs of non-monosexual populations and engaged in purposeful programs, education, and outreach aimed at non-monosexual populations.

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Chapter I: Introduction

> Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black nor all things white. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separated pigeon-holes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects. The sooner we learn this concerning human sexual behavior the sooner we shall reach a sound understanding of the realities of sex. (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948, p. 639)

My History

In 1996, as a junior in college, I had come out to myself and close friends and I decided it was time to start to come out to my family. I made the decision to come out to my dad first, knowing that he would be the least likely to disown me or cut me off financial or emotionally. I was in my first relationship with a women and I wanted to be able to share this part of my life with my family. My parents were separated and I knew that I could come out to my father without worrying about it getting back to my mother. I remember being in the car with my dad on the way to lunch. We were engrossed in some conversation about my experiences at my new institution and I finally worked up the courage to say to him, "Dad I am bisexual." I will never forget his response to me and the lasting impact it had when he said, "I can handle you being gay, but I really can't understand you saying your bisexual." The message was crystal clear, "bisexuality does not exist, it does not make sense, and you are just confused."

Flash forward to 1998 when I found myself working as a graduate assistant, the only paid position in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Center on campus. I was still proudly identifying as bisexual, but I was increasingly encountering negative stereotypes of bisexual people and

pushback from members the Lesbian and Gay community who were consistently stating that bisexuality does not exist and it is only a transitory identity that is used by people who are not quite ready to admit that they are Gay or Lesbian. I caved under the intense and persistent pressure of the message that I could not possibly work on behalf of the LGBT community if I was going to identify as bisexual, and started to adopt the identity of my current partner at the time, which was as a lesbian.

This brings us to 2007, when I was working full time as the coordinator for Gender and Sexuality Student Services on a college campus. I was increasingly adopting the identity of queer when I was in academic spaces because I felt that queer was the best way to capture my belief that gender identity exists on a spectrum and not in binaries of male and female. It was also still safe for me since queer was the "new" inclusive identity and did not force me to take any real ownership for the fluidity of my own sexual orientation. However, when my relationship of 6 years dissolved, I was forced to question my sexual orientation as it had been defined in terms of who I was partnered with at the time–in this case, a lesbian identified woman. When I started to examine my own attractions and allowed myself to explore my sexuality as it related to me and not who I was partnered with, I was able to see that my sexual orientation was indeed more fluid and my attractions were more complex than I had previously allowed them to be due to the intense messages I had received about the legitimacy of bisexuality or fluid sexual orientations in general.

As I began to come out more under the label of bisexual, I started to notice an interesting phenomenon due to my self-disclosure. I had many students who had identified under the monosexual labels of gay or lesbian before, come out to me secretly as bisexual.

They admitted that they had feelings, attractions, behaviors, relationships with people of various gender identities and that they felt like they could not come out as bisexual or pansexual due to the stigma placed on fluid identities. To be clear, for the purpose of this dissertation, I will be utilizing Robyn Ochs's definition of bisexuality:

> I call myself bisexual because I acknowledge that I have in myself the potential to be attracted, romantically and/or sexually, to people of more than one sex and/or gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree. (Ochs & Rowley, 2005, p. 8)

It was during this time that I began to see that my experience of internalized and overt biphobia and binegativity were not unique experiences that I had due to my own hang up about my sexual orientation, but were patterns of experiences that many students with more fluid sexual orientation were experiencing. Rust (2002) states, "Biphobia is used by lay people to describe any form of prejudice against bisexuals, although clinicians would interpret the term more specifically as 'fear of bisexuals'" (p. 204). Binegitivity is described by Kleese (2011) as,

> …a broad set of oppressive practices, which include forms of violence (interpersonal, legal, institutional), discrimination (social, cultural, legal), as well as epistemic erasure and denigration through negative representations. The operation of stereotypes is part and parcel of the last strategy. (p. 234)

It became clear that, while we intend to build inclusive spaces for LGBT students on many campuses, most of these models were perpetuating the biphobia and binegativity that exists in our society. What I suspect is that this biphobia and binegativity has been inadvertently institutionalized into the programs, services and resources that we have created for LGBT students mostly through collapsing the needs of bisexuals into the needs of the larger gay and lesbian community.

As noted above, bisexuality and non-monosexual identities are contentious identities both within the gay and lesbian community as well as in the larger heterosexual community. According to Israel and Mohr (2004), Ochs (1996), and Sheets and Mohr (2009), bisexuality is a stigmatized identity due to the many stereotypes that exists for bisexual people, such as bisexuality being seen as a transitory identity, bisexual people being unable or unwilling to commit to one partner, and bisexual people not being committed to the larger Lesbian and Gay community. While bisexuality and fluid sexual orientations are still largely misunderstood and under researched, the research that does exist points to an unmet need for education, services, and resources that are tailored to the unique needs of this population (Dodge, Reece, & Gebhard, 2008; King, 2011; Rust, 2002; Sheets & Mohr, 2009).

As described by Rust (2002), the term bisexuality is, in and of itself, a contentious identity that many people are not willing, able, interested or comfortable adopting for themselves. Language is imprecise and imperfect and is only made more problematic when it is used by others to label what they do not understand. Bisexual is an identity and a label that was imposed by researchers on people whose behaviors, attractions, relationships and such did not fit under a monosexual identity.

At the same time, some within the larger gay, lesbian and transgender communities have recently called into question the use of the term bisexual, stating that it reinforces traditional gender binaries of male and female. This is a particularly interesting phenomena considering that the same argument can be made about gay and lesbian identities, since many who identify as gay and lesbian actually do not believe in the binary system of gender, but still use a label that implies that attraction is to one gender (Barker et. al, 2012; Savin-

Williams, 2001). The idea that bisexuality perpetuates the binary systems of gender has impacted the number of people who are willing to identify themselves as bisexual and has given rise to the creation or adoption of alternative definitions of identities such as pansexual, fluid or queer (Callis, 2009). Due to this, I will be using the term non-monosexual as an umbrella term for all sexual orientations and identities that do not conform to traditional definitions of straight, gay, or lesbian.

Statement of the Problem

One would be hard pressed to find one student development theory that applies to all students unilaterally. There are too many competing factors that influence the development of students in higher education. Arthur Chickering is an often cited student development theorist. His particular framework that is most well-known is called the Seven Vectors of Development. In 1993, Chickering and Linda Reisser updated the vectors in order to make them applicable to a broader population of college students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). There are many ways in which LGBTQ students' development is in line with Chickering and Reisser's Seven Vectors, but there is also an unaddressed impact of being LGBTQ on identity development. Ronni Sanlo (2004) points out that LGBT identified students are unable to progress through the vectors until they are able to resolve developmental tasks related to being LGBTQ.

Within the last 20 years, colleges and universities have started to understand the unique needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender identified students. The Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals (2012), share that many 4-year institutions have officially recognized LGBTQ student organizations on their campuses and

close to two hundred institutions in the United States have dedicated services, offices, or centers that are charged with serving the needs of LGBTQ students. As with larger LGBTQ organizations outside of higher education institutions, according to Fassinger (1998), models for serving LGBTQ people were primarily based on the needs of white, gay male identified individuals. Many centers, offices, organizations and such were only using gay or gay and lesbian in their titles. Through the nineties and beyond, LGBTQ services began to use more inclusive titles in order to speak to the diverse student populations they wished to serve. The problem is that LGBTQ service models are still built around serving primarily gay and lesbian identified students. It would be too quick to judge if one was to assume that this is due to a lack of desire on the part of LGBTQ center or office staff to serve broader populations. It is my belief that there has not been adequate work done that looks at the unique needs of non-monosexual students and what services and resources they need in order to thrive in college.

The purpose of this dissertation is to draw attention to a current discrepancy that exists around providing services for non-monosexual identified students. More specifically, it is the unique needs of bisexual, pansexual, and students with more fluid sexual identities in our higher education systems that are not being addressed under current service and program models. Students are coming out at much younger ages and much higher rates than ever before and a using a broader range of identities. Colleges and universities are starting to look at the needs of gay and lesbian students on their campuses and to a lesser extent Transgender populations. Yet, most campuses assume the needs of non-monosexual students are being met by their programming targeted at gay and lesbian students. This research will speak to

the unique needs of non-monosexual students as an area of student development that needs to be addressed.

Current research on the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students is typically conducted using white gay males and occasionally white lesbian females as the standard. Recent articles have suggested that this is not an accurate means of measuring the needs of the entire LGBTQ student population. As supported by Brown, Clark, Gortmaker, Robinson-Keilig (2004) and Dilley (2004), this research suggests that there is a need for more research on issues facing non-monosexual students and understanding the needs of this population.

Patrick Dilley (2004) conducted a review of the research that focuses on LGBTQ College students between 2000 and 2003. Dilley classified the articles into three areas: "studies of campus climate and how to attempt to change it; works dealing with LGBTQ student life issues; and explorations of how being non-heterosexual affects the politics and practices of college teaching" (Dilley, 2004, p. 106). Looking at the research focused on campus climate, Dilley pointed out that, while there was much work done by individual campuses looking at their own campus climate, much of that work was not published research. The campus climate research that was published looked primarily at policies and procedures that impact LGBTQ students such as implementation of campus non-discrimination policies. The other work that was conducted on campus climate involved looking at the programs and services that were provided on individual campuses around LGBTQ populations, including the implementation of several campus safe zones or ally programs (Dilley, 2004).

Through his review of the research, Dilley (2004) did identify some areas for future research that align closely with the direction of this research. He breaks down his findings into five distinct categories: Students, Faculty, Administration, Policies, and Women, Bisexual, and Transgender Populations. In the Students sections, one suggestion that Dilley makes is that there needs to be more studies done on the effects of the campus climate on students. Also, he suggests that we need to also look closely at what individual institutions are doing with those reports (Dilley, 2004). In looking at the lack of research on women, bisexual, and transgender populations, Dilley points out that "with a few exceptions, most of the research has conflated the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer populations, despite the fact that research in other disciplines (psychology, human development, sociology) indicates significant differences among them" (Dilley, 2004, p. 113). Dilley directly addresses the disparity in research on bisexual students and expresses the direct need for this research going forward. This lack of research on non-monosexual students contributes to the invisibility that non-monosexual students feel due to the lack of understanding around bisexuality.

Description and Scope of the Research

As stated above, it is my assumption that non-monosexual identities and the needs of non-monosexual students are continually and mistakenly assumed to be the same as their gay or lesbian identified peers. This assumption is supported by the research of Dilley (2004) and Dugan and Yurman (2011). A careful review of the current literature in the field indicates that there is a marked absence of research dedicated to looking at the needs of non-monosexual students, and bisexual students specifically. The purpose of this research is to

test that assumption, to develop a better understanding of the experiences of non-monosexual students and to work towards developing better models for serving non-monosexual students.

For the purposes of this research, I will be using the frame of queer theory in order to both analyze my findings and to dismantle the static boxes of the binary sexuality and gender systems in our society. According to Abes and Kasch (2007), "Unlike constructivist-developmental theory, which explains development toward complex ways of understanding identity, queer theory critically analyzes the meaning of identity, focusing on intersections of identities and resisting oppressive social constructions of sexual orientation and gender" (p. 620). Michael Foucault (1978) is one of the often cited theorists who gets credited with laying the poststructural foundation for queer theory. There are a few other theorists who are credited with the development of queer theory; one that is of particular interest to my research is Judith Butler. Butler (1990) believes that all gender and sexuality work together as a system that is both socially constructed and performative in nature. Butler is of interest to my work because of the way that she did look at gender and sexuality as a constructed system. Although, I agree with April Callis (2009) that Butlers work was the first to talk about gender and sexuality in this way, she did not talk about how bisexuality interrupts this performativity piece. According to Butler (1990), gender performativity is culturally formed and socially constructed and not based on an essential and innate identity of male and female. The performativity is how each and every one of us takes in those cultural cues and markers and presents them as gender. It is also dynamic and malleable based on the cues, markers and also the punishment and push back we receive from others (Butler, 1990).

Research Questions

Through this research I will be addressing the following questions:

1. What is the current campus climate for non-monosexual people?

2. What are the effects of not having a recognized or organized non-monosexual community on the identity development of non-monosexual students?

3. What programs and student support services do non-monosexual students need?

4. How can LGBTQ centers/offices/services better serve non-monosexual student populations?

Purpose and Significance of the Study

As a practitioner in the field of LGBTQ higher education professionals, this research is imperative to the work that we do in order to serve the needs of all non-heterosexual students. Also, as students move further and further away from labeling their attractions, behaviors, relationships and identity, LGBTQ higher education professionals will struggle with how to provide inclusive resources to these populations. Gaining a better understanding of the needs of non-monosexual students and the best way to serve these populations will become a greater imperative.

Allowing non-monosexual identified students the ability to talk about their identities in ways that move away from binary notions of identity and towards more queer ideas of identity will allow students the ability to self-define but also allow them to form community with others who have similar needs and experiences, hopefully insuring that they are not further marginalized within the current LGBTQ services models.

The research that currently exists that focuses on LGBTQ students in higher education focuses almost exclusively on gay and lesbian identified students. This ignores the needs of non-monosexual students. I believe that non-monosexual students feel more alone, isolated and alienated on campus as well as within LGBTQ organizations and centers on campus. The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the experiences and the needs of non-monosexual students on a large research extensive institution that currently provides LGBTQ services to its students. What are the ways that LGBTQ resources and services on campus are currently supporting non-monosexual students and what are the ways in which they are falling short? This study will illuminate the needs of non-monosexual students and will serve as a guidepost for developing more open and affirming LGBTQ programs, services, and centers for non-monosexual students. Ultimately, this research will help practitioners develop more inclusive programs, services and resources that will help students understand that non-monosexual identities are valid identities. This validation of non-monsexual identities will help students develop healthy understanding of their own identities and curb some of the higher instances of depression (Oswalt & Wyatt, 2011; Sheets & Mohr, 2009), suicide ideation (Bostwick et al., 2007), and drug/alcohol use (Bostwick et al., 2007; Oswalt, 2009) that have been documented in bisexual communities.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

There is a small, but growing body of research on the topic of Gay and Lesbian students in higher education and even less on Bisexual and Transgender students. The field is growing, but the invisibility of LGBTQ identified students on campus makes this topic hard to research. While the purpose of this research is to illuminate the needs of non-monosexual students, it is important to look more globally at the needs of LGBTQ students and their identity development. In this section, I will be looking at historical and current research on bisexual, fluid, pansexual identified people both in higher education and the larger American society. This review of the literature also aims to highlight how the lived experiences of non-monosexual students have not been addressed in current literature. Specifically this will be done by looking at LGBTQ identities, LGBTQ campus life, and LGBTQ visibility and specifically looking at how this research treats non-monosexual identities. I will also be looking at the research on bisexual, pansexual, or fluid identities, and trying to identify what the trends are for working with these students in higher education.

Bisexuality Research

The most important thing to understand about research on bisexual populations is that there are ways to approach working with and researching bisexual populations. There are sensitive issues that are unique to this population and that need to be acknowledged in conducting this research (Barker et al., 2012). One very important research item that needs to be taken into account is how we determine and define ones sexual orientation. It becomes problematic to rely solely on self-identification as bisexual or non-monosexual. This reliance

on self-identification has a tendency to ignore, invisibilize, or erase non-monosexual identities (Savin-Williams, 2001).

When conducting research on any sexual minority population, we must move beyond questions about self-identification or labels, and ask more broad questions about sexual behaviors and attractions (Savin-Williams, 2001). There are many reasons why someone would not choose to label themselves as non-heterosexual: not out to themselves, not out to others, not in alignment with LGBT community, or they have not engaged in sexual behaviors, thus not really having a true understanding of what their identity is at that time (Savin-Williams, 2001).

In 2012, a group of bisexual researchers developed guidelines for conducting research on bisexual populations. These guidelines are important for understanding possible perils of doing research on, for or by this population. One of the main problems that Barker et al. point to in research is bisexual invisibility (2012). Research on LGBT identities has a tendency to focus on finding the cause of gay and lesbian identities and altogether ignores fluid sexual orientations (Barker et al., 2012). On the other hand, research on the origins or bisexuality tends to focus on proving if it even exists (Barker et al., 2012). The final way that bisexuality is made invisible through research is by ignoring it all together. Researchers doing research on lesbian and gay populations specifically will collapse non-monosexual identities in with lesbian and gay populations or just remove them all together (Barker et al., 2012; Garber, 1995). Not only does this erase the existence of bisexual populations, it also does not allow for developing an understanding of the unique needs of bisexual populations (Barker et al.,

2012; Ochs, 1996). Another way that research on bisexuality has fallen short is how it is assumed that there is a monolithic experience for all bisexual people (Barker et al., 2012).

One particular point about bisexual research that is of great importance to this research is the concept of reflexivity. This is of particular importance given how misunderstood bisexuality is in general. Barker et al, makes the point that reflexivity is critical to research on bisexuality in order to make sure that personal assumptions and biases and such are not shaping the research (2012). On a similar note, it is vital that bisexual community is included in research and design process (Barker et al., 2012).

Some of the particular challenges that bisexual people face are around sexual identity, sexual orientation labels, and understanding identity development for fluid sexual orientations. In this section I will be discussing research that focuses on bisexuality and non-monosexual identities. I will start by discussing the research on bisexual identity development. Then, I will look at research related to attitudes about bisexuality and the impact of binegitivity and biphobia on bisexuals. I will explore how the attitudes about bisexuality impact bisexual community and the visibility of bisexuals

Bisexuality in Traditional LGBT Identity Development Models. One of the first concepts to look at when wanting to understand a particular population's needs is student development theory. One would be hard pressed to find one development theory that applies to all unilaterally. There are too many competing factors that influence the development of students in higher education. There are a few main theories that have taken a look at identity development in LGBTQ identified individuals that will be reviewed in this section. These include: Cass's Psychosocial Model for Sexual Identity Development, Savin-Williams Pattern

of Gay Identity Development, Troiden's Model of Homosexual Identity Development, and

D'Augelli's Model of lesbian, gay, and bisexual development.

The first model to addresses LGBTQ development directly is Vivienne Cass's (1984)

model, *Cass's psychosocial model for sexual identity development*. Cass first discussed her

theoretical model in her 1979 work, "Homosexual Identity Formation: A Theoretical Model."

This original work presented the stage model as a theoretical model. According to Cass

(1984), there are six linear "stages" of identity development for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual

(GLB) individuals: Identity Confusion, Identity Comparison, Identity Tolerance, Identity

Acceptance, Identity Pride, and Identity Synthesis. Savin-Williams (1998) created another

stage development model specifically for gay males, the Savin-Williams Pattern of Gay

Identity Development which consists of 10 stages of identity development. The Troiden

(1989) model is also conceptualized as a four stage model similar to Cass and Savin-Williams

models.

In Cass's model, the first stage is Identity Confusion where one starts to question their

sexual orientation. Cass felt that this stage is typically prompted by a realization that a

specific behavior or behaviors can be labeled as homosexual. In the Identity Comparison

stage, individuals acknowledge their difference in comparison to their heterosexual

counterparts based on Cass's (1984) description. Cass points out that individual's path

through this stage could look very different depending on how they start to view their

potential homosexuality. If an individual continues to accept the possibility that they may be

homosexual, then they will proceed to the Identity Tolerance stage. In this stage, individuals

see contact with the homosexual community as necessary to get certain needs met, such as

emotional or physical connections. In other words, Cass see's this stage as one where the individual learns to tolerate their homosexual identity in order to have a connection to other homosexuals, but may also maintain a largely heterosexual image outside of homosexual community.

Cass (1984) continues with Identity Acceptance, which is where individuals connect more with the homosexual identity and the community. Typically individuals are out to close friends and family and are able to maneuver in the homosexual community and the heterosexual community. Individuals move from this stage into Identity Pride. In this stage, individuals develop an intense pride in their identity as homosexual. Individuals become more aware of the discrimination from the larger heterosexual community and they start to challenge that discrimination. Individuals at this stage of challenging typically have a preconceived notion of non-acceptance from heterosexuals and when this is challenged, individuals start to move into the final stage of Identity Synthesis. In this final stage, the homosexual identity no longer serves as the defining identity for individuals. Individuals are out and no longer feel the need to hide who they are. "Own view of self and views of self-believed to be held by others are therefore synthesized into one integrated identity that unites both private and public aspects of self" (p. 153).

The first stage that Savin-Williams discusses is a feeling of being different from heterosexual peers based on an inability to fit into rigid gender norms. The second stage is an acknowledgement of same sex attraction. The third stage is where the gay youth will develop an understanding of what homosexuality means. The fourth stage is where one starts to label their feelings as non-heterosexual, or homosexual. The fifth stage is experimentation and

actually engaging in sexual activity with another male. The sixth stage involves actually experimenting with sexual activity with a female. The seventh stage is where the youth begins to label as non-heterosexual: gay or bisexual or something similar. The eighth stage involves disclosing new identities to others, including family and peers. The ninth stage involves experiencing an actual relationship with someone of the same sex. The final stage of the Savin-Williams model involves integrating new identity with rest of identities and developing a positive self-concept around gay identity.

Troiden (1989) builds off the work of Cass in order to develop his four stage model. The first stage is "sensitization." This stage occurs prior to puberty and is characterized by a general feeling of being different from heterosexual peers. The second stage in Troiden's model is "identity confusion." In this stage, individuals are typically starting the process of questioning their sexual orientation. Stage three of Troiden's (1989) model is "identity assumption," where individuals start to identify themselves as homosexual in various ways. Stage four of his model is called "commitment." Troiden conceptualizes this stage as where an individual not only enters into a same sex relationship but also starts to become more comfortable openly identifying as either gay or lesbian.

These major stage models of gay identity development have stages that they share in common. According to Horowitz and Newcomb (2001), each model points to four linear stages of awareness of one's difference from heterosexual peers, acceptance of this difference, disclosure of new identity and the integration of one's identity with all other identities. However, Troiden does not see his model as a linear process model. He describes this model as more like a spiral that allows individuals to move in all directions along the stages. "In

many cases, stages are encountered in consecutive order, but some instances they are merged, glossed over, bypassed, or realized simultaneously" (p. 48).

It was Cass's 1984 work, "Homosexual Identity Formation: Testing a Theoretical Model" where Cass starts to actually test the model through applying it to actual gay and lesbian populations. Cass tested her theoretical model through a questionnaire that she distributed through snowball sampling of 227 individuals; 109 identified males and 69 identified females. She asked participants to self-select one of the six stages in her model based upon a paragraph description of each model. Similarly, Levine (1997) tested the Cass model using the experiences of lesbian identified women. Levine utilized four different questionnaires including the Stage Allocation Measure developed by Cass for her study in 1984. Both Levine and Cass found that the participants in their studies followed the Homosexual Identity Formation Model proposed by Cass (1979). There were some limitations that Levine discussed in study: lack of diversity in respondents, lack of respondents who identified themselves in the lower stages of identity development, and requirement that participants identify as lesbian (1997).

Trica L. Peterson and Deborah A. Gerrity (2006) utilize the Cass Identity Development Model in their research looking at "Internalized Homophobia, Lesbian Identity Development, and Self-Esteem in Undergraduate Women." In their research they are utilizing the Cass Identity Development model and the "Gay Identity Questionnaire." Peterson and Gerrity sent surveys to women on a large, northeastern university campus in order to get a better understanding of lesbian identity development. In order to qualify for the study one had to self-identify as lesbian. What is of particular interest to this research is that

Peterson and Gettity had 35 participants, fourteen of whom self-identified as bisexual and nine as heterosexual. While the majority of the participants fall under the non-monosexual category or questioning category, Peterson and Gettity chose to label them and their experiences as lesbian. To be fair to Peterson and Gettity, they did state "separate analyses were not run for lesbian-identified and bisexual-identified women due to the small sample attained; all three groups were combined for the purposes of this study" (p. 64). However, by still utilizing the term "lesbian development," it would seem that the data is no longer applicable to the current research. In their discussion of implications for future research, they did advocate for future research that addresses the potential differences in development for lesbian and bisexual women. The problem is that they never address the problematic nature of trying to generalize findings that are based on entirely different identities but labeled as lesbian. This study brings home the point that non-monosexual identities are complicated and can complicate and muddy potential research that is based on gay and lesbian binaries. Due to this, it is sometimes easier for researchers to just collapse non-monosexual identities into gay or lesbian identities to the detriment of research on non-monosexual people.

According to Bilodeau and Renn (2005), while the Cass model is still used by practitioners who work with LGBTQ populations, this model has continuously been proven to be a less than adequate model for LGBTQ identity development. Some of the critiques of Cass's model are that, although it is typically applied as a blanket model for LGBTQ development, it was based on gay men and therefore cannot be applied broadly to all (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). Cass's model is also based on a linear development process which implies a beginning and an endpoint (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). Many researchers have shown

that one-dimensional, linear models of development are not accurate models since they do not allow one to travel back and forth along the continuum or occupy multiple stages (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). Cass's model also relies on self-disclosure or coming out as the main determinate of one's development as lesbian or Gay (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005; Dworkin, 2002). Finally, Cass's model is presented as having an endpoint at which time someone who is lesbian or gay would be fully self-actualized as both a member of the LGBTQ and heterosexual community (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005).

In contrast to Cass's model is Anthony D'Augelli's (1994), *model of lesbian, gay, and bisexual development*. D'Augelli does not agree with the static notion of Cass's model of development. D'Augelli's model consists of six *"identity processes"* of development: Exiting heterosexual identity; developing a personal lesbian/gay/bisexual identity status; developing a lesbian, gay, bisexual social identity; becoming a lesbian, gay, bisexual offspring; developing a lesbian, gay, bisexual intimacy status; and entering a lesbian, gay, bisexual community . According to Bilodeau and Renn (2005), this model helps to account for the complexity and fluidity of identity and how an individual's identity may change over time.

D'Augelli (1994) shares that two of the biggest differences between the Cass model and and D'Augelli model is the *becoming a GLB offspring* stage and the *developing a LGB intimacy status*. Unlike Cass's model, D'Augelli sees coming out as a multi-layer process and there is a difference between coming out to one's own peer group and to one's family. This is a very interesting distinction that can be critical for GLB identified college students who rely on financial support from family members in order to attend college. Also, D'Augelli focuses

on the development of intimate relationships as a stage in GLB development. He sees this stage in GLB development as critical because of the lack of acceptance and role models for GLB identified couples. This can be particularly difficult for GLB identified students who are navigating new feelings while experiencing homophobia or lack of acceptance. D'Augelli's identity processes still include coming out both to one's self as well as to others. Unlike Cass, the identity process model is not presented as a static and linear model. D'Augelli sees identity as more fluid and the process of identity development as ever shifting based on multiple factors (1994).

In 2005, Brent Bilodeau and Kristen Renn analyzed various LGBTQ identity development models as they relate to student development. They briefly discuss each model as they relate to particular identities, groups or subgroups of the LGBTQ population. One of the most striking points that Bilodeau and Renn make in terms of looking at LGBTQ development models and applying them in student affairs is, that it implies that there is a final stage or an level at which students would become fully self-actualized as LGBTQ people. (2005). They also address how favoring a particular family of theoretical models can dictate the approach you take to your research and your expected outcome. For instance, using Cass's model of homosexual identity development or Troiden's model of homosexual identity development to look at bisexual identity development may limit a researcher's ability to see a bisexual individual as fully developed since they may be traveling back and forth through stages depending upon who they are partnered with at the time or if they are engaging more with heterosexual or LGBTQ communities. Ultimately their point is that student affairs practitioners and faculty have to be aware of the implications of using a particular model and

how particular identities (such as bisexual) have the potential to become effectively erased depending on the model.

  Bisexual Identity Development. In 1994, Weinberg, Williams, and Prior conducted studies of bisexuals over the course of 6 years in order to understand identity development for bisexual identified people. Weinberg et al., identified four stages of bisexual identity development: Initial confusion, finding and applying the label, settling into the identity and continued uncertainty (1994). The initial stage that Weinberg et al. discusses is not just about questioning one's heterosexuality, but for many people they believe that the acknowledgement of a same sex attraction means an end to opposite sex attraction. This can also create confusion for people at this stage (Weinberg et al., 1994).

  There are many ways in which individuals find the label bisexual, but according to the research by Weinberg et al., participants typically found the label through sexual encounters with people of the same sex and of the opposite sex. They also reported that this was typically the stage where bisexual individuals would experience biphobia from others and this would cause them to question bisexuality as an identity (1994). During this time, many participants reported that their attractions were towards one sex more than the other sex and this caused more confusion due the bisexuality being framed in society as more of a 50/50 attraction. This also caused participants to question their own ability to label themselves as bisexual (Weinberg et al., 1994). Participants moved from this stage to settling into their identity, they started to receive more support and began to feel more comfortable in their identity (Weinberg et al, 1994). The final stage for Weinberg et al., is continued uncertainty (1994). For Weinberg et al., there are several factors that contribute to this uncertainty, but

there was a shared experience of it among the participants. The reasons were mostly related to biphobia and a general lack of support or understanding of bisexual identities. In their research, Weinberg et al. also wonder about the viability of later stage development when there is a lack of support outside of a few large urban areas for bisexual identified people (1994). Many, including Weinberg et al. have pointed out that one big limitation in their research is that they looked at mostly white participants who all reside in San Francisco where there was an established bisexual community. This is not the case in most places throughout the United States (Brown, 2002; Weinberg et al., 1994).

In his *Proposed Model of Bisexual Identity Development that Elaborates on Experiential Differences of Women and Men*, Tom Brown also utilizes a stage model of identity development. Brown's model builds off of the six stages of identity development presented by Cass and applied to the bisexual community by Weinberg et al. (1994). Brown developed his model in order to take into account the difference in development of a bisexual identity based on gender. The main difference that Brown suggested between the original model developed by Weinberg et al. (1994) is that Brown changed "continued uncertainty" to "identity maintenance." According to Brown, this moved this process away from fulfilling tasks in order to reach a certain pinnacle and instead towards maintaining the bisexual identity. This small change moves Brown's model away from the traditional stage models and their linear trajectories (Brown, 2002). However, Brown's proposed model is still built around gendered concepts that do not speak to the current LGBTQ community, particularly with his references to lesbian feminist community which is not as relevant to current generations of queer women.

Paula Rust (1996) looked at these issues in depth to try to understand the real impact of non-inclusive identity and development models for those with more fluid identity and behaviors. At the time of her research, those who identified as bisexual or who's behavior could be labeled as fluid were viewed by researchers as having less mature identity development (Rust, 1996). The view that someone's identity, behavior and attraction is more fluid than fixed did not correspond with existing identity development models such as Cass (1979). Rust observed in her research of women and lesbians, in particular, that many times women were having same-sex and opposite sex attractions, but were not always naming them or would label them in ways that would essentially erase the experiences all together (Diamond, 2003; Rust, 1996).

Rust collected survey data by sending out a survey to multiple organizations that would be considered friendly to LGBTQ people and bisexual people specifically. She received 518 responses from all over the world and from people with multiple sexual and gender identities. Rust asked them several questions that were related to their sexual identities, both historically and in current contexts. Rust identified six types of changes that she felt contributed to someone changing their sexual orientation or identity. Rust categorized the six sexual identity change categories: "changes in one's location on the sexual landscape, changes in the sexual landscape, changes in the language available for self-description, changes in social context, and changes in the accuracy of self-description" (Rust, 1996, p. 67). Rust was looking at what events would prompt an individual who did not identify as bisexual previously to adopt a bisexual label. Rust (1996) explores identity development in relation to the sexual landscape as a way to highlight that identity is not linear and static process of

development but rather a social construction that evolves in relation to changes to self or things around the self. For example, this can be seen when someone has a change in relational or affectional attraction to someone of a different gender than their typical attractions. Also, Rust (1996) talks about the landscape itself changing either through society changing or identity evolving, such as an expectation from the feminist movement of the seventies that women identify politically as lesbians.

Rust (1996) makes this point through her research on identity development in bisexual women and states that "Bisexual women's frequent identity changes do not indicate a state of searching immaturity, but a mature state of mutability" (p. 66). Rust (1996) believes that linear models of development do not capture the nature of identity change and development and should be replaced by models that rely more on looking at the social construction of reality and identity. Rust, points to how many of the women she interviewed change their identity labels based on who they are partnered with or certain life changes. She also points out that many women in particular will not identify at bisexual in lesbian communities due to the binegitivity that exists within lesbian communities. Rust believes that identity is not essential to our beings, but a social construct that we use to describe ourselves in relations to others. Rust points to this in order to understand the implication by some that bisexuality is an unstable or transitory identity. Rust states, "The real threat to all identity-based communities is the dynamic nature of identity itself; the appearance of a new antagonist will merely be the symptom of the tension inherent in attempting to build stable identities and communities in dynamic self-descriptions" (Rust, 1996, p. 81).

In her research on *"The Bisexual Experience: Living in a Dichotomous Culture,"* Mary Bradford (2004) interviewed 20 self-identified bisexual women and men living in the bay area of San Francisco. She wanted to know how bisexual-identified people experience cultural attitudes on bisexuality and how that impacts their self-concept and their ability to create and access community. She had three main findings that pertained to attitudes about bisexuality, establishing community, and how bisexual people see themselves. She found that participants felt isolated and did not have a sense of bisexual community. This isolation caused them to start to seek out other bisexual identified people and start to form their own community (2004). She also found that bisexual identified people had to continually and re-examine their identities as bisexual. Bradford also found that bisexual identified women in her sample felt a real sense of rejection by the lesbian community in particular. From her research, she develops a new stage theory of bisexual development: questioning reality, inventing identity, maintaining identity, and transforming adversity. The last stage is the biggest change from other stage models of development. She acknowledges that bisexuals have to constantly maintain their identities, but she adds a stage fourth stage where bisexual individuals become leaders and activists in the community (Bradford, 2004)

One of the main unifying factors for the bisexual identity models seems to be related to some form of identity maintenance (Bradford, 2004; Brown, 2002). Cass originally viewed bisexuality as a form of identity foreclosure that gay and lesbians used in order to not have to take on the label of gay and lesbian (Cass, 1979). Troiden (1989) and Fox (2003) point out how difficult it is for many to maintain the label of bisexual given the binegitivity that exists both within the heterosexual community and the larger gay and lesbian communities. Fox

(2003) also discusses how bisexual identity development is not a linear process and, therefore, one that does not have a defined endpoint.

Rust (1996) sees bisexual identities as dynamic and therefore ever changing. She talks about identity being developed in relation to the other. "Sexual identity is thus not a static representation of essential being but a dynamic description of the self in relation to others" (Rust, 1996, p. 78). She believes that it is the dynamic nature of identity categories themselves that make it so difficult to build stable community. According to some researchers and theorists, women have greater flexibility in their sexuality than men (Brown, 2002; Diamond, 2003; Rust, 1996, 2002).

Lisa Diamond (2003) conducted a 5-year longitudinal study of young women who identified as non-heterosexual. She wanted to understand the phenomena where women who once identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual abandon these labels for a heterosexual identity label. She referenced Anne Heche and her 2001, very public breakup with Ellen Degeneres, when she denounced any non-heterosexual identity and promptly married a man, as an example of public figures who have abandoned non-heterosexual identities. She also referenced the phenomena of "LUGs" or "Lesbian until graduation," where women will date other women while in college but marry a man after graduation. Diamond is one of the only researchers to look specifically at these phenomena and the only one to conduct a longitudinal study of fluid identities.

Diamond (2003) stresses the importance of making the distinction between sexual orientation and sexual identity for the women in this research. Sexual orientation is predisposition towards a particular orientation whereas sexual identity is about the self-

concept an individual has related to how they label their identity. Diamond observes, "Women who relinquished their sexual-minority identities reported significant declines in their same-sex behavior over the 5-year assessment period, yet their attractions did not significantly change" (Diamond, 2003, p. 358). Diamond (2003) emphasizes that for these women, abandoning the label of lesbian or bisexual did not mean that they no longer experienced same-sex attractions. She also is quick to note that these women did not feel comfortable using the bisexual label due to the negative views of bisexuality both in gay/lesbian and heterosexual communities. While this research is helpful for understanding what voices may be lost when we are conducting research on non-hetrosexual identified people, it is problematic that Diamond does not elaborate on the impact of biphobia and binegitivity on identity maintenance.

One qualitative study that focuses specifically on the undergraduate experience for bisexual identified students is Heather Marie Knous' research, "*The coming out experience for bisexuals: identity formation and stigma management*." Knous focused her research on looking at the coming out process for bisexual identified people and how they navigate in a bi-negitive and biphobic society. She attempted to test Lemert and Kitsuse's stages of deviance model that hold that there are 3 stages to deviant identity and its formation: primary deviance, secondary and tertiary (Knous, 2005). In addition to testing the deviant stages to see if they would map directly to the experiences of bisexual identity development, she was also looking at testing Weinberg et al. bisexual identity formation model which holds that bisexual identified people do not ever reach the point of full acceptance of their bisexual identity. This would then mean that bisexual identified people would never actually move out

of the space of questioning their identity and identity label as bisexuality due to the stigma associated with the bisexual label (Knous, 2005). Knous wanted to prove that bisexual identity can be maintained through stigma management.

Development of a bisexual identity also means navigating the coming out process for many non-monosexual people. While Knous research relies on a small population of 10 interview participants obtained through snowball sampling, it is important to the cannon of bisexual research because it focuses specifically on the management piece of identity development that is so different for non-monosexual populations. She found that it becomes very difficult to accept a bisexual identity in a society that is biphobic (Knous, 2005).

Knous determined that members of her study used three main techniques in order to manage the stigma associated with adopting a bisexual identity: passing as gay/lesbian/ heterosexual, disclosing their identity, and finding support groups (Knous, 2005). One finding that seems particularly important in Knous research is that participants in her study needed a specific support network that was inclusive of bisexual identities. Community support for bisexual individuals seems to be a reoccurring theme in this research.

Knous had three participants that she considered to be at stage three of bisexual identity formation. She did point out that there were participants in her study who rejected the identity label of bisexual, but that did not mean that they had not embraced their identities or felt pressured to choose a heterosexual or gay/lesbian identity (Knous, 2005). Because of the small sample size and only three participants could be classified in stage three of identity development, Knous suggests that more research is needed and that it needs to be more inclusive of diverse participants (Knous, 2005).

Biphobia, and Binegitivity. Israel and Mohr (2004) look at research attitudes towards bisexual individuals in their review of the literature. They point to the same patterns that other researchers have highlighted around lack of community, biphobia, and binegitivity. It is the internalization of these attitudes that hinder the development of a healthy bisexual identity (Fox, 1991; Israel & Mohr, 2004; Ochs, 1996). Israel and Mohr (2004) believe that this is in part due to the way bisexual identities challenge some assumptions related to the nature of sexual orientation. One of the major assumptions is that sexual orientation is fixed and out of one's control.

There are several attitudes that Israel and Mohr focus on through their research: Heterosexism, Authenticity, Sexuality, and Loyalty. Heterosexism impacts non-heterosexual identities and contributes to biphobia as well (Israel & Mohr, 2004; Ochs, 1996). They look at authenticity in relation to bisexual identities and their validity. Research studies indicate that bisexuals are too scared to come out (Eliason, 2001) and do not want to relinquish their heterosexual privilege (Ochs, 1996; Rust, 1993). Also, according to research, bisexuality is seen as a transitory identity that individuals adopt before they are able to admit being gay or lesbian (Fox, 1991). Israel and Mohr (2004) posit that some of the inability to acknowledge bisexuality as a legitimate identity is due to an individual tendency to make assumptions about one's sexuality based on the gender of their current partner (Ochs, 1996). They also make the important point that, "The possibility of being bisexual may threaten the sense of self and community for individuals who have based their social identity on a lesbian or gay sexual orientation" (Israel & Mohr, 2004, p. 121).

In terms of sexuality, Israel and Mohr (2004) found that bisexuality is seen as deviant, and bisexuals are thought to be obsessed with sex (Eliason, 2001), unable to be monogamous (Eliason, 2001), and transmitters of HIV and AIDS (Eliason, 2001). They also point to the pervasive attitude that bisexuals cannot be loyal or trustworthy (Mohr & Rochlen, 1999; Ochs, 1996). Similarly, bisexual people are assumed to leave their partners due to the lure of heterosexual privilege (Ochs, 1996) and to not be interested or invested in the gay and lesbian community (Mohr & Rochlen, 1999; Ochs, 1996, Udis-Kessler, 1990). Also, bisexuality is seen as being in direct contradiction to the political rhetoric of framing gay and lesbian identities as biologically determined and out of one's control (Rust, 1995; Udis-Kessler, 1990).

Israel and Mohr (2004) suggest that there are certain interventions that researchers should take in order to counter these pervasive attitudes around bisexuality. "Given the prevalence of misinformation and negative attitudes toward bisexual women and men and the potential damaging effects of such attitudes, it will be important to conduct research on attitude change interventions" (Israel & Mohr, 2004, p. 130). They also point to targeting specific interventions to specific populations such as bisexual men, bisexual women, lesbians, and gay men. They also suggest that interventions should also target certain professionals that work with the community (Israel & Mohr, 2004). This is an important thing for student affairs professionals to look at as well. "Such findings indicate that to fully understand the effects of stigma on the interpersonal relationships of bisexual individuals, it is critical to examine the influence of attitudes related to the legitimacy and stability of bisexual orientation and identity" (Israel & Mohr, 2004, p. 131).

Balsam and Mohr (2007) looked at how gay/lesbian populations differ from bisexual populations when it comes to stigma management. They point out that there is little research that compares the lives of gay/lesbian individuals with the lives of bisexual individuals. They demonstrate that the lives of bisexual people are different due to the binegitivity they experience from gay, lesbian and heterosexual communities. In their research, Balsam and Mohr posit that bisexual individuals would be less connected to a gay and lesbian community. Their research supported this claim and revealed that many organizations are inclusive in name only and still need additional understanding regarding being supportive and inclusive of bisexual identities (Balsam & Mohr, 2007).

Invisibility and Stigma. In a 2011 study looking at the impacts of sexual orientation and mental health on academic performance, Sara Oswalt and Tammy Wyatt looked at the data from a national college health assessment. Their findings were illuminating, not only because they focused on looking at gay, lesbian, and bisexual college students' mental health and levels of stress and how they impact academic success, but also because they were able to look at each population separately. "Our hypothesis that sexual minority college students, particularly bisexuals, would exhibit greater mental health challenges and stressors, thus, impacting their academic performance at higher rates than heterosexual college students, was supported" (Oswalt & Wyatt, 2011, p. 1270).

Their findings showed that bisexual students were experiencing the highest levels of mental distress and depression. They also showed that bisexual students do not use counseling and mental health services at the same rate as their gay, lesbian, and heterosexual peers (Oswalt & Wyatt, 2011). Ultimately, they stress the importance of understanding the

needs and issues of bisexual students when it comes to providing health services on campus (Oswalt & Wyatt, 2011).

The research discussed in this subsection looked at bisexuality in terms of identity development and attitudes about bisexuality. When looking at the research on identity development, it is clear that linear stage models of development do not accurately portray the developmental patterns of bisexual people. Weinberg et al. (1994) model tried to compensate for the differences in bisexual development by developing a stage model that was not meant to be seen as linear and included a stage that was meant to allow for continued fluidity and change in the way people label their sexual orientation. Brown felt that this "continued uncertainty" stage was not accurate enough to describe the actual phenomena that he was witnessing. Brown evolved this stage in his research to be about maintaining a bisexual identity (2002). Rust (1996) and Bradford (2004) both found that identity maintenance is critical to understanding bisexual identities. In their research, one unifying theme is that identity is constantly changing and that is not a sign of lack of development.

Bisexual identities are fluid and many times bisexual people need strong and healthy community in order to have a healthy sense of self as a bisexual person. Across the board, researchers in this subsection pointed out that developing this healthy sense of self is difficult to do when confronted with systemic biphobia both within the heterosexual community as well as within the LGBTQ community (Bradford, 2004; Brown, 2002; Diamond; 2003; Fox, 2003; Knous, 2005; Oswalt & Wyatt, 2011; Rust, 1996; Weinberg et al., 1994).

LGBTQ Higher Education Research

In 2010, Kristen Renn conducted a comprehensive review of LGBTQ research in Higher Education. Renn points out that traditional research and programs in Higher Education have subscribed to the binary models of gender and sexuality and as such do not provide us with the depth and breadth of identities and experiences for queer identified people in higher education (Renn, 2010).

Renn uses queer theory in order to frame her foundational lens as well as a way to broaden the research lens to be more inclusive of all sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions. She points out that queer theory actually consists of many theories that help to erase the binary system of sexual orientation and gender identity and move the conversation towards a more inclusive model of all identities that fall outside of the traditional, hetronormative models (Abes & Kasch, 2007; Renn, 2010). Renn goes on to point out that research on LGBTQ issues in higher education has been scarce. She states, "Since the late 1980s, three strands of scholarship compromise the bulk of this work on LGBTQ issues in higher education, focusing on the following subjects: (a) visibility of LGBTQ people, (b) campus climate for LGBTQ people, and (c) LGBTQ student identities and experiences" (Renn, 2010, p. 134). Renn points out that the research on visibility for LGBTQ students has been largely qualitative and rarely involves looking at multiple institutions. She also states that the end goal of most of this research was to show that LGBTQ students are a largely invisible population on campuses and are in need of resources and programs (Renn, 2010).

As mentioned previously, there are many theoretical models that can be used to look at how gay and lesbian students develop their identity, but there is not as much research that exists that looks specifically at non-monosexual identities. Similarly, there has been some research on how LGBTQ college students experience college, but there is very little that focuses on non-monosexual identities. In this section, I will examine the literature on how college impacts the development of LGBTQ students and how LGBTQ students experience college. I will be pointing out specifically the lack of research that focuses on non-monosexual identities. I will be dividing the literature into three categories: LGBTQ student development theory, LGBTQ identities, visibility and campus life; and campus climate based on similar breakdowns used by Sanlo (2004), Dilley (2004), and Renn (2010).

Campus Climate. Renn further extrapolates the research on campus climate for LGBTQ students into three subgenres: "(a) perceptions and experiences of LGBTQ people, (b) perceptions *about* LGBTQ people and their experiences, and (c) the status of policies and programs designed to improve the academic, living, and work experiences of LGBTQ people on campus" (Renn, 2010, p. 134). Renn points out that much research in the nineties focused on campus climate studies (Renn, 2010; Tierney, Dilley, & Piner, 1998). While research involving campus climate surveys were necessary in order to show the lived experiences of LGBTQ people on campus, they have since become assessment tools for individual campuses and not far-reaching research (Renn, 2010). She points to Sue Rankin's research on LGBTQ campus climate as one of the only studies that takes into account multiple institutions of higher education (Rankin, 2003; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010).

Renn (2010) acknowledges that campus climate studies are not the cutting edge of LGBTQ research, but she states that climate studies are critical to individual institutions as a way to both make them aware and hold them accountable to what LGBTQ people are experiencing on their campuses. She also stresses the importance of queer theory as a framework and that it "provides models and directions for studying student identities and experiences in ways that do not contain and constrain gender and sexuality" (Renn, 2010, p. 136).

In 2010, Campus Pride, an organization for LGBTQ college students, in conjunction with the Q Research Institute for Higher Education (Sue Rankin's research group) conducted a national survey of 5,149 individuals at institutions across the nation in order to understand the campus climate on multiple campuses for LGBTQ individuals. This was the first large scale, national research project to look at institutions in all fifty states and all types and classifications of institutions to find out the climate for LGBTQ people.

The researchers, Sue Rankin, Genevieve Weber, Warren Blumenfeld, Somjen Frazer, and C. Pride (2010), released a report, "State of Higher Education for LGBTQ People." They surveyed students, faculty, and staff to find out their perceptions of and experiences with campus climate at their respective institutions. This was the first time that this type of research had been conducted on a national scale. Rankin et al. pointed to previous research that stated that campus climate negatively impacts the ability to work, learn and function effectively in the higher education environment (2010). Their research explored the differences in how faculty, staff and students experience the higher education environments and how that may be different based on identity as well.

Rankin et al. (2010) stated that they used Renn's (2010) model of queer theory as their theoretical approach to their demographic analysis. Rankin et al. (2010) research helps to validate the research of other small scale campus climate studies (Noack, 2004; Rankin, 2003, 2006). Based on this research, Rankin et al. (2010) developed a list of potential best practices for institutions of higher education: develop inclusive policies, demonstrate institution commitment, integrate LGBTQ issues and concerns in curricular and co-curricular education, respond appropriately to anti-lgbtqq incidents/bias, create brave spaces for student dialogues in on-campus housing, offer comprehensive counseling & healthcare, and improve recruitment & retention efforts (pp. 16-17). This research helped to validate the individual institutional experiences of LGBTQ individuals and show that these experiences are not isolated to individual campuses. Rankin et al. shows that these experiences are generalizable to multiple institutions (Rankin et al., 2010; Renn, 2010).

As stated above, campus climate studies are meant to assess particular campus environments to gauge how LGBTQ friendly a particular campus is to LGBTQ people. Many climate studies focus on both the way that LGBTQ people are perceived on campus as well as how LGBTQ perceive the campus for themselves (Renn, 2010). Campus Climate studies also look at the policies, procedures and programs on a campus to make sure they exist and to also measure their impact on the climate for that particular campus (Renn, 2010).

Many researchers have looked at campus climate studies as a way to understand the status of LGBTQ people in higher education. Climate studies are then used by many campuses in order to provide evidence that programs, services and policies need to be expanded or inclusive of LGBTQ people (Sanlo, 2006). Also, Renn points out that LGBTQ

climate studies also serve a symbolic function, they highlight that LGBTQ people matter (Renn, 2010). Climate studies need to expand to look at more diverse and intersecting identities within the LGBTQ community (Meezan & Martin, 2003; Rankin, 2006; Renn, 2010). Researchers need to begin to utilize queer theory in order to broaden the way we look at and assess identity within campus climate research (Rankin, 2006; Renn, 2010).

In 2011, John P. Dugan and Lauren Yurman set out to look at what it really meant for researchers to collapse all the LGB identities under one umbrella when conducting research on this population. Similar to others, Dugan and Yurman point out that the research on LGB students seems to revolve around two main areas: campus climate issues (Rankin, 2003; Renn, 2010) and student identity development (Abes & Jones, 2004; Cass, 1979; Dugan & Yurman, 2011; Renn, 2010). They believe that there was a clear lack of quantitative research in the field (Dugan & Yurman, 2011; Renn, 2010). They also acknowledge that there is a lack of qualitative data and the lack of large scale research studies that ask students direct questions about their sexual orientation or gender identity. This means there is insufficient and unreliable data on LGB students. They also argue that this means that LGB populations are not considered separate populations in most research studies, and many scholars and researchers have pointed out that we should be looking at the populations individually (Dugan & Yurman, 2011; Gortmaker & Brown, 2006; Longerbeam, Inkelas, Johnson, & Lee, 2007). This is at the heart of their research; they want to know how appropriate it is to do quantitative research on LGB populations as a whole versus breaking down the research by population.

One of their main findings was that bisexual identified students experience higher levels of discrimination than their gay, lesbian, and heterosexual peers, which is consistent with the findings of other researchers mentioned later in this chapter (Dugan & Yurman, 2011; Fox, 1995; Robin & Hamner, 2000; Rust, 2002). They point out that this can cause some bisexual students to feel as if they need to adopt either a gay, lesbian, or hetrosexual identity in order to be accepted by their peers and family (Dugan & Yurman, 2011). Dugan and Yurman (2011) state, "However, issues related to lower perceptions of campus climate and decreased levels of appreciation of diversity on the part of bisexual students signal potential areas for intervention on the part of student affairs professionals" (p. 213). They suggest that more research needs to look at the potentially negative aspects of campus climates for bisexual students.

Queer Theory in Qualitative Research

For the purpose of this research, I will be using queer theory as my theoretical framework. The term queer has become an umbrella term within LGBTQ communities. The term is used by many as a way to be more inclusive of all identities and to avoid binary language altogether. The reclaiming of this term within the LGBTQ community has been a side effect of the development of queer theory. Queer theory grew out of poststructuralist theory and the method of deconstruction (Abes, 2009; Abes & Kasch, 2007; Dilley, 1999; Gammon & Isgro, 2006).

Queer theory is influenced by the poststructuralist movement that included theorists like Michael Foucault (Abes & Kasch, 2007; Callis, 2009; Dilley, 1999). "Queer theory is not simply about the studying of people whose sex lives are not heterosexual or even the

positionalities of those people; at its core , it is about questioning the presumptions, values, and viewpoints from those positions (marginal and central), especially those that normally go unquestioned" (Dilley, 1999, p. 462). The central tenant of queer theory is that sexuality is socially constructed and connected to particular historical moments and not innate categories (Callis, 2009). Gender and sexuality are products of the time and place and, due to this, they are ever changing based upon society (Abes & Kasch, 2007; Callis, 2009; Dilley, 1999). Dilley (1999) states, "In academic circles, to queer something is to analyze a situation or a text to determine the relationship between sexuality, power, gender, and conceptions of normal and deviant, insider and outsider" (p. 458).

Queer is a multilayered term that has historically had several meanings. Queer is often used as umbrella term specifically for gay and lesbian identities (Angelides, 2001; Gammon & Isgro, 2006), a collective term for many identities that fall outside of heterosexual and cisgender identities (Angelides, 2001; Gammon & Isgro, 2006), and finally as a way to disrupt the traditional heterosexual verses homosexual discourses by challenging the idea of the identities themselves (Gammon & Isgro, 2006). It is this last definition of queer that is of great importance to this research. The literature in this section addresses specifically how qualitative research and non-monosexual identities have been addressed or included in queer theory.

In "Applying Queer Theory in Practice with College Students: Transformation of a Researcher's and Participant's Perspectives on Identity, A Case Study," Abes (2008) used narrative inquiry in order to look at the social construction of identity and how student affairs can play a big role in helping students to make sense of their multiple, complex, and

intersecting identities. This was really the first research that looked at student affairs practice

through the lens of queer theory (Renn, 2010). Abes focused this research article on one

student in particular who had a very positive response to this research and had stated that it

really helped her to understand her identity. Through her research, Abes suggests that it is

important for student affairs practitioners to present queer theory concepts as well as their

own identities to students. As Abes points out, research shows that participating in leadership

roles in LGBTQ organizations positively impacts students' identity development and that

introducing these students to the concepts of queer theory will help them to develop a deeper

understanding of their identity. She argues that LGBTQ higher education practitioners need

to have advanced knowledge and understanding of queer theory in order to challenge

programming and structures that assume binary identities. Abes suggests,

> Possibilities include: reconsidering how sexual and gender identities are defined for
> purposes of student organization and leadership positions; retooling organizational
> structures and student programming that maintain distinctions among students'
> multiple aspects of identity; providing funding for LGBTQ students to attend queer
> studies conferences and workshop where they can interact with people different from
> themselves; and inviting faculty to organization functions to facilitate conversations
> about queer theory. (p. 75)

Patrick Dilley explored types of methods for qualitative queer research. He believes

there are three main tenants to queer research: "examination of lives and experiences of those

considered non-heterosexual; juxtaposition of those lives/experiences with lives/experiences

considered "normal"; and examination of how/why those lives and experiences are considered

outside of the norm" (Dilley, 1999, p. 462). He also likes to think of queer theory as being

less interdisciplinary and more transdisiplinary, meaning that the outcomes of particular queer

research may not be relevant to researchers in another field, but the methods of research are extremely relevant (Dilley, 1999).

Dilley (1999) categorizes queer theory in the following four ways: "language, literature, and the arts; historiography; queer life histories/stories; and queer praxis" (p. 463). Language, literature and the arts and historiography are categories of queer research that are utilized by more traditional liberal arts disciplines that are looking at the arts and historical contexts of queer identities (Dilley, 1999). According to Dilley, educational research typically falls under the Queer life histories/stories category of queer research since so much of educational research related to queer identities is about examining the lives and lived experiences of students, faculty or staff. Queer theory as praxis is about action and typically involves queer theory as activism (Dilley, 1999).

Ultimately, Dilley points out that queer research is about what society considers normal and who gets to define what is normal. "Queer studies is more than researching homosexual lives, whether those lives were lived on the margins or in the forefront of public conversations and consciousness; it is researching/theorizing why/how/when lives are homosexualized, 'queered" outside of the norm'" (Dilley, 1999, p. 469). Dilley also states that while most educational research falls under identity exploration and queer stories, there is still much research to be done in this area (1999).

Bisexuality in queer theory. While the discussion of queer theory clearly speaks to a belief in the fluidity of human sexuality and the problematic nature of binary systems related to gender and sexuality, there has been almost no discussion of bisexuality or non-monosexual identities in queer theory (Callis, 2009; Dilley, 1999; Gammon & Isgro, 2006).

Bisexual organizers and activists have been involved in the gay and lesbian movement since before stonewall, but their identities and contributions were not acknowledged (Gammon & Isgro, 2006). There are three theories that dominate the study of sexual orientation and gender identities: essentialist, social construction, and deconstruction (Gammon & Isgro, 2006).

An historical understanding is important to understand as it frames how theory has our understanding of sexual orientation has evolved overtime and how we came to our modern understanding of Queer Theory. It was during Stonewall, where the gay and lesbian movement started to gain momentum and identities started to become politicized. Post-Stonewall, gay identities were being thought of as ethnic identities that were being presented in biologically driven and essentialist ways (Gammon & Isgro, 2006). Gay and Lesbian Studies also came into prominence during this time. These programs presented gay and lesbian identities in essentialist ways that focused on identities as a human rights issue and an issue of sexual freedom. There was also a clear lack of bisexual representation in these discourses as well (Gammon & Isgro, 2006). Our post-stonewall approach to sexual orientation was that there was a universal sexual identity that was often framed under the term gay. The notion of a universal sexual identity was called into question as more marginalized populations began to point out how their identities were obscured through this idea (Gammon & Isgro, 2006).

This challenging of the idea of a universal queer identity lead to the application of a constructionist approach to sexuality. Through the constructionist lens, we shift from the innate and biological to the construction of experiences (Gammon & Isgro, 2006). This shift

to constructionist dialogues allowed for more discussion of bisexuality and more development of bisexual research, but it still remained on the margins of the larger discussions (Gammon & Isgro, 2006). The introduction of queer theory helped to expand upon the constructionist notions and adds in elements from the post-structuralist and deconstruction theories. Queer theory is deconstructive in nature and challenges the very nature of gay and lesbian identities and moves the discourse away from identity and towards an understanding of how sexuality helps to create knowledge, culture, and social lives (Gammon & Isgro, 2006).

When bisexuality is applied to queer theory it can be either strengthen or further weaken the construction of identity (Angelides, 2001; Gammon & Isgro, 2006). One of the main ways it does this is through either placing gender at the center of the discourse, or it completely removes it from the discourse (Angelides, 2001; Gammon & Isgro, 2006). This helps to further highlight that there is no single gay, lesbian, or bisexual experience or collective identity (Gammon & Isgro, 2006).

When queer theory is applied to bisexuality, what becomes apparent immediately is that identity politics are once again pitted against queer deconstructive theory (Gammon & Isgro, 2006; Seidman, 1997). For bisexuals, identity politics are relevant still when looking at institutionalized forms of oppression (Gammon & Isgro, 2006). They reference Seidman who points to how the gay community has been presented as an ethnic community in large part based on the notion of sexual orientation being defined by the gender (1997). It is this insistence that sexual orientation is based upon gender preference that has kept bisexuality at the margins of queer theory (Gammon & Isgro, 2006). Similarly, academic discourse on queer theory and knowledge are largely controlled by gay and lesbian identified academics

which means that other identities are left in the margins (Gammon & Isgro, 2006; Seidman, 1997).

Callis (2009) attempts to write bisexuality into queer theory as it is defined and discussed through the works of Judith Butler and Michael Foucault. According to Callis, bisexual identities trouble the binaries of gender and sexuality. Callis (2009) concedes that the inclusion of bisexuality in queer theory is still contentious, even among those who are supportive of non-monosexual identities.

Some theorists argue that the "queering" of identities can have the potential to further marginalize already marginalized identities like bisexuality (Callis, 2009; Gammon & Isgro, 2006). Since non-monosexual identities are not always understood or intentionally included in the larger Gay and Lesbian community, non-monosexual identities run the risk of being forgotten or erased when using the word queer as an umbrella term (Callis, 2009). What Callis is referring to is that, since queer is often times used to refer to all non-heterosexual identities, it has the tendency to be used in ways that imply that it is the opposite of heterosexual and thus referring back to the idea of sexual orientation as a dualistic binary system that is only built around the monosexual identities of heterosexual and gay/lesbian. While I agree with Callis that one must use caution when using queer theory in relation to non-monosexual identities, I will be using queer theory to help frame my research. Queer Theory is important to this research because it helps to highlight the both the social construction of identities as well as the power structures that they operate within and how those structures impact non-monosexual identities.

Conclusion

  While reviewing the research for this section, I slowly discovered what I in many ways already knew; LGBTQ identities are complex and therefore difficult if not impossible to fit into one model for identity development. The same can be said of the experiences of college students who are LGBTQ identified. Many models that are currently in existence are based upon the white gay male experience. In other cases, the identity development models include white lesbian identified people, but ignores the identity development of bisexual, transgender and multiple intersecting identities of LGBTQ identified people, such as race and class.

  In her conclusion, Renn highlights four areas to consider for further research for LGBTQ issues in higher education: theory, research methods, educational practice, and intersections with other critical issues in education. In Renn's analysis of the research literature around theory, she has come to the conclusion that more research needs to utilize queer theory. Moreover, Renn feels that this queer analysis would actually benefit non LGBTQ organizations as well by providing a new lens and new solutions to old problems (Renn, 2010). She also points to the need for broader research methods in the current LGBTQ research. "Regardless of theoretical approach or research paradigm (qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods), existing studies of LGBTQ issues in higher education too frequently rely on convenience samples, limited data, and unsophisticated data analysis and /or interpretation" (Renn, 2010, p. 137). She suggests that qualitative samples should be criterion-based and should move away from a strong reliance on recruiting from LGBTQ

centers or student organizations and towards screening surveys that expand the questions

beyond identity labels to include behavior as well (Renn, 2010).

The available research points to the fact that bisexual students have multiple needs that

are not being addressed and it affects their ability to be successful in higher education.

Students on campuses today are embracing more fluid identities when it comes to sexual

orientation, gender identity and even racial identities, and this means that the current structure

of our support services [and academic departments]? may be seen as exclusionary and out of

touch with our student's needs. Many campuses across the nation have developed programs

and support services for LGBTQ students, but many of these areas still do not support the

unique needs of their bisexual populations.

What the existing research speaks to is the need for more research about the

experiences of non-monosexual identified students. These populations are relatively ignored

in the current research. Bisexual students are mentioned, but are still examined in terms of

their most current partner. So if a bisexual identified student is currently with a partner of the

same sex then the research will identify them as part of the Gay and Lesbian experience

instead of looking at the effects of a non-monosexual identity on student development. There

are many ways in which non-monosexual identified people are shunned by both Gay and

Lesbian communities as well as heterosexual communities and this has a substantial effect on

how they develop their identities.

Also, as seen in the research discussed in this chapter, transgender identities are

largely left out of the research completely. Many of the research studies and identity models

are exclusively listed as GLB and do not attempt to include transgender. Some of this is due

to the lack of respondents (Renn, 2007) and some is due to the real difference between sexual orientation and gender identity, but I would also say that a larger reason for the lack of research on bisexual and transgender identities is due to the complexity of fluid identities. By complex, I mean bisexual and transgender identities are fluid and do not fit neatly into the binaries of gender and sexual orientation, which makes them harder to discuss and define globally. This review shows that these areas are vital to the holistic understanding of the LGBTQ college identity development theories and deserve to be examined.

From this review of the literature, I have found four major themes that exist for non-monosexual populations that I wish to explore further in my research. First, bisexual individuals and bisexual communities are not as visible as their gay and lesbian counterparts. Second, research pertaining to bisexuality is often collapsed into research on the larger gay and lesbian populations. Third, bisexuality is assumed to be a phase and that a bisexual person is not ready to come out as gay or lesbian. Forth, bisexuals experience biphobia and binegitivity from both the heterosexual community and gay/lesbian community. These are all themes that I will attempt to explore in my research.

Chapter III: Method

Introduction to the Problem

As evidenced by the thorough review of the literature, it is clear that students whose identities do not fit within the narrow boxes of sexual identity and whose relationships, behaviors and/or attractions are more fluid in nature are not being addressed through current research or practice. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the needs of non-monosexual students as it relates to the services that are or should be provided to LGBTQA students in institutions of higher education. Specifically, I address the following questions:

1. What is the current campus climate for non-monosexual people?

2. What are the effects of not having a recognized or organized non-monosexual community on the identity development of non-monosexual students?

3. What programs and student support services do non-monosexual students need?

4. How can LGBTQ centers/offices/services best serve non-monosexual student populations?

Qualitative Research Paradigm

During the literature review there was little research that was found looking specifically on the needs of non-monosexual students in the higher education setting. Addressing this void through this research was critical because the current models that exist for LGBTQ services on campuses are built around identity models that do not speak to the lived experiences of the students that they are meant to serve. A qualitative approach to this research was used in order to help capture the particular needs of this population and to

address the fact that there is much work that needs to be done to make sure we are providing open and affirming services for all "queer" students. I believe using a qualitative approach for this study is important in order to get a deeper and richer understanding of the needs and experiences of non-monosexual students. Of course the often cited downside of qualitative research is that it is considered not to be generalizable. I would like to point out, in the words of Bieschke, Eberz, and Wilson, "Given the complexities one encounters when sampling from this population, however, the results of most quantitative studies we reviewed are not generalizable either" (2000, p. 41).

Critical Research

LGBTQ services on campuses are typically built on models that are firmly entrenched in binary structures and language and to some extent this is helpful in order to be able to advocate for the diverse needs of the various populations and identities that fall under that larger umbrella. But, what happens when we start to look more critically at what it means to be LGBTQQA? What if we start to look at these identities as not only oppressed by a heterosexist system, but also oppressed by the very nature of the binary terminology that we have created in order to make sense of those whose sexual orientation does not fit solidly into the heterosexual binary? Students with fluid sexual orientations understand this argument all too well. It is at the heart of this research to gain insight into how we provide services, resources, interventions, advocacy, programming and affirming spaces for students whose identities cannot be neatly placed into a box or who just refuse to be labeled?

Queer Theoretical Approach to Analysis

The primary function of queer theory is to take a critical look at the socially constructed binaries of sexual orientation and gender (Abes & Kasch, 2007). Seidman (1997) says,

> Queer theory is less a matter of explaining the representation or expression of a homosexual minority than an analysis of the hetro/homosexual minority than an analysis of the hetro/homosexual figure as a power/knowledge regime that shapes the ordering of desires, behaviors, social institutions, and social relations—in a word, the constitution of the self and society. (p. 174)

Queer theory has been used in qualitative research in order to point out systems of power and privilege that work to marginalize non-heterosexual identities, primarily gay and lesbian identities. Rust (2002) talks about bisexuality being very different from gay and lesbian identities. She references the term monosexual as the way to distinguish between gay and lesbian identities and more fluid identities. Gammon and Isgro (2006) state that the term non-monosexual helps people with more fluid sexualities form community by having a way to label and call out their difference from monosexual identities. Queer discourses are controlled primarily by gay and lesbian academics and non-monosexual identities are further marginalized due to this control (Callis, 2009; Gammon & Isgro, 2006). It is my aim to use queer theory both to analyze participants' stories as non-hetrosexual individuals but also as non-monosexual identified students whose experiences are uniquely queer.

Participants

For the purpose of this research the focus was on finding 10 to 12 traditional aged college students between the ages of 18-25 year old. I chose to focus on traditional aged students in my research since they are the primary users of campus centers and services and

research has shown that this is the time in which most people are exploring and developing their sexual identity (Vaccaro, 2006). Students were identified through the LGBTQ Resource Center at a major research one institution in the southwest. Outreach to these students will be done through the LGBTQ newsletter, Facebook page, and listserves in order to find students who self-select an identity that falls within the non-monosexual category. Ultimately, what ended up happening is that the participants were obtained through snowball sampling. Many of the student participants were found through word of mouth and/or referrals from other students who were participating in the research.

According to Diamond (2008) and Rust (2002), one of the reasons that bisexuality and bisexual people are erased from research is not because they do not exist or that they do not make up sheer numbers of people, but because bisexuality complicates binary models of research. It is easier for researchers to ignore non-monosexual identities than to accept the fact that non-monosexual behaviors, attractions and identities challenge the very methods or concepts that are being researched. In the interest of not repeating this pattern, this research project made every attempt to develop a diverse pool of students for this research, which included the inclusion of non-monosexual identities. While this research is focused around sexual orientation and specifically non-monosexual identities, it does not exclude people who also identify as transgender and/or gender variant in this research. Gender and sexual orientation are two separate and distinct identities that operate in tandem and they are firmly enmeshed with one another. While these systems are interrelated and interdependent, the research will not be focusing on gender identity or gender expression, but this would be of great interest for future research.

There were 10 students who participated in the interview process. All 10 students were undergraduates and had various levels of outness and interaction with the LGBTQ community on campus. For this purpose of this interview, participants were allowed to select a pseudonym that they are referred to as throughout this study.

1. Drew: Drew's preferred gender pronouns were They, Them, And Theirs. They were classified as a senior. They identified their race/ethnicity as Middle Eastern and Mexican. Their gender identity was gender queer, femme. They originally identified their sexual orientation as pansexual, but at the time of the interview identifed as bisexual and queer.

2. Bem: Bem's preferred gender pronouns were she, her and hers. She was classified as a junior. She identified her race/ethnicity as white. Her gender identity was cisgender. She identified her sexual orientation as bisexual.

3. Waters: Waters' preferred gender pronouns were she, her, and hers. She was classified as a freshman. She identified her race/ethnicity as African American. Her gender identity was cisgender. She identified her sexual orientation as bisexual.

4. Daenery: Daenery's preferred gender pronouns were she, her, and hers. She was classified as a junior. She identified her race/ethnicity as white. Her gender identity was cisgender. She identified her sexual orientation as bisexual.

5. Elizabeth: Elizabeth's preferred gender pronouns were she, her, and hers. She was classified as a sophomore. She identified her race/ethnicity as white. Her gender identity was cisgender. She identified her sexual orientation as labelless/fluid.

6. Owen Banks: Owen Banks' preferred gender pronouns were she, her, and hers. She was classified as a junior. She identified her race/ethnicity as white. Her gender identity was cisgender. She identified her sexual orientation as bisexual and/or pansexual.

7. Henry: Henry's preferred gender pronouns were he, him, and his. He was classified as a senior. He identified his race/ethnicity as Hispanic. His gender identity was cisgender. He identified his sexual orientation as pansexual.

8. Lorelai: Lorelai's preferred gender pronouns were she, her, and hers. She was classified as in between as sophomore and junior. She identified her race/ethnicity as white. Her gender identity was cisgender. She identified her sexual orientation as bisexual and/or pansexual.

9. Klavi: Klavi's preferred gender pronouns were she, her, and hers. She was classified as a freshman. She identified her race/ethnicity as multiracial Hispanic. Her gender identity was cisgender. She identified her sexual orientation as bisexual.

10. Dianna: Dianna's preferred gender pronouns were she, her, and hers. She was classified as a freshman. She identified her race/ethnicity as white. Her gender identity was cisgender. She identified her sexual orientation as bisexual.

Explanation and Definitions of Identity Labels

As referenced in the introduction to this research, I used Robyn Ochs understanding of bisexuality as a way to understand the identities of the students who participated in this research. The behaviors and attractions of the participants were complex and often times

difficult to define and label. Also, the labels themselves have become politicized and used for a larger discussion around biological sex, gender identity, and inclusion of transgender identities. Robyn Ochs definition of her own understanding of her own bisexuality is often quoted by many bisexual individuals as a way to show how bisexuality is more inclusive and complex than it tends to get framed by others. Robyn says, "I call myself bisexual because I acknowledge that I have in myself the potential to be attracted, romantically and/or sexually, to people of more than one sex and/or gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree (Ochs & Rowley, 2005, p. 8).

Robyn's understanding of bisexuality is the one that I applied through this research, but it is important to understand the other ways in which bisexuality has been framed, defined, and viewed by others. It is particularly important to understand how bisexuality is defined when it comes to services in higher education. Isabel Williams (2014), in her paper, "Bi* Identities Resources and Introduction," uses the UCLA LGBT Resource Center's definition of bisexuality as one of the ways it explains bisexuality. They state, "A person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to males/men and females/women. This attraction does not have to be equally split between genders and there may be a preference for one gender over others." (Williams, 2014). While this definition is in no way static in terms of the way it defines levels of attractions, it does state that bisexuality is about various levels of attraction to two sexes: males/men and females/women.

Pansexual is the other major identity label that was used by students who have participated in this research. Pansexual is largely understood to mean a person who is

attracted to people of all gender identities. However, pansexuality is another identity the can be rather subjective and can change based upon the feelings of the person who is claiming that identity. For example, the UCLA LGBT Resource Center's definition of pansexuality is, "A person who is sexually attracted to all or many gender expressions" (Williams, 2014). This definition allows people to claim this identity without claiming to be attracted to people of all gender identities and expressions, which is different from the traditional understanding of pansexual meaning an attraction to all.

There was one student in this research that used the term fluid as a way to describe her sexual orientation. The term fluid is also somewhat subjective and difficult to define in a large and shared definition. Fluid is a term that is typically used to describe someone's sexuality not as fixed and binary, but as something that moves and changes, sometimes constantly. Many times students will use this term to describe their changing attraction and behavior patterns and not necessarily as a stand-alone identity. However, some students are also using the term fluid as a way to describe their attraction and behavior patterns without having to identify with a particular identity or community. For some students, the label of fluid allows them to feel as if they are able to sidestep the idea of labels all together.

Finally, many students of the students in this study used the identity label of queer as a non-monosexual identity label. The identity label of queer is one that is used by many LGBTQ people as an umbrella term for the LGBTQ community. It is often times considered the best way to identify oneself as non-heterosexual, but not be forced to choose a particular sexual orientation or gender identity label. However, there are some non-monosexual identified people that also implore queer in order to not have to come out to others as non-

monosexual due to the biphobia that they experienced from others in the LGBTQ community. The UCLA LGBT Resource Center talked about this phenomena when they are discussing the various ways the queer identity is employed. They said, "This term is sometimes used as a sexual orientation label instead of 'bisexual' as a way of acknowledging that there are more than two genders to be attracted to, or as a way of stating a non-heterosexual orientation without having to state who they are attracted to" (Williams, 2014).

Instruments for Data Collection

This was a basic qualitative research study that involves a semi-structured multiple interview process. I explored the experiences of non-monosexual students through the lens of queer theory. I selected a basic qualitative approach since I wanted to know how non-monosexual students construct and interpret their lives and experiences. I am chose to do this with a queer theoretical framework because the lives, identities and experiences of non-monosexual students are quite diverse but I believe connected through a shared experience of being non-monosexual and non-heterosexual. The use of qualitative analysis helped me to identify the experiences of non-monosexual students across identities. Using queer theory also allowed me to look beyond restrictive identity labels and focus more on the systems that impacted both identity development and privilege.

I interviewed the 10 students in this research on two separate times. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic and the conservative nature of the institution, I met with the students for multiple interviews in order to allow them to establish trust with me and to truly open up about their feelings and experiences. The first interview focused on how they described and defined their sexual orientation, as well as their personal experiences as they

pertain to their non-monosexual identities. The second interview focused on their experiences on campus and their thoughts on the perceived needs of non-monosexual students on campus based upon their own experiences. The goal of this interview was to gain some insight from participants on how to build more inclusive services and programs for non-monosexual students.

I let participants know that I was recording the interviews in order to maintain accurate accounts of what was said by the participants. As stated previously, this was a two interview process so that participants are able to develop a rapport and trust with me, but also so that participants are given a space to really reflect exclusively on their identities in relation to their sexual orientation and the ways in which they choose to label those identities. This process proved to be complex and for many students this was the first time that they are disclosing this level of information about their identities to another person. Thus, many of the participants need extra time to process aspects of their identities and express themselves.

During the first interview, I asked open ended, semi-structured questions that focused on the participants' understanding of identity and what it meant to them. I asked them to identify the various labels they used to describe their sexual orientation and gender identity. I also asked if they have disclosed their sexual orientation to others and, if so, who are they out to, why are they out to the people they are out to, and what prevents them from being out to others. The goal of this interview was to understand the participants' identities in their own words as well as get a better understanding of their level of outness around their non-monosexual identity.

For the second interview, participants were given the opportunity to expand upon, redefine or change their identities with the understanding that this interview process itself prompted participants to think more critically about their identities, including the possibility of redefining them altogether. I also asked participants to talk about the campus climate for them as non-monosexual: were they active in LGBTQ community; were they active in other areas of the institution? I also had them address how out they were on campus and in what areas. Finally, I had them address what support they were currently receiving on campus in terms of their identities and if they had a sense of what services or support were lacking for them as non-monosexual students (See Appendix A for interview guides).

Analysis

I utilized a similar design approach to Abes and Kasch (2007) who were the first in the field of college student development to utilize queer theory in their research. Abes and Kasch analyzed the data they collected twice, once using narrative analysis and a categorical content approach and once using queer theory. Similarly, I focused on categorizing the content of the interview according to the themes that develop during the interview process through the constant comparative method (Merriam, 2009). Since there is not a clear method for queer qualitative analysis, Abes and Kasch reread the texts looking specifically at the impacts of hetronormativity, performativity and liminality in the stories (2007).

I analyzed the data I collected twice as well, the first time through a comparative analysis that focused on the non-monosexual identities of the participants. The second analysis I looked specifically through the lens of queer theory with a particular focus on power structures such as hetronormitivity and performativity, but I also analyzed the

transcripts to look specifically at the impact of biphobia and monosexism within the queer community as well.

Quality of Research

It must be pointed out that, as a person that identifies as non-monosexual and specifically bisexual or pansexual, it could be very easy for me to inadvertently show bias in my research based upon my identity in the same community I am attempting to study. I felt that, while this gave me some advantage when it came to developing trust with participants, it could also unintentionally bias my research findings. Also, I worked with the LGBTQ population at the institution where I conducted my research. Again, this allowed me to have a certain level of trust from my participants, but it was also sometimes difficult to get them to open up when they seemed to believe I would see that as a criticism of my area/efforts. I tried to minimize this effect by making every effort to reach out to students who may not know me or have accessed the center since I came to the institution. Lastly, I tried to reduce any bias in my questions to participants by conducting a pilot test to make sure my questions are not unintentionally leading the participants. The other bias checks methods involved journaling/memoing and/or leaving an audit trail of research decisions and analysis moves so that the reasons for them and the influences on them were clearer.

In order to ensure reliability and validity of my data, I purposefully looked at a diverse pool of non-monsexual identified students in order to specifically include multiple non-monosexual identities as well as other intersecting identities (i.e. gender identity, race, class, ability, etc…). I utilized multiple methods of triangulation. "Triangulation using multiple sources of data means comparing and cross-checking data collected through observations and

different times or in different places, or interview data collected from people with different

perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same people" (Merriam, 2009, p. 216). As

stated previously, I conducted multiple interviews each with a diverse group of participants. I

utilized probes during the interview process to make sure I understood and adequately

captured what the participants were trying to convey. I also allowed for member checks

through the process. I offered to share my early analysis with the participants to see if the

participants resonate with my particular analysis or interpretation of their stories. One of the

students followed up with me about being involved in this process, but never chose to actually

participate.

Chapter IV: Results

The interviews were conducted with non-monosexual identified students at a large state, research extensive institution located in the southwest. The institution is over 100 years old and has a rich history that is heavily infused and defined by traditions. The campus is considered to be one of the most conservative in the nation with most students strongly identifying as Christian. The campus has two LGBTQ student organizations that serve undergraduate students as well as a resource center that serves LGBTQ students. There is also an active safe zone training program that helps to educate members of the campus community about how to better support LGBTQ people. Due to the nature of the environment for LGBTQ students, there is an active LGBTQ community on campus and may students participate in the student organizations and utilize the services of the LGBTQ center on campus.

As previously stated, the purpose of these interviews was to determine if the unique needs of bisexual, pansexual, and students with more fluid sexual identities in our higher education systems are being addressed under current service and program models. As evidenced through the review of current research in the field, most campus programs and resources for LGBTQ students assume the needs of non-monosexual students are being met by their programming targeted at gay and lesbian students. Through the following interviews with non-monosexual identified students, I hope to be able to speak more directly to the unique needs of non-monosexual students. These interviews will speak to how people with non-monosexual identities need to be understood as their own community or identity group and to how their specific needs should be addressed.

As evidenced through others' research presented in chapter two, non-monosexual students feel more alone, isolated and alienated on campus as well as within LGBTQ organizations and centers on campus. The student's voices serve to help us gain a better understanding of the experiences and the needs of non-monosexual students on a large, research extensive institution that currently provides LGBTQ services to its students. The students who were interviewed here spoke to how they saw LGBTQ resources and services on campus supporting non-monosexual students and what were the ways in which those services were falling short. Their voices serve to illuminate the needs of non-monosexual students and will serve as guideposts for developing more open and affirming LGBTQ programs, services, and centers for non-monosexual students.

Though these interviews, I wanted to address the following questions:

1. What is the current campus climate for non-monosexual people?

2. What are the effects of not having a recognized or organized non-monosexual community on the identity development of non-monosexual students?

3. What programs and student support services do non-monosexual students need?

4. How can LGBTQ centers/offices/services better serve non-monosexual student populations?

In order to address these questions, I asked the students to talk about their long term identity development in terms of finding their identities, labeling their identities and naming their identities to others. I also asked them about their experiences as non-monosexual on campus. I had them address their answers separately based on their experiences in the LGBTQ community and in the heterosexual community. I also asked them to talk specifically

about where they find support and resources for their non-monosexual identities and had them describe what that looks like for them. Finally I gave them an opportunity to address any opportunities that they saw for more support, resources, and programs that are specifically addressing non-monosexual populations or are intentionally inclusive of non-monosexual communities.

Non-monosexual Identity Development

One important aspect to understanding the needs of non-monosexual students is understanding their journey to the identity itself. How did they find out about their non-monosexual identity? When did they start to apply that label to themselves? When did they start to tell others? The coming out process, both to themselves and others, for participants of the study varied widely. Some of the participants came out in high school while others came out well into their undergraduate experience. The participants often used various and multiple labels and identities to signify their sexual orientation. Six of the 10 students identified as primarily bisexual. The students talked about how and why they identify as bisexual:

> Okay, starting with Bisexual, I say that I have a romantic, affectionate and sexual attraction to both sexes. Personally I find that attraction to be pretty equal, if not…well never 50/50, but pretty equal most of the time. (Waters)

> I pretty much just identify as bisexual, kind of leaning more towards, I don't know it almost depends on how I am feeling, whether I am more attracted to men or women at the time, but that's…I identify as bisexual. (Dianna)

Daenery's response shows how some students struggled with labels:

> Well, I identify as bisexual. Like that is a category I feel people would fit me into, but I don't know. I don't like saying bisexual typically just because I know there is more than two genders. Bisexuality kind of insinuates that it's equal, and it's kind of not sometimes. But I go by bisexual. (Daenery)

Some participants talked about how they chose the label bisexual because they felt like it was the easiest for people to understand. Daenery talked more about this when she discussed her identity exploration,

> While I actually explored a couple of different labels, and it's all about, like, kind of like, I don't know, fitting into a group you know? But I mean with things like this it's more fluid in my opinion, but there's still that desire to fit into a group. So, I go by bisexual because people, especially people outside of like the LGBT and fluid area, will immediately kind of know what that means versus like, ahh…I can't think of any right now, versus more of like the non-mainstream identifications. (Daenery)

Similarly to Daenery, Klavi discussed her choice to identify as primarily bisexual as more of a political statement,

> By preferred name only, I am a bisexual individual. By the way I act and how I think myself, I am technically closer to the pansexual side of things. But for the purpose of convenience of identity and a more political standpoint, I label myself as bisexual. (Klavi)

Many talked about how they felt a connection to pansexual as well, but for various reasons they landed on the label of bisexual. Bem states,

> I identify as bisexual for my sexual orientation, though I feel like some people might truly label it as pansexual. I just don't feel as comfortable using that term because I don't think that I'm restricting myself to the gender binary when I say I am bisexual. (Bem)

Some talked about how pansexual seemed the most relevant to their identity, but they still chose to use the term bisexual. Bem talked more about finding validation in choosing bisexual over pansexual through hearing Robyn Ochs speak about her own definition of bisexuality,

> I really liked when Robyn Ochs came to speak because I think she might have been the first one to say it's two or more genders not necessarily at the same time or in the same way. She sort of rejects the gender binary and that helps me feel better about identifying as bisexual when I'm probably more pansexual. Cause I was like, well I

feel more comfortable with this label and I want to stay with it, but also doesn't mean that I can't love someone who is this or that who isn't just male or female or man or woman. (Bem)

One of those six participants talked about how their identity changed over time. Drew originally identified as pansexual and later began to identify primarily as bisexual. Drew talked about originally using the term pansexual because they did not realize that bisexual could be both self-defined and inclusive. Drew discussed their reason for the change in identity:

> Um, well when I first came out I identified as pansexual because I was attracted to a friend of mine who is trans, and I didn't know at the time that I could define bisexuality however I like it for it to be defined. And so I came out as pansexual at first but then I, then later identified as both pansexual and bisexual. (Drew)

Drew identifed as both bisexual and queer and they discussed why they felt it was important to emphasize their bisexual identity above others,

> I use the terms interchangeably, although, I feel like it's more important to establish my bisexual identity because of the biphobia in the community and dismantle monosexism and biphobia in the community. I think that's the reason why use bisexual more because for visibility purposes and to demonstrate to people that, that I claim that identity for myself and that it's just as queer as the other labels. (Drew)

Two participants, Lorelai and Owen Banks, identified both as bisexual and pansexual. Lorelai talked about her choice to identify herself as either pansexual or bisexual being based on not feeling like pansexual is understood outside of LGBTQ community. Lorelai stated,

> Yeah, so I identify at the same time as both bisexual and pansexual based on the experience that I'm facing. If it's inside the LGBT community and I feel like people who would accept the term and know what I am saying, I would say pansexual. If it's outside the community, I usually stick to bisexual just based off not explaining that you're a thing with bread, cause that's a little bit annoying. (Lorelai)

Lorelai pointed out the frustration of not having her identity understood and instead turned into a joke.

Several students talked about how they use bisexuality as a label, but feel like pansexual is probably more of an accurate identity label for them. However, not all students really understand the differences and the subtle nuances between the labels and identities themselves. Owen Banks stated that she useed both identities of bisexual and pansexual interchangeably. She said, "…and my sexual identity is bisexual and or pansexual. I really don't see a difference in the two, as some people do. I just don't" (Owen Banks).

Only one participant went by pansexual exclusively, Henry. He talked about his journey through various identities before landing on the identity of pansexual. He said,

> I really started learning more about it when having the opportunity to talk to other people about my identity or identities or the spectrum of the queer community. For a short while, I just identified as queer. I really was just kind of like, "ahh, labels." And I just kind of identified under the umbrella term as queer. And then, when I had more time to think about it, I started noticing, "Okay, pansexuality I feel, fits me, and fits my attractions and just the person who I am." (Henry)

One participant, Elizabeth, stated that she was uncomfortable with labels and she talked about the reason why she prefered to go without at label:

> I don't usually use labels, I'm probably closest to pansexual but a lot of people don't understand that term, so I just drop the label because I'll have to explain it anyways. But basically I just uh, my attraction to people doesn't have to do with what's in their pants. (Elizabeth)

Many of the students that participated in these interviews spoke of a disconnect or struggle in finding an identity label that made the most sense for them personally. For some of the students such as Bem, Lorelai, Drew, Klavi, and Daenery, they clearly expressed that they chose their identity labels due to how well they would be understood by others. There

seemed to be a shared sentiment that pansexual seemed to be the most inclusive of their

identity, but the most misunderstood by others. Therefore, these students chose to use

bisexual as a label most of the time so that they did not have to explain their identity all the

time. Some of the students elaborated on this choice when asked about how they found out

about their identities as non-monosexual.

Finding the Label

Many participants discussed how they found out about non-monosexual identities. A

majority of the participants referenced that they learned about non-monosexual identities and

communities through online research. For instance, Bem talked about trying to understand

her feelings for a female friend while in Junior High. She said,

> While I was in eighth grade and I was mostly trying to explain why I felt feelings for
> this one girl so I think I was like I'm straight but I'm in love with the girl…I'm
> bisexual…no maybe in a lesbian…I don't know, you know? I'm questioning and I
> went through all the labels, but after a lot of online research I was like okay I think I'm
> bisexual, I think I'm attracted to women too. (Bem)

Waters talked about the process of trying to find a way to describe herself. She said,

> I went searching to find something to describe myself, because I am not so big on
> labels when it comes to other people. Like I don't search for a way to describe myself
> to other people, but I was searching for a way to describe myself to me. And I have
> this idea in my head, and I was okay this is what I am, but there is a word for what I
> am, because I am assuming I'm not the first person who has ever thought this or felt
> this, cause that is really narcissistic to think that. So I was like, okay well, there has to
> be something and then I went and searched for it and I found it pretty easily. Google
> is a fascinating tool. And it just worked from there and I was like "okay, this is what I
> am, very cool." And moved on to the next thing. (Waters)

Daenery could not remember where she specifically heard about non-monosexual

identities, but she knew that she had to have heard about them somewhere. She also

referenced that the internet was a helpful tool in trying to learn more about identities. She

mentioned,

> So, I mean, just like google searches just for information and then like Tumblr I think
> has a lot of good, more persuasive, argumentative kind of viewpoint articles. I mean,
> but the term bisexual. I had to figure that out at some point, but I don't remember.
> (Daenry)

Elizabeth also discussed how she utilized the internet in order to find more information about

community. Elizabeth discussed,

> I think I'd always been knowledgeable in different identities and I have a Tumblr and
> there are a lot of LGBT community on there. And I just, I can't quite remember if I
> did research about it, but I'm sure I had to do a little. I don't think I really knew about
> pansexuality when I first realized that I wasn't straight, but I guess I just kind of
> realized that when I figured out that something didn't work, I'd try to find something
> that did work. So I guess that's where I guess I just tried to find something like that.
> (Elizabeth)

Most of the students talked about using the internet or various social media sites in

order to access information about their identities. One student talked about learning about his

identity through internet gaming community. Henry stated that he found out more about

identities through the social gaming environment online. He said,

> It may sound a little bit geeky, but I was on an online game social forum, and this one
> was specifically for people of the queer community and they were all, online
> characters that I played with on my spare time, my free time. So, when I was not
> doing school or homework, I was in a social video game environment where people
> were openly talking about their experiences and stuff. That kind of opened my
> understanding more, I would say. (Henry)

One participant, Lorelai, mentioned that she learned about pansexuality through her

involvement in her college's Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA). She said,

> Yeah, it was through a GSA in Galveston, so it was really great. People, we had a, on
> one of the first meetings, we had a "your terms, and how to best use them in this

situation." And I was like, wait, what is that? [pansexual] And they explained it to me and I was like I now identify as that. (Lorelai)

Klavi also mentioned accessing information online. She discussed,

And I've been pretty much on the internet constantly since I was like 10 years old so eventually that strayed over into like, into all that kind of territory. You know, I joined Tumblr. And of course you know Tumblr is like this massive movement sort of thing going on, so I just kind of fell into that. And then I guess I liked it so much and then I felt more comfortable with what I was experiencing wasn't just out of the blue. (Klavi)

One participant, Dianna, stated that it was hearing Robyn Ochs that helped her realize her

own identity. She said,

Yeah, I listened to that lecture, it was kind of when I was leaving that I was kind of like, "yeah, I kind of agree with everything that they said" and it just made me think about growing up how I kind of, like I kind of always felt…I didn't call myself that, but I kind of already thought the same way and it was just kind of an easy transition for me to be like, "oh, well I guess I'm bisexual then. (Dianna)

Identity development for non-monosexual students includes trying to figure out the

best way to label their sexual orientation. All but two of the students in this study referenced

utilizing the internet in order to find out more about non-monosexual identities and what they

mean. Lorelai talked about finding out about her identity as bisexual through a meeting of the

LGBTQ student organization on her campus at the time. For Dianna, it was attending a

Robyn Ochs lecture with her bisexual identified friend that helped her realize her identity as

non-monosexual. The use of the internet for accessing community and accessing information

about non-monosexual identities was somewhat expected in this research. What was

unexpected is how much students utilized blogs and specifically Tumblr in order to educate

themselves on identities.

Attractions

Eight of the 10 participants talked about their identities in terms of attraction. These

students were aware of sexual orientation as a multilayered concept. We discussed sexual

orientation as made up of three major components: attraction, behavior and identity. Eight of

the 10 students talked about their sexual orientation in terms of their attractions and behaviors.

> I like that, you know, that being bisexual, like, I define that it's my attraction towards
> two or more genders, in a way that's like I'm not attracted to people to the same
> degree or at the same time, just accepting that fluidity happens, at any time but it's not,
> but it varies per attraction to whichever gender I'm attracted to. (Drew)

For Drew, they described their attractions as fluid and varied based on the person. Like Drew,

Waters described her attractions as more fluid as well. However, for Waters, her attractions

were not encompassing of the entire gender spectrum.

> I have been attracted to, I don't want to say every end of the spectrum, because that is
> a completely false statement, but I've been attracted to heterosexual males, I've been
> attracted to, unfortunately heterosexual females, and I've also been attracted to people
> who, specifically women, who are gay or lesbian. (Waters)

While Waters talked about her attractions being mostly to people who fit within the

traditional binary of male and female, Daenery talked about realizing her attractions are more

complex than she had believed.

> Cause I always thought that I was attracted to just binary people who identified as
> male who were biologically male and the same for females. But, there was this guy
> and he wore a dress. But he was really attractive and he did a slam poem. I don't
> know why he chose to wear a dress that day or like what he identified as, but every
> time since he's had his nails painted and stuff. But every time I've seen him since,
> which has been six-seven times, he's dressed in like male kind of, what's seen as
> normal as male... But anyways, but I was really shocked, because I was like, I would
> date him. And that was just kind of eye opening for me. (Daenery)

Henry also discussed his attraction to people who step outside of societies traditional ideas of

what is considered typical male and female behaviors and presentations. Henry's stated that

he was interested in people who do not subscribe to traditional notions of gender.

> I end up finding my attraction more so, a little bit juxtaposition, mean in the terms of like what I have noticed more is that I like males who are on more side of effeminate and then I also like females who are on the more side of masculine. (Henry)

> Attraction is complex and individual for each participant, but attraction itself is also

multi-layered and varies for each student. Owen Banks highlighted how attraction for her was

different based upon the gender identity of the person.

> So sexually, I'm straight down the middle, it could go either way. Romantically I find myself more inclined towards women and I think that kind of aids in the sexual and make me lean more towards women overall. I just, I've always been friends with women, I just get along better with women. I find that they're more understanding and I can talk to them more easily. But, I'm not against men or anything like that. I have a boyfriend and he's great and he's very understanding and I love hanging out with him and stuff as well. So, it depends on the person and it's like that. (Owen Banks)

Owen Banks expanded upon attraction and pointed out that attraction for her was different

based upon gender. She viewed attraction as having two components: romantic attraction and

physical/sexual attraction. This was an important distinction for her because she referenced a

difference between her attractions based on gender. She was more inclined to a romantic

relationship with people who identify as women and because of the romantic connection she

felt that also helped her have more of a sexual connection with women too.

> Lorelai discussed how her attractions had changed recently and that was a surprise to

her.

> So I hear a lot with attraction, that you look for something that you don't have in someone else, so I think that was me trying to balance it. But I've also come to learn

more gender norms and what I'm really wanting to attract based on what I really want are two different things. I've definitely been attracted to more feminine characteristics and I find more comfort in that, and I've actually just been happier with people that are more open and more feminine presenting and have more delicate features, so that's been lately. We'll figure out where that's going. (Lorelai)

For Lorelai, she had recently realized her attractions had changed pretty significantly from primarily male presenting people to people that present with more feminine characteristics. She was still trying to process why that was and what that meant in terms of her sexual orientation and identity.

Klavi was one of the few students that talked about her attractions as being open to all gender identities and expressions.

In terms of potential attractions, I'd say I'm pretty 50/50 split. For me gender just kind of really doesn't matter. Like, I mean besides like masculine men and feminine women. I also like feminine men and masculine women. It really runs the scale. (Klavi)

Identity development, labels and attractions for the students in this research were all over the map. Each student had a very different interpretation of what their non-monosexual identity looked like for them. Most of the students spoke to how they felt it was difficult to find the right way to identify their sexual orientation and even when they find a label that they use, it still does not feel accurate. Students also talked about their attractions with most students referencing that they are attracted to people all along the gender identity spectrum. For some students, their attractions changed over time and that was surprising to them. While bisexual has been defined by some as being only attracted to men and women, Waters was the only one that identified as bisexual and described her attractions within this binary. Similarly, pansexuality is considered by most to be attraction without regard to gender identity and/or

expression and only one student seemed to describe their attractions as encompassing of all gender identities and expressions.

Coming Out

Coming out to oneself. The participants were at very different stages of coming out. Some had only barely begun to come out to themselves, while others were out to various family and friends. The process of coming out to oneself was layered and complex for many of the participants. Drew talked about having to balance what others expect from them verses their own desires. They said,

> When I came out to myself as pansexual it was a good feeling, but it was also a weird feeling because I was embracing something that I knew that I like, I knew that I was afraid of, you know, of how my identity would affect me and how others would take it as well, and so step-by-step I just started tuning out society's opinions of sexual minorities and just focusing on staying true to who I am and really embracing the authentic side of me and no longer ignoring that that part of me. (Drew)

Waters talked about how it was something she knew from a very young age and she never had to struggle with it. She said,

> Yes, I'm, I identified as bisexual in my head when I was about 3. I liked girls, I thought girls were cool. I would volunteer to play house and like I never minded being in a relationship with another girl, even for like play purposes. As it progressed as I got older, I would like kiss the principal's daughter after school for six months straight. And then as my friends started dating I noticed, while I don't solely have to date men or boys at this point, and it just kind of became this thing in my head that I was very comfortable with and I didn't really put a name to it until I was like "oh bisexual would be both, so I suppose I am bisexual." And that was around seventh grade, so I was at around 11 or 12 years old. And, I don't think there was a strict coming out process for me, like to myself. I never battled with it, I never struggled with it, I never fought it or denied it, or there was never any complications with it. It was just something that I knew and something that I accepted and something that was perfectly okay. (Waters)

Elizabeth talked about how it took her friends suggesting that she might not be

heterosexual, to get her to realize that she might actually have more of a fluid sexuality. She

stated,

> There was a girl that I had been following on this different social media and I had told
> two of my guy friends that she would be my dream girl, if I liked girls and they were
> just like, "you might be, you like girls." And then it just kind of clicked that it might
> be true and looking back now, I can see moments where it makes sense. Like that's
> definitely where it kind of took off and then I played with different labels and stuff
> and figured out where to go from there and then ended up here. (Elizabeth)

Owen Banks also relied on friends to help her process her sexual orientation. She told

this story,

> Yeah, bi first, it was actually lesbian first, during high school, I think it was my
> sophomore or junior year, somewhere in there. I started questioning and I told one
> friend and then a year later I told another two friends and I was like, I don't know
> what's going on. (Owen Banks)

Conversely, Henry talks about how his coming out process was more about self-reflection and

introspection. He said,

> Mainly I've just had a little bit of introspection on like what does my identity mean to
> me? What is my identity? Is it really fluid as I think it is? And most of it has come
> back as, "yeah, I define myself as a fluid identity. Just, it was a lot of introspection on
> what that is and what that means to me. (Henry)

Klavi continued the theme of self-reflection in the coming out process. She stated,

> I guess like, I guess I feel, over the past for three or so years of my life I've gone
> through a lot of self-growth, like self-awareness sort of stuff. I feel like I've matured
> very quickly in the last three years of my life compared to all the other times and I
> think that realizing my sexuality was sort of a part of that in a way cause it meant the
> crossing out of another uncertainty regarding myself. Like I was now sure of another
> aspect of myself. (Klavi)

The students in this section spoke to the process of coming out to oneself and realizing

their identities. For the students in this section, coming out to themselves seemed to involve

several different avenues. For Drew, the process of coming into their identity as bisexual

meant tuning the rest of the world out so that they could be themselves without worrying

about the judgment of others. For Henry, coming out was a process of looking within and

allowing himself the space to process his own feelings and attractions for himself. Elizabeth

was the only one that was completely caught off guard by her identity and it was only at the

encouragement of others that she recognized that she might be something other than

heterosexual.

Coming out to family. Many of the participants talked about coming out to family

and friends as non-monosexual. Bem tells an elaborate story about coming out as bisexual to

her mother. She states,

> And coming out to my parents was hard, coming out to my mom, she got really mad.
> I was trying to come out to her for a long time, and I would sit with her, I'd be alone
> with her and I would think "I should tell her, I should tell her…" No, you know. "No,
> I can't do it!" But one time she found this like cutesy thing that I had made for a
> friend, and she was just my best friend, I didn't find her, you know, I wasn't attracted
> to her. But my mom took it the wrong way and she was like, "are you a lesbian?"
> "Are you in a relationship with your friend?" "No, No! But I am bisexual," and she
> cried and she told me that…she talked about Angelina Jolie a lot (laughter). She's
> said a few times, [mother] "well Angelina Jolie's bisexual, but then she married Brad
> Pitt." [Bem responds to mother] "She still says she is Bisexual! And I would marry
> Brad Pitt too!" (Laughter). I mean who wouldn't? But she also told me that being
> bisexual meant that I wanted to have sex with girls and I was like 13 or 14 and I was
> like Ugh, sex is scary, I don't want to have sex, that's a terrifying thought. (Bem)

Waters also tells a story about her coming out experience with her mother. Waters said,

> I told my mother that I was bisexual in the middle of the video store, because I had
> outed my brother for not believing in God and I was scared that he was going to out
> me for being bisexual and also for not believing in God too, so I was like, "well, mom,
> I don't believe in God and I'm not straight." And at first it was like "you're not
> straight?" And I was like, "I'm bisexual." And she asked me if I wanted to be a boy,
> and I was so horrified not at the idea that somebody would suggest that I'm

transgender, but the idea that somebody could confuse bisexuality and transgender. (Waters)

For some students, the coming out experience was less about a lack of understanding about non-monosexual identities and more about not believing that non-monosexuality exists. Daenery experienced this from her mother when she came out to her. "But, I came out to my mom when I was three and she told me it was a phase and we just never talked about it again." (Daenery)

One participant talked about how her mother does not believe bisexuality exists and therefore she would not be coming out anytime soon. Klavi told the following story,

> My parents do the thing where…see, it's very complicated the way my parents feel about it cause like my dad's brother is gay, so like while my parents are okay with homosexual stuff in theory, I'm sure in practice they would be like; you know they wouldn't really; they would be uncomfortable with it and I also know for a fact that my mom doesn't believe that bisexuality exists. She's like okay, yeah you're gay and lesbian, but she's scoffed me before. You know I've told her that I've had friends who are bisexual and she's like, "no they're not, what are you talking about? They're either gay or straight." I'm just like, "I can't tell you, sorry!" I mean yeah, I'll wait till I'm like older so she won't pull the you're a teenager, you're confused card on me. Like if I wait until I'm older, maybe then. Unless I get into a homosexual relationship, I probably won't have a reason to tell her. So, yeah. I don't feel like I'm hiding some like essential aspect of myself from my parents by not coming out because, you know if I were a lesbian it would be different. I would feel that way because I would only be able to be attracted to women. For me because it's more of a double ended thing, it's not a pressing. (Klavi)

For some parents, it was less of an issue for them personally, and more concerning when it came to others knowing. Dianna's mother told her that she should not come out to other family members out of fear that they will not be okay with her identity. She said,

> She was kind of fine with it. It kind of, like the, she was more concerned that I didn't tell anyone else in the family because she was concerned that they would alienate me. So she was like, I'm glad that you feel open enough to tell me, but you may not be open enough…you shouldn't be this open with other people in our family. (Dianna)

Not all parents struggled with understanding or accepting their children. Lorelai

talked about the process of coming out to her mother and how her mother was very

supportive, but still not as knowledgeable about non-monosexual identities. Lorelai said,

> My mom actually looked it up herself, because she wanted to know, how to best like, she was kind of scared, she didn't want to be rude. She is one of the sweetest ladies in the fact that once I tell her something, she wants to then handle it in the best way possible. So it was interesting, because she started looking things up. And so she ended up starting to say the word, are you dating anyone and then like, before, if I said their name was Ashley, before assuming it was a girl or a guy, she would be like, Oh what's your partner's identity or something and I thought that was really cool. So she's great about that. And she learns, like when I come home and teach her about gender, she learns more each time. (Lorelai)

A few of the participants talked about their experiences coming out to their fathers as

non-monosexual. One participant talked about her father being more conservative and

therefore she had a lot of anxiety about coming out to him. Lorelai said,

> And I was scared to tell him because he's a conservative, big republican and I was like, he is going to disown me. But I wanted to be honest, cause I was dating a girl and he kept asking who I was dating and I was like, noooo oneeee (drawn out for emphasis). (laughter) And I told him and he didn't actually say anything for a long time and then he was just trying his best to handle best what to say, cause we were out to dinner and I figured if I came out to him at dinner he couldn't yell at me. And then our waitress came by and the only thing he said was, do you think our waitress is hot? (laughter) So I was like, yeah. And he was like, okay, and that was just his acceptance for it. That was the only time we ever discussed it. (Laughter) (Lorelai)

Henry talked about his experience coming out to his aunt, who was more like a

parental figure for him. He said,

> When I first came out to…this is just an anecdote…I remember I first came out to my aunt, she immediately said like, "Oh, I think your just gay." And I really told her, like, no, that's not what I feel. And I had a book that I bought by Robyn, I forget her last name…[Interviewer]…Robyn Ochs…[Henry] Yes, called "Bi the Way," and I shared it with her, and after reading some of the testimonials Robyn Ochs had in her book, which was an accumulation of interviews from people with fluid identities. She really started to come to terms with, okay, she now understands as bisexual, but when I

explained to her further, oh its pansexuality. She kind of still, really doesn't understand but kind of gets the message. I have noticed though in regards to family, like, if I'm attracted to a female at that time, they feel like I'll have a more normal life. While if I'm attracted to a male at that time, it's still kind of seen as a phase. (Henry)

Coming out to family as non-monosexual seemed to be more difficult for the participants of this study due to what seemed to be a general lack of understanding around non-monosexual identities. Most of the students talked about their experiences coming out to their mothers. Bem's mother was upset by her daughters announcement and referenced the only bisexual person she could think of, Angela Jolie, as proof that she could still get married to a man. For Waters, her mother incorrectly assumed that being bisexual meant that Waters was transgender. When Daenery came out to her mother, she told her that she thought it was a phase and they have never discussed it since. Klavi's mom talked about how she did not believe that bisexuality really exists, and therefore Klavi chose not to come out at all.

Some of the participants had talked about how they had received support from their mothers, even though they also expressed some questions or concern. Dianna's mom was understanding of her sexual orientation, however she was also insistent that Dianna not share this information with any other family members for fear of their lack of support and understanding. Lorelai talked about how supportive her mother was when she came out even though she was not really informed on non-monosexual identities. Her mother did her own research in order to understand her daughter's identity.

Two participants, Lorelai and Henry, talked about coming out to family other than their mothers. Lorelai talked about her dad questioning her attraction to their waitress after she came out at a restaurant. Henry talked about coming out to extended family and how for

him their reactions differed based on who he is partnered with at the time. When he is with someone who is male identified, his family views it as a phase. In fact, It seems to be that the general experiences of coming out to family as non-monosexual for most of the participants was that their non-monosexuality was seen as either not real or a phase.

Coming out to friends. For many participants, coming out to friends proved to be challenging as well. Bem talked about having a crush on her friend in junior high and how she was less than thrilled that another girl had a crush on her.

> The girl that I had a crush on in eighth grade though, she was not very happy that I had a crush on her and she was, you know, it was a really rough time and trying to like, be her friend was very hard and it was also hard to still stay in her friend group because they didn't want me to be around. Sort of like mean girls, "I can't bring a lesbian to my party!" (Bem)

Daenery talked about going to a slam poetry event with a friend in college and having to navigate coming out to that friend based on direct questions she was being asked about her attractions.

> She's from Alabama, which is considerably more conservative. And, we were at this slam poetry thing and she asks me, "so what's your type?" And I was like, okay, I can either tell her half the truth or I can just jump in and tell her all the truth. So I paused and she saw all the like, that I was super hesitant to answer and then she was kind of like, why are you so hesitant to answer, like that kind of face. And I was like, "well, you see…" and my heart was racing, I was so terrified, cause we were about to sit through this 4 hour poetry slam together, in public. I was going to live on her couch, in a couple of weeks, for like 2 weeks, so like, it was terrifying. But, I, I was like I'm bisexual so that question is kind of like a little more broad. And she's like "oh!" and she took it really well. She was like, "I've had gay friends and dadadadada [sic]", all this stuff. She took it really well and she was really supportive. So that was really exciting. That was a really good experience, coming out to friends. (Daenery)

Owen Banks also talked about the fear of coming out to friends who she assumed to have more conservative belief systems.

The friends that I made at [Extended Orientation] were very religious and very straight laced, wouldn't even cuss, wouldn't think about sex before marriage, didn't like talking about any of that. And I was very worried about coming out to them, but eventually it kind of like ate out, you know ate at me, so eventually I was like, I have to tell them or I'm going to go crazy. And I sat down to lunch and I was going to just tell, there were three of them, three girls. I was just going to tell the three of them and one of the girls, her boyfriend tagged along. And so of course I'm like, oh no another person that I'm going to come out to and it's going to be really awkward and I'm like sitting there like I'm in a bad mood and they can tell something's wrong. Finally they are like, "What is it?" And I was just like, "ahhh, I'm bisexual!" I just straight out said it, I was like, there is no more beating around the bush. And there was a long, like pause, you know. And the boyfriend was the first one to speak and he just goes "sweet!" And I was like, "bless you!" He actually made the whole experience so much better. He texted me afterwards and gave me his full support. He said both his sisters were lesbian and if I needed anything and if anyone said anything to me just come to him and he would straighten them out and give me the support that I needed and stuff. (Owen Banks)

She went on to talk about the fear of coming out to friends that she knew would be

more inclined to be supportive of her identity:

And then the friends that I made at new student conference, I think I came out to them during finals week. I feel like they kind of suspected. They were more open. They're not nearly as religious. There're two of them. There is a girl and a guy that I was friends with. They weren't nearly as religious. They were, you know, theater kids if that helps you get a grasp of that, you know. I think they kind of suspected that I was bisexual or gay or whatever and so the way I came out to them was a lot less dramatic. I basically kept dropping hints until I was so obnoxiously like "I'm GAY!!!" (Very loud, dramatic delivery) (Laughter), and they were like, okay she's there. She's bisexual. And, I think, you know, like jokes like someone would be like "that's gay" or "stop being gay" and I would just be like "oh well, I'm going to get out of the room then." Well, like that, or things like that. So it was a lot more light-hearted and it was a lot more accepting. (Owen Banks)

One participant talked about how her lesbian friend was not happy about her coming

out as bisexual. Lorelai said,

My best friend was mad, cause she was like, well I mean, she struggled to come out as gay and she had to tell her mom this is all I'm ever going to do. She was like, I was jealous basically that I could identify as both and my mom couldn't be sad because

one day I could in fact marry a man. And so she had a really hard time dealing with it, but she's been my best friend since I was like four and she slowly got over it, so…

In this section, students spoke about the fear they had around coming out to peers. Bem was the only participant that spoke about coming out to friends in high school and experiencing a negative reaction from her former peer circle. However, she also spoke about how her friends apologized later in high school for how they had initially reacted to her confession.

Owen Banks and Daenery talked about the emotional roller-coaster they went on prior to coming out to their friends. They both spoke about coming out to peers in college and knowing their religious and political affiliations and assuming the worst outcome as a result of their confession. Owen Banks is the only one who really talked about making the conscious decision to remove people from her friendship circle because they stated that they could not be supportive of her.

Coming out in the classroom. Coming out and being out as non-monosexual on campus is highly complex and consists of many avenues. Some of the students talked about being out to classmates or roommates. Some of the students talked about coming out to staff or faculty on campus. Some students talked about being out in specific spaces on campus. Bem talked about navigating the coming out process by stating that, "…I am pretty much out to anyone who I don't find is a threat." She talked about coming out in a class,

> I came out to a class one time. We had to give a speech about a marginalized group and I chose bisexuals. And everyone on their review sheets, they are like peer review, said "oh that was awesome" you know, like "good for you for doing that." Just one girl didn't like it, she glared at me the whole time (laughter). But, I already had problems with her. (Bem)

Waters had the opportunity to take a Gay and Lesbian Literature class and had been

surprised to find that a majority of the class was heterosexual identified. She contemplated if

she should disclose her sexuality in this course, but she determined that it was important. She

talked about that decision,

> And, I was just like well, I mean we are going to be talking about this stuff and I would like to be like fully forthcoming with where my opinion is coming from because I know if I were to say some of the things that I say without self-identifying as bisexual or a person of the LGBT community, people would probably look at me really weird, like is there a reason you have that viewpoint and is there a reason that you are that passionate about it, or is there a reason that you are like sensitive to this certain topic. So I felt like for the purpose of the dialogue, for the purpose of the discussion, for the purpose of the things we would be talking about in the class, it would be beneficial to come out as bisexual, so I did. (Waters)

Daenery talks about the experience of inadvertently being outed to an entire seminar

class:

> Actually my class yesterday, we were supposed to write down, it's a one hour seminar on lessons learned from Mays business faculty. So we had a professor come in and talk to us about trust. So we were supposed to do this assignment, but I didn't know we were sharing. So I didn't censor myself and I, you're supposed to write about someone that you trust and why, and give an example of why. And someone that you just distrust and why and end of story. And I actually listed you ([Interviewer] lets out a little sound of shock) for the trusting side, not for the distrusting (laughter). And, you know just how you take in people sensitive stories and keep them confidential and are super respectful and stuff like that. So I was just telling them about the GLBT Resource Center, and I actually got called on to speak so I tell my example. [Interviewer] Are you allowed to pass if you…[Daenery]…Probably, but I don't know. It was an experience, so I, it was a challenge, so I decided to go with it. So I did, and everyone got really quiet and but um, the facilitator, the person presenting seemed a little shocked at first, but took it really well. But she actually came back and referenced my story later, which was surprising. (Daenery)

Sometimes spontaneous conversations between classmates lead to self-disclosure

within the classroom. Owen Banks relayed an experience she had with this:

And I remember one lab, everyone just started talking about their sexuality and sexual history and like what they were doing, I learned things about some of these kids that you would not need to know. So I like threw out there, "oh yeah my girlfriend or whatever and it went over pretty smoothly, they didn't seem phased at all. (Owen Banks)

Two of the students, Dianna and Henry, talked about their experiences as student

workers on campus and deciding if it would make sense to come out in their place of

employment, or to supervisors or co-workers.

All of my supervisors have known about my sexual orientation, my advisor has known about my sexual orientation. I've only had positive experiences. Mainly a lot of my mentors and people who, my mentors and my supervisors, they…that's really been an important kind of aspect of that trust I guess or that kind of professionalism, that it's also accepted. So a lot of the acceptance comes from that ability to identify as whatever I am. (Henry)

Clearly, for Henry, being out as a student worker on campus was a non-issue. He felt

supported and accepted in his place of work. For some students, this is not the case. Dianna

talked about her experiences working for the campus bookstore versus the campus library.

…I mean the, I used to work at the campus bookstore, and now I work for the library. And at the bookstore, it was just a little bit more, strict than it is at the library in general. But I know at the bookstore, I had this weird thing where co-workers would try to set me up with people. But at the same time you can't, you get the feeling that this is inappropriate to be talking about your sexuality. And like at the library, it's just kind of like nobody cares. I mean you need to get your work done, but I mean I know, like I work across from Michael and he has the [Ally Training] sticker, and my boss has the [Ally Training] sticker and it's just, I don't know, at the library, it's just a little bit more welcoming towards my sexuality in general and I know that [prospective supervisor] knows about my sexuality. But it's, I don't know, it's just kind of different. Not like, for me at the bookstore didn't necessarily, they didn't, they weren't kind of like, you know discriminatory towards me, it's much more of this is a work environment and you don't need to talk about it kind of thing. (Dianna)

Dianna had different experiences based upon where she worked on campus. For her,

the library felt like a safer environment for being out. She had talked about knowing there

was a LGBTQ archive in the library and that many people that worked there also had gone

through the ally training workshop. However, what she danced around, but never spoke to

directly is that the library was all professional staff and a few student workers and the

bookstore was almost all student workers with a few professional staff members. She talked

about how she did not feel safe coming out to co-workers at the bookstore, even though one

of them was openly gay.

Coming Out in Heterosexual Community versus LGBTQ Community

Two students discussed that they felt there was a difference when it came to coming

out in a heterosexual community versus a LGBTQ community. Waters talked about how she

determined if she would disclose her bisexuality to others:

> But I look at how they gauge maybe the LGBT community as a whole or I look at
> well, do I know that their strictly religious or are they affirming in any way for the
> LGBT community, are they open-minded, or are they kind of just closed off close
> minded and not necessarily bigoted but are they more conservative in their values and
> not open to the LGBT community?…But I do, it becomes more important to me to
> identify as bisexual to someone who is heterosexual because it's harder, and it's a
> more exhausting process because not everybody accepts it. (Waters)

Similarly, Lorelai explained how she felt comfortable being out as LGBTQ to both

heterosexual community and LGBTQ community, but that she rarely identified her

bisexuality to strangers.

> No, I'm actually pretty bad about it to be honest. Like when, in my sociology classes,
> I usually say I'm in the LGBT community. Like I let that out, like if we are talking
> about something. But, I usually just let people assume I'm gay, like lesbian
> completely because I feel like I'm going to, people are going to be like, "oh well
> you're bi, you're not really gay." And I'm like (sigh) No! I don't, I just usually let
> people assume what they want to assume and I just say I'm part of the LGBT
> community, and I leave it at that. (Lorelai)

For both students, being out as bisexual is something they were constantly negotiating. For Waters, being out in heterosexual community was harder because she perceived that there was less understanding of bisexual identities in heterosexual community versus LGBTQ communities. Lorelai spoke less about the difference of being out in heterosexual versus LGBTQ community and more to the difficulty of being out as non-monosexual in general. They both talked about how they felt there was a lack of understanding around non-monosexuality and what that means. For Waters, she didn't want to have to explain herself all the time, but for Lorelai, she didn't want to be questioned about the validity of her identity.

Questioning Identity

Three participants were actively questioning their identity as they were participating in this research: Klavi, Lorelai, and Elizabeth. They all talked about having solid non-monosexual identities, but after having time for self-reflection and concentrated time to unpack their identities and attractions, they started to question the validity of their own non-monosexual identities. After the first interview, Klavi found herself pulling an all-night study session and in the early morning hours she started to process her identity and began to question if she really was non-monosexual:

> Last night, I stayed up really late, really late, like I think I went to bed at like six am cause I was working on something and I went to use the restroom and as I was washing my hands I was all sleep deprived and having these crazy thoughts and I was just like, what if I'm a lesbian? If I'm so scared to have sex like with a guy, what does that mean? And then I was like, "no, I'm being stupid, why would you even think that? That's dumb." And then that thought kind of just kept coming back to me, like well no. It kind of just kept this persistent worry, I was like I feel like no one else feels like this, no one else is scared. Then I was like, what if you know…and then I just kind of like, it was just this like, I kind of just thought, I think this is a sign that I need to go to bed. [Laughter] Yeah, but, yeah it's just really weird. It's very not pleasant having that kind of anxiety. It perpetuates itself into parts of your life where

you would like for it not to be. But you know it's something that I'm pretty much going to have to work though at some point or another. I've never really been a particularly physically intimate person, that's never really been my thing even though I still enjoyed it and in that moment I was just kind of thinking, what if that's a sign of something else? And then I just kind of thought like, you're over thinking things, you're looking too much into things, you need to stop. Don't go down this path please. But yeah, that's just kind of what my sleep deprived brain rattles to me yesterday and I never really had that thought before, and I thought what if it means something else, but that's not what it is… (Klavi)

She did state that she felt this questioning was brought on by her participation in this research and her focus at that moment on her own identity and what that meant to her.

Semantics played a big part in Lorelai's questioning. She was worried that she could not identify as truly pansexual if she was not attracted to all gender identities and expressions. Since she was suddenly finding herself attracted to mostly feminine women for the first time, she was worried that she had to be attracted to all gender identities and gender presentations in order to truly be pansexual:

I was actually talking to someone because I got a little upset at one point, cause I realized when I talked to you about how a lot of my tendencies have been leaning towards more feminine characteristics, I was like, "what does this mean?" And so I actually sat down and I talked to one of my friends and I was like, like I understand that in the bisexual community you can have preferences, and like I do identify as pansexual and that's, that's where my questions lies, I was like, "can I have preferences if I identify as pansexual?" Like I'm willing to date everyone, but I still have a preference to a certain look, does that mean I'm pansexual? So we had a very long conversation about that. (Lorelai)

After her first interview, Elizabeth also started to question her identity. She was still choosing to not label her identity, but she was starting to question if she was non-monosexual at all. She states,

Like I still don't really like a label, but I think I am leaning more towards a more same sex persuasion. Just cause I had been interested in this guy, just recently. But like it didn't feel right. So I guess I just realized that I don't have a female in my past to

compare it to, like I haven't dated any women, but just, cause I connect with guys more better than girls in a friendly way. Like in the emotional connection way, that friends need. But, like I don't think I'm capable of getting romantic feeling with guys. I mean, not that I know that I do with women, but just thinking about a future with a women and a future with a man seems to make more sense to me to do that. But it still doesn't feel right saying that I'm homosexual just because I can look at a guy and think "yeah, he's really cute!" But then, not, I guess, now I'm just more aware that it hasn't really ever worked in the past with guys. So I guess that's where I am at with that. (Elizabeth)

In this subsection, Lorelai was questioning her use of the term pansexual and if she could legitimately use that term if she was not attracted to all people since pan means all. For Lorelai, this questioning was a matter of semantics and a lack of common understanding around the pansexual identity label. Klavi was questioning herself due to a nervousness to be intimate with people, which she started was more about her anxiety than a lack of attraction or desire. Elizabeth was the only one of the three students in this subsection that seemed to be unsure of her attractions to multiple gender people and by the second interview had determined that she was more likely than not exclusively romantically attracted to women.

Biphobia/Binegitivity/Bierasure

The participants detailed many times when they experienced ignorance, misinformation, negativity, stigma, erasure, or blatant biphobia. The participants shared incidences that happened both within LGBTQ community as well as in heterosexual community. Two of the 10 participants detailed biphobia/binegitivity they experienced within the LGBTQ community. Waters talks about the pain of the moments when she realized that she had made a false assumption that others had understood her identity when they clearly did not.

But for people in the LGBT community who don't necessarily accept bisexual people, it becomes more complicated because I've experienced times where someone will tell me, "well bisexuality doesn't exist and you're just really straight or you're greedy or you're confused or you're curious, or you're not capable of being monogamous, or that you just don't know what you want…" and it's very heartbreaking. Especially if I am confiding in somebody and believing that they are going to be comfortable with it and then they're not. And then it's just very frustrating. (Waters)

Drew also started to talk about their own pain that they felt due to the biphobia they experienced specifically within the LGBTQ community.

…There's a lot of biphobia in the LGBT queer community and it makes me really sad because we're just as queer as other LGBTQ identified people and… I'm sorry just talking about, I want to talk about but I also feel uncomfortable so could we get the question maybe? (Drew)

It becomes very clear when talking with Drew about this that this pain runs very deep and they actually acknowledge that they do not feel comfortable talking about this topic.

Not all bipobia and binegitivity was blatant. Many times what students experienced was more insidious. Lorelai talked about the personal impact of having her identity questioned all the time and having to explain and validate her identity. She stated,

Like, it can be difficult, like, explaining to people, "No, I'm bisexual, I really am in the LGBT community" and that gets annoying. But also, like, it's hard to deal with, like cause you get asked so much, are you really gay or are you really straight, like you start to question yourself. Especially when you are in a relationship with one person or another, well maybe I'm wrong. And like I always come out with, no, this is what I am and this is what I believe in, but like you always start to question, especially when people start asking you a lot. So it's hard to re-affirm your own identity to yourself. I guess that's what I wanted to explain. (Lorelai)

Lorelai stresses the difficulty of having to constantly validate her identity to others and how that lead her to constantly question it for herself. As in the previous subsection, she even talked about how she knew that her identity was correct for her, but that having her identity challenged all the time lead her to constantly question her own identity.

Henry talked about an incident that took place the LGBTQ center on campus. Some students were talking about pansexuality and making jokes about being attracted to frying pans and other kitchenware. He said,

> Yes, I've had people kind of not really understand it, or want to understand it. And just labeled it as something within, labeled as something different from…different but still in the realm of gay...They thought they were being clever and funny but, it's obviously a very dismissing comment. Mostly what I felt at that time was dismissed, but I mean personally it was a dismissal by something completely outrageous. So it didn't really carry much weight, but I imagine that after a while, hearing stuff like that multiple times, it can add up. (Henry)

While many of the students did not always see their experiences clearly, Henry did an excellent job of illustrating the mircoaggressions that he experienced within the LGBTQ community on campus. He even acknowledged that his experience was a small one, but he knows that having those experiences over and over again can really take a toll on people.

One of the microaggressions that came up for many of the students involved having their identity erased by others. Bem talked about coming out to her sister and close friends and how they told her that they did not believe her.

> A long time ago when it came out in eighth grade, I came out to my sister, two of my best friends and…well, not just two, but they'd say like, "you know I don't really think you are," and their like "you know I think maybe you just kind of have a crush on this girl," like it's a phase, you know, and I don't think it's really real and they've retracted that and said "I'm sorry I said that but I understand that now" and I said "oh that's okay, it happens." (Bem)

Similarly, Owen Banks had friends tell her directly that they did not believe in her identity:

> And the three friends, they accepted me. They told me they hadn't really known anyone before that was like that, and they didn't really believe in it or you know think that it was okay, but you know, it was my life and they loved me anyway, and you know okay we will still be friends. Eventually I kind of decided that I didn't want, even the fact that they didn't believe in it, or they didn't support it was a negativity in

my life that I didn't want, and I'm not friends with any of the three of them anymore, so. I mean that's that. (Owen Banks)

Daenery talks about her fears about people trying to erase her identity, and how she saw to see

it actually happen when she transferred institutions:

> But with bisexuality, people are like "well, you probably, you know, are just curious, or stuff like that." So I already had like those concerns, and when I came here and I started getting involved in like [LGBTQ Student Organization] and like having non-hetrosexual friends, I kind of see that. (Daenery)

Daenery talked about seeing how the LGBTQ community erases non-monosexual

identities and other students discussed witnessing this as well. Drew talked about how they

felt that only gay and lesbian identities and issues were talked about on campus:

> Well I noticed that like bisexual identity is often erased so on campus people usually refer to straight or gay identified persons and not really include bisexual identities or pansexual identities so, umm, (long pause). (Drew)

Henry talked more about biphobia within the LGBTQ community and how painful

that can be for non-monosexual people:

> In regards to biphobia, I usually see it more within the community and those are, that's the ones that hurt the most. While the biphobia I experience outside the community is more so a lack of bi or fluid identities existing. But, the type of phobia I experience within the community is more of a, people see it as just a phase and stuff, rather than an identity most of the time. (Henry)

Lorelai talked about how non-monosexual identities are rarely discussed or

acknowledged unless there are non-monosexual people in the room who specifically bring it

up:

> I feel like unless me or someone else who identify in those spaces or bring it up, like, "no we're here." And I'm pretty loud about it because I am not afraid to be like "well, like, this is like, how I experiences this in a bisexual way." Cause I think some people are, they are afraid of people like tearing down what their orientation is, and saying

like, "why are you even here," which like sucks. I don't know, I just feel like we are really under-represented and under-talked about (is that a thing?). (Lorelai)

She went on to talk about how she felt like it was only brought up as a way to make people feel like that is a safe space for them and not necessarily an inclusive space:

I don't feel like they want to talk about it, but I feel like they want to make me feel safe. Which is good that they want to make me feel safe, it's great, but it's like, you should want to talk about it too, because it's very much a part of our community, like you can't just knock it out, as much I think people want to. (Lorelai)

The student's experiences in this section range from mircoaggressions all the way to bierasure and binegitivity. Henry shared an experience that he had in the GLBT Resource Center on campus that was the perfect example of the micro-aggessions that non-monosexuals experience. He heard his identity being used as a joke or punchline and while it was clear to him that people were less making fun of pansexuality and more making fun of the name itself, it was still creating an environment for him where he felt that his identity was not taken seriously. Other students talked about how they experienced people questioning the validity of their identity as non-monosexual.

Some of the students talked about the most painful experiences they had were instances where other LGBTQ people had either erased their identity or made non-monosexual identities invisible. Drew talked about how non-monosexual identities are never talked about in LGBTQ spaces and Lorelai pointed out how non-monosexual identities are not just left out of the conversations, they are left out completely by others in LGBTQ community who constantly refer to "gay and lesbian" instead of LGBTQ. For these students, the impact of these experiences have real and lasting negative effects on them as non-monosexual

identified people such as making them less likely to self-identify as non-monosexual to others.

Lack of Education/Understanding

The other thing that came up consistently with students is the lack of understanding and misinformation that people have when it comes to non-monosexual identities. Many students talked about the stereotypes that people believed were true about non-monosexual identified people. As Lorelai pointed out, "Sometimes people generalize a bit with the bisexual community, and it's kind of degrading." Bem gave an example of how she was automatically assumed to be polyamorous after coming out to someone:

> The only instance that I can think of is when I told someone that I was bisexual and I also told them that I had a boyfriend and they were like, "oh so you have a girlfriend to?" And it wasn't really like hateful. It was just ignorant. (Bem)

Bem acknowledged that she knew this came from a lack of understanding around non-monosexual identities. Waters talked some more about the experience of encountering misguided people with questions about non-monosexual identities:

> Most people have a lot of questions that I find ridiculous and stupid and ignorant, but I answer them because I'd rather you asked the questions and know the real answer then think really stupid ignorant and bigoted things. (Waters)

As she stated here, Waters felt like she needs to educate people about non-monosexual identities and she welcomed questions from others about her identity. She gave the following example:

> I think coming out to people, they may have more blunt, or more inappropriate questions about bisexuality which could be taken as biphobia, which I recognize as just not having the knowledge to ask the questions that they want to ask in a respectful way, or in an appropriate way. But I think that people just feel, for whatever reason, that bisexual people are just more open to talk about things that are private or that are

personal and so they kind of just ask things upon me coming out, or upon referencing bisexual people that aren't okay. But I don't think, blatant biphobia, I don't think I have experienced that quite yet. I hope I don't, but not yet. (Waters)

Waters talked more about where she encountered the most questions about non-monosexual identities. When asked if she experienced it more from heterosexual community or LGBTQ community she stated,

> Both! I've experienced it from LGBT people who I think on a day to day basis, their more comfortable or used to interacting with monosexual people. And also I'm entering into a community that's already close knit and comfortable with each other, so the questions that they are asking are, their only point of reference is asking somebody who they are incredibly comfortable with already, so they just kind of like, Well, I mean you are here, so I'm just going to be really comfortable with you too and just ask you something that maybe not everyone would ask somebody that they are just meeting. And then from the hetrosexual community as well, since they have not perhaps met somebody who's openly bisexual, or who's openly LGBT, or they think that they haven't. (Waters)

She went on to talk about how people seemed to think that bisexual people are hypersexual and open to talking about their identity and sexual experiences to anyone:

> For whatever reason bisexuality translates to open, which translates to I'm going to talk to everybody about my private life because stereotypically, apparently, bisexual people are overtly sexual and overtly sexualized. And romantic feeling never really enter the equation and if they do it's always asked in a really vulgar manner that relates to being polyamorous, which is not the same thing. (Waters)

Dianna talked about how she felt like any LGBTQ identity on campus had a difficult time, but that non-monsexuals had a harder time due to not being understood by the general population:

> I think people who identify as gay or lesbian kind of have it, I don't know to me they kind of have it a little bit easier cause most people know what that means. But any of the other ones, people don't know what it means so you have to explain it. And if you have to explain it, people are less likely to listen to it, or like, you know, it's just kind of that people don't like what they don't know about kind of stigma. (Dianna)

Daenery talked about how stereotypes impacted the perception of non-monsexuals and particularly how she encountered people who believed that non-monseuxals were hyper-sexual and non-monogomous. She told the story of a conversation with guy she was dating who identified as Christian conservative and not okay with LGBT identities. After he made the remarks to her about not being okay with LGBT people, she decided to test him with a question about threesomes knowing she was not interested in actually having one. She asked him the following:

> So, would you be okay with having a threesome with me and another girl?" and he was like "yeah, that's fine!" and I was like, that didn't really make sense. (Daenery)

She talked more about navigating dating men and coming out as non-monsexual:

> In my experience, they have seen me more as promiscuous, because of that. Like, I'll get questions right after that like, "oh are you looking for a friend with benefits, or stuff like that?" I'm like, no, not really. Or I'll get the threesome question or something like that. (Daenery)

The participants in this section highlighted how much misinformation and lack of understanding there was about non-monosexual identities. Waters really sumed this up when she talked about how it is not biphobia that she experienced from people, it is just a lack of education mixed with a feeling of freedom to ask non-monosexual people very personal things about their behaviors and relationships. Daenery pointed out how she also experienced this phenomena when she was navigating the dating world and particularly with hetrosexual, cisgendered men. There is an automatic assumption made that a bisexual woman is going to be hypersexual and interested in multiple partners. Her example was particularly poignant because the person she was dating at the time had stated that he was not okay with LGBTQ identities, yet he would be okay with having a threesome with her and another female. This

highlights just how complicated it is for non-monosexual students to navigate all

relationships, and in particular dating with potential romantic partners.

Assumed Heterosexual

Some of the student participants spoke to the invisible nature of non-nonsexual

identities. They talked about how they are assumed to be heterosexual by both the

heterosexual community and the LGBTQ community and what that felt like for them. One

student, Bem, talked about being a student leader in the largest LGBTQ organization and not

being seen as a member of the LGBTQ community:

> I wonder about that sometimes because people have assumed that I'm straight and I
> don't really go out partying with everyone else when they do because I don't really
> like going to [local LGBTQ nightclub] so I feel I would just stay at home and hang out
> with my boyfriend and I feel like people just think that like I don't know that I wasn't
> as gay as they were because of the way that dress or the way that I look or who I'm
> hanging out with or who I'm dating so it's kind of weird sometimes. But I try to be out
> and proud about who I am and supporting the organization you know. (Bem)

Henry talked about how people had essentially erased his identity:

> Yes, I've had people kind of not really understand it, or want to understand it. And
> just labeled it as something within, labeled as something different from…different but
> still in the realm of gay. (Henry)

Bem talked about what it was like to be bisexual identified and in a relationship with a

cisgender, straight male. She talked about having heterosexual privilege, but at the same time

she highlighted the struggle of not being seen as non-monosexual:

> ...that I feel like being in a heterosexual relationship while having a bisexual identity is
> sort of like a blessing and a curse at the same time, because you know, I can skate by
> with straight privilege and but it's also very upsetting to always be assumed to be
> straight just cause I am with a man. But I try to use it to my advantage if I can. (Bem)

> I can't think of one specifically when I've come out to people, but I know I think at
> least two people have said oh that's [Bem] she straight (laughs). But like, oh you

know she's got a… I just, like she's got a boyfriend she must be straight, and I asked one of my friends in the community here one time what he thought like when he first met me because I don't feel like I look like your stereotypical lesbian, you know, and I've got a boyfriend so what did you think? [Friend's response] "I thought you're just one of those white girl allies who's like, "yeah I love the gay community". (Bem)

Lorelai talked about the struggle to identify as non-monosexual when she felt like she was constantly questioned by others:

…Sometimes it's really hard to identify as bisexual because there are so many parts of the community that want you to identify with a monosexual, because they just, there are so many questions, "well, like are you really gay?" So many times you want to say, "yes, I am!" and then it's automatically assumed you're a lesbian and it's like I'm not, but you just have to start wondering well if I'm more attracted to feminine characteristics, does that mean I'm a lesbian? What does this even mean? And then you get in your head and then you start thinking, well maybe I am a lesbian, but then you start thinking, well this isn't my identity, this is how I feel, but everybody else tells me to feel a different way. I think it's interesting to be in this community because as much as it's a great place to be, the LGBT community can be very harmful to some identities. They don't always accept everything as much as they should, or I would like them too. (Lorelai)

Lorelai discussed how as a non-monosexual identified person she struggled to maintain her identity in the face of intense and consistent questioning and messaging from others about her sexual orientation.

Experiences in LGBTQ Student Organizations

I asked the students to talk more directly about their experiences in in the LGBTQ student organizations on campus. There were two LGBTQ undergraduate organizations on campus. [LGBTQ Student Organization] was the oldest and largest organization and [LGBTQ QPOC Student Organization] was the smaller, newer organization. [LGBTQ Student Organization] was a more general social organization and [LGBTQ QPOC Student Organization] was a discussion based organization that focused on racial and social justice.

While there was some overlap in the attendance and participation by students in both organizations, many other students choose to attend one organizational meeting or the other. Of the participants in this study, 6 of the 10 students had some experience with one of the LGBTQ student organizations on campus. I asked students to talk about their experiences participating in these student organizations and if they were able to find community and/or support as non-monosexual within these organizations.

There were a couple of students that found an immediate community within [LGBTQ Student Organization] and felt that they were understood as non-monosexual. Henry stated,

> I was in [LGBTQ Student Organization] for the first good portion of my underclassmen years here. And as I made friends within the community here, I just kind of found my way and continued having those friendships and stuff. (Henry)

Klavi talked about [LGBTQ Student Organization] being very open for her as non-monosexual:

> [LGBTQ Student Organization] as far as I'm concerned is very, very open with all of that kind of…like they're not, you know, they're not biased against non-monosexual stuff from what I have seen so far. I don't feel like that's a problem and I'm really happy about that because I've read lots of stories and you know, yay! I don't have to go through that. As far as…I don't think I've experienced any actively bi-phobic community or anything, I've just read about it a lot. So all the spaces I've been in so far have been really good. (Klavi)

Not all students felt that both organizations had the same level of support and understanding of non-monosexual identities. Drew spoke to this in their experiences in both organizations and why they ultimately chose to participate exclusively in [LGBTQ QPOC Student Organization]:

> I'm involved, I used to be involved with [LGBTQ Student Organization], but then I gravitated towards [LGBTQ QPOC Student Organization] which one of my good friends founded a few years ago. I feel like I can be openly bi and accepted amongst

those people versus my previous experiences with the [LGBTQ Student Organization]. I used to identify as pansexual, so when I would express my experiences as a pansexual person I feel like it wasn't really being considered because it wasn't the gay or lesbian identified experience. So, that's one of the reasons why I'm kind of more involved with [LGBTQ QPOC Student Organization] versus [LGBTQ Student Organization]. (Drew)

Drew went into more depth about the reasons why [LGBTQ QPOC Student Organization] seemed to be a better fit for them:

I feel more free to talk about my experiences as a bi person of color and talk about how these intersecting identities matter, why they should, why we shouldn't ignore race or we shouldn't ignore sexual orientation. I feel like [LGBTQ QPOC Student Organization] is the space where we can embrace all our identities versus just focusing on sexual orientation or gender identity. (Drew)

Waters also self-identified as a bisexual person of color, but she did not find the same sense of community and understanding from [LGBTQ QPOC Student Organization] that Drew talked about. Waters also talked about how she had to step away from [LGBTQ QPOC Student Organization] because she felt like it was just too much for her to handle that the moment. She talked about being active in the LGBT Resource Center, [LGBTQ Student Organization], Speakers Bureau programs and [LGBTQ QPOC Student Organization]. She chose to distance herself from [LGBTQ QPOC Student Organization] as a form of self-care. She said,

… I just had an overload of queer. I was, I am in the GLBT Resource Center all the time and then I'm in, all my friends are a part of the LGBTQ community so those issues come up quite a lot. And then I wanted to be a part of a social organization, so I stayed with [LGBTQ Student Organization]. And then [LGBTQ QPOC Student Organization] was kind of like the straw that broke the camel's back. Like it was just too much, it was an overload of information and an overload of community and I needed to be able to step back and say, no, I don't really want to be a part of this particular organization. Just because it intersects with everything and it wasn't in my opinion, a necessary thing in my life cause it was just kind of like, whoa, I can't deal with this. This is just like too much. It's an overload of queer. (Waters)

Some students talked about the struggle to attend student organization meetings given their academic commitments, student life commitments and/or work commitments. Lorelei talked about how she could not make it to most meetings and that she really was upset when she had to miss the one meeting that focused on non-monosexual identities.

> I was really sad, I actually missed, there was one meeting, like fall (questioning timeframe outloud to self)…last spring, about bisexual, I think it was like bisexual awareness? I don't know if it's in the spring, but whenever bisexual awareness month is, but it was during that time and there was some bisexual meeting which was great and I wasn't in there for that, which was really sad. But, there was one meeting, but out of having a meeting every week and there being one meeting focused on it. I don't know? I feel like, in my relation, it's kind of like Native American history month, where like from Native American's it's like, "well, every month is white people month." Except for like the few, but then it's like, "well we get one month, well why do you get one month?" We never have a white month, that's because you always have white month. It's kind of like that with the LGBT community, you'll always have a meeting, why do we only have one month? (Lorelai)

The participants had a wide variety of experiences while participating in the LGBTQ student organizations on campus. While some of the students felt their identities as non-monosexual were non-issues for them in these spaces, others seemed to feel that they were not understood or seen for their full spectrum of identities beyond just sexual orientation. Other participants talked about how they did not feel that the organizations where biphobic, but that they did feel concerned that non-monosexual identities were only talked about within the organizations if someone brought it up and advocated for their own identity or if it was near Celebrate Bisexuality Day.

Drew spoke about how she felt that she was not always understood as a non-monosexual person of color in [LGBTQ student organization], but she did feel that within [LGBTQ POC student organization]. However, Waters felt that [LGBTQ POC student

organization] was not a space that she felt comfortable as a non-monosexual person of color.

The difference in the student experience varied based upon the identity that was most salient

for the student at the time. Drew was exploring her identity as a multiracial person and

Waters was excited to be somewhere that was supportive of her identity as non-monosexual.

Dating

Several students mentioned how difficult it was to date as a non-monosexual identified

person. Many of the students had stories about how they had been treated differently and

negatively after coming out as non-monosexual to people. Waters talked about how she felt

lesbian identified women reacted to her coming out to them as bisexual:

> I may like somebody who is a lesbian or who doesn't identify as bisexual but
> identifies as strictly monosexual related to females. And that becomes difficult,
> because their view of bisexual people might be that you are incapable of being in a
> relationship with them, of or that by somehow liking you they're connected with men
> and they don't want that. And it becomes really disheartening and you don't know up
> until that point. Cause they are fine being friends with you, or being friends with me,
> but it's when I want to date them that it becomes a problem. Because they're like,
> "well, I would never date a bisexual person because XYZ and even if XYZ are totally
> false. It becomes a problem because then I don't want to necessarily become friends
> with them because it feels like they don't really accept me. (Waters)

Waters focused on her struggles as a bisexual cisgendered woman coming out to

lesbians. Henry talked more about what it is like for him as a pansexual man when attempting

to date both men and women. He said,

> But the only difficulties that I have mainly is when it comes to attraction and finding a
> partner within the queer community. That's when a whole different realm of
> stereotypes, logic, and just various other qualities come out and things of that sort.
> For example, I've had men who have not wanted to pursue a further relationship with
> me strictly because I was also attracted to females. And the other side of that, I've had
> females who just, who expressed confusion and not really homophobia, they're
> hesitant to enter into a relationship with me because of my fluid identity. (Henry)

Lorelai talked more about not being seen as potential dating material by others within the LGBTQ community due to her identity. She also pointed out how stereotypes that exist about non-monosexual identities are persistent and the main deterrents of LGBTQ people from pursuing any type of relationship with non-monosexual identified people.

> …When I started looking into dating someone that's when I usually experience the problems of like, like it will go great and then we are like "let's go on a date," and then they will be like, "Oh so you are?" And I'll be like, I'm bisexual and they will be like, "Oh, J.K.[just kidding]" I don't understand, this was going so well, although it may just be me. But it usually is like, it will be going great until I mention I'm bisexual and then the conversation will end, it will just be completely different and I'm like, you know it's not like I'm polyamorous, and I understand that would be a different story, because many people don't want multiple people in a relationship. I don't, but I respect if you do. And I think, even within the LGBT community that tries to be inclusive, it can still be very exclusive when they hear bisexual. It's very, like, oh you could leave me for a man. I think they've dealt with that so much, of like having that problem that they're like, "well, let me just steer away, cause I'd rather just save a problem." So, it's a little bit annoying within this campus to try to date people, but just outright people will tell me my identity isn't true. Not within the LGBT community, I haven't been caught in a lot of that. It's just been when I'm trying to date people. (Lorelai)

Henry talked about being confronted with people's lack of understanding of non-monosexual identities and their belief in the persistent stereotypes of non-monosexual people.

> I've had a, cause as soon as the topic of my fluid identity comes up it just kind of puts a switch of, oh that's not really what I'm looking for in somebody. And then I've had direct comments of them feeling it would be too hard for them to keep my interest because of my fluid identity. When personally it's just like "well, I'm attracted to you at this point, so what does my fluid identity really have to do with it? (Henry)

Henry highlighted the frustration of having to convince people that he is not going to cheat on them. Similarly, Lorelai gives some direct examples of how this persistent stereotype of non-monosexual people being incapable of monogamy has come up over and over in her attempts to date lesbian women.

I've gotten mad and been like, cause like it will be going great and then I'll say it and they will be like, "Oh well I can't really make it." By like the third time that's happened, I was like, "can you not really make it or are you not allowing my identity to have like a real purpose?' And they've been like, "whoa!" and I'm like, okay, be honest, is that why you're not pursuing this? And I've had one person say, "yeah, that just makes me nervous. I respect you, but that makes me too nervous and I would be very jealous and uncomfortable dating and I don't find that healthy in a relationship." And I understand that to a point, but like I'm very much a person that if I want to date you then I want to date you and that's the story. And so I don't think, and I think that can be true in lesbian relationships and gay relationship and it's very easy to understand. But when you add a bisexual component to it, then it's like "no, not true." (Lorelai)

Many of the participants in this research discussed how difficult it was to date and be out as non-monosexual. There was a persistent message from others that being non-monosexual was a deal breaker in the dating world. The students talked about how once they were out to potential dates, the story changed from I want to pursue this to excuses as to why it would not work out. Lorelai spoke about how she even started to confront people about it and only one person actually confessed that they had been interested until they found out that she was non-monosexual. There was a persistent message that non-monosexual people cannot be monogamous and would most likely cheat on you with someone of the opposite gender. Even when participants countered with the fact that they were not interested in a polyamorous relationship, potential partners still felt uneasy with pursuing that relationship. Of the participants who were actually actively dating, all of them talked about how difficult it was navigating dating while non-monosexual.

Supportive Spaces for Non-monosexuals

One of the questions I wanted to know from the students who participated in this research was where they were finding support and a sense of community as non-monosexual

students. Were there places on campus or resources that they were accessing that seem to be

inclusive and supportive of their identities? Were there resources or organizations that they

had found that catered to non-monosexual identified students or their needs?

Waters talked about why she felt like she needed to seek out spaces and community

that were welcoming to her and to her identity as non-monosexual. She said,

> So, I, as a bisexual person, I wanted to be around people who had a better
> understanding of bisexuality. So I accessed the GLBT Resource Center for the
> purpose of finding a community among LGBT people, but also among bisexual
> identified people as well. And then I also went to, I am a part of [LGBTQ STUDENT
> ORGANIZATION]. And for a short while I was a part of [LGBTQ QPOC Student
> Organization] and I pretty much for all the same reasons: I wanted friends and I
> wanted a community where I would be able to talk about situations and concerns
> among the community without having to provide a dictionary definition for every
> single thing we were talking about. (Waters)

For Waters, it was important that she not only found a community of LGBTQ people, but she

specifically wanted to find a community where she did not have to explain or educate others

about her identity.

Drew addressed these questions by mostly talking about the LGBTQ organizations on

campus, but they were also the only student who mentioned the support they felt from their

academic department.

> I guess in the student organizations, and the GLBT Resource Center, the political
> science department; because I study political science, you know it's nice to do my
> work and talk with colleagues about things not related to research every once in a
> while and the majority of them are pretty accepting of non-monosexual identities and
> that's super awesome. (Drew)

Bem also specifically called out the organizations and the resource center on campus,

but she also felt like she was able to get support through her experience in the residence halls

and her experience in the extended orientation program.

And I feel like my first year living in the dorms, that was very supportive. I feel like a lot of the RA's are [ally trained] and try to be accepting and I saw that at [Extended Orientation Program] too when people would say, "I'm an [school mascot] and I'm …whatever" It's like we're all different, but we are all [school mascot] and I feel like that is the kind of [school mascot] spirit that they were trying to convey. (Bem)

Some of the participants did not participate in the student organizations for various reasons and therefore had to find community in other places. Daenery's schedule did not allow for her to attend student organization meetings, so she talked about finding support in other places. "Really, the only place I can think of to really find resources, that would be here at the GLBT Resource Center and then just through individuals like [Advisor] and people who just kind of work at [institution] in like this area." (Daenery)

There were four students that had come out while utilizing non-LGBTQ related services on campus. Henry talked about his experiences with coming out outside of LGBTQ identified spaces on campus. Henry and Lorelai are the only students to mention coming out while accessing wellness services, such as counseling and health services.

I've come out at student counseling services, health services I think with my physician, res life, my RA knew and stuff like that. Mainly as it comes up, services pertaining to my life, the only one coincidently that I didn't, I never felt comfortable talking to, or coming out was actually my psychiatrist and that was actually an odd story. (Henry)

Henry did not choose to elaborate on the reasons he did not feel comfortable coming out to his psychiatrist, but he was out to his therapist on campus. He had also discussed how he was always out as queer or not heterosexual, but he did not always feel comfortable trying to explain his identity as pansexual.

…Unless I know that they've been ally trained or have some sort of indication that they're okay with the community, I have to first cross the barrier of identifying within the GLBT community and then I feel like adding on a whole other layer of my

fluidity, that makes it much more challenging. Including my student counseling services, sometimes a lot of my counseling has been particularly break ups with my male partners, because those are the ones I have the most trouble talking to others about and I find a lot of help in student counseling services with an open environment and open counseling session. But whenever I have to add in some information about my female attractions, at first I'm met with some internal hesitation. (Henry)

I asked Henry to elaborate on that hesitation he has about being out specifically as non-monosexual when accessing services. He described it this way,

It's a, I feel like most of the hesitation comes from just already having to deal with something and then having to deal with something and then having to go the process of education somebody about myself, to then get help about myself and that's usually a challenge and it's something that I've had to particularly when receiving resources, try to read between the lines of getting resources that are readily available and then tailoring them to my personal identity. (Henry)

Drew also talked about accessing counseling services while on campus. They already had some hesitation accessing counseling services and then to add both gender and sexuality made them very nervous about what kind of experience they were going to have. Drew said,

When I considered counseling, I was really hesitant about the whole concept of counseling and I wanted to make sure that I had a therapist who wasn't…who is going to understand a few aspects of me and resonate with a few identities, so I'm really happy that I have like a trans therapist who, whenever I explain the frustrations from biphobia and transphobia, he really understands where I'm coming from in a way because it's similar to what he may experience and so I feel like the student counseling services does the great job in pairing people with really awesome counselors who can help them with certain issues. (Drew)

Lorelai also talked about being out while accessing health services. She told a story that pointed out that being out as non-monosexual while accessing services does not always mean just having to educate practitioners on identity terminology, it can also mean receiving extra and unnecessary services due to a lack of awareness of non-monosexual identities and

the subsequent reliance on stereotypes such as non-monsexuals being hyper sexual and non-

monogamous. Lorelai stated,

> "I've had to be out on doctor's appointments before, cause they've asked me if I'm in
> a relationship and I said yes, I'm in a relationship with a female and then
> automatically started talking about STD's and I was there because my foot hurt, I was
> like, I don't think this is what causes foot pain. (Laughter) Pretty sure that's not what
> causes foot pain." (Lorelai)

One student, Klavi, self-identified as having a disability and she discussed her

experiences utilizing disability services on campus.

> I have a disability and when I was doing my paperwork with disability services at the
> beginning of the year is was like, list organizations that you've been to and since like I
> know my disability counselor and I saw the ally placard outside of her door and I was
> like sweet and I put [LGBTQ Student Organization] and then she was like, like when
> she was reading it over and she was like, "that was brave of you to write that down."
> And I was like, "thanks" you know, it was really nice. I think that was like the only
> time. You know she was like, if you ever feel like you need to talk about anything
> you can, and I was just like, yay, counselors. (Klavi)

Klavi's example shows how having a signifier that a person or a particular place, such as an

office, is open and affirming to LGBTQ students can make a direct difference for them. Klavi

was able to find someone who could understand the importance of both her identities and she

could talk about them in tandem instead of having to compartmentalize them depending on

the services she was accessing.

Dianna talked specifically about how having a visible statement that someone was an

ally and had gone through training on how to work with the community was a very powerful

statement to her. She said,

> I mean to me, if I see that someone's an [trained] ally, it makes me a little more
> willing to talk to them, cause it's like, oh you may not be, like by the definition of ally,
> like they may not be gay or bisexual or anything, they may be heterosexual, but at
> least they, you know I assume they feel the same way about me that, it's okay to feel,

it's okay to be a different sexual orientation and it still makes you a human being and that sort of thing. (Dianna)

For many of the students, finding supportive resources and spaces was a leap of faith on their part. They did not always know that they were going to be met with support or kindness, but they chose to be out in these spaces anyway. Most were met with support and encouragement, but some were met with confusion and a lack of support. Some of the participants in this section talked about the support they received when accessing departments and services on campus. For some of the participants, they were not out in these spaces, but they talked about how there were clear signs that they would be welcome as LGBTQ in that space.

Lorelai touched on the idea that LGBTQ identities are seen as unclean, even by health care providers. She talked about being given unnecessary STI testing due to mentioning her current relationship status. Henry talked about how he felt comfortable being out as LGBTQ when accessing counseling services, but he was not comfortable coming out as non-monosexual. For him, he did not want to have to educate people at the same time he was seeking support services from them.

Other participants spoke to the power of visible markers that someone was LGBTQ friendly. Klavi's decided to be out while accessing disability services solely because she saw the ally placecard and she felt that it was okay to be out in that space. Dianna also talked about how much of a difference it made for her in seeking student employment to see the ally placecard and know that if she was to be out in that space, it would be okay.

Finding Support Online

As discussed earlier, many of the students talked about finding support and community online. For some students, this was just about finding information about their identities, but for other students, this was really about finding a sense of community as non-monosexual. Three of the students talked about using the internet to find more information about their identities. Lorelai told a story of researching bisexuality online, "I was just like, what does this mean and google responded with a bunch of Christian websites and then an awesome website, I think it was PFLAG and it was like, "what to do if your child is bisexual." I was like, "what TO do?"

Owen Banks talked more about finding information about non-monosexual identities through doing research online. She said,

> Tumblr (laughter), honestly, has been a god-send and I've learned so much from that website which is ridiculous given some of the content that on it, but at the same time there's such a variety. And also, like just having heard the words pansexual and stuff, I've just googled and tried to find resources...Especially like you said, not a lot of people understand components that go into sexuality, so I feel like I haven't seen, I've gotten most of that information off the internet. I haven't seen a lot of pamphlets or whatever. (Owen Banks)

Klavi also talked about researching non-monosexual identities online. I asked her where she goes to find more information about identities. She said, "Mostly through Tumblr and mostly through a BiNet USA, through (long pause), that's pretty much it. Yeah…Oh through reddit too." She also talked about finding a community of bisexual identified people online that she had been able to connect with around identity.

> I have a lot of internet friends who identify as bisexual and have had some conversations with them about it, but not very many, cause it's not really something that we talk about a lot. For me it's mostly the posts that are directed at like everyone

and they get like hundreds of thousands of posts or whatever. What I do see it a lot of objections towards biphobia and invisibility and I understand that, and it's very heavily focused on that cause Tumblr's general culture is dissatisfaction with, like social activism. You know when you have activism you are always dissatisfied with something. That's what it is. It's mostly through the posts, mostly. (Klavi)

Across the board, the students in this study were utilizing the internet in order to access both information about non-monosexual community and as well as others who identified similarly to themselves. Lorelai talked about accessing google in order to read more about non-monosexual identities, but both Klavi and Owen Banks discussed their use of Tumblr as a way to find out more information about the community and access others who identified as non-monosexual.

What Do Non-monosexual Students Need

While the students discussed their experiences as non-monosexual and their experiences on campus as non-monosexual, many of them also touched on areas where they felt as if they needed support, understanding and resources. I wanted to find out if the students had specific needs as non-monosexual on a college campus. I asked them very direct questions about what programs, services, and resources they felt they needed as non-monosexual. Many students struggled to come up with answers to these questions. The ones that did had responses that fell into four categories: non-monosexual exclusive spaces, non-monosexual inclusive spaces, educational programs, and mentorship.

Non-monosexual exclusive spaces. Three of the 10 students talked about having spaces that were primarily for non-monosexual identified people. Waters talked about having an organization or group that was an exclusive space for non-monosexual people:

...maybe a bisexual group, or a non-monosexual group, or some kind of service oriented club or group. Not that I think you should have a bisexual group, or a non-monosexual group, cause really that just sounds like you're bashing everybody else, but something that's inclusive without being prejudice would be my whole point. (Waters)

On three separate occasions, Waters talked about the importance of having non-monosexual spaces. At the same time she talked about how she felt that having non-monosexual spaces were something that would look bad to others in the community and she would not want to make others feel excluded. She was clearly expressing a need and desire for non-monosexual community, but she also had a deep sense of trepidation that continually came up in her discussions about exclusive spaces. She wanted the space, but she did not want to do something that she felt might distance her from her LGBTQ peers.

Daenery also talked about having a separate space for non-monosexuals in the form of a support group. She said,

…It's different from being gay or being lesbian because we have our own set of hardships that aren't necessarily related or relevant to monosexual identified individuals. So, it would be cool to have like, what's the word, like a group that gets together and talks about stuff like that. I think that would be really interesting...But, a support group, that's the word! I think it would be really cool to have a support group for bisexual or pansexual or fluid-sexual, if that's a thing. (Daenery)

Klavi talked about the idea of a support group or community meeting online. She talked about the importance of connecting with others who shared her particular identity. She said,

A while ago, I don't remember what website it was, hosted a google + conference call and it was about six-7 students who identified as non-monosexual and they were all in college and they were talking about what it's like to be bisexual on campus. And a lot of them were, they were talking about, I don't really remember what they were talking about because I was kind of sleepy when I watched it, but it's just like that connecting with other people who you know are like you. That's kind of like the most important

aspect of it all. I don't really know if it's the specifics of the community as much as it is the visibility of the community and just feeling comfortable around others who are like you. That generates the largest sense of, yes I'm part of this acronym, but these are people who are very much like me, and that's kind of what it is. You know it's like if you have a website for people who are lesbian; it's kind of like the same thing. Like you know, you know you have your subcategories and you just make places dedicated to those subcategories and then you're all fine. Even if you do the same stuff as everyone else, your audience is still different. (Klavi)

Both Waters and Klavi talked about the importance of having non-monosexual spaces. However, while Waters had mentioned several times that she felt that non-monosexual spaces are needed, she also talked about how non-monosexual spaces could be seen as exclusionary to others. She spent a lot of time talking in circles about the need for non-monosexual specific places and services and then talking about how it would be seen as exclusionary and probably not a good idea. She did not elaborate on where this was coming from during the interview. She did talk at other points about choosing not to participate in [LGBTQ QPOC Student Organization], even though she self identifies as an LGBTQ person of color. It seems that she was struggling with feeling safe accessing resources and services that speak more directly to her multiple and specific identities versus just larger umbrella organizations where she may or may not feel validated or seen for her multiple identity labels.

Non-monosexual Inclusive Spaces

Non-monosexual inclusion seemed to be the topic that the students wanted to talk the most about. Eight of the 10 students discussed how making sure programs, services, and resources are inclusive of non-monosexual identities is primary and necessary. Students focused on the importance of the language that is used in LGBTQ spaces. Bem talks about how discussions that have not been inclusive of non-monosexual identities have had an

impact on her. She used the example of people using the term "gold star," meaning that

someone has not had sexual activity with a member of the opposite gender. She said,

> I wrote to be careful of the language that we use. One of the examples that I was
> thinking of is when people identify as a gold star gay or gold star lesbian and it's like,
> okay, what that says is that maybe you have never explored your identity in that area,
> or you don't have to be…you're not a better lesbian for never being with a guy, your
> just being more smug about it and I think that is kind of upsetting to hear. (Bem)

She also talked more generally about monitoring the language that people use within the

LGBTQ community. She stated, "I would say just start monitoring language and try to stop

them from saying "oh she has a girlfriend, she must be a lesbian." Maybe she's not." (Bem)

> Waters also talked about the importance of organizations being more inclusive of non-

monosexual identities. She said,

> I think non-monosexual comradery is needed and to say that we can have open
> discussion about not being monosexual and that there is a support of non-monosexual
> people. But I think that support should come from everybody and not just from non-
> monosexual people because non-monosexual people cannot be the only ones to affirm
> that non-monosexual people exist. (Waters)

Waters also went on to say, "...You're only truly affirmed when another group that isn't you

affirms that you exist." Waters seemed to be concerned more than most about how the rest of

the LGBTQ community not only sees the non-monosexual community, but also how they feel

about the community.

> A few students talked specifically about feeling left out of LGBTQ groups, programs,

and resources through specific language that is used to talk about community. Klavi talked

more in depth about how important it is to her for people to use inclusive language. She said,

> There have been a couple of times where I've read things, things written about
> LGBTQ students here and they say like gay and lesbian students. People do that, like
> people do that all the time. (Klavi)

I went on to ask her more about her feelings around being excluded through language:

> I mean it used to not bother me at all, but over time I've just developed a slight, ahh. You know, like a twinge of disappointment whenever I see that. Cause I mean if you think about it, typing gay and lesbian versus typing LGBTQ+, that's like shorter, you know, type the acronym. It's like shorter. And I think enough people know now what the letters mean so they won't be like, "what's that?" And, it's just a little disappointment. I think most of the stuff I've seen where it's like gay and lesbian, like on the internet in general, like the gay and lesbian thing, like that's a little older. You know, I think that ever since we crept into the 2010's more people are being more inclusive, but in terms of campus services, it's helpful that the GLBT center itself changed it's name to include the acronym, because now people outside the center are calling it by that name too. But yeah, I guess it's just like a little twinge of disappointment whenever I see gay or lesbian. It's just like, but I'm not either.
>
> [S] Yeah, do you feel like, when you see that, do you feel like that program is someplace you are going to feel included?
>
> [K] Maybe? But it's not a definite yes. It will probably be inclusive enough, since you know, but it's not a definite yes. (Klavi)

Klavi's answers highlighted the importance of inclusion within the LGBTQ community and why language is so important for non-monosexual students.

Students in this section were talking about creating inclusive spaces and the topic that seemed to come up the most was around using inclusive language. Bem spoke specifically about making sure to not make assumptions through language, such as assuming someone is lesbian identified because they are in a relationship with another female identified person. However, most of the students in this section spoke about how being in spaces where non-monosexual identities are never talked about was the most disheartening for them. Some of the students talked about how painful it is for them to hear the community referred to as "gay and lesbians" and not using terminology that is more inclusive of the entire community.

Educational Programs

Six of the 10 students discussed the importance of programs that are inclusive of, or

aimed at, non-monosexual students. Drew talked about how having programs that are only

aimed at gay and lesbians takes an emotional toll on them,

> Umm, (big sigh), because it's stressful to encounter diversity only aimed at gay and lesbian identified students. It's sort of erases the population of non-monosexual's, so LGBTQ professionals and centers can create more awareness programs and resources towards non-monosexual's and non-monosexual issues: biphobia, panphobia…just doing more work around non-monosexual identity versus just having programs for, you know, gay speakers because it would be more well-rounded for these centers and professionals to include non-monosexual identities and their work. (Drew)

Bem wanted to see more dedicated conversations about non-monosexual identities,

outside of the Celebrate Bisexuality Day in September. She said,

> And, I would say just like when we talk about bisexuality specifically, it's normally like this is celebrate bisexuality day or it like one day or one or two days out of the year for like bi pride and then we just sort of forget about it. I think we need to be more inclusive to celebrate bisexuals all the time.

Drew also discussed the importance of talking about identities outside of the dedicated days.

> Just anything really that includes bisexual awareness, or pansexual awareness, because it is really minimal. And I would like to see more awareness about those communities. More of the highlighted element of non-monosexualality so that other LGBTQ students could realize that we have needs too and that we are just as queer too.

Lorelai talked about the need for continued conversation around non-monosexual

identities and that it is not enough to just acknowledge that non-monosexuals exist. Lorelai

said,

> I think it needs to be more than just, "bisexuals exist." It's also cool if we start talking about what I was talking about with my friend, "um, can you have preferences?" The deep meaning of the bisexual community, so it's not like a random, "oh wait…" You actually get to find out more and it makes a real depth, like you don't just question,

"oh, is this an identity?" You know something about it and you feel comfortable talking about it. I think that's what everyone needs to do. (Lorelai)

Klavi also talked about the importance of building inclusive programs that target non-monosexual identities. She was also the only student who referenced the higher rate of health issues and abuse. She said,

> Like for example during some pride parades that there are unique programs targeted specifically towards bisexuals and non-monosexuals, but those are mostly directed towards, what I see from those is that there is the recognition that bisexuals inherently higher percentage of not good things happen to them. Like they have a higher medical problems, higher instance of abuse, whatever, whatever. It's directed towards that kind of emotional support and directed towards that sense of community within. (Klavi)

One area that students struggled with is a general lack of information and education about non-monosexuality. Students made reference to not finding specific information on non-monosexuality other than online. Henry talked about this as an area that could have a big impact for him, both finding more information about non-monosexual identities and being able to share more about his identity in order to help educate others:

> I think an access to more knowledge and information about those topics. I feel like it's very difficult to find most information. It's usually more so in literature and not something that's readily presentable and something that's easily able to talk about. Most of the opportunities I've had to share my sexuality have been more so in a scholarly environment and I feel like if it was more so a casual environment it'd be a lot easier to talk about. It'd be a lot easier to have people have an already kind of mental projection of what exactly bisexuality within the GLBT spectrum encompasses. I feel like that in general is just the difficulties I've had was just not, was just with a global lack of information about what the B in GLBT encompasses.

Some students talked specifically about being able to educate others on their non-monosexual identities. Two students, Waters and Henry, talked about how important the speaker's bureau program is to educating others about non-monosexual identities. The

speaker's bureau program trains students to go into classrooms, student organizations,

departments, units and others areas on campus to talk about their identities and answer any

questions people may have about their lives or experiences as LGBTQ identified people.

Waters had this to say about the program and her involvement in the panels:

> LGBT panels have been the most resourceful because I think that, and I've said this before, education is helpful in presenting that maybe aren't widely presented or presenting personal opinions that people otherwise wouldn't have access to. So standing in front of people, or sitting in front of people and stating like here is where I stand, and here is what I believe, and here is who I am as a bisexual person. I think it's helpful because they gain a perspective of hey, well bisexual isn't just something I've heard about now, and it's not just something I may or may not personally identify with myself. It's something I'm actually watching and I can learn from that, or not learn from that, depending on what they choose to do. But, so yeah, that's been pretty beneficial for me personally. (Waters)

Henry also talked about being involved in the speaker's bureau program and how he

felt that made a big difference in terms of educating others on stereotypes in the LGBTQ

community.

> I personally really liked the "Guess Who's Gay" Panel. That was a panel where there was panel members who were unidentified and you had to ask questions to try to reveal their identity. Although I identified within the bisexual GLBT during these panels, it also allowed an open forum to kind of share my identity as time permitted. It was also really interesting to see how complete strangers would identify me with whatever questions they liked asking and seeing whether they thought I was, what area of the GLBT they thought I was, whether they thought I was gay, or they thought I was bisexual or whether I was straight. (Henry)

Some students talked about how frustrating it is to have others only focus on gay and

lesbian programming. Bem talked about how she felt frustrated that non-monosexual

identities are only talked about around Celebrate Bisexuality Day in September and Drew

talked about how they feel like we should have spaces to talk about non-monosexual identities

beyond just bisexual. Klavi was the only one who talked about the health disparities that

disproportionately impact non-monosexual people and how that makes having a visible non-

monosexual community even more important.

There had been one non-monosexual speaker, Robyn Ochs, who came to campus. Six

of the 10 students referenced going to hear Robyn Ochs speak. All of the students who saw

her said it was the first time that they had heard a non-monosexual speaker in person and all

of them had talked about what a difference that made for them. One student, Dianna, talked

about how she discovered her own identity after hearing Robyn Ochs speak. Here is what the

students had to say about hearing a non-monosexual speaker like Robyn Ochs:

> Yeah anything that includes like a program or service towards non-monosexual
> identities would be great because the only program that I've experienced was the
> Robyn Ochs workshop a couple of months ago. And it was really great but as a non-
> monosexual I already knew those things, but it was still really awesome to watch
> people learn about bisexuality and the Kinsey scale. (Drew)

Drew focused on how it was important to have a speaker like Robyn on Campus, she

felt like it was aimed at educating others instead of helping her learn more as a non-

monosexual person. Bem echoed those sentiments,

> For the most support and understanding, I would say when Robyn Ochs came to
> speak. It was really nice to have her on campus for a 2nd time and I think she explains
> bisexuality really well, in a broad term that everyone can relate too. (Bem)

For Bem, it was less about broadening her understanding of her own identities, and

more about creating an inclusive and understanding environment for non-monosexual people.

Owen Banks focused more on how powerful it was for her to see a visual representation of the

number of non-monosexual people there were in the room:

> It definitely helped with me realizing that there's more people out there than I
> previously thought cause she had everyone mix papers, trade papers or whatever and
> like stand out in a row, like a live Kinsey scale, you know? And the fact that it wasn't

like one side or the other, I was like, "oh, that's really great!" I was able to see that there was a lot more people around then I thought, which was…I really enjoyed her coming and she herself identifies as bisexual and I was able to like relate to her story a lot, which was awesome. So yeah that was a really good thing that happened and I'm really glad I went. (Owen Banks)

For Owen Banks, the educational moment was about creating a sense of community and seeing that she had more non-monosexual people around her than she previously thought. For Henry, the program itself was an educational tool that helped him to understand more about his own identities.

Yeah. She was an amazing resource. I really enjoyed her whole; I don't want to say performance, her whole lecture about fluid identities and what that means. Just having someone like that share their experiences, being a spokesperson who really helped personally. That was one of the few experiences that really strengthened my understanding of my identity. (Henry)

Lorelai felt that it was both an educational tool for others to learn more about non-monosexual community and for non-monosexuals to come together as community.

I think everyone should be forced to listen to Robyn Ochs. (Laughter) Is that appropriate? No, I just think there should be more people like Robyn Ochs coming to speak, I guess. And not just the GLBT Resource hosting it, but like, make sure the LGBT [LGBTQ Student Organization] and [LGBTQ QPOC Student Organization] host it too. Making sure not just on bisexual awareness, but on other times, like hey there are bisexuals in the community, let's support that and just have a kind of meeting talking about Robyn Ochs or other specific bisexual people in the community and making sure people are very aware that this is a real identity, a real way you can feel and question. (Lorelai)

Many spoke about the educational aspect of Robyn's program, but a couple talked about how it personally impacted them. Bem and Henry specifically talked about how it helped them to understand more about how they identify as non-monosexual. Dianna is the only student who talked about how they came out to themselves during Robyn's program:

> Yeah, the lecture by Robyn, I think, I mean they were helpful with me, you know, realizing my sexuality, but like, I don't know, I think more like lectures and stuff like that, I guess maybe more just like activities focusing on it, it kind of leads to more that's out there, the more inclusive it is, the more welcoming it is for people. (Dianna)

Dianna had mentioned earlier in her interview that she came out while attending Robyn Ochs program. For her, she was given a space to really think about her behaviors and attractions and actually plot them out on a scale and she realized at that point that she could no longer solely identify herself as 100% heterosexual. It is important to note that students found this program powerful, not just because Robyn Ochs is a powerful speaker, but because students identified and connected with her. It was also powerful for them because it is one of the only times they had validation of their identities and a space that allowed them to see that there were others out there and they were not alone.

Mentorship

Two of the 10 students talked about the importance of mentorship for non-monosexual students. One of the two, Daenery mentioned that she was participating in the LGBTQ mentorship program that was housed in the LGBTQ Resource Center on campus. During the first interview with Daenery, she talked about being excited to meet her mentor for the first time. At our second interview, she had met with her mentor and was talking about that experience. When asked if she found the mentorship program beneficial to her, she said,

> It kind of validates what I am going through because I feel, I have never, ever, ever, even in high school or middle school, never sought out LGBT [LGBTQ Student Organization] community and so I feel like you get thoughts in your head, like "well you're not really bisexual because you would have pursued this…", or something like that. So it just kind of validates, like, that I'm not making this up (laughter). So, yeah, that's, out of anything that I've gotten out of our mentorship, it that validation. (Daenery)

She also talked about how she saw a peer mentorship program as being beneficial for LGBTQ

and specifically non-monosexual students. She said,

> I think it would really cool to have a program that gets juniors and seniors in the LGBTQ+ community to like have a, orchestrate a program where like you reach out to the freshman. Cause we had a…example, good example, k so I was a part of GUIDE, which is a freshman mentorship organization. So you have upperclassmen who are paired with freshman and for a while year and you kind of just like mentor them. And, I experienced that both as a freshman and as a mentor and I think a program like that would be really cool to have because it just fosters that community and you can have discussion groups of different things and also you get to show them like why [institution] is awesome. (Daenery)

Waters also talked about how she would like to see a non-monosexual mentorship

program. She expressed concern about not having professional role models that she could

look to in order to learn about what is and is not acceptable as an LGBTQ person in the

professional world. She said,

> A queer identified, a self-identified queer professor, but I think that, or professional, but I feel like they should be more open and more forthcoming with their journeys and their opinions and the experiences that they have gone through. Because specifically for me, I want to enter the professional community and I have yet to meet someone within my professional community who actually identifies as queer. So, it's difficult for me to navigate like my future, without having spoken to somebody who's had at least a common thread of my journey…I think that would be helpful because I would like help, and I would like somebody to tell me that it's okay to come out, or at what level of professionalism is it okay to come out and what level is it okay to be out at your office, or out to your clients, or out to people you come in contact with on a professional basis, because, I don't know. I don't know at what point is it okay or not okay, or unprofessional or professional to do so, so and every field is different. (Waters)

Daenery and Waters were both active in the mentorship program that was run through

the LGBTQ Resource Center on campus. However, they both were fairly new to the program

and instead of focusing on what they felt was currently valuable for them in their mentoring

relationship, they talked more about what they felt would be valuable in terms of non-

monosexual specific mentorship. Daenery focused more on a peer mentoring model and how mentorship was appealing to her as non-monosexual because it offered her a sense of validation for her identity as non-monosexual. She also felt that it offered her community and a sense that she was not alone as someone who identifies as non-monosexual. Waters focused more on professional mentorship and how she really wanted to hear from someone who was older and in the professional world in order to know what it is like for LGBTQ people and how she could or should navigate the professional world as someone who is LGBTQ identified.

The difference in focus between the two mentorship models made sense given what Daenery talked the most about versus Waters. Daenery was searching for validation and had a need to have her identity understood and accepted by others. She also had a great experience with peer mentorship as a freshman and sophomore and she wanted to find a way to apply that to others in a way that was accepting of LGBTQ identities. Waters had previously had older mentors in other capacities and she had made strong connections with older mentors so she sought out those types of relationships and was looking for that as a new freshman who had just transitioned to college for her first semester.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to find out about the specific needs and experiences of non-monosexual students on campus. One of the first research questions that I wanted to address was about the effects of not having direct access to a non-monosexual community on the identity development of non-monosexual students. I wanted to understand how students came to know themselves as non-monosexual. But, I also wanted to know how they were

able to develop as non-monosexual people particularly without having access to a physical and exclusively non-monosexual community.

In order to gain a better understanding about student's development as non-monosexual, I wanted to find out more about their experiences with finding support and community. I also wanted to find out about their experiences coming out and coming into their identities as non-monosexual, I asked some direct questions about how they found information about non-monosexual identities and what identity labels they used in coming out to others. I also asked about their experiences with coming out as non-monosexual. A majority of the students in his study spoke at great length about their coming out stories and this provided some opportunity to find out more about their comfort with using non-monosexual labels with others, their support systems, and others level of education and understanding around non-monosexual identities.

Through this study, I found that coming out as non-monosexual was very difficult for the students due to a general lack of knowledge by others about non-monosexual identities. Students talked about a fear of coming out to others, not only around divulging that they were not heterosexual, but also a fear of not being understood or believed as non-monosexual. Some of the students talked about encountering a true lack of understanding about non-monosexual identities from most people they told. Most of the stories they talked about detailed a general lack of education and understanding from others around non-monosexual identities, which caused them to rely on stereotypes that persist about non-monosexual people. I also saw that many of the students were struggling with how to identify their sexual orientation or label themselves as non-monosexual.

Many of the participants spoke of their non-monosexuality having been seen by others as either a phase or something that was not real at all, which leads to the second part of this research question: How are students feeling supported and understood as non-monosexual when they experience constant messages from others about how their identities are not valid? When it comes to support and information access, I found that most non-monosexual students were relying on the internet and social media specifically to access community and to be understood and heard as non-monosexual people. For these students, coming out and finding their identities as non-monosexual was not an easy process since there was little information or understanding about their identities. Most of the students referenced that they did not have a community of non-monosexual people that they could connect with in order to find support, information, or resources. Many of these students got most of their information through online research or blogs like Tumblr.

Mircoaggressions came up consistently in the students' stories and seemed to have a significant impact on many of the students through erasure of their identities and constant questioning of the validity of their identities. Students talked about the toll that these mircoaggressions took on them, from a feeling of frustration around not having their identity seen or believed, all the way to causing students to question their own feelings and identities after being bombarded with constant erasure and questioning from others. From the students' perspectives, it was the biphobia, bierasure, and mircoaggressions that they experienced from within the LGBTQ community that had the biggest impact on them. This last point seemed to be the one that resonated the most for all 10 of the students who participated in the interviews. Even the students who had not had significant exposure to LGBTQ community had stories of

negativity they had experienced from LGBTQ community or had heard of stories of negative experiences other non-monosexual students experienced and that made them wary of interacting with LGBTQ community.

The students in this study spoke about not always feeling included in LGBTQ spaces when it comes to their non-monosexual identities. Two of the main research questions were focused on what programs and services the students felt they needed in order to feel supported and included as non-monosexual students. The student's individual responses spoke to the need for inclusive spaces and language, exclusive spaces for non-monosexual students, educational programming and outreach, and mentorship for non-monosexual students.

Many of the students detailed stories of feeling that their identities as non-monosexual were left out of the conversations. Students spoke about how when people in LGBTQ spaces would refer to the entire community, they often left out non-monosexual identities. The students talked about a real sense of sadness at the continual exclusion of their identities through language in LGBTQ spaces. Students also talked about the need for creating spaces that were exclusive to non-monosexual identified people. The students that spoke to this need, talked about creating support or discussion groups for non-monosexual identified people.

Another area of need that came up throughout the study was the need for educational programming on non-monosexual identities. Some of the participants talked about the importance of programs that are inclusive of and/or directed towards the non-monosexual community. They talked about the importance of acknowledging non-monosexual identities beyond just a dedicated day in September. They also referenced the need for conversations

outside of non-monosexual spaces that help to educate others on non-monosexual identities.

A couple of the students spoke about the power of non-monosexuals talking about their

identities and telling their own stories. They referenced being a part of the speaker's bureau

on their campus and how much of an impact they felt they were making in those spaces just

by sharing their stories.

Two students in this study also referenced the impact of having non-monosexual

identified mentors. The students talked about how there are not as many older LGBTQ

people that they know to be non-monosexual identified and how that would be a very

powerful experience for them to be able to interact with older non-monosexual identified

professionals. Another student spoke about a peer mentorship program for non-monosexual

students that would pair incoming freshmen with sophomore and above students.

Lastly, eight of the 10 students had referenced attending Robyn Ochs program,

"Beyond the Binaries." Even though a few of the participants had not been involved with the

LGBTQ Center or campus or the LGBTQ student organizations, they had all discussed

attending Robyn's program that specifically focuses on non-monosexual identities. All of the

students who attended Robyn's presentation spoke about how impactful it was for them.

Even those students, like Drew, who had done extensive reading and research on non-

monosexual identities talked about the power of attending a program that focused specifically

on non-monosexual identities. The students who attended Robyn's program talked about both

the power of speaking about non-monosexual identities and the feeling of being in a space

that they knew was filled with other non-monosexual identified people. These students

finally felt that there was a non-monosexual community around them that they had no idea

existed. This was a powerful moment for many of the students, and they suggested having more events like Robyn Ochs in order to continue the educational outreach as well as the community building.

Through this study, I wanted to find out more about the experiences and needs of non-monosexual students. The participants in this study had a wide variety of perspectives and experiences as non-monosexual students. As a result of this reseach, I was able to see that non-monosexual students are finding community beyond the traditional walls of academic institutions. They are also coming out as non-monosexual to friends and family, but they are struggling somewhat with determining the best way to label and identify their non-monosexual identities. The participants experienced microaggressions based upon their identities, but they were most impactful when they came from within the LGBTQ community. Lastly, the participants expressed a desire for inclusive community and spaces where their identities are discussed and called out in the public sphere.

Chapter V: Discussion

Introduction

The interviews were conducted with non-monosexual identified students at a large

state, tier 1 research institution located in the southwest. The institution is over 100 years old

and has a rich history that is heavily infused and defined by traditions. The campus is

considered to be one of the most conservative in the nation with most students strongly

identifying as Christian. The campus has two LGBTQ student organizations that serve

undergraduate students as well as a resource center that serves LGBTQ students. There is

also an active safe zone training program that helps to educate members of the campus

community about how to better support LGBTQ people. Due to the nature of the

environment for LGBTQ students, there is an active LGBTQ community on campus and may

students participate in the student organizations and utilize the services of the LGBTQ center

on campus.

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of non-monosexual

students and to see if there are discrepancies between providing services to gay and lesbian

student versus providing services for non-monosexual identified students. I wanted to know

if the unique needs of bisexual, pansexual, and students with more fluid sexual identities in

our higher education systems are being addressed through current service and program

models that we have in place at our institutions. The review of current research of non-

monosexual identities reveals that when non-monosexual identities show up in the research,

they are typically collapsed back into either gay or lesbian categories instead of examined as a

separate community with different experiences and needs. I was also able to show through

the research that most campus programs and resources for LGBTQ students assume the needs of non-monosexual students are being met by their programming targeted at gay and lesbian students. The interviews that I conducted with non-monosexual identified student's shows that they have a unique set of needs that are not always addressed through our current models.

The student's voices serve to help us gain a better understanding of the experiences and the needs of non-monosexual students on a large research extensive institution that currently provides LGBTQ services to its students. The students who were interviewed here spoke to how they see LGBTQ resources and services on campus currently supporting non-monosexual students and suggested ways in which those services and resources are falling short? The students' voices illuminate the needs of non-monosexual students and serve as guideposts for developing more open and affirming LGBTQ programs, services, and centers for non-monosexual students.

As evidenced through the interviews in chapter four, I was able to understand the needs and experiences of non-monosexual students on campus. I was able to get a better sense of the current campus climate for non-monosexual identified students. While students acknowledged that they did not have an active non-monosexual community on campus, they were actively seeking non-monosexual people out online. Many students referenced that they felt it would be beneficial to have more active non-monosexual community or support networks on campus as well and it did seem to have a negative impact on their development as non-monosexual identified people. They also articulated that they feel supported as LGBTQ by current resources and programs, but that they do not always feel acknowledged, validated, or understood as non-monosexual students in those spaces.

In this chapter, I will discuss the results of my research, including my findings and how those relate to what others have found when working with this population. I will address the limits of my current research, and suggest ideas for future research based upon my findings. I will also address how this research has supported and run counter to both queer theory and student development theory. Finally, I will make some recommendations based on my finds to help practitioners in the field when working with non-monosexual populations in higher education.

Discussion

  Identity development and the politics of naming. The identities labels that the student participants used was a source of constant challenge both internally and externally. Six of the 10 participants labeled themselves as bisexual, yet all of them referenced that they did not find this label ideal when it came to describing their attractions. Several of the students talked about using bisexual as a label because pansexuality is not understood by others and they did not want to have to explain their identity and what it means every time they come out. Some of the students talked about how coming out as bisexual was more of a political statement since they perceived there to be more of a community around bisexuality. One student, Drew, also talked about how it was important to them to come out as bisexual because of the biphobia that exists in society and they wanted to help to combat that.

  One of the issues that became clear to me through this research is that non-monosexual students do not always feel they are seen by others as having the autonomy to make a determination for themselves what identity and label makes sense for them. Almost every student in this research referenced how they chose a label based upon the values,

feelings, and opinions of others. Some to the students displayed this behavior by labeling themselves as bisexual instead of pansexual because they did not like having to explain themselves continually to others While students felt that they had to educate people constantly about bisexual identities, they felt that for the most part people understood bisexual as an identity label, unlike pansexual.

Other students chose their identity label in order to access what they perceived as a more organized community. For these students, they saw pansexual as more inclusive of the spectrum of gender identities and expressions. However, these student choose to use the bisexual label over what they saw as the more inclusive pansexual label, because the felt that bisexuality had more people that understood it as a label and identified as part of the bisexual community. This disconnect between how students feel about their own sexuality and how they choose to identify their sexual orientation is something that other researchers have seen in their research on bisexual identity development. Unlike other Gay and Lesbian identity models, bisexual identity models allow for a space of constant questioning of one's identity that is known as either questioning identity or identity maintenance. (Bradford 2004; Brown, 2002; Knous 2005).

Students continually referenced finding information about their non-monosexual identities through online research. Some of the students talked about using search engines, such as Google in order to find out more information about their sexuality. Many of the students also referenced finding out about their identities through online blogging sites such as Tumblr. The continual reference by most of the participants involved in this research to Tumblr was an unforeseen finding in this research. Not having direct experience with and

understanding of Tumblr, I had not factored in how much students had relied on Tumblr as a method of research for finding out more about their identities online. It was not surprising that students would rely on blogs for community, but it was an unexpected finding that students were primarily using Tumblr in order to find information about their identities. Tumblr is a blogging application and blogs are typically self-published personal feelings, thoughts, or musings about the world. Blogs are rarely based upon research and rely on personal narrative and opinions about the world. Most of the students referenced Tumblr in particular as the only place where they are able to directly connect with other non-monosexual people and access non-monosexual community.

One significant finding involving identity development relates to students continual questioning of their identity. Three of the students discussed actively questioning their identities as non-monosexual. All three students talked about how they have thought about their identities many times, but once they became involved in this research they began to think more critically about their identities and what that means. One student, Elizabeth determined after the first interview that she felt like she was not non-monosexual and that she was quite possibly solely attracted to women. She stated that while she could find men attractive, she determined that she was not physically attracted to men. While others talked about questioning their identities, she was the only one that determined that she may not be non-monosexual like she first thought.

Klavi talked about how an all-night study session and lack of sleep brought on some anxiety about her identity. She was also dating a male identified person and she was nervous about the possibility of having a sexual relationship with him. She started to wonder if this

was due to anxiety about having a physical relationship with him specifically, or if that meant she was really just supposed to be with women. She did state something very profound while describing her thought process, "…It's very not pleasant having that kind of anxiety. It perpetuates itself into parts of your life where you would like for it not to be." When asked if she felt this was brought on partly due to being involved in this research and she said that she did. What was the most interesting about this finding in particular is that non-monosexual students discussed facing so many challenges to their identities from others and many discussed how they also started to challenge and question their own identities which we see reflected in this research.

Lorelai also spoke to this idea of questioning her identity. However, for Lorelai, this questioning was more about semantics than about challenging her identity based on attraction. She also stated that this questioning was brought about by participating in this research and having a good friend also participating in the research as well. She was thinking more about her choice to identify as pansexual. She felt that since pansexual is typically defined as being attracted to all gender identities that maybe she could not identify as pansexual given that she had specific types of gender identities and expressions that she was attracted to. She ultimately determined with help from her friend that she has the ability to be attracted to all gender identities, but she has a preference for a specific gender expression and that is still considered pansexual.

Biphobia, bi-negativity, bierasure and microaggressions. Most of the negative experiences that students discussed related to their identities were described by the students themselves as a general lack of education and understanding about non-monosexual identities.

However, they certainly encountered out and out biphobia, bi-negativity, and bierasure as well. Students talked in great detail about how stereotypes and misinformation about non-monosexual identities caused students to feel as if they would not be understood or accepted and often times led students to not want to talk about their identities at all. The students referenced feeling that their identities were not valid and that they were often assumed to be hypersexual and incapable of maintaining monogamous relationships. Waters talked about the pain of having many of the bisexual stereotypes brought up and used against her by others. She had people tell her that her identity was not valid, that she was not capable of being monogamous as a bisexual person, and that she was confused. Drew also talked about how they had experienced this type of biphobia directly from the LGBTQ community. When I asked them to elaborate on this, they hesitated and said that they did not feel comfortable talking about it and wanted to change the subject. They not only seemed to struggle with the pain that they felt due to this biphobia they experience, but it also seemed that they did not feel safe calling out their peers publically for the biphobia and bi-negitivity that they felt in LGBTQ spaces.

Bierasure was a continual theme that emerged throughout the research. Daenery, Bem, Drew, Owen Banks, Lorelai and Klavi talked about the bierasure that they experienced from people who told them that they do not believe that bisexuality exists. Henry also experienced this with his aunt, who told him that she thought he was just gay and not ready to fully admit it.

One source of pain related to bierasure that participants talked about was having LGBTQ community continually leave out any mention of non-monosexual identities.

Daenery, Drew, and Lorelai all gave direct examples of how non-monosexual identities were not discussed or sometimes not even mentioned when people refer to services, programs and such as "gay and lesbian." Many of the students talked about how this contributes to a feeling that they are not welcome in that space and that their identities are not believed to be valid or worth talking about.

Henry spoke specifically to microaggressions when he was addressing the incident that occurred in the LGBT Center, where other students were making jokes about the term pansexual. He said, "So it didn't really carry much weight, but I imagine that after a while, hearing stuff like that multiple times, it can add up." While acknowledging that he could brush off this particular incident, he knows that over time these incidents have a direct impact on non-monosexual people. Lorelai talked more in depth about the impact of experiencing bi-erasure and mircoaggressions on a frequent basis. She said something I found particularly poignant, "But also, like, it's hard to deal with, like cause you get asked so much, are you really straight, like you start to question yourself." This was also referenced earlier by Klavi when she was having a late night internal dialogue about her identity. It seems the constant questioning of identity from the outside ends up getting internalized by students and leads them to question their identities on a consistent basis.

One of the most significant findings is the need for education and understanding when it comes to non-monosexual identities. All of the students had a story about someone in their lives not understanding non-monsexual identities. This general lack of education led many to rely on their stereotypes about non-monosexual identities and to assume them to be true for all non-monosexuals. Students talked about being assumed to be unable to admit that they are

gay and lesbian, incapable of being monogamous, and hypersexual. Through the students stories we are able to see the impact of having to witness to this misinformation and lack of education about non-monosexual identities. Many of the students talked about deciding if they are going to educate others or not when they encounter people who are uneducated about non-monosexual identities. Most of the students acknowledged that what they experience from others is sometimes a lack of education and not blatant biphobia.

Another significant finding is that while the students talk about their experiences with biphobia and bi-negativity from heterosexual community, it is the biphobia and bi-negativity that they experience from within the LGBTQ community that caused them the most pain. The students talked about LGBTQ organizations and resources on campus being places where they felt welcome and accepted. At the same time, they referenced the pain they felt in LGBTQ spaces and organizations due to bierasure and a general lack of knowledge and lack of desire to learn about non-monosexual populations. Students discussed the impact of having LGBTQ people and organizations use the term "gay and lesbian" to refer to LGBTQ identities. They said that this made them feel like they no longer belonged in those spaces. They also talked about how non-monosexual identities where rarely discussed unless a non-monosexual student brought them up or it was a program related to "Celebrate Bisexuality Day," which happened at the end of September.

The students also discussed their hardships with trying to date in the LGBTQ community. Waters, Henry, and Lorelai discussed this phenomenon while trying to date gay and lesbian identified students. All three students talked about gay and lesbian students having shown clear signs of being attracted to them up until the point in which they came out

as non-monosexual. The gay and lesbian students seemed to believe stereotypes about non-

monosexual students, such as non-monosexual people are incapable of being monogamous

and they will inevitably leave you for someone of the opposite gender. Lorelai was the only

student who referenced confronting someone who was expressing interest up until the point in

which she came out as pansexual. The student told her that she would be too jealous if they

were to date, implying that Lorelai would not be capable of remaining in a monogamous

relationship with her. This seemed to be a point of deep pain for students who continually

deal with these stereotypes both within the LGBTQ community and in the heterosexual

community. However, the students stated across the board that they found the biphobia, bi-

negativity, and bierasure that they received in the LGBTQ community the hardest to deal with

and by far the most painful.

Limitations

As a LGBTQ professional in the field of student affairs who identifies as non-

monosexual and specifically bisexual and queer, this gave me a great advantage when it came

to developing trust with participants. However, I did feel that it inhibited students desire to

honestly open up about services or resources that are currently lacking due to their desire to

not intentionally hurt my feelings. I also tried to get as diverse a pool of participants as

possible. Four students self-identified as students of color, and one student self-identified as

transgender and specifically, non-binary femme. The biggest limitation to my research ended

up being that only one male identified participated. I attempted to recruit male participants in

multiple areas and through a variety of methods. I had LGBTQ student leaders who told me

they spoke to non-monosexual identified male students directly about participating in my

research study and the students were not interested. Many of the male students seemed to fear being out as non-monosexual, even in an anonymous study.

Implications for Research

As stated above, future research on non-monosexual student populations should look at the experiences and needs of male identified non-monosexual students specifically. Non-monosexual male voices are missing from this research and we know from the research that non-monosexual males encounter high rates of biphobia, bi-negativity, and bierasure within the LGBTQ community. It is important that the needs of this population be examined and addressed specifically.

Another area that needs further research would be the effects of the disconnection that exists within non-monosexual communities in relationship to identity politics. Specifically how some of the participants in the study (Drew, Waters, Bem, Owen Banks, and Daenery) referenced that they continually hear from non-bisexual people that the term bisexual automatically implies an exclusive attraction to men and women and does not allow for attraction along the spectrum of gender identities. Some people state that the bisexual label is transphobic due to the idea that bi infers an attraction to two genders: male and female. Like many bisexual people, all the bisexual identified students in this research did not see their attractions as binary and only towards two genders. However, they did say that this was a consistent message that they have heard about bisexuality, which lead to many bisexual participants to qualify their identity. For example, many participants would say that they identify as bisexual, but they felt like pansexual was probably a better identity label for them.

The students in this research did not say that they felt that the use of the term bisexuality was transphobic. A few students did mention that they felt that the term bisexual did imply a binary gender system of just male and female. While these students acknowledged that they felt bisexuality reinforced the binary, they still chose to identify as bisexual due to bisexual being a more common and understood term. I also would suggest due to students discussion about pansexual versus bisexual identity labels, that they have been subjected to the infighting of bisexual and pansexual populations related to identity politics and the politics of naming. Non-monosexual students are already expressing that they are a disenfranchised group within an already marginalized population. The infighting within the non-monosexual communities seems to add to the difficulty of non-monosexual students to proudly claim an identity and community that makes the most sense to them based upon their attractions, behaviors, and desires.

Lastly, students talked about how they constantly encountered people who expressed a general lack of education and knowledge of non-monosexual populations. This constant barrage of misinformation did take its toll on the students, but it was hardest to take when it came from within the LGBTQ community. Future research needs to be done on the bias that exists in LGBTQ community when it comes to non-monosexual individuals. Conversely, there needs to be more research done on the impact of biphobia, bi-negativity, and bierasure directly from the LGBTQ community.

Implications for Theory

Bisexual identity development. Through a thorough review of the literature and the results of the research through this study, the bisexual identity models; Brown (2002),

Bradford (2004), and Knous (2005) that suggest an identity maintenance stage are somewhat accurate in their assumptions. The students that participated in this research continually question, resist, push up against, and embrace their non-monosexuality. They all showed times of questioning or challenging their identities and the boxes they have placed themselves into. However, there needs to be more research done on why these students are continually examining their identity. The implication based on previous theory related to bisexual identity development is that bisexual identified people are constantly encountering messages that bisexuality is not a valid identity. The constant challenge to the validity of non-monosexul identities serves to keep non-monosexual people in a constant state of questioning their identities.

Bradford (2004) suggests that bisexual identity development is a process of maintaining one's identity while having to navigate biphobia, bi-negativity, and bierasure as well as a lack of community and feelings of invisibility. Bradford added a fourth stage to her model: "transforming adversity." Bradford felt that there was a stage that bisexual identified people reach where they are able to tune out all the negativity about bisexual identities and proudly claim their identities through activism related to their identities; such as becoming leaders in the bisexual community (Bradford, 2004).

The current research suggests that it is very difficult for students to rise above the messages they are receiving about their non-monosexual identities. In terms of this research, I had three LGBTQ student leaders who participated in this study. All three talked about their struggles with maintaining their identities, not only in the face of the negative messages they hear about non-monosexual identities, but also due to the identity politics that exist around

bisexual and pansexual identities. Again, all students talked about their struggles with labeling their identity, but all but one student solidly identified as non-monosexual. Due to this, it became clear that the students were not questioning their identity based on non-monosexism they were experiencing from outside the community, but possibly due to the biphobia and bi-negativity they were experiencing from other non-monosexuals who tried to say that bisexuality can only be defined along the binary notions of male and female attraction exclusively.

This is where I believe research should look for more information about non-monosexual identify development. Students seem to be experiencing the splintering effects of these identity politics and without clear community to support them in the face of challenges from within the non-monosexual community about their identity labels, coupled with the always present biphobia, bierasure, and bi-negativity they feel more generally from the outside.

Queer Theory. Gunn and McAllister (2013) talk about using a queer theory as research methodology in research focused on higher education. The idea behind queer theory as a method in research is to examine systems and structures in terms of heteronormativity and power that may have a disproportionate impact on LGBTQ students. Gunn and McAllister (2013) focus on utilizing queer theory in order to gauge the impact of their environment and the experiences of LGBTQ students on their learning. While the current study did not look at if or how non-monosexual students are impacted academically, it did try to engage them around their experiences as non-monosexual within the classroom.

Instead of looking at the academic impact in terms of grades or persistence within the classroom, I chose to look at the impact on the students experience overall on campus utilizing the methodology of Gunn and McAllister (2013). I chose to look at the same question that they posit when looking at higher education research through the lens of queer theory: "How does the development of one's sexuality and sexual identity interplay with the experiences in the classroom and corridors of the university to facilitate or constrain learning, especially when that sexual identity is considered as 'non-normative' by others and self?" (Gunn & McAllister, 2013, p. 163).

While this study did not look at academic learning in the traditional classroom sense, it did look at the expanded learning that happens in, around and beyond the classroom. What this research has said about queer theory is that there is a direct impact on student learning and development for non-monosexual identified student. However, under the lens of queer theory, all LGBTQ identities are understood to be socially constructed, unstable categories that are at the core more fluid and flexible. While this may seem to be beneficial to non-monosexual identifies, this actually serves to erase the needs and experiences of non-monosexual identified people, once again collapsing non-monosexual identities into other, more prominent identities, such as Gay and Lesbian. This continual erasing of non-monosexual identities further marginalizes non-monosexual people and prevents the formation of community for non-monosexual people. Also, it does not allow for a space within LGBTQ community to examine the impact of biphobia, bi-negativity, and bierasure by LGBTQ people. I would recommend a two pronged methodological approach similar to

Abes (2008) where non-monosexual identities are looked at in opposition to heteronormativity as well as how they both affirm and challenge lesbian and gay identities.

Implications for Practice

Before beginning the interview process, I knew that students might struggle with being able to speak directly to their needs as non-monosexual students. Some of them may just be coming into their identities and may not know what they need as this point in their identity process. What I had not anticipated is how the students across the board had a hard time being able to address their needs as non-monosexual students. It is not that they did not have needs, since they could clearly articulate experiences and impacts they have had based upon their identities as non-monosexual. That being said, a few students were able to discuss their needs as non-monosexual students.

Non-monosexual support groups. Three of the 10 students talked about the importance of supportive spaces for non-monosexual students on campus. Each student had a slightly different idea of what a non-monosexual supportive space would look like, but they all seemed to agree that there needs to be some type of support group for non-monosexual students. While other students did not mention this specifically, they talked about experiences that they had on campus as non-monosexual students and the lack of a non-monosexual community. It seems that non-monosexual students would benefit from having a space where non-monosexual identities are affirmed and understood. Particularly given the negative experiences that many students had while accessing LGBTQ organizations on campus.

Inclusive language. The students talked about how the language that was used or sometimes not used to refer to LGBTQ community had a direct impact on them. Three of the

students spoke at length about language and the impact of excluding non-monosexual identities. Students discussed how they had heard others use the phrase "gay and lesbian" to refer to the entire LGBTQ community and how that had made them feel unwelcome in those spaces.

They also talked about how language was used to glorify and raise up one identity over the other. For instance, Bem discussed the term "gold star" was being used to hold up certain lesbian identified women as being ideal queer women due to the fact that they had never had any physical encounters with males. She talked about how people should not only be aware of the language they use, but the assumptions that we make combined with the language that we use. For instance, assuming that someone is a lesbian because they are currently dating a women.

Educational programming for and about non-monosexuals. Six of the 10 students talked about programming that was inclusive of or aimed at non-monosexual populations. Many of the students referenced the importance of having programs that discussed non-monosexual identities and helped to educate others about non-monosexual identities. There is an important distinction that needs to be made here, and that is that there needs to be both programs that are designed to educate others about non-monosexual identities and programs that are aimed at non-monosexuals specifically.

This was brought home to me during the interview process in a powerful way. Almost every student that participated in the interview process referenced having attended the program on bisexuality that was sponsored by the GLBT resource center and lead by the national bisexual speaker and educator, Robyn Ochs (see Appendix B for more information

on Robyn Ochs). There were several students who participated in the study who had not been involved at all in the GLBT resource center or the LGBTQ student organizations, so the fact that they attended a program put on by the center on bisexuality is a powerful indicator of their desire to access non-monosexual information and community.

Several students discussed the importance of education on non-monosexual identities. They talked about having been involved in the speaker's bureau on campus and working to actively education the broader campus community on LGBTQ identities. They felt that this was a powerful education tool that allowed them the ability to educate others on their identities and non-monosexual identities in general.

Mentorship by and for non-monosexual students. Two of the students talked at length about the importance of non-monosexual mentors. This makes particular sense given the lack of a general non-monosexual community. One student approached it as a peer mentor program for incoming non-monosexual students and the other talked about a professional mentorship program involving adult mentors. In either case, a mentor for non-monosexual students would help students by providing role models and someone to show that fluid identities exist in spite of the persistent messaging that non-monosexual identities do not exist or are transitory identities that serve as temporary place markers for those who are not ready to claim their gay and lesbian identities.

Non-monosexual allies. Another recommendation based on conversations with the students is specifically developing non-monosexual allies. Some of the students talked about their experiences on campus with interacting with people who have been through the allies training. Some of the students discussed seeing the ally placecard and feeling relief that they

could be themselves in that space and it would not be an issue. Because of this, some students recommend the development of a non-monosexual specific ally training, in order to help educate people about these identities and help insure that all allies understand non-monosexual identities. Other students talked about the importance of education about non-monosexual identities. It would be worthwhile to look at combining these into a comprehensive training for allies that would concentrate on understanding non-monosexual identities. This would also be beneficial for the student leaders of each organization to attend so that they are working to make their organizations more inclusive for non-monosexual identified students.

Conclusions

Non-monosexual students' needs are not entirely being addressed through current programs, resources, and services on campus. While the students in this study were finding ways to make meaning about their identities and experiences, it was not always easy and sometimes it meant having to navigate through significant biphobia, bi-negativity and bi-erasure. This meant that while students were able to find spaces that were affirming to their identities as non-monosexual, they still had to learn to navigate all of the mirco-aggressions and biphobia that exists both within and outside of the LGBTQ community.

What this research shows is that LGBTQ centers need to be more attuned to the needs of non-monosexual populations. They need to have information online that is tailored to non-monosexual populations. They need to have programs that are aimed at both educating others about non-monosexual populations and programs that are meant specifically for non-monosexual populations. They also need to look at having some kind of social, discussion, or

support group that is designed specifically for non-monosexual populations. There also needs to be training for all student leaders and active allies that helps to educate not only on non-monosexual identities but also on how to be a better ally to non-monosexual populations. Lastly, there needs to be some sensitivity to the language used and assumptions that are made when talking about students in general and particularly non-monosexual students.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Project: Assessing the Needs of Non-Monosexual Students Related to Campus **LGBT Services**
Date:
Time:
Location:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:

Introduction and housekeeping:
Thank you for your participation. It is important to note that your participation is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may stop at any time or skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

Risk Statement:
You will be answering questions related to your personal experiences and based on your identities; it is possible that answering questions may cause you to become uncomfortable. Again, you may ask to skip questions or stop the process at any time.

Confidentiality of responses is guaranteed:
Information collected from research participants will only be viewed by Sidney Gardner and she will be the only one who can identify the responses of individual subjects. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy of information. Recorded files will be stored on a password protected computer and within a password protected folder that only the researcher, Sidney Gardner, will be able to access. Identifying demographic information such as names will be changed in order to maintain anonymity of participants. Participants sexual orientation, identity labels, race/ethnicity and gender identity/expression will be shared, but in ways that will not compromise participants anonymity.

Approximate length of interview: One Hour
If you have questions about this research, you can contact me:

Sidney Gardner, Researcher
St. Cloud State University
Email: smsi0701@stcloudstate.edu,
Phone: 612-860-1008
Or
Dr. Michael R. Mills (Faculty Advisor)
Associate Professor
Higher Education Administration
St. Cloud State University
Office: 320.308.3730E-mail: mrmills@stcloudstate.edu

Purpose of research:
The purpose of this dissertation is to gain a better understanding of both the experiences and the needs of non-monosexual students and the services that are or should be provided to better serve non-monosexual students in institutions of higher education. More specifically, it is the unique needs of bisexual, pansexual, and students with more fluid sexual identities in our higher education systems.

Interview One:
1. Describe your sexual orientation/gender identity and describe what that label or labels mean to you.
2. What is your current relationship status?
   a. What is the gender identity/sexual orientation of your current partner?
3. What does it mean to you and what labels (if any) do you use to identity yourself to people within the LGBT community?
4. What labels (if any) do you use to identity yourself in the heterosexual community
5. How open are you about your sexual orientation?
6. Have you had any experiences coming out to others?
   a. If so, can you tell me more about that process?

Interview Two:
1. Since our last interview, have you thought more about identity?
   a. Have you had any changes to the way that you identify or anything that you want to follow up on based on our previous conversations?
2. Can you tell me about times when you have experienced homophobia on campus? Can you tell me about times you have experienced biphobia on campus?
3. Are you active in the LGBT community on campus (LGBTQ Resource Center, LGBT student organizations, Ally organization)? If so, what has your experience been as a non-monosexual person in these organizations?
4. Are you out in other non-LGBT areas of campus? What have your experiences been within those spaces as non-monosexual?
5. Where do you find support and community on campus?
   a. Where do you find support related to your sexual orientation?
6. What programs, resources, and services have been the most relevant to you in terms of your sexual orientation?
7. What programs, resources, and services have been the least inclusive of your sexual orientation?
8. In your opinion, what can LGBTQ professionals and centers do in order to better serve non-monosexual students and make these services and spaces more inclusive of non-monosexual identities?

Appendix B: Information on Robyn Ochs

Robyn Ochs is the preeminent speaker, writer, and educator on bisexuality and sexual fluidity. She is one of the only speakers in the nation that is focused primarily on building understanding around non-monosexual identities. She is currently the editor of a newsletter for Bi women called, *Bi Women Quarterly* and the editor of two bisexual anthologies; *Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals around the World* and *RECOGNIZE: The Voices of Bisexual Men*.

In the case of this institution, Robyn presented her program, Beyond Binaries: Identity and Sexuality. The program focused on increasing people's awareness and understanding of non-monosexual identities. Robyn describes her program, *Beyond Binaries: Identity and Sexuality* as follows:

> This program explores the landscape of sexuality, and how we "map" sexual orientation. No two people are alike. Given that, how do we assign labels to our complicated and unique experiences? In this interactive workshop we will conduct an anonymous survey of those present, and look together at the data. Where do we fall on the sexuality continuum? How do we label? How old were we when we came to our identities and to our sexualities? In this fun and interactive program we explore different experiences of identity; the interplay between gender and sexuality; the complexities of attraction, and more.