ADJUSTMENT AND CHANGE AMONG BISEXUAL WOMEN: A LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS

by

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Abstract

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Higher levels of psychological distress have been found among representative samples of bisexual adults than among comparable samples of gay, lesbian, or heterosexual adults, yet significant variability in mental health outcomes has also been found between bisexual individuals. This longitudinal, mixed-methods study (Time 1 N=50, Time 2 N=40) aimed to examine why bisexual women may be at heightened risk for distress, and also to identify factors associated with psychological adjustment among this population. Theories that associate bisexuality with cognitive dissonance and identity diffusion were reviewed and critiqued, and an alternative model of identity integration for bisexuals, built around toleration of multiplicity and paradox within one's self and one's relationships with others, was proposed. It was hypothesized that the capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality would be predicted by personality organization, differentiation-relatedness, and attachment. Further, it was hypothesized that mental health outcomes among this population would be predicted by the following factors: 1) capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality, 2) experiences of internally- and externally-imposed pressure to "resolve" one's bisexuality into a binary model, 3) experiences of community support for and stigma against bisexuality, 4) experiences of emotional attachment and sexual excitement as integrated versus split in romantic relationships, and 5) need for cognitive closure. The interaction between capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality

and degree of change over time in sexual attractions, behaviors and/or self-identifications was also hypothesized to predict mental health outcomes. Multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to examine relations between hypothesized predictors and outcomes, controlling for socio-demographic covariates. Qualitative data were then revisited to elaborate on patterns identified through quantitative analyses, and to illuminate additional dynamics from the focused interviews. In particular, qualitative analyses were used to examine the ways in which change over time in sexual attractions and self-identifications were understood by participants and integrated into their self-concepts; to understand the extent to which different participants experienced emotional and erotic aspects of relationships as integrated or split with male versus female partners; and to consider the ways in which participants' attempts to negotiate these dynamics were shaped by internal, relational and environmental factors.

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Identity development can lead to a brutal act of integration – a way to demand from the self and others to cohere and to shape noncongruent experiences so they fit…How difficult it can be to draw the line between identity and the false self.

Noam, 1999, p. 61-62

I am asking us to believe that, at the same time, we can know and not know who we are, that we can say "I" even as our identity is multiple, unstable and emerging, as…is our sexuality.

Dimen, 2003, p. 80-81

INTRODUCTION

Higher levels of psychological distress have been found among representative samples of bisexual adults than among comparable samples of gay, lesbian, or heterosexual adults (e.g. Cochran & Mays, 2007; Koh & Ross, 2006). However, while these studies found elevated distress among bisexual samples as a group, they also revealed a wide range between bisexual individuals, with some demonstrating significant distress while others showed evidence of successful adjustment.

These findings suggest that a bisexual orientation may correlate with poor mental health outcomes for some, but not for all, and that a healthy bisexuality is indeed possible. Yet, although a number of studies have attempted to identify mitigating factors that might explain this variability, results remain relatively inconclusive. Therefore, we currently know very little about how bisexual individuals cope with the conflicts that may arise as a result of their complex sexual orientation. In addition, the majority of studies investigating the mental health of bisexuals have been cross-sectional rather than longitudinal, thus limiting their capacity to examine processes of change over time. Change, plasticity and "fluidity" with regard to

sexuality, and in particular with regard to women's sexuality, represents an area of relatively recent interest (e.g. Chivers et al, 2005; Diamond, 2008), yet remains poorly understood.

Given this gap in the literature, the present study utilizes a longitudinal design with the purpose of better understanding why bisexual women may be at heighted risk for distress, and of identifying factors that may contribute to psychological adjustment – defined here as the presence of positive self-concepts and affect states, and the capacity for positively-valenced relationships with others – among this population. It builds on an earlier, cross-sectional study conducted by Anna Levy-Warren in 2008, with significant involvement by this writer in all stages of research (e.g. designing interview guide, conducting interviews, writing qualitative coding manual, coding qualitative data). While that study provided valuable information about the sexualities and psychologies of a group of bisexual women at one moment in time, it was unable to examine change processes as these may relate to bisexual women's mental health. Accordingly, the longitudinal design of the present study allows processes of change over time in bisexual women's sexual attractions, behaviors and self-identifications to be examined, and its integration of quantitative and qualitative methods grants insights into the ways in which participants themselves understand and relate to these change processes.

The present study is structured around the following primary aims: 1) to identify factors that contribute to bisexual women's capacities to tolerate paradox and ambiguity with regard to their sexualities, including factors related to character structure, attachment and identity integration; 2) to identify factors that influence psychological conflict and distress versus adjustment among this population; and 3) to understand the ways in which multiplicity and change within the sexual self are negotiated both internally and in the context of social, familial and romantic relationships.

The aims and hypotheses of the present study are informed by the literature reviewed below, and by gaps that currently exist in the literature. Considered broadly, the study seeks to interrogate existing theories that cast bisexuality as a source of cognitive dissonance (e.g. Festinger, 1957) and as evidence of identity diffusion or borderline personality organization (e.g. Akhtar, 1984; Erikson, 1956), instead proposing an alternative model of identity integration that is built around the toleration of multiplicity and paradox within one's self and one's relationships with others (e.g. Bromberg, 2001; Diamond, 2008; Dimen, 2003; Levy-Warren, 2013; Pizer, 1998). The study also considers the role played by community support versus stigma, as well as by experiences of internally- and externally-imposed pressure to "resolve" one's bisexuality into a binary model (i.e. either heterosexuality or homosexuality).

The overarching models proposed by the present study are presented below (see Figures 1-2). These models, their corresponding hypotheses, and their rationales, will be illustrated in greater detail following the review of literature.

To provide an overview, I propose that mental health outcomes among bisexual women are influenced by factors at four different levels of analysis: intrapsychic, relational, societal, and change over time. On an intrapsychic level, I hypothesize that mental health outcomes will be influenced by the individual's capacity to tolerate paradox and ambiguity with respect to her bisexuality; by the degree to which she experiences an internal sense of pressure to "resolve" her bisexuality into a binary model; and by the degree to which she experiences a more global desire for cognitive closure and predictability. On a relational level, I hypothesize that mental health outcomes will be influenced by the extent to which the individual experiences an external sense of pressure from significant others in her life to "resolve" her bisexuality into a binary model; as well as by her capacity to experience emotional attachment and sexual excitement as integrated

with a single partner, rather than experiencing these two aspects of intimacy as split according to gender. On a societal level, I hypothesize that mental health outcomes will be influenced by the extent to which the individual experiences support for versus stigma against bisexuality from the communities to which she belongs. At the level of change, I hypothesize that change over time in sexual attractions, behaviors and self-identifications may be associated with elevated distress, at least in the short-term, but that such distress will be mitigated by the individual's capacity to tolerate paradox and ambiguity with respect to bisexuality.

Figure 1. *General Model.*

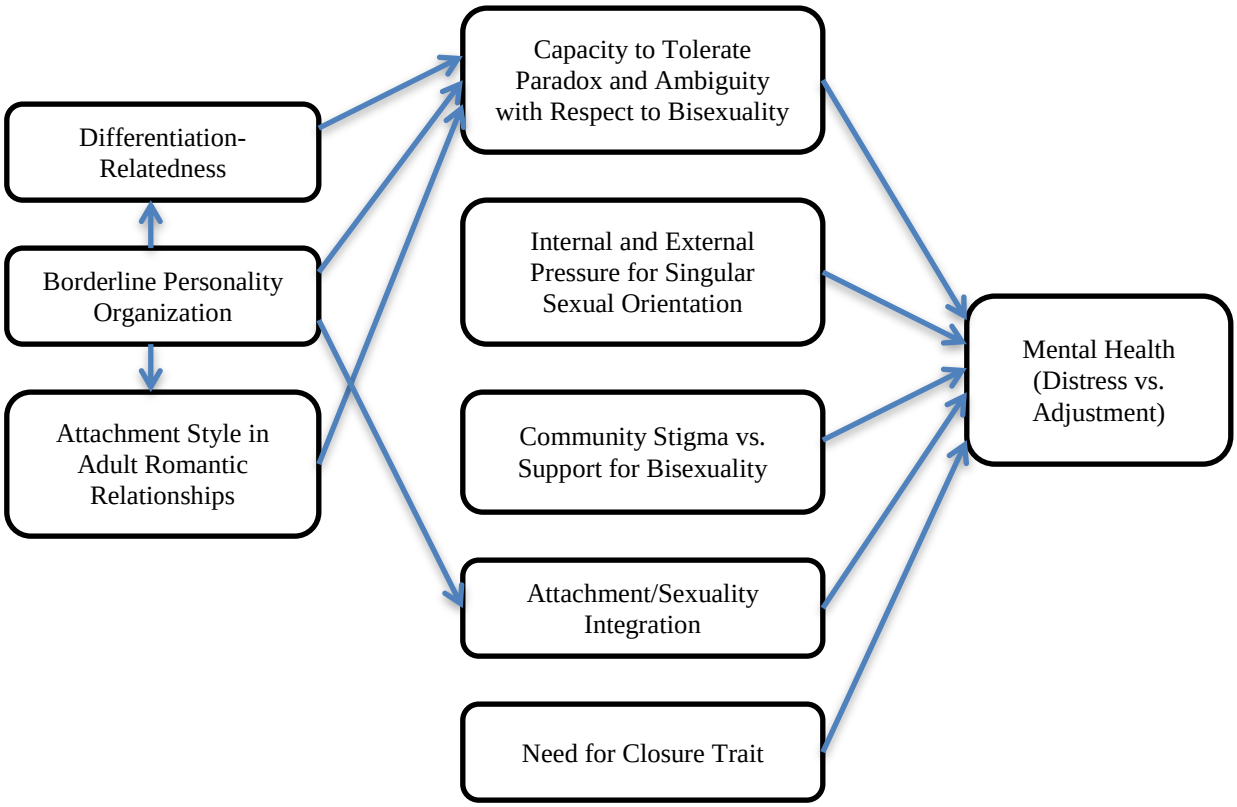
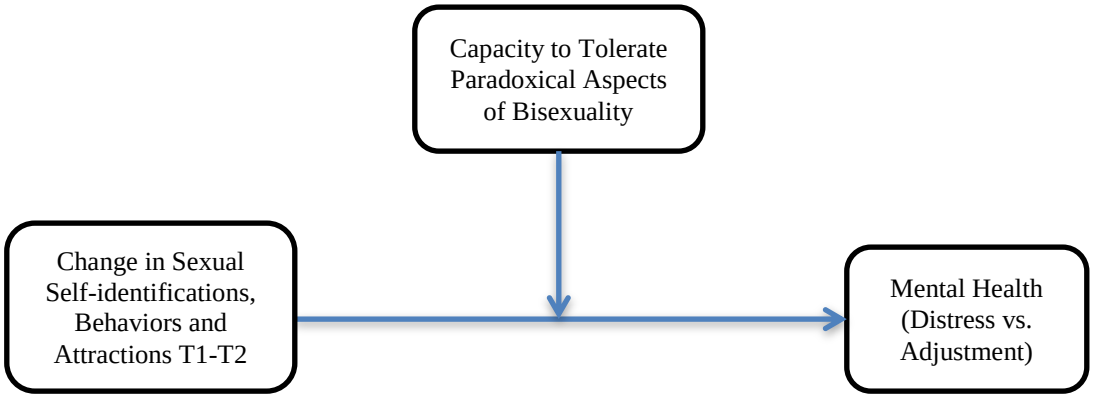


Figure 2. *Model of interaction between change in sexuality markers, capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality, and mental health (distress vs. adjustment).*



In addition to the models outlined above, I will argue that the dominant ways in which bisexuality has been defined and theorized reflects a larger cultural tendency to erase bisexual desire, and/or to suggest that the bisexual individual must "resolve" his/her sexuality into a binary model (i.e. either heterosexuality or homosexuality) in order to be considered "mature" or "authentic." Such cultural discourse, in turn, influences the ways in which bisexuality is experienced and negotiated by the individual, by those close to her, and by society more broadly.

In order to illustrate this argument, I will review literature on the ways in which bisexuality has been defined and conceptualized. I will also review literatures (including psychoanalytic theories of identity integration, as well as cognitive dissonance theory) that were not formulated specifically with bisexuality in mind, but that have since been used to understand sexual identity development. In addition to providing a historical and theoretical context for the research questions of this dissertation, my aim in reviewing this literature is also to demonstrate the ways in which the theories we espouse may in fact contribute to the distress experienced by a group of individuals – in this case, bisexuals – if these theories do not recognize their identities and narratives as legitimate.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND PRESENT RESEARCH

With the above aims in mind, and in order to situate the present study within the existing literature, this chapter will review current research and theory regarding the sexualities, identities, and mental health of bisexuals. First, a brief overview of the different ways in which bisexuality has been defined and conceptualized will be provided, with the aim both of providing context and of illustrating the ways in which even our definitions and means for assessing bisexuality can, in effect, render bisexual desire and identity invisible, and can exert what I have termed "pressure for closure." Second, research regarding bisexuality, "fluidity" and change over time will be presented (e.g. Chivers et al, 2005; Diamond, 2008), and possible implications for the ways in which bisexuality is conceptualized will be considered. Third, empirical research documenting mental health disparities between bisexual adults and their gay, lesbian, and heterosexual peers will be briefly reviewed.

Fourth, psychoanalytic theorizing with regard to bisexuality will be examined in historical perspective, beginning with Freud's original conceptualization of "psychic bisexuality" as universal (Freud 1905); moving next to modern Freudian concepts of identity diffusion/ integration and of identity and intimacy as these relate to models of sexual identity development (e.g. Akhtar, 1984; Erikson, 1956; Kernberg, 1977); and finally considering contemporary psychoanalytic theories of multiplicity as these offer an alternative framework for understanding the bisexual's experience of self (e.g. Bromberg, 2001; Dimen, 2003; Harris, 2009).

Fifth, drawing from social psychology, the contributions of cognitive dissonance theory (e.g. Festinger, 1957) will be placed in conversation with the literature on ambiguity tolerance (e.g. Moore & Norris, 2005; Pizer, 1998; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), which offer distinct

perspectives for considering how the bisexual individual might cope with the complexities posed by his/her attractions to both men and women. Sixth, the role of the broader social context will be considered from the perspective of minority stress theory (e.g. Meyer, 2003; 2007). Finally, the hypotheses under examination will be presented as these follow from the literature.

Definitions of "Bisexuality"

Scholarly and societal understandings of bisexuality are currently contested and in flux, and this dynamic is reflected by the variability with which the construct of bisexuality has been defined and measured in the psychological literature. Historically, bisexuality has been used to refer both to male and female gender identifications and to male and female object choice, often without distinguishing between the concepts of sexual orientation and gender. In fact, much canonical psychoanalytic theory collapses the two, assuming that a deviation from heterosexual object choice must also imply a deviation from identification with one's biological gender.

Underlying this assumption is an attempt to understand all relationships using a heterosexual model, so that each couple is seen as including both a masculine-identified and a feminine-identified partner. A number of contemporary psychoanalytic theorists have argued that using such gender polarities to define bisexuality essentially renders bisexual desire invisible (e.g. Layton, 2000) and represents a form of splitting (e.g. Dimen, 2003). While these theorists have attempted to decouple gender and sexual orientation from each other in psychoanalytic discourse (e.g. Chodorow, 1994; Butler, 1995; Layton, 2000; Dimen, 2003; Goldner, 2003; Harris, 2009), the lines between the two remain blurred at times, both in academic literature and in colloquial usage. Indeed, although the topic of gender identity is beyond the scope of this paper, this conflation of gender and object-choice is mentioned here because it provides one wide-spread example of the erasure of bisexual desire in certain discourses.

When used to refer specifically to object choice, as it is used in this study, bisexuality has been defined variously as a transitional phase en route to an exclusively homosexual orientation, as an experimental phase that will resolve into an exclusively heterosexual orientation, as a stable third orientation that will *not* resolve over time into either heterosexuality or homosexuality, and, more recently, as an expression of plasticity or fluidity within the sexual self, where "plasticity" and "fluidity" are defined as a capacity for ongoing change across the life-course in response to both internal and environmental influences (e.g. Diamond, 2008). To add a further layer of complexity, bisexuality has also been defined and measured with reference alternately to one's sexual attractions, sexual behaviors, or sexual self-identifications, or some combination of these three.

For the purposes of this paper, bisexuality is used to refer to attractions to both male and female love objects that have led to sexual activity with both sexes at some point in the individual's life, as well as to the sense of identity that emerges from these dual attractions. Within this frame, whether to understand bisexuality as a stable third sexual orientation or as an expression of plasticity within the sexual self – or both – remains a question to be examined. These two formulations, while similar on the surface, differ in that a view of bisexuality as a stable third sexual orientation implies that attractions to both sexes will remain constant over time, while a view of bisexuality as an expression of plasticity suggests that one's attractions and sexual self-concepts may change over the life-course. Unlike definitions of bisexuality as a transitional or experimental phase, a view of bisexuality as an expression of plasticity does not presume that such change processes are time-limited and have an inevitable, binary endpoint (i.e. an exclusively heterosexual or homosexual orientation), instead allowing for the possibility that they may remain shifting and unresolved. This formulation also leaves room for the fact that

bisexual desire is rarely "fifty-fifty," with equal attractions to both sexes, and that this balance may often vary both between bisexual individuals and over time for the same individual.

While one could argue that bisexuality is inherently plastic because the gender of object choice may shift over time, what remains to be understood is to what degree such shifts in gender of object choice reflect – and/or contribute to – shifts in an *internal experience* of one's sexual orientation, versus to what degree such shifts are congruent with a stable internal experience of oneself as oriented towards both sexes. The latter could be true, for example, for a bisexual individual who is consistently attracted to both men and women in similar proportions regardless of his/her current partner's gender. By contrast, the former could be true, for example, for a bisexual individual who moves between same-sex and opposite-sex relationships due to a shift in inner attractions, and/or who experiences a shift in inner attractions secondary to beginning a new relationship.

Bisexuality and Change Over Time

Although longitudinal research on bisexuality is currently limited, two studies in particular have documented change over time in attractions and sexual self-identification among bisexuals. In a recent ten-year longitudinal study of identity development among women (n=98) who identified at baseline as either lesbian, bisexual, or "unlabeled," 67% changed their self-identification at least once over the ten year period, and 36% changed multiple times (Diamond, 2008). Within this study, sexual attractions were found to be more stable over time than behaviors and self-identifications, which the author argues are more open to influence by environmental factors (Diamond, 2008). Interestingly, shifts in self-identification were often

found to follow shifts in behavior, with individuals changing the ways in which they described their sexualities in order to accommodate new relationships.

In an earlier study based on a survey of 800 gay, lesbian, heterosexual, and bisexual adults, Weinberg and colleagues (1994) found that a significant proportion of bisexual men (n=116) and women (n=90) experienced change over time with regard to sexual behavior (i.e. gender of sexual partners), romantic feelings for men versus women and, to a lesser extent, sexual feelings and attractions for men versus women. These changes were assessed retrospectively by asking participants to provide Kinsey ratings for themselves at present and three years ago. Looking back at the previous three years, approximately 60% of bisexual men and women reported changes in sexual behavior, and approximately 50% reported changes in sexual feelings. Changes in romantic feelings were more common among bisexual women (61.1%) than among bisexual men (43.2%). The distinction drawn in this study between "romantic" and "sexual" feelings, and the different patterns of change revealed for each, suggests that schemas for attachment and sexuality may sometimes operate independently.[1] The implications of this attachment/sexuality distinction as it relates to intimate relationships among bisexuals is explored below.

In addition to data regarding short-term change, Weinberg and colleagues also assessed whether or not individuals had ever experienced a "major change in sexual feelings as measured by the Kinsey scale" at any point in their lives. They found that such changes were most common among lesbians (66.3%), bisexual women (61.7%), and bisexual men (56.0%), followed by homosexual men (31.9%), heterosexual women (18.6%), and heterosexual men

[1] Indeed, at times such schemas may operate independently for all individuals regardless of their sexual orientation, although such a discussion is beyond the scope of this paper (e.g. see Diamond, 2003, 2004; and Diamond et al, 2007).

(18.6%). These data support current hypotheses that the sexuality of lesbian and bisexual women may be more plastic than that of gay and bisexual men (e.g. Diamond, 2008). It should be noted, however, that the differential influences of innate and social factors on such a trend can be difficult to disentangle (e.g. Chodorow, 1994), and that such findings could be attributed, at least in part, to response bias or social desirability affecting these groups in different ways.

Empirical Research on the Mental Health of Bisexuals

Within recent decades, empirical research has documented mental health disparities between heterosexual and homosexual individuals, with representative samples of gay and lesbian adults demonstrating higher levels of psychological distress than their heterosexual peers (e.g. Cochran & Mays, 2007; Koh & Ross, 2006). Such disparities have been attributed mainly to environmental factors such as stigma and discrimination, as well as to the internalization of these factors through self-stigma and internalized homophobia (e.g. Meyer et al, 2003).

Until recently, such studies have utilized a dichotomous model of sexuality in which participants are classified as either heterosexual or homosexual, and bisexual individuals have either been folded into gay/lesbian samples or have been dropped from analyses altogether. While such practices are understandable from the point of view of statistics, as the number of bisexuals within these studies has often been too small to be analyzed separately, one of the consequences has been a dearth of empirical research regarding the mental health of bisexuals as differentiated from other sexual orientation groups.

However, within the past decade, three large-scale epidemiological studies (Cochran & Mays, 2007; Jorm et al, 2002; Koh & Ross, 2006) have obtained sample sizes large enough (N=2272, 1304, and 4934 respectively) to consider bisexual adults as a separate population. Results of these studies indicate that bisexual adults experience levels of psychological distress

higher not only than those of their heterosexual peers, but also than those of their gay and lesbian peers. All three studies found strong main effects in which holding a bisexual orientation was found to correlate with negative mental health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, negative affect, suicidal ideation, and developing an eating disorder. Cochran and Mays also found that bisexuals were significantly more likely than homosexual or heterosexual individuals to develop health complaints such as migraines and ulcers, although these effects were mediated by psychological distress.

In addition to identifying elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation among bisexuals, Jorm and colleagues (2002) also found a higher prevalence of potential risk factors among bisexuals than among homosexuals or heterosexuals, specifically current adverse life events, childhood adversity, low social support and high social constraints. The elevated levels of psychological distress among bisexuals remained significant even after these potential risk factors were controlled for, however, suggesting that additional mechanisms above and beyond those measured must contribute to distress among this population.

While these studies found elevated levels of distress among bisexual samples as a group, however, they also revealed a wide range between bisexual individuals, with some demonstrating significant distress while others showed evidence of successful adjustment. These findings suggest that a bisexual orientation may correlate with poor mental health outcomes for some, but not for all, and that a healthy bisexuality is indeed possible. Yet, although a number of studies have attempted to identify mitigating factors that might explain this variability, results remain relatively inconclusive. Therefore, we currently know very little about how bisexual individuals cope with the conflicts that may arise as a result of their sexual orientation. It is with this gap in the literature in mind that I now turn to a consideration of theory and research regarding internal,

relational, and environmental factors that might influence the experience and mental health of bisexuals.

Freud on Bisexuality

In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (Freud, 1905), Freud describes bisexuality as "psychosexual hermaphroditism," and bisexuals as "amphigenic inverts," from the Greek "ambi-genetis" which means "born both ways." Both of these terms imply an analogy between the psychic and the biological, with bisexuality conceptualized as the mental equivalent of possessing both male and female genitalia. Fond, throughout his theorizing, of metaphors from biology, Freud is compelled by this analogy yet also complicates it, alluding to ways in which psychic bisexuality may be both more subtle and more universal than "somatic hermaphroditism" (Freud, 1905, p. 8).

Freud grapples, in these essays, with the convergences and distinctions between biological sex, gender, and object choice, sometimes conflating these and sometimes teasing them apart. By stating, for example, that a man who chooses a male love object "feels he is a woman in search of a man" (Freud, 1905, p. 10), he paves the way for the common tendency within psychoanalysis to construct same-sex relationships along a heterosexual model, and to assume that homosexual desire affects (and/or reflects) one's core gender identity. Elsewhere, he frames same-sex object-choice as essentially narcissistic, stating that men in same-sex relationships "take *themselves* as their sexual object" (Freud, 1905, p. 11).

Yet alongside a tendency to present same-sex object-choice as "primitive" (Freud, 1905, p. 10), he also makes the radical proposal that psychic bisexuality may be a universal phenomenon. In a lengthy footnote, in fact, he states that "psychoanalytic research…has found

that all human beings are capable of making a homosexual object-choice, and have in fact made one in their unconscious" (Freud, 1905, p. 11). He goes on to argue that,

> A choice of an object independently of its sex…is the original basis from which, as a result of restrictions in one direction or the other, both the normal and the inverted types develop. Thus from the point of view of psycho-analysis the exclusive sexual interest felt by men for women is also a problem that needs elucidating and is not a self-evident fact based upon an attraction that is ultimately chemical in nature. (Freud 1905, p. 12).

In other words, all humans are capable of bisexual desire at least in unconscious fantasy. Further, not only homosexuality but also heterosexuality is a "problem that needs elucidating," rather than purely a biological given.

A further way that Freud explores the phenomenon of bisexuality is by describing it as a combination of "pairs of opposites" within a single person. The "pairs of opposites" that he discusses include not only masculinity and femininity but also activity and passivity, and even sadism and masochism (Freud, 1905, p. 26). While the assumption that activity is a "masculine" quality and passivity is a "feminine" quality has been extensively critiqued, Freud's effort here to consider how an individual might integrate apparently "opposite" qualities into the self foreshadows much complex theorizing and debate that still surrounds this issue, both as it relates to identity in general and as it relates to bisexuals in particular.

Interestingly, Freud's ideas about the universality of bisexual identifications and desires, as these may become sublimated to varying degrees in adulthood, could be understood as resonant with certain contemporary theories that question binary notions of sexual orientation. If, as Freud argues, we are all born psychically bisexual, the idea that sexuality exists along a continuum, and even the idea that some of us may shift along this continuum at different moments in our lives, is an intuitive leap. This is not to discount the significant role played by biology in shaping sexual orientation – nor, as noted above, would Freud be one to discount

biology. However, Freud's theorizing lays a groundwork for considering that other forces may also be at play. These ideas will be discussed further below, and throughout the dissertation.

Neo-Freudians on Identity Diffusion, Identity Integration and Bisexuality

Identity Diffusion vs. Identity Integration

Within dominant cultural discourse, bisexuals are widely portrayed as perpetual adolescents, confused about who they are and what they want, unable or unwilling to choose or commit, wanting to "have it both ways." The assumptions that underlie these perceptions share much in common with certain theories within psychoanalysis, specifically Neo-Freudian theories concerned with the nature of identity integration and the prerequisites for intimacy within adult love relationships.

While not explicitly formulated with issues of sexuality in mind, the concepts of identity integration versus identity diffusion presented by the Neo-Freudians have been used to conceptualize bisexuality. Following Erikson, who positioned "bisexual diffusion" as a state to be overcome in achieving a mature and integrated sexual identity (Erikson, 1956, 1968), a number of Neo-Freudian theorists have understood bisexuality as a form of identity diffusion (e.g. Akhtar, 1984; Kernberg, 1977). Within these theories, bisexuals are seen as wandering an equivalent of the adolescent moratorium in search of a stable self. Arriving at a dichotomous sexual orientation is taken as essential for the anchoring of mature identifications, and also for the possibility of intimacy with partners of either gender. Thus, bisexuality is understood as a "transitional phase" that should resolve, in maturity, into an exclusively heterosexual or homosexual orientation, with any contradictory desires having been pruned or sublimated.

The twin concepts of identity diffusion and identity integration are used to describe the quality of internal representations both of the self and of others. In his seminal writings on

identity, Erikson defines identity diffusion as "the lack of an integrated and stable concept of total objects in relationship with the self," and identity integration as "both a persistent sameness within oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others" (Erikson, 1956, p. 225). Akhtar, in his influential paper on identity diffusion, argues that identity diffusion is defined by "the presence of contradictory character traits within the self" and "the continued active presence of contradictory identifications," and that identity integration is defined by "the capacity to remain the same amidst change and with the passage of time" (Akhtar, 1984, p. 1381). Kernberg, in his theorizing on identity as it relates to personality disorders, expands on Erikson's view to situate identity as an inherently object-related phenomenon. He describes the internal world as comprised of self- and object-representations that can be more or less consolidated or split-off, forming a continuum from identity integration to identity diffusion (Kernberg, 1977; 2006). Identity diffusion, as defined by these three theorists, is one of the central criteria currently used in the diagnosis of borderline personality disorder, whereas identity integration is seen as a marker of a higher-level personality organization.

Erikson, Akhtar, and Kernberg each discuss sexual orientation as one component to be considered in relation to identity integration. All three operate from an explicitly heterosexual framework, and specifically define a heterosexual orientation as psychologically "healthier" than a homosexual orientation. However, their theories are arguably even more critical of a bisexual orientation. In his formulation of the "identity versus identity diffusion" developmental stage, Erikson defines the opposite of "sexual identity" as "bisexual diffusion" (Erikson, 1956), describing bisexuality as a state of indecisiveness that must be resolved in order to move past a psychic adolescence. In Erikson's usage, bisexuality is used to refer both to gender identity and

to sexual orientation, or in other words to the desire to *be* both masculine and feminine and to the desire to *be with* both male and female partners. Therefore when Erikson refers to "bisexual diffusion," he is referring both to what he defines as a "diffuse" sense of gender identity and a "diffuse" sense of sexual orientation. (While the issue of gender identity lies beyond the scope of this paper, this dual usage of the term "bisexual" should be noted when interpreting his theory.)

Akhtar similarly conflates gender and sexual orientation, but defends this stance more explicitly, arguing that identity integration must include a "cohesive gender identity" which is "concordant with one's biological sex and shows harmony between core gender identity, gender role, and sexual partner orientation" (Akhtar, 1984, p. 1382-3). He states that identity diffusion is characterized by "weakness of gender identity," and defines male and female identifications as "contradictory" (Akhtar, 1984, p. 1382-3). While he does not discuss bisexuality directly, his emphasis on the importance of avoiding "contradiction" and of cultivating "the capacity to remain the same…with the passage of time," as well as his focus on congruence between biological sex, gender identity, and object choice, suggests that he would view bisexuals as suffering from identity diffusion.

Kernberg proposes a more complex and potentially less pathologizing view of bisexuality, suggesting that there is a bisexual core to all erotic relationships, and that this psychic bisexuality is essential to the ability of individuals of both genders to identify with and overcome their envy of one another (Kernberg, 1995; 1977). At the same time, he is very clear in stating that bisexual identifications and attractions must be sublimated within the context of a heterosexual relationship. In his paper "Boundaries and Structure in Love Relations," he defines the first two "preconditions for normal love relations" as follows:

> First, the capacity for broadening and deepening the experience of sexual intercourse and orgasm with the expanded sexual eroticism derived from the integration of aggression

> and bisexuality (sublimatory homosexual identification) into the heterosexual erotic relationship; and second, having developed an object relation in depth, which includes the general transmutation of pregenital strivings and conflicts in the form of tenderness, concern, and gratitude, and the capacity for mutual genital identification, coupled with the stability of the predominant sublimatory identification with (and yet leaving behind of) the parental figure of the same sex. (Kernberg, 1977, p. 83)

In this description, Kernberg simultaneously honors the role of bisexual identification and desire in a mature erotic life, and at the same time subtly implies that same-sex desire and identification is akin to the other "pregenital strivings" that must be "transmuted" for mature love to be possible.

Despite his explicitly heterosexual framing, it would be possible to read Kernberg's theory as applying equally to the sublimation of bisexual identifications and attractions within the context of a homosexual relationship. It is more difficult, however, to see Kernberg's formulation as describing the experiences of individuals who hold a bisexual orientation, and who have had relationships with both women and men.

One reason why it is so difficult to imagine a healthy bisexuality from within these theoretical frameworks is because of their emphasis on avoidance of "contradiction" (Akhtar, 1984) and their focus on the importance of "selfsameness" (Erikson, 1956). As long as theories define identification with and/or desire for both males and females as "contradictory," bisexuality will be seen as problematic. This is true despite the fact that much psychoanalytic theorizing has discussed the importance of tolerating complexity and ambivalence within the self, as for example tolerating the apparently "contradictory" emotions of love and hate towards the same object (e.g. Kernberg, 1977; Winnicott, 1965). Indeed, in many ways psychoanalysis has interrogated binaries and suggested that health lies in the capacity to transcend them. Such a critique of dualism with regard to gender and sexuality is relatively recent, however (e.g.

Chodorow, 1994; Dimen, 2003; Harris, 2009), and has yet to fully enter the clinical dialogue about what constitutes psychological health.

The idea of "selfsameness" is also fraught for individuals with dual attractions, as the sexual identities and desires of these individuals may often be characterized more by fluidity and change over time than by stability[2] (e.g. Diamond, 2008; Eliason & Schope, 2007; Hall & Pramaggiore, 1996; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor, 1994). Formulated by Jacobson as a sense of a "coherent self that has continuity and remains the same despite and in the midst of changes" (Jacobson, 1964), by Erikson as "a persistent sameness within oneself", and by Akhtar as "the capacity to remain the same amidst change and with the passage of time" (Akhtar, 1984), the idea of "selfsameness" inspires the question: what does it mean to "remain the same"? Words such as "sameness," "coherence," and "continuity" can be used interchangeably in discussions of identity, but they have slightly different valences. For example, "sameness" evokes a quality of stasis, while "continuity" evokes a quality of development, and invites the dimension of time into our considerations of identity. Thus a bisexual individual may experience a sense of "continuity" of self in the midst of changes in his/her sexual self-concept, but not necessarily of "sameness."

Erikson, who drew on psychoanalytic insights to illuminate questions about developmental processes across the life-course, very much considered identity to be a phenomenon that unfolded over time. He viewed the individual as engaged in a constant process of change and development, with new conflicts ascending in importance at different times of life, and with the individual's engagement with these conflicts ideally leading to newfound growth. However, there is a linear quality to Erikson's narrative about how identity is formed. In keeping

[2] In other words, the bisexual individual does not always desire men and women equally, nor does he/she necessarily maintain a stable ratio of desire for one gender versus the other over time.

with the modernist sensibilities of his day, Erikson writes about identity as something stable to be discovered and achieved. While it is an object of exploration and experimentation during the adolescent moratorium, Erikson argues that this period of change must close in order for the individual to proceed to the next developmental stage of intimacy versus isolation, and for mature love relationships to be possible (Erikson, 1956).

Although Erikson operates from a framework that defines heterosexuality as normative and homosexuality as pathological, as discussed above, this perspective could be understood at least in part as a product of the time in which Erikson was writing, when homosexuality was conceptualized as a disorder and was often theorized as evidence of personality pathology. In fact, aside from passages where he discusses homosexuality directly, it would be possible to read Erikson's writings on identity as quite concordant with a particular type of "coming out" narrative.

In such a narrative, an individual comes to a progressive realization of his/her authentic identity as gay, and then emerges into the larger social world embracing this identity. As homosexuality has increasingly been recognized by psychology as a valid sexual orientation, much theorizing about identity development among sexual minorities has centered around such understandings of the "coming out" process, suggesting a linear progression from questioning to recognizing to embracing to revealing (e.g. Domenici & Lesser, 1995; Eliason & Schope, 2007). Such narratives are built around a belief that there is an authentic sexual self to be discovered, and that once it is discovered it should remain relatively stable throughout life.

Bisexual identity development has been found to differ from such "coming out" narratives in significant ways, however, following a less linear narrative arc (e.g. Diamond, 2008; Eliason & Shope, 2007; Hall & Pramaggiore, 1996; Weinberg, Williams & Pryor, 1994).

Instead of describing a gradual coming-into-focus of a picture that, once sharply resolved, remains fixed, these narratives have more of the quality of a double-exposure or a hologram, remaining multiple and shifting. This fluid quality could be described as an expression of identity diffusion, or as a form of adolescent exploration that should resolve into a fixed heterosexual orientation. However, another process may be at work, namely the ways in which identity may be shaped and re-shaped in different relational contexts throughout the life-course. As this question is crucial to the issues posed by the present study with respect to change over time, I will now discuss the ways in which the interplay between identity and intimacy has been conceptualized by the Neo-Freudians, and by their critics.

Identity, Intimacy, and Object Relations

Erikson understands identity integration to be a precondition for intimacy. In other words, he defines intimacy as a relationship between two people who have both achieved fixed, stable identities. Without such identity integration, Erikson warns that much harm can be done to both partners. He writes:

> True 'engagement' with others is the result and the test of firm self-delineation… For where an assured sense of identity is missing even friendships and affairs become desperate attempts at delineating the fuzzy outlines of identity by mutual narcissistic mirroring: to fall in love then often means to fall into one's mirror image, hurting oneself and damaging the mirror. (Erikson, 1956, p.79)

In this striking passage, Erikson warns of relying on relationships to make sense of the self. He describes such openness to being shaped by one's friends and partners as a form of narcissism, revealing a sense of emptiness at its core.

Erikson's view is very resonant when used to describe forms of intimacy that are entered into because of a desire that they will fill a perceived lack in the self. However, what is left out of such a view is the ways in which individuals whose overall identities are far from "fuzzy" may

nevertheless be influenced deeply, at the level of the self, both by the people with whom they fall in love and, more broadly, by the people by whom they are surrounded in their daily lives. Erikson recognized and was among the first psychologists to draw attention to the vital ways in which the individual is "invited to become himself" (Erikson, 1956) within a particular social context, and is shaped intimately by this context. However, the picture he paints of love relationships is somewhat different, as he conceives of romantic intimacy as a state one can only enter once one's sense of self has been fully formed.

An exception to this dynamic is described in Erikson's controversial paper "Woman and the Inner Space" (Erikson, 1968). In this paper he argues, among other things, that identity may *not* precede intimacy where women are concerned, but that instead a woman's moratorium may extend until she takes her place as a wife and mother, at which point her identity can settle into a more stable shape to complement that of her partner. On a fundamental level, this argument is objectionable because of the ways in which it situates women as secondary, even in matters of identity, to men, and to their presumably male partners. While Erikson voices what could almost be called reverence towards women in this paper, with its reflections on the wisdom of the "inner space" to which he sees women as having unique access, this reverence still holds a patronizing tone. However, in the sense that it discusses the phenomenon of identity being shaped to some extent within the context of intimate relationships, it provides an interesting contribution to the topic at hand.

A theorist contemporary to Erikson who explored this phenomenon in depth was Harry Stack Sullivan, whose work became foundational to the Interpersonal school of psychoanalysis. According to Sullivan, the self comes into being within the interpersonal field, and is shaped and re-shaped in the context of relationships and intimacy with others (Sullivan 1953). In contrast to

Erikson's view, Sullivan writes about identity as "a dynamism" that continues to evolve throughout the life-course, and describes the individual's desires for intimacy and sexual satisfaction as "the last of the great integrating tendencies" (Goethals, 1976; Sullivan, 1953).

Kernberg takes a view somewhat between these two perspectives, attentive both to the formative role of relationships and to the integrative role of the self. His view of the self is organized around relationships that are internalized and become the building-blocks of identity. He refers to these building-blocks as "units of internalized object-relations" (Kernberg, 1976), and argues that it is through the gradual process of integrating these object-relational units with each other that the mature self is formed. Yet this process of integration is never complete in that the individual maintains distinct object-relational constellations throughout life, with different self-other schemas becoming more or less activated in different contexts.

Viewed through the lens of psychoanalytic theory, one of the mechanisms through which such shifts are understood to occur is through transference, in which particular characteristics of an individual trigger a whole intricate web of relational associations. Discussions of the "positive" and "negative" oedipal configurations, and the ways in which both can remain alive in adulthood and in adult love relationships, are essentially discussions of the formative power of transference and internalized object-relations. A number of papers by Diane Elise explore this theme as it relates to identification and love in bisexuality (e.g. Elise 2002; 1998; 1997). She proposes that shifting desires and gender identifications can coexist with a mature sense of self, and describes bisexuality as "a creative use of potential space that does not necessitate the collapse of core gender identity" (Elise, 1998).

Sexual orientation is shaped by both biological and environmental factors, the particular balance of which is still the subject of much exploration and debate. From a psychoanalytic

perspective, however, one fundamental insight about sexual orientation is that it is, to some degree, the product of compromise-formation. Freud first made this argument in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in which he stated that "psychoanalytic research…has found that all human beings are capable of making a homosexual object-choice, and have in fact made one in their unconscious" (Freud, 1905, p. 11), and that "from the point of view of psychoanalysis the exclusive interest felt by men for women is also a problem that needs elucidating" (Freud, 1905, p. 12). Following this line of thought, as contemporary psychoanalyst Nancy Chodorow argues eloquently, it is not only homosexuality that is the product of compromise-formation, but heterosexuality as well (Chodorow, 1994). In other words, both homosexuality and heterosexuality involve letting go of or sublimating particular identifications and love-objects from childhood. Kernberg describes such a process when he describes the "preconditions for mature love," as quoted above, as involving the "stability of the predominant sublimatory identification with (and yet leaving behind of) the parental figure of the same sex" (Kernberg, 1977).

The inner processes that are at work in the formation of a bisexual orientation complicate this picture. Bisexuality could be seen, from this perspective, as a refusal of compromise-formation, an "avoidance of choices" representative of identity diffusion (Erikson, 1956), or a narcissistic belief that one should not need to compromise. In some cases, it may indeed represent some or all of these stances. However, as Judith Butler suggests in her influential paper "Melancholy gender, refused identification" (Butler, 1995), we must also recognize what is lost when one believes that a mature identity requires complete rejection of parts of the self that could be seen as "contradictory" – in this case, masculine and feminine identifications and/or object-love.

In his explorations of love relations, Kernberg situates the capacity to form a "total object relationship" as the foundation both of mature identity and of mature love. In order to achieve such a relationship, the individual must have "the capacity to integrate genitality with tenderness and a stable, mature object relation" (Kernberg, 1977, p. 278-9). In other words, attachment and sexuality must be integrated both within the individual and within his or her intimate relationships.

Maintaining such a "total object relationship" is a complex task for individuals of any sexual orientation, as attachment and sexuality may at times operate somewhat independently of each other, and can even be experienced as in tension (e.g. Diamond, Blatt, & Lichtenberg, 2007; Diamond, 2004, 2003; Dimen, 2003). As Dimen argues in her paper on perversion (Dimen, 2003), defining psychological health through "the capacity for whole object-love" can be a risky business, as the edges of emotional intimacy and sexual desire often refuse to fit neatly together even in the most loving relationship. She proposes that it could instead be possible to see the tensions between attachment and sexuality as creative, and as forces that might allow for ongoing growth within the life of the individual and the couple.

While I agree with Dimen's perspective, I would also argue, with Kernberg, that possessing a *capacity* to experience both emotional attachment and sexual desire with the same person is an important component of emotional health and maturity, even if these two systems are not always integrated in each sexual and/or romantic encounter. Because of this, in the present study I hypothesize that a capacity for attachment/sexuality integration within intimate relationships will predict psychological adjustment among this population.

As described above, Diamond (2008) and Weinberg et al (1994) reported related and somewhat complementary phenomena in their examinations of change over time among sexual

minorities. On the one hand, Weinberg and colleagues found that among bisexual men and women patterns of change over time in romantic feelings for one gender versus the other often differed from patterns of change over time in sexual feelings for one gender versus the other. On the other hand, Diamond's study provides examples of situations in which emotional attachment and sexual attraction could build one into the other in unexpected ways. For example, she describes intimate friendships that begin to integrate sexuality into their underlying fabric of emotional attachment, as well as sexual encounters that surprise both partners by growing into relationships characterized by deep emotional safety and commitment. In both cases, the gender of the partner in question could have been seen as cause for compartmentalizing the relationship as one that could only serve attachment needs, or only sexual needs. However, many of the narratives from Diamond's study describe a trajectory that moves towards greater integration of attachment and sexuality rather than towards greater disconnection of the two, even when this process is not smooth, and even when it necessitates an openness to change in one's sense of self and sexual identity. Such narratives could be seen as examples of change and multiplicity in the service of forming a "total object relationship," rather than as factors standing in the way of intimacy and mature love.

Contemporary Psychoanalytic Theories of Multiplicity

In contrast to modernist conceptions of identity as a stable entity to be discovered and achieved, post-modern theories within contemporary psychoanalysis have proposed a view of identity as made up of multiple self-states rather than one "authentic" self. From this perspective, the self is understood as naturally fragmented, with health resting in the ability to "stand in the spaces between self-states without losing any of them" and to "feel like one self while being many" (Bromberg, 1996).

A multiple self-states model is particularly useful for thinking about bisexuality because of the room it creates for multiplicity and change within the sexual self. From this perspective, bisexuality could be conceptualized as made up of "heterosexual" and "homosexual" self-states (Bromberg, 1996), or object-relational constellations (Kernberg, 1976), that emerge and recede in different social and relational contexts. For example, particular self-other schemas formed in the context of early relationships with the same-sex and opposite-sex parent – and/or with "masculine" and "feminine" aspects of both parents – could become differentially ascendant in adult romantic relationships with men and with women.

Psychoanalytic theorists currently writing about multiplicity in the self posit a spectrum from normative to pathological dissociation of self-states (e.g Bromberg, 1996, 2001; Howell, 2005). To understand the more pathological end of this spectrum, they draw from trauma theory, which has mapped out the phenomenon of dissociation as a defense against experiences that resist integration into an individual's understanding of herself and of the world. The fact that many individuals diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, who suffer from severe identity diffusion, have also been found to be survivors of trauma suggests that in some ways dissociation and identity diffusion may describe similar phenomena. Indeed, both pathological dissociation and identity diffusion describe a fragmentation of the self that cannot be bridged by "standing in the spaces" (Bromberg, 1996) because to do so would be experienced as intolerable.

I would argue that, in addition to actual experiences of trauma, social forces and theory-building can have an impact on which parts of the self are experienced as bridgeable and which are not. If the theories we embrace define particular self-states as "contradictory" or lacking in "selfsameness," such perspectives could inadvertently have the effect of widening rather than narrowing the spaces that exist between these elements of the self. Akhtar's description of

identity diffusion as characterized both by "contradictory traits" and by "lack of authenticity" captures this tension (Akhtar, 1984), as it is possible that attempting to dissolve internal contradictions could in fact *result* in just such inauthenticity.

Indeed, theories that call for identity to be too neatly integrated may inspire the creation of a false-self organization in the individual who feels he/she must make him/herself "fit" into a single, coherent self, while his/her felt reality is messier and more complex. Noam (1999) refers to this phenomenon when he writes:

> Identity development can lead to a brutal act of integration – a way to demand from the self and others to cohere and to shape noncongruent experiences so they fit…How difficult it can be to draw the line between identity and the false self. (61-62)

For bisexual individuals, such a false self could emerge based on a perception that a unilateral sexual orientation is a necessary precondition for maturity in matters both of identity and of love, and that all noncongruent experiences and desires must be split off and disowned.

Muriel Dimen describes this dilemma when she writes of dualism as "a set-up," both in general and with regard to questions of gender and sexuality in particular (Dimen, 2003). She cautions that theories that take a dualistic view of the self can be iatrogenic, inspiring splitting rather than a sense of wholeness. Likewise, the theories of identity integration described above could in fact manufacture the pathology they claim to describe, driving bisexual individuals to split off the parts of themselves that do not neatly align, rather than cultivating a capacity to tolerate multiplicity, ambiguity and paradox within the self.

As a counterpoint to some of his more dualistic writings on identity, Erikson also speaks about the vital role of "social play" in identity development. In this he joins with Winnicott and many others who have described the creation of a transitional space as a conduit for growth throughout the lifecycle (e.g. Benjamin, 2004; Dimen, 2003; Elise, 1998; Harris, 2009; Pizer,

1998; Winnicott, 1971). The concept of transitional space could be understood as akin to Bromberg's vision of "standing in the spaces," in that it is a space between subjective and objective realities where contradictions can be observed without being collapsed.

When a capacity to "stand in the spaces" is taken as the marker of healthy identity, the picture we hold of bisexuals shifts dramatically. As Diane Elise (1998) has written, for example, bisexuality can then be seen as "a creative use of potential space that does not necessitate the collapse of core gender identity." Or as Adrienne Harris (2008) has argued, it is possible to understand gendered and sexual identities as "softly assembled," allowing for complex influences both across contexts and across time. The capacity for multiplicity and fluidity of desire described above no longer appears as a marker of identity diffusion, but rather as an expression of multiple self-states that may be more or less integrated. From this perspective, identity integration becomes a lifelong task of creating a sense of self that incorporates the past, with its contradictions, rather than needing to construct a totalizing narrative that cuts out pieces of the past in order to cohere.

Cognitive Dissonance vs. Ambiguity Tolerance

The theoretical dilemma explored above with regard to the interplay between integration and contradiction within mature identity can be viewed from another angle, drawing from both cognitive dissonance theory and from the literature on ambiguity tolerance. While the language used by these literatures belongs primarily to social and cognitive psychology, the questions at their core resonate with those posed by the psychoanalytic theorists described above, and can be fruitfully placed in dialogue with each other with regard to the experiences of bisexual individuals.

Cognitive dissonance theory, formulated by Leon Festinger (1957), argues that incongruence between affects, behaviors and cognitions necessarily gives rise to conflict, and that when such conflict arises individuals are motivated to act in ways that will reduce this incongruence. Many of the examples provided by Festinger to illustrate his point revolve around issues of choice (Festinger, 1957), and later writers have applied the theory to issues of identity (e.g. Cooper, 2007), both of which are relevant to the dilemmas faced by bisexuals. For example, Festinger describes experiments demonstrating that, when individuals were made to choose between two desirable objects, their appraisals of the chosen object's value would become exaggerated, thus reducing their distress at the loss of the rejected object. In other words, cognitive appraisals of value were altered in order to increase their congruence with a given behavior. With regard to identity, later theorists describe scenarios in which individuals who behaved in ways that were at odds with their self-concepts were found to alter their appraisals of their behavior in order to preserve a sense of "self-consistency" (e.g. Aronson, 1968; Cooper, 2007; Steele, 1988).

While cognitive dissonance theory was not formulated with issues of sexuality in mind, it has since been used to explain heightened levels of distress among bisexuals. Attractions to both sexes are viewed as inherently contradictory, and the incongruence that may occur between a bisexual individual's sexual self-identification, sexual behaviors, and sexual attractions is seen as conflict-producing. From this perspective, in order to reduce this dissonance individuals must either alter their identity and attractions in order to match their behaviors, or must alter their behaviors to reflect their identity and attractions.

This formulation proves particularly problematic for bisexual individuals in monogamous relationships, as according to this theory bisexuality and monogamy cannot coexist without

dissonance and distress. In other words, a bisexual individual who is monogamous will experience dissonance because his/her attractions to both sexes are incongruent with his/her commitment to one partner. Theoretically (although this is questionable in practice), one way to solve this problem would be to cultivate attractions solely towards the gender of one's partner, and to assume a congruent identity as exclusively homosexual or exclusively heterosexual. Alternately, one could alter his/her behavior by adopting non-monogamous partnerships with both men and women, thus reducing dissonance between behavior, identity, and attractions. While bisexual individuals may attempt such solutions, doing so may itself lead to conflict. Such conflict may result either from attempting to deny one side of one's sexual orientation or, alternatively, from choosing a non-monogamous relationship configuration that can be treacherous to navigate on a relational level and stigmatized on a societal level.

In keeping with cognitive dissonance theory, higher levels of identity conflict have indeed been reported among representative samples of bisexual adults than among comparable samples of heterosexual or homosexual adults. However, the impact of such conflict on mental health outcomes remains unclear. For example, Balsam and Mohr (2007) found higher levels of self-reported identity confusion among bisexuals than among lesbian or gay individuals, but identity confusion was not correlated with psychological distress. Similarly, Moore and Norris (2005) found that bisexuals showed higher levels of conflict about their sexuality than did homosexuals or heterosexuals, but did not find a correlation between conflict and distress. In this study, conflict was assessed both through a self-report measure and through an examination of levels of congruence or incongruence between individuals' attractions, behaviors, and identities using the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (Klein, 1993). The latter form of assessing conflict may be problematic for bisexuals, however, both from the perspective of a "fluidity" model that views

these dimensions of sexuality as naturally capable of flux (Diamond, 2008), and when considering the fact that many bisexuals may hold monogamous relationships, a situation that would necessarily lead to incongruence between identity and behavior. These studies suggest that, while internal conflict regarding sexuality may be present among many bisexuals, this conflict may not necessarily lead to distress.

Here I would argue that an additional internal factor becomes important, that of ambiguity tolerance. Some theorists also describe this factor as a capacity for "flexibility" (e.g. Moore & Norris, 2005; Zinik, 1985), but I prefer the term ambiguity tolerance for this purpose because it more specifically captures the aspect of bisexuality that can cause it to be so fraught with conflict, namely, its ambiguity. A similar and related concept, "capacity to tolerate paradox" (Pizer, 1998), was proposed by Anna Levy-Warren in previous cross-sectional research using this same sample (Levy-Warren, 2013), and the construct of "capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality" is used in the present study in order to refer to ambiguity tolerance as it pertains specifically to participants' sexual self-concepts. Such tolerance of ambiguity and paradox with regard to the sexual self stands in contrast with internal experiences of pressure to "resolve" one's sexuality to fit within a binary model. Toleration of paradox also contrasts with the construct of "need for closure" (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), which describes a more global capacity to tolerate lack of closure in a wide range of life situations. By definition, bisexual individuals must navigate ambiguity, paradox, and lack of closure in order to integrate their identities, attractions, and relationships. While conflict and confusion may be involved in the process of forming an integrated bisexual self-concept, in part because of intrapsychic conflicts but also because of social pressures (e.g. Moore & Norris, 2005), I would argue that possessing a capacity to tolerate paradox and ambiguity within one's cognitions and

self-concepts can mitigate the effects of this conflict. In other words, I propose that capacity to tolerate paradox and ambiguity predicts psychological adjustment among bisexuals over and above the effects of identity conflict.

Aside from the cross-sectional study conducted by Anna Levy-Warren in collaboration with this writer, as noted above, no studies to date have investigated the impact of ambiguity tolerance on mental health outcomes among bisexuals. One possible reason for this gap in the literature may be that the construct of ambiguity tolerance, like the phenomenon it describes, has proven difficult to pin down. Previous studies of bisexual adults have attempted to operationalize this quality through self-report measures of cognitive flexibility (Martin & Rubin, 1994), communication flexibility (Martin & Rubin, 1994), and sex role flexibility or androgyny (Bem, 1974), but these studies have not investigated correlations with psychological distress or adjustment.

It should be noted that varying levels of ambiguity tolerance may come into play not only as they pertain to the bisexual individual but also as they pertain to his/her social environment. In other words, while a particular bisexual individual may not experience his/her sexual orientation as a cause of cognitive dissonance, his/her friends, family, and/or romantic partners *may* experience it this way. Accordingly, an individual with a high personal capacity for ambiguity tolerance may nevertheless experience heightened conflict because of an attempt to fit his/her sexual self into a category that would feel less "dissonant" to those around him/her. For the purposes of this study, I have referred to such experiences as "external pressure for singular sexual orientation" (see p. 41).

Minority Stress Theory

The predominant theoretical framework that has been used to conceptualize the role of the social environment in influencing the mental health of sexual minorities is the minority stress framework proposed by Meyer (2003; 2007). Grounded in social psychology, minority stress is defined as "the excess stress to which individuals from stigmatized social categories are exposed as a result of their social, often minority, position" (Meyer, 2003, p.675). Within this framework, this "excess stress" is understood both as an objective reality enacted within the social environment, and as a subjective phenomenon in which this objective reality is experienced and given meaning by the individual. Thus, when examining the experiences of bisexuals from a minority stress framework, both environmental factors such as stigma and discrimination, as well as subjective responses to these environmental factors such as internalized homophobia and identity concealment, are considered (Balsam & Mohr, 2007; Balsam & Szymanski, 2005; Herek et al, 2009; Luhtanen, 2003; Meyer, 2003; Rosario et al, 2002; Solorio et al, 2003).

A number of studies have examined the phenomenon of internalized homophobia, alternately labeled as internalized homonegativity or self-stigma, among bisexual and gay/lesbian individuals. In a recent meta-analysis of thirty-one studies examining the relationship between internalized homophobia and mental health, Newcomb and Mustanski (2010) found a moderate effect size for the relationship between the two variables, and also determined that internalized homophobia was associated with increased levels of internalizing problems (i.e. anxiety and depression). Frost and Meyer (2009) found that internalized homophobia was correlated with decreased relationship quality among both bisexuals and homosexuals, and that this correlation was significantly mediated by increased depressive symptoms. Herek and colleagues (2009) also found that self-stigma was correlated with increased distress among

bisexuals and homosexuals, and additionally found that this correlation was mediated by decreased self-esteem. In this study, bisexual men had significantly elevated rates of self-stigma compared to gay men, although rates of self-stigma among lesbians and bisexual women were found to be comparable.

A number of studies have also investigated the degree of sexual orientation self-disclosure, or "outness," among bisexuals. Each of these studies demonstrated that levels of outness were significantly lower among bisexuals than among homosexuals (e.g. Balsam & Mohr, 2007; Bronn, 2004; Solorio et al, 2003), but the correlations of outness with mental health outcomes remained complex. For example, Koh and Ross (2006) found that outness significantly mediated both suicidal ideation and risk of developing eating disorders among bisexual women relative to heterosexual women, with bisexual women who had disclosed their sexual orientation reporting suicidal ideation and eating disorders twice as frequently as heterosexual women. Strikingly, this same correlation held for risk of suicidal ideation among lesbians relative to heterosexual women, but in the opposite direction, with lesbians who had *not* disclosed their sexual orientation reporting suicidal ideation twice as frequently as heterosexual women. These findings suggest that the relationship between sexual orientation self-disclosure and mental health outcomes may differ significantly between bisexuals and homosexuals.

The particular challenges that bisexuals face surrounding sexual orientation self-disclosure was further investigated by a number of qualitative studies. Bradford (2004) found that many bisexuals felt their sexual orientation was "invisible" unless they explicitly made an effort to disclose it, and that their orientation was often assumed based on the gender of their romantic partner at any given time. Thus, being "out" as bisexual required a particular level of active disclosure over and above being open about one's current romantic life, and also required

a willingness to explain a category of identity that is often poorly understood or seen as invalid. Hartman (2005) and Gurevich and colleagues (2007) described similar dynamics of "invisibility," and found that their participants also ascribed the challenges they faced in disclosing their sexual orientations to fears of discrimination both by the heterosexual mainstream and by lesbian and gay communities.

The phenomenon of bisexuals being marginalized by and excluded from lesbian and gay communities was documented in a number of studies, and appears to have implications for the particular ways in which bisexuals may experience minority stress. Minority stress theorists (e.g. Meyer, 2003; 2007) have proposed that the formation of "minority in-groups" may serve as protective factors for individuals whose identities are stigmatized by the broader culture, and that belonging to such groups may buffer individuals from some of the negative mental-health effects of social stigma. This picture is complicated for bisexual individuals, however. While bisexuals are often nominally included in LGBT communities and organizations, bisexual participants in these studies presented a different picture, reporting experiences in which they were denigrated by lesbian and gay individuals as "fence-sitters," confused, disloyal, and afraid of monogamy and commitment (Gurevich et al, 2007; Hartman, 2005). In fact, some studies found that bisexuals perceived much lower levels of acceptance among lesbians and gays than among heterosexuals (e.g. Bronn, 2004). Bisexuals also reported having trouble finding same-sex romantic partners because of their sexual orientation (Bradford, 2004).

Indeed, considering the unique experience of bisexuals from a minority stress framework, a double bind emerges. Unlike individuals who hold exclusively homosexual identities, bisexuals often do not have access to minority "in-groups," yet if they are to reveal their identities, bisexual individuals may also face discrimination from the heterosexual mainstream. Thus, for

bisexuals, gaining access to a community of support may often necessitate hiding or concealing a part of the self. To maintain support and acceptance within mainstream society, bisexuals may feel compelled to conceal their attractions to and relationships with members of the same gender, while to gain access to gay and lesbian "in-groups" they may feel compelled to conceal their attractions to and relationships with members of the opposite gender. The current lack of communities of support specifically for bisexuals intensifies this dilemma, and mirrors the fact that bisexuality is, to some extent, still widely understood as a category defined by murkiness and confusion rather than by cohesion and integration.

The creation of a new "in-group" (Meyer, 2003) specifically to provide support for bisexuals could be one solution to these experiences of marginalization. However, this might be complicated by the fact that, in a number of studies, many individuals who were sexually active with and/or attracted to both sexes expressed ambivalence about the identity label "bisexual," and the binary/dichotomous view of gender and sexuality that they felt it implied (Ochs, 2007; Diamond, 2008). Many of these individuals chose to remain "unlabeled" (Diamond, 2008) or assumed a non-binary identity label such as "queer," and explained these choices as reflecting an inner experience of multiplicity. Such experiences and perspectives on the nature of sexuality and sexual identity might not lend themselves to affiliation with strong in-groups, and could also limit the extent to which in-group affiliation would be protective for individuals who hold this experience. In fact, such dilemmas with regard to which elements of identity can be revealed and which must be concealed in different social contexts may constitute the most salient area in which "cognitive dissonance" comes into play for bisexual individuals.

The Present Study

This longitudinal, mixed-methods study of adult bisexual women is structured around the following primary aims: 1) to identify intrapsychic and environmental factors that contribute to bisexual women's capacities to tolerate paradox and ambiguity with regard to their sexualities, including factors related to character structure and identity integration; 2) to identify intrapsychic and environmental factors that influence psychological conflict and distress versus adjustment among this population; and 3) to understand the ways in which multiplicity and change within the sexual self are negotiated both internally and in the context of social, familial and romantic relationships. The study's longitudinal design allows processes of change over time in women's sexual attractions, behaviors and self-identifications to be examined, and its integration of quantitative and qualitative methods grants insights into the ways in which participants themselves understand and relate to these change processes.

The aims and hypotheses of the present study are informed by the literature reviewed above, and by gaps that currently exist in the literature. Considered broadly, the study seeks to interrogate existing theories that cast bisexuality as a source of cognitive dissonance (e.g. Festinger, 1957) and as evidence of identity diffusion or borderline personality organization (e.g. Erikson, 1956; Akhtar, 1984), instead proposing an alternative model of identity integration that is built around the toleration of multiplicity and paradox within one's self and one's relationships with others (e.g. Bromberg, 2001; Diamond, 2008; Dimen, 2003; Levy-Warren, 2013; Pizer, 1998).

Following this reasoning, identity integration is operationalized here as differentiation-relatedness of self and object representations, a construct that also incorporates the idea of ambiguity tolerance, as one of the markers of differentiation-relatedness is a capacity to tolerate

ambiguity and ambivalence without destabilization (Diamond et al, 1991/2009). This aspect is particularly salient to a bisexual population, as ambiguity is "built into" the bisexual individual's experience of self in a profound way and thus must be negotiated in order to construct integrated self and object representations. It is therefore hypothesized that differentiation-relatedness of self and object representations will be positively associated with capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality. Differentiation-relatedness is also utilized as a validity check in identifying participants with a borderline personality organization.

At the level of the individual, drawing from both post-modern psychoanalytic theory (e.g. Bromberg, 2001; Diamond, 2008; Dimen, 2003; Levy-Warren, 2013; Pizer, 1998) and social psychology (e.g. Moore & Norris, 2005; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), it is hypothesized that a global need for cognitive closure (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994), as well as internal pressures for closure and resolution specifically with regard to one's bisexuality (referred to here as "internal pressure for singular sexual orientation"), will be negatively associated both with capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality and with psychological adjustment, and positively associated with psychological conflict and distress.

Moving outward to the level of intimate relationships, drawing from Kernberg's concept of the "total object relationship" (e.g. Kernberg, 2001) and from Diamond and colleagues' work regarding attachment and sexuality (Diamond et al, 2007), it is hypothesized that a capacity to integrate attachment and sexuality within a single relationship will contribute to psychological adjustment, and that a tendency to split attachment and sexuality by gender of partner will contribute to psychological distress. Likewise, it is hypothesized that attachment/sexuality integration will be associated with a greater capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality. Also at the level of romantic relationships, it is hypothesized that security of

attachment to romantic partners will contribute to the individual's capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality, because such attachment will provide a "secure base" from which the individual may gain comfort in acknowledging and exploring her sexuality without feeling threatened by such exploration.

At the broader social/environmental level, and drawing from minority stress theory (e.g. Meyer, 2003), it is hypothesized that experiences of community support versus stigma will influence the psychological distress and adjustment of bisexual individuals, and that this will be the case even when individuals show a high degree of identity integration and ambiguity tolerance on an intrapsychic level. Further, it is hypothesized that, in addition to overt forms of stigma, bisexual individuals may experience distress when friends, family, partners, and others in their social environment demonstrate a low level of ambiguity tolerance and exert what I have termed "external pressure for singular sexual orientation," thus compelling the individual to attempt to fit her sexuality into a binary model that may make others more comfortable but may represent a form of "false self" (e.g. Winnicott, 1965).

In keeping with reviewed research that has documented sexual plasticity among this population (e.g. Diamond, 2008; Weinberg et al, 1994), it is expected that some degree of change will be evident from baseline to follow-up with respect to sexual self-identifications, behaviors, attractions and fantasies. Contrary to what might be suggested by the Neo-Freudians (e.g. Akhtar, 1984; Erikson, 1956), it is hypothesized that such change in sexuality markers will *not* be significantly associated with a borderline personality organization, and will instead be found across this bisexual sample without regard for character structure. Given cultural, interpersonal and intrapsychic pressures for identity to be clearly defined, as described by much of the literature reviewed above, it is hypothesized that change in sexuality markers may result in

elevated distress at least in the short-term, as individuals negotiate these shifts internally and in the context of social and romantic relationships. However, it is also hypothesized that the effects of such change on psychological distress and adjustment will be mitigated by the capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality.

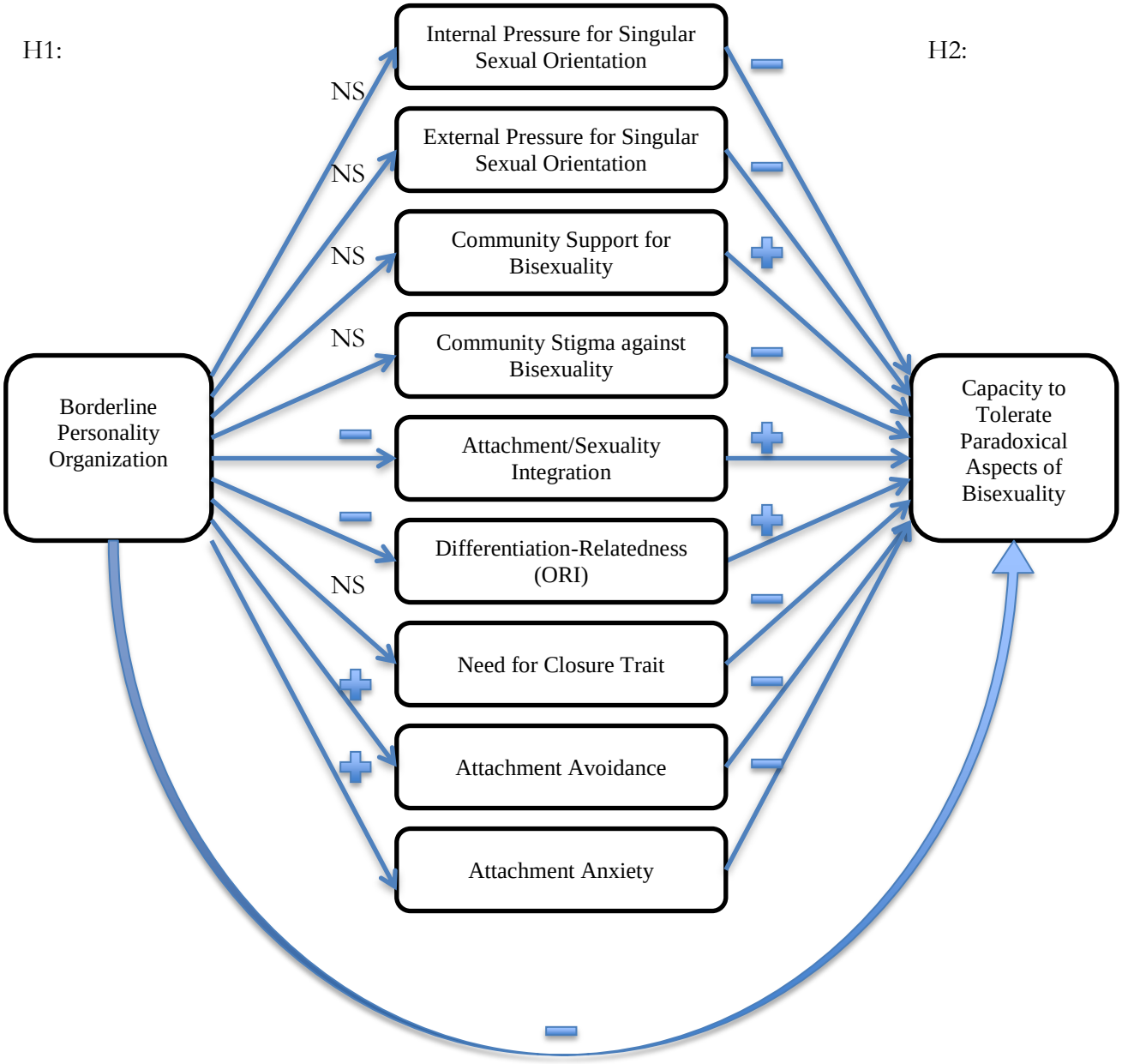
In summary, the distinct hypotheses of the current study are presented below.

Hypotheses:

H1: Borderline Personality Organization (BPO) will be negatively associated with Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality (CTP) and Attachment/Sexuality Integration; will be positively associated with Attachment Avoidance and Attachment Anxiety; and will have no significant association with Need for Closure Trait (NFCT), Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation (IPSSO), External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation (EPSSO), Community Support for Bisexuality, or Community Stigma against Bisexuality (see Figure 3).

H2: Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality (CTP) will be positively associated with Community Support for Bisexuality, Differentiation-Relatedness of Self and Object Representations (ORI), and Attachment/Sexuality Integration, and will be negatively associated with Need for Closure Trait (NFCT), Attachment Avoidance, Attachment Anxiety, Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation (IPSSO), External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation (EPSSO), and Community Stigma against Bisexuality (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. *Hypotheses 1 and 2.*



H3: Distress and Negative Affect will be negatively associated with Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality (CTP), Community Support for Bisexuality, and Attachment/Sexuality Integration, and positively associated with Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation (IPSSO), External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation (EPSSO), Community Stigma against Bisexuality, and Need for Closure Trait (NFCT). Positive Affect and Self-Esteem will be positively associated with Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality (CTP), Community Support for Bisexuality, and Attachment/Sexuality Integration, and negatively associated with Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation (IPSSO), External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation (EPSSO), and Community Stigma against Bisexuality, and Need for Closure Trait (NFCT) (see Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4. *Hypothesis 3, part 1.*

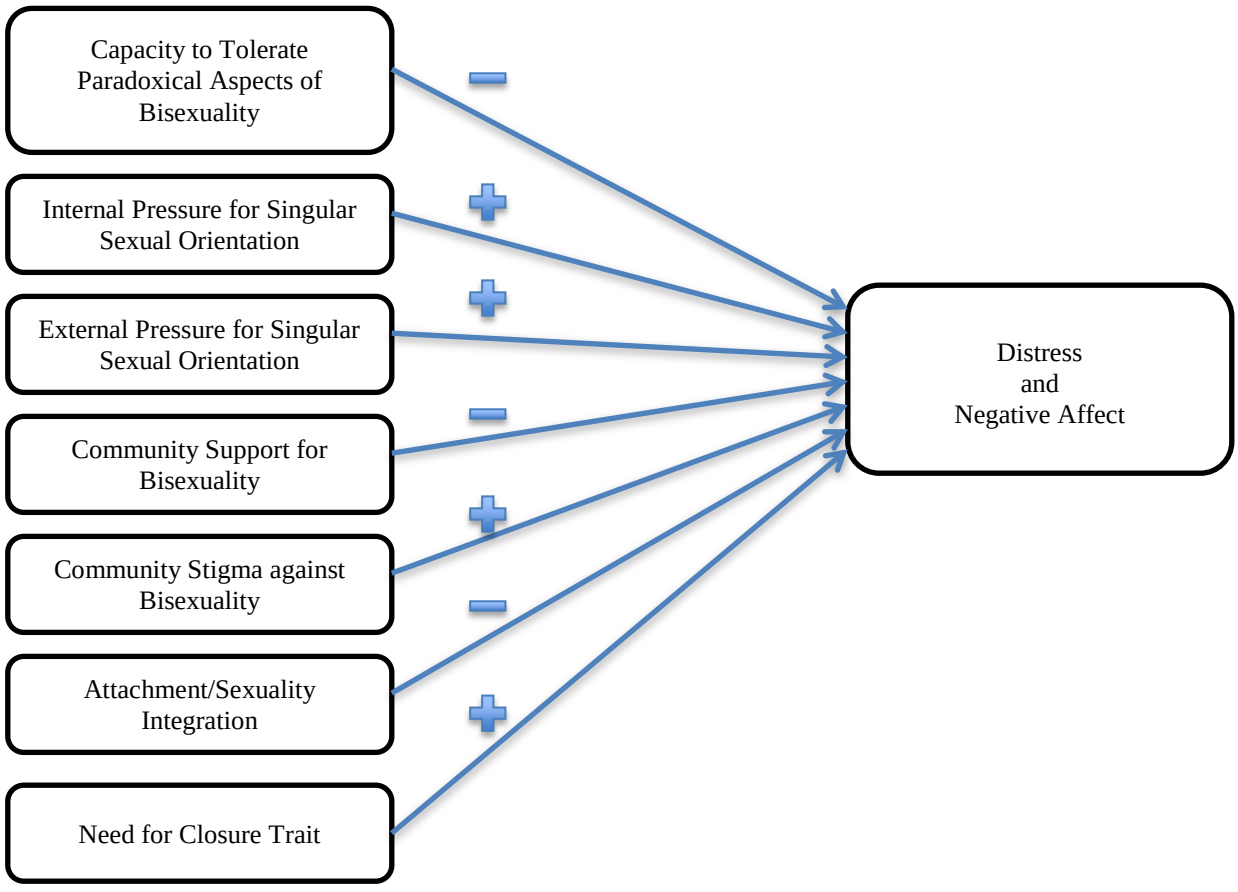
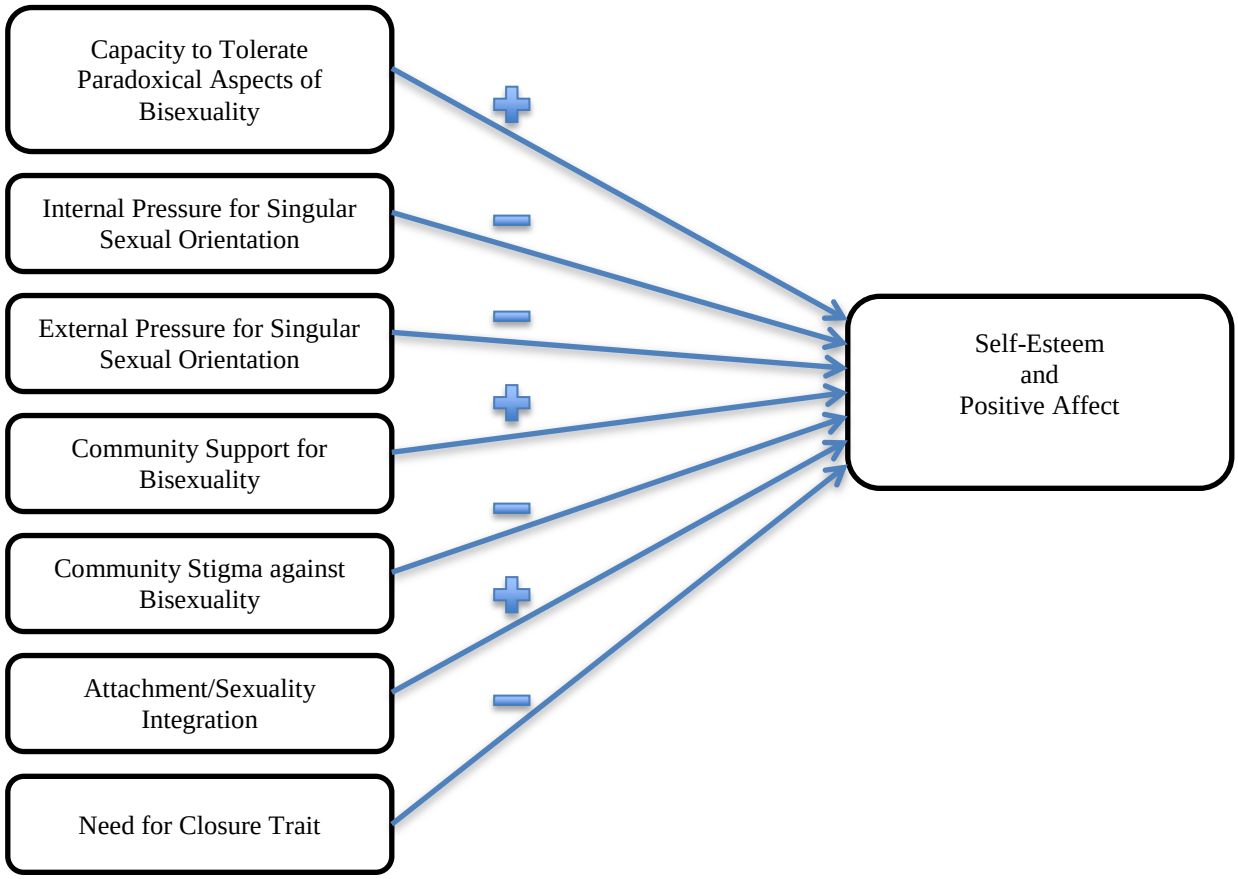
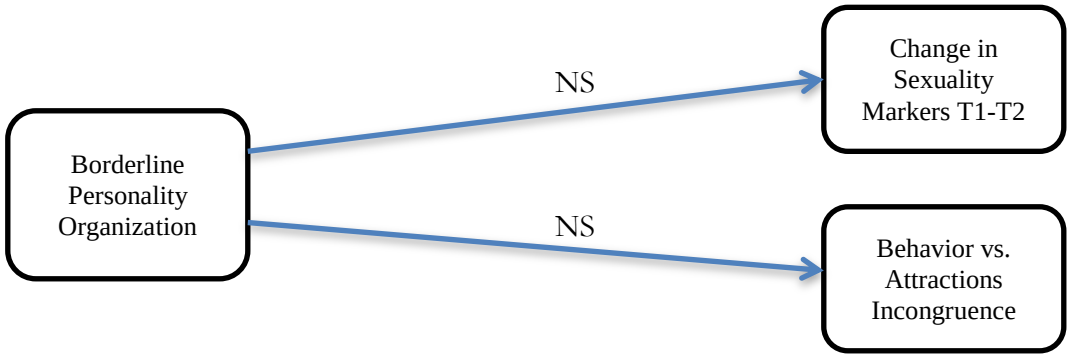


Figure 5. *Hypothesis 3, part 2.*



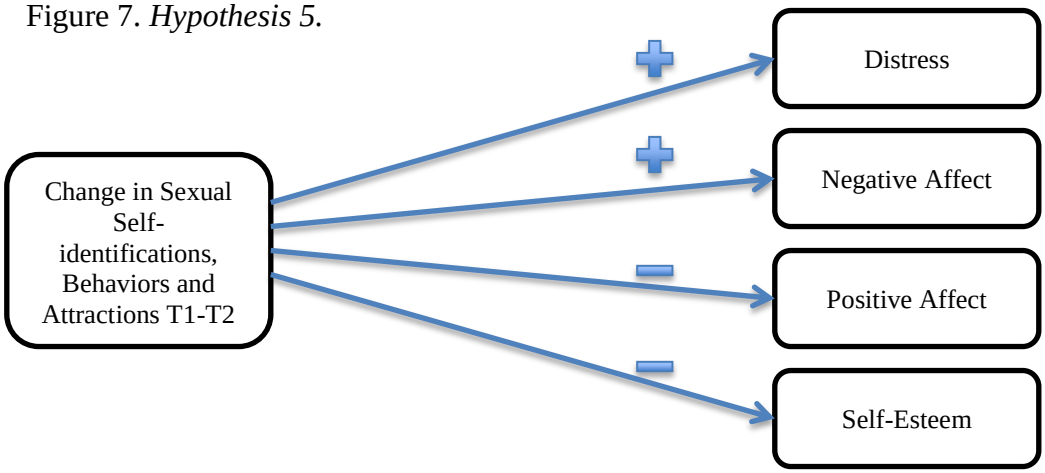
H4: Borderline Personality Organization (BPO) will have no significant association with Change in Sexuality Markers (sexual self-identification, behaviors, attractions, fantasies and erotica), or with Behavior vs. Attractions Incongruence (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. *Hypothesis 4.*



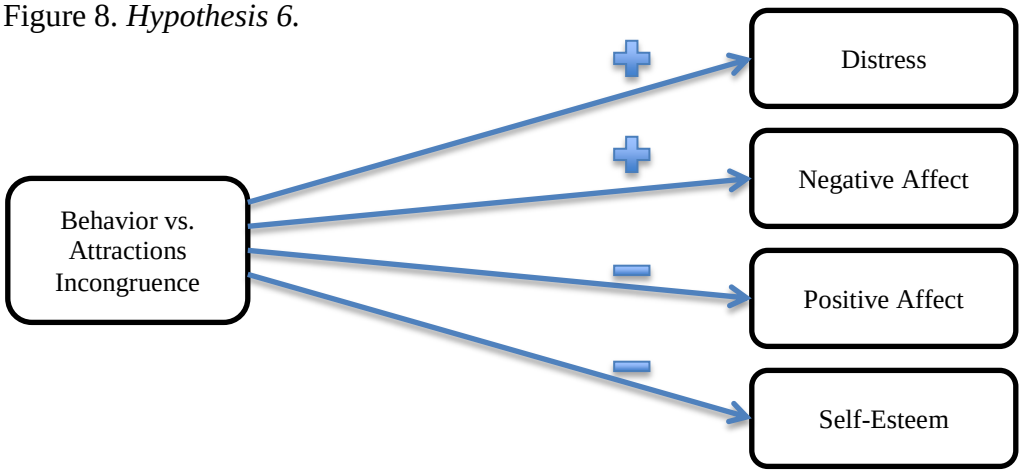
H5: Change in Sexuality Markers (sexual self-identification, behaviors, and mean attractions) will be positively associated with Distress and Negative Affect and negatively associated with Positive Affect and Self-Esteem (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. *Hypothesis 5.*



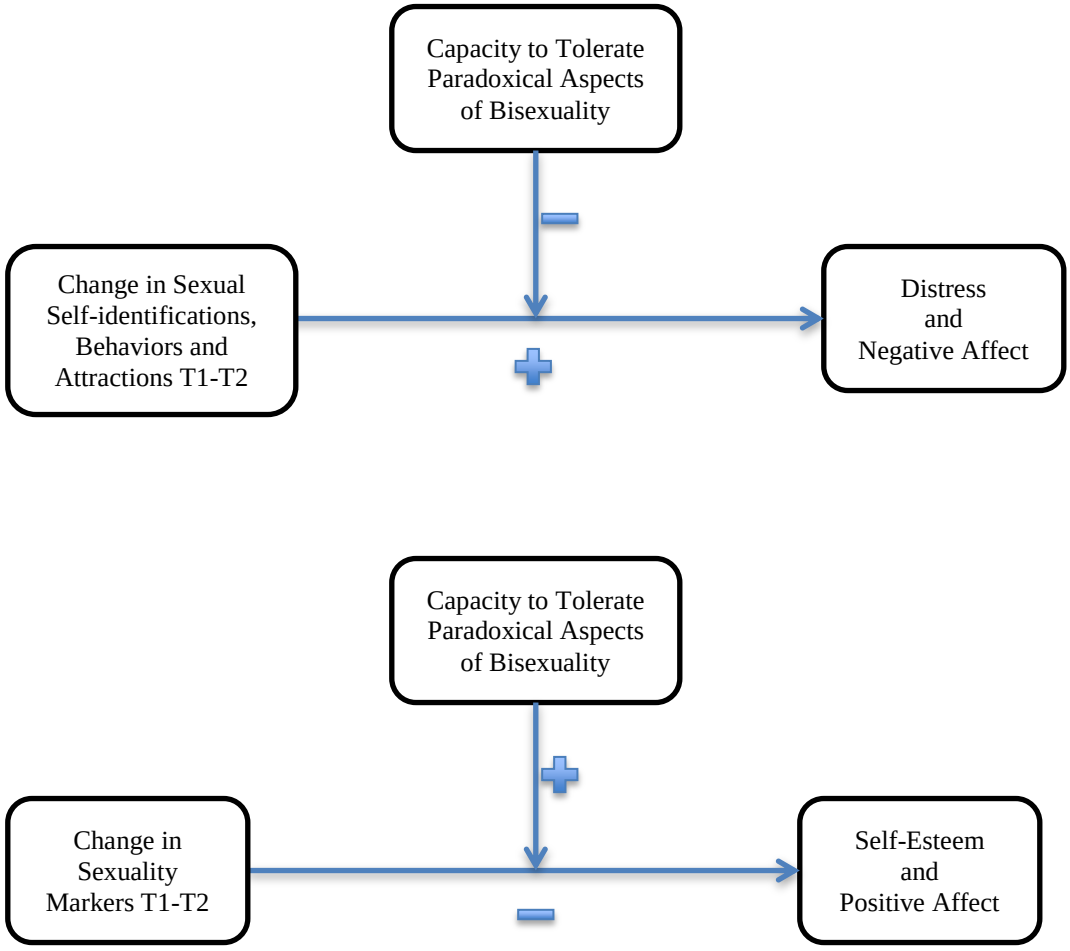
H6: Behavior vs. Attractions Incongruence will be positively associated with Distress and Negative Affect and negatively associated with Positive Affect and Self-Esteem (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. *Hypothesis 6.*



H7: The relationship between Change in Sexuality Markers and Distress vs. Adjustment will be moderated by Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality (CTP), which will be negatively associated with Distress and Negative Affect and positively associated with Positive Affect and Self-Esteem (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. *Hypothesis 7.*



METHODS

Overview

This longitudinal, mixed-methods study reassesses baseline quantitative and qualitative data collected in 2008 from 50 women (follow-up N=40), ages 26 to 36, who identified as "dually attracted" (i.e. attracted to both men and women) and who had been sexually active with both sexes. Time 2 assessments occurred 12-14 months after Time 1 assessments, and were completed by January 2010. Demographic characteristics of the sample are provided in the Results section. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the City University of New York.

Procedure

Participants were recruited via a local newspaper and website, in which advertisements were placed for women with "ongoing attractions to both women and men." As the literature suggests that many women with attractions to both sexes use identity labels other than "bisexual" (e.g. "queer," "heteroflexible," etc.), the word "bisexual" was intentionally not included in these advertisements so as to obtain a sample more representative of dually attracted women. When participants contacted the researchers, a screening was conducted to determine eligibility for the study. The screening ascertained participants' biological sex, the presence or absence of sexual attractions to women and men, and the presence or absence of past sexual activity with both sexes. Women who identified as biologically female, who reported attractions to both sexes, and who reported that they had been sexually active with both women and men were offered the opportunity to participate in the study. Time 1 assessments were conducted between July and January 2008. Participants received $30 at Time 1, and were offered the opportunity to be

contacted for voluntary participation in future research. All 50 participants in the Time 1 study agreed to be contacted for future research, and provided contact information and an alternate contact person for this purpose.

Participants who agreed to be contacted for future research were invited to participate in a voluntary follow-up assessment 12 months after the completion of their Time 1 interview. Of the original 50 participants, contact was successfully reestablished with 43. Of these, three declined to participate in the follow-up study, citing time-constraints, and 40 agreed to participate. Follow-up assessments were completed between July and January 2010. Participants received an additional $30 for participation in the follow-up study.

All participants were asked to provide informed, written consent before being included in the study sample. After consent was given, participants completed the questionnaire packet, the contents of which are detailed below, and then participated in the structured and semi-structured interviews (ORI, SERBAS, and Focused Interview, detailed below), which lasted approximately 60-90 minutes.

Measures

Closed-Ended Measures

Demographic form: A simple form describing basic demographic information (e.g. date of birth, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, type of employment, current relationship status).

Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI; Deragatis, 1975): A 53-item self-report measure that assesses symptoms of psychological distress and their severity at a specific point in time, using a 5-point Likert scale (0="Not at all," 4="Extremely"). Level of psychological distress was measured using the BSI's Global Severity Index (GSI), which quantifies the severity of a

participant's symptoms by calculating the mean of all items. The GSI demonstrated excellent reliability at both Time 1 (Chronbach's alpha=.94) and Time 2 (Chronbach's alpha=.95).

Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire (ECR; Brennan et al, 1998): A 36-item self-report measure that assesses attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance in adult relationships with romantic partners, using a 7-point Likert response scale (1="Disagree strongly," 7="Agree strongly"). The Attachment Anxiety scale, which was computed by calculating the mean of all items related to attachment anxiety, demonstrated excellent reliability at both Time 1 (Chronbach's alpha=.93) and Time 2 (Chronbach's alpha=.95). The Attachment Avoidance scale, which was computed by calculating the mean of all items related to attachment avoidance, also demonstrated excellent reliability at both Time 1 (Chronbach's alpha=.91) and Time 2 (Chronbach's alpha=.90).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965): A well-known 10-item self-report measure of self-esteem that uses a 4-item Likert response scale (1="Strongly Agree," 4="Strongly Disagree"). The scale was scored by calculating the mean of all items. The RSES demonstrated excellent reliability (Chronbach's alpha=.90). The RSES was administered only at Time 2.

Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson et al, 1988): A 20-item self-report measure of psychological adjustment that assesses the extent to which positive and negative affective states were experienced over the past week, using a 5-point Likert response scale (1="Very slightly or not at all," 5="Extremely"). The Positive Affect subscale, which was scored by calculating the mean of all items indicating positive affect states, demonstrated excellent reliability (Chronbach's alpha=.91), and the Negative Affect subscale, which was scored by

calculating the mean of all items indicating negative affect states, demonstrated good reliability (Chronbach's alpha=.89). The PANAS was administered only at Time 2.

Need for Closure Scale (NFCS; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994): A 47-item self-report measure that assesses a global personality trait associated with ambiguity tolerance and need for cognitive closure in a wide variety of life situations, using a 6-point Likert response scale (1= Strongly disagree," 6="Strongly agree"). It includes 5 subscales: Desire for Order, Closed Mindedness, Intolerance of Ambiguity, Desire for Predictability, and Decisiveness. The full-scale NFCS score was obtained by summing all items. The subscale scores were obtained by summing all items pertaining to that particular subscale. The full-scale NFCS ("Need for Closure Trait") demonstrated good reliability (Chronbach's alpha=.83), as did the Desire for Order subscale (Chronbach's alpha=.80) and the Decisiveness subscale (Chronbach's alpha=.83). The Desire for Predictability subscale demonstrated acceptable reliability (Chronbach's alpha=.74). Because the Intolerance of Ambiguity subscale demonstrated poor reliability (Chronbach's alpha=.55), and the Closed Mindedness subscale demonstrated unacceptable reliability (Chronbach's alpha=.15), these two individual subscales were not included in subsequent statistical analyses. The NFCS was administered only at Time 2.

Sexual Risk Behavior Assessment Schedule (SERBAS; Meyer-Bahlburg et al, 1991): A semi-structured interview that assesses sexual self-identifications (straight, gay/lesbian, bisexual, or "other"); Kinsey rating scales of sexual behaviors (1=sexual behavior only with women; 7=sexual behavior only with men); and Kinsey rating scales of sexual attractions, fantasies, and response to erotic material (0=only women, never men, and 6=only men, never women). Each is assessed with reference to the past year. Sexual attractions are assessed by asking individuals to rate the extent to which they felt attracted to men versus women in their daily lives, "for example

when walking down the street with many different people around, or standing in line." Sexual fantasies are assessed by asking individuals to rate the extent to which they fantasized about men versus women while masturbating, while having sex, and in their dreams or daydreams. Response to erotica is assessed by asking individuals to rate the extent to which they felt sexually turned on by erotic images of men versus women as these might appear in "magazines or books, or sexy and erotic scenes in TV shows, or sexy stories." The SERBAS also assesses the presence or absence of important sexual life events (e.g. sexual abuse).

Qualitative measures

Object Relations Inventory (ORI; Blatt et al, 1996): An open-ended interview used to assess aspects of mental representations by evaluating the structure and content of spontaneous descriptions of self and others. In the present study, four questions were asked: (1) Describe yourself, (2) Describe yourself as a sexual being, (3) Describe your mother, and (4) Describe your father. The description of self as a sexual being (2) was added to the other three standard prompts for the purposes of this study, and a scoring manual was developed specifically for this item (see Appendix B).

Responses to the standard three ORI prompts were scored using the Differentiation-Relatedness scale (Diamond et al, 1991/2009), a ten-point scale that assesses the level of rigidity, complexity, time perspective, sense of agency and autonomy, and relatedness and reciprocity conveyed by representations of self and others. The scale assesses the individual's capacity to maintain a cohesive sense of self and other that is flexible enough to incorporate change over time, as such change may occur in the context of reciprocal relationships that transform both parties. It also assesses the degree to which ambivalence and ambiguity within representations of

self and significant others can be tolerated without leading to destabilization.

Differentiation-relatedness scores range from a lack of basic differentiation between self and other (1) to a reflectively constructed representation that integrates aspects of self and other in mutual relatedness (10). A score of one, indicating *self/other boundary compromise,* was assigned to responses in which a basic level of physical cohesion or integrity of representation was lacking or incomplete. A score of two, indicating *self/other boundary confusion,* was assigned to responses in which representations of self and other were depicted as physically intact and separate, though feelings and thoughts were described without differentiation or definition. A score of three, indicating *self/other mirroring,* was assigned to responses in which characteristics of self and other were depicted as identical. A score of four, indicating *self/other idealization or denigration,* was given to responses in which an attempt was made to consolidate representations based on unitary, unmodulated idealization or denigration, characterized by extreme, exaggerated, uni-dimensional descriptions. A score of five, indicating *semi-differentiation,* was assigned to responses in which there was a dramatic oscillation between opposite qualities, indicating a tenuous consolidation of representations by polarization, or an emphasis on external features. A score of six, indicating *emergent, ambivalent constancy of self and sense of relatedness,* was given to responses in which the consolidation of divergent aspects of self and others was equivocal, hesitant, or ambivalent, characterized by appropriate conventional characteristics that lacked distinction. A score of seven, indicating *consolidated, constant self and other in unilateral relationships,* was given to responses in which thoughts, feelings, and desires were differentiated and modulated, marking increased capacity for and integration of disparate characteristics and a sympathetic understanding of others. A score of eight, indicating *cohesive, individuated, empathically related self and others,* was given to

responses which included a definite sense of identity and interest in interpersonal relationships, a cohesive, nuanced, and related sense of self and others, and a capacity to understand others' perspectives. A score of nine, indicating *reciprocally related integrated unfolding self and others,* was given to responses that displayed a cohesive sense of self and others in reciprocal relationships, characterized by the transformation of the self and others in complex and evolving ways. Finally, a score of ten, indicating *creative, integrated construction of self and other in empathic, reciprocally attuned relationships,* was assigned to responses that displayed integrated reciprocal relations, including an appreciation of one's contribution to the construction of meaning in complex interpersonal relationships.

The additional ORI item assessing the individual's representations of self as a sexual being was scored according to the ORI-SASB scoring manual, which was developed for the purpose of this study (DeMille, 2013; see Appendix B). Based on the Differentiation-Relatedness scoring system described above, the ORI-SASB scoring system also considers the degree with which the sexual self is differentiated from and related to the rest of one's identity, in addition to the quality of the self described.

Inter-rater reliability of the Differentiation-Relatedness scale has been found to be .83 (Stayner, 1994). The two raters who scored the ORIs for the present study demonstrated a similar level of inter-rater reliability (Kappa=.81).

Focused Interview: The focused interview (Merton et al, 1990) is an open-ended yet guided individual interview that not only obtains a factual report of the events experienced but also probes for the subjective meaning that participants attach to these experiences, thus adding depth and nuance to the researcher's understanding of the phenomena under investigation. In this study, the focused interview was used to assess the subjective meaning that participants attach to

their sexualities, relationships, experiences of community support or stigma, and experiences of change over time in these domains, as well as the degree of conflict manifested with regard to these themes.

Focused interview questions were designed to gather information regarding intrapsychic, relational, and societal/environmental factors related to participants' experiences of their bisexuality. On an intrapsychic level, participants were asked to describe how they make sense of their attractions to both men and women; whether they experience these dual attractions as a conflict; and if so, how this conflict has affected them and how they have negotiated it. On a relational level, participants were asked whether and to what extent they have disclosed their dual attractions to romantic partners; how partners have responded; how they feel about having attractions towards and/or fantasies about people of the opposite sex of their partner; whether their sexual attractions and emotional attachments to men and women feel "the same" or "different," and if different, in what way; whether and to what extent their relationships have been monogamous versus non-monogamous; their feelings about bisexuality and monogamy (possible? desirable?); and the ways in which each of these issues has been negotiated in the context of their romantic relationships. On a societal/environmental level, participants were asked about experiences of support versus stigma from family, friends, LGBT community, religious communities, and other significant communities in their lives.

With regard to each of these levels of inquiry, participants were asked to what extent they experience internal or external pressure to "resolve" their bisexuality, versus to what extent they experience acceptance of their bisexuality as an ongoing aspect of themselves. In addition, at the end of the interview, participants were also asked how they imagine these issues surrounding their sexuality unfolding over time; what kind of relationship they imagine for themselves in the

future and with whom; and whether they felt this image of the future had changed over the past year. Many other questions were asked, which can be found in the Focused Interview Guide (see Appendix A).

Focused interviews were conducted at both Time 1 and Time 2. At Time 2, Time 1 focused interview protocols were reviewed prior to meeting for the follow-up interview so that changes could be queried. Questions during the Time 2 interview were similar to those asked during the Time 1 interview, but with an additional focus on the ways in which participants' experiences had changed or remained stable since the previous year, as well as the ways in which each participant made sense of such change or stability. Changes on the SERBAS, e.g. changes in participants' sexual self-identifications, behaviors, attractions, fantasies and response to erotica, were also brought to participants' attention during the focused interview, and their reflections on possible determinants of these changes were elicited.

Three doctoral-level clinicians were trained using the Focused Interview Guide at Time 1, and two additional doctoral-level clinicians were trained at Time 2. All interviewers also conducted practice interviews, which were tape-recorded and reviewed by this writer, who provided feedback and further training as necessary before the study interviews began. The focused interview was coded using the grounded theory method (Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and was then used as the basis for seven global quantitative scores: capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality (CTP), internal pressure for singular sexual orientation (IPSSO), external pressure for singular sexual orientation (EPSSO), community stigma against bisexuality, community support for bisexuality, attachment/sexuality integration, and borderline personality organization (BPO). These seven global scores are defined below; the procedure for

arriving at these scores is described in Data Analyses; and scoring rules specific to each are included in Appendix B.

Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality (CTP) score: A five-point scale (1=low, 5=high) assessing the degree to which the individual describes disparate aspects of their bisexuality as incompatible, and needing to be split off, denied, or dissociated from one another; in conflict, and needing to be changed, fixed, resolved or figured out; or compatible, and able to coexist as seemingly contradictory aspects of each woman's complex bisexual identity. Inter-rater reliability was demonstrated for this score (Kappa=.87). Preliminary support for the construct validity of the capacity to tolerate paradox clinical score was established in a previous study based on analyses of Time 1 data (Levy-Warren, 2013).

Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation (IPSSO) score: A five-point scale (1=low, 5=high) assessing the extent to which the individual describes experiencing internal pressure and/or desire to "choose" or resolve her bisexuality into either heterosexuality or homosexuality; i.e. internal pressure to identify as purely heterosexual or purely homosexual, to have romantic partners of only one sex, and/or to deny or attempt to cut off her attractions to either men or women. Individual instances of such pressure were coded in the focused interview as "pressure for closure: self," or, where appropriate, as "cutting off same-sex relationships/attractions." By contrast, descriptions of feeling comfortable with dual attractions as they are, without needing to resolve them, were coded as "accepting lack of closure: self." The global Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation score assesses both the *number* of coded instances of such pressure for closure, as well as the *degree* of internal pressure the participant reports experiencing (i.e. how severe/rigid it is). Inter-rater reliability was demonstrated for this score (Kappa=.90).

External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation (EPSSO) score: A five-point scale (1=low, 5=high) assessing the extent to which the individual describes experiencing pressure from others for her bisexuality to "resolve" into either heterosexuality or homosexuality; i.e. pressure to identify as purely heterosexual or purely homosexual, to have romantic partners of only one sex, and/or to deny or attempt to cut off her attractions to either men or women. Individual instances of such pressure were coded in the focused interview as "pressure for closure: other." By contrast, the code "accepting lack of closure: other" was used when the participant described instances of others in her life communicating a sense of comfort with her dual attractions as they are, without pressuring her to resolve them. Both are followed by a code indicating which community is being described (i.e. partner, family, friends, GLBT, religion, work, other community, society). The global External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation score assesses both the *number* of communities from which the participant reports experiencing this pressure, as well as the *degree* of pressure the participant reports experiencing from others (i.e. how severe/rigid it is). Inter-rater reliability was demonstrated for this score (Kappa=.87).

Community Support score: A five-point scale (1=low, 5=high) assessing the extent to which the individual describes experiencing support for her bisexual orientation from significant people in her life. Degree of support is signified in the qualitative interviews by the codes "acceptance" (experiences of others as "fine with," but not actively supportive of, the participant's bisexuality), and "support," (experiences of others as actively supportive of her bisexuality), both of which are followed by a code indicating which community is being described (i.e. partner, family, friends, GLBT, religion, work, other community, society). The global Community Support score takes into account both the *number* of communities from which the participant reports receiving acceptance and/or support regarding her bisexual orientation, as

well as the *degree* of support (i.e. "support" vs. "acceptance") she feels from these communities. It also considers the internalization of positive/accepting views of bisexuality (coded as "internal comfort with bisexuality"), as opposed to internalized homophobia or biphobia. Finally, it considers the extent to which others in the participant's life express openness to alternative family structures, e.g. the idea that it is possible to have a family with a woman as well as with a man (coded as "family construction traditional: other"). Inter-rater reliability was demonstrated for this score (Kappa=.87).

Community Stigma score: A five-point scale (1=low, 5=high) assessing the extent to which the individual describes experiencing stigma against her bisexual orientation from significant people in her life. Degree of stigma is signified in the qualitative interviews by the codes "stigma" (experiences involving overt homophobic/biphobic comments from others) and "tolerance" (experiences of microaggressions, such as people outwardly conveying an attitude of "tolerance" but never wanting to meet her partners, referring to female partners as "her friend," etc.), both of which are followed by a code indicating which community is being described (i.e. partner, family, friends, GLBT, religion, work, other community, society). The global Community Stigma score takes into account both the *number* of communities (i.e. partner, family, friends, GLBT, work, religion, other community, society; each coded separately in the qualitative interview) from which the participant reports experiencing stigma regarding her bisexual orientation, as well as the *degree* of stigma (i.e. "tolerance" vs. "stigma") she feels from these communities. It also considers the internalization of stigma against bisexuality and against homosexuality (coded as "internalized biphobia" and "internalized homophobia"), as well as the individual's description of feeling she does not belong in any community because of her bisexual orientation (coded as "not belonging"). Finally, it considers the extent to which others in her life

express the view that she can only have a family with a man (coded as "family construction traditional: other"). Inter-rater reliability was demonstrated for this score (Kappa=.91).

Attachment/Sexuality Integration score: A five-point scale (1=low, 5=high) assessing the extent to which the individual describes a capacity to experience emotional attachment and sexual excitement as integrated within romantic relationships, versus a tendency to split emotional and sexual aspects of relationships by sex of partner (i.e. experiencing sexual excitement with one sex and emotional attachment with the other). Individual instances of these phenomena were coded in the focused interview as "attachment sexuality split" and "attachment sexuality integrated." These codes were further refined by the sex being described, as well as by whether the individual was speaking about her current partner, thus yielding the codes "attachment sexuality split: women," "attachment sexuality integrated: women," "attachment sexuality split: men," "attachment sexuality integrated: men," "attachment sexuality split: partner," and "attachment sexuality integrated: partner." The global Attachment/Sexuality Integration score assesses both the *degree* to which attachment and sexuality are described as split versus integrated, as well as the *number* of relationships in which the two are described as split vs. integrated. Inter-rater reliability was demonstrated for this score (Kappa=.82).

Borderline personality organization (BPO): Each participant was classified according to the presence or absence of a borderline personality organization (BPO). Defenses were coded throughout the focused interviews, including primitive defenses of splitting, idealization, denigration, projection[3] and identity diffusion that are associated with borderline personality

[3] Projection was coded less frequently in the interviews than was splitting, given that it is more difficult to reliably identify when an individual is projecting his/her own thoughts and feelings onto others without a more detailed understanding of the individual him/herself, and what "belongs" to him/her versus to others. Such an understanding would generally take more time to develop than was afforded by the present study.

organization in the literature (e.g. Kernberg 1975). For the purpose of this study, a borderline personality organization "case" was operationalized as a participant whose focused interview included at least 10 coded instances of these primitive defenses; whose overall clinical presentation was independently judged by two doctoral-level clinicians (Kappa=.93) to be organized at a borderline level according to the clinical characteristics described by Kernberg (1975); and, as a validity check, who received an average differentiation-relatedness score of no higher than 6 on the Object Relations Inventory. Using this method, 9 out of the 40 participants who returned at Time 2 were classified as having a borderline personality organization. It should be noted that the term "borderline personality organization" is used here to describe a clinical impression derived from qualitative data. As no formal psychiatric interview or objective measure of personality disorders was given, participants classified as having a borderline personality organization for the purposes of this study would not necessarily meet full criteria for Borderline Personality Disorder as outlined in the DSM-V.

Data Analyses

Qualitative data were recorded, transcribed, and uploaded to the qualitative coding program Atlas.ti. A manual for coding the focused interviews was developed using the grounded theory method (Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The complete coding manual is included in Appendix B. Two doctoral-level clinicians were trained in this coding system, which they utilized to code the focused interviews.

After all focused interviews were coded, seven global scores were derived from these codes (see Methods for further detail regarding these scores): Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation (IPSSO), External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation (EPSSO),

Community Stigma Against Bisexuality, Community Support for Bisexuality, Attachment/ Sexuality Integration, Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality (CTP), and Borderline Personality Organization (BPO). Each global score was designed to capture key themes of interest from the qualitative interview, and to allow this information to be quantified and integrated into subsequent quantitative analyses. Scoring rules were developed for each global score (see Appendix B), and two doctoral-level clinicians were trained in their use. Using these scoring rules, both clinicians assigned each participant a numerical score from 1 to 5 along each of these domains, with the exception of borderline personality organization, which was scored as a dichotomous variable.

Inter-rater reliability was established for each of these variables through a comparison of scores. Both clinicians' global clinical scores for all participants were within one point of one another, and where there was a discrepancy, consensus was reached through discussion. Cohen's Kappa coefficient was calculated for each global score in order to assess inter-rater reliability. As noted above, inter-rater agreement was demonstrated for all seven variables (Landis & Loch, 1977).

ORI data were scored using the Differentiation-Relatedness scale (Diamond et al, 1991/2009), which rates the degree to which representations of self and other reflect both cohesiveness/ integration and reciprocal relatedness. ORI scoring was conducted by two doctoral-level clinicians who completed an in-depth training in the Differentiation-Relatedness scoring system, and who achieved inter-rater reliability (Kappa=0.81).

Data regarding participants' sexual self-identifications, behaviors, attractions, fantasies and response to erotica were collected at both Time 1 and Time 2 using the SERBAS. A principal components analysis was conducted examining the relationship between attractions,

fantasies and response to erotica, and at both Time 1 and Time 2 the three variables were found to comprise a single factor. As a result, a new variable, Mean Attractions, was calculated by averaging each participant's ratings of their sexual attractions, fantasies and response to erotica about/towards men versus women over the past six months. Interestingly, while Mean Attractions demonstrated good reliability at Time 2 (Chronbach's alpha=.87), it demonstrated poor reliability at Time 1 (Chronbach's alpha=.58). This indicates that, on average, participants' self-reported attractions, fantasies and erotica were more congruent at Time 2 than at Time 1. This finding is discussed further in Results.

SERBAS data were then analyzed for degree and direction of change over time in sexual self-identifications, behaviors, and attractions (using the Mean Attractions score described above) from Time 1 to Time 2. Change in sexual self-identifications was calculated by assigning a dichotomous score (i.e. "change" vs. "no change") to each participant based on whether she provided a different description of her sexual identity at Time 2 than at Time 1, choosing between the categories straight, gay/lesbian, bisexual, or "other." In order to calculate change in sexual attractions and sexual behaviors, Time 1 attractions were regressed on Time 2 attractions, and Time 1 behaviors were regressed on Time 2 behaviors. The residual was saved in each of these regressions, yielding residualized change scores centered on the mean.

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis) were calculated for all variables, and all variables were found to be normally distributed, with the exception of the General Severity Index (GSI) at Time 1. Time 1 GSI was highly skewed due to one outlier, Case 10, who had an unusually high score, indicating high psychological distress. This outlier was winsorized (i.e. its value was changed to the value of the next-highest score) in order to create normal distribution of data. The focused interview for Case 10 was examined to identify factors

that may have contributed to her elevated distress, revealing that this participant had recently been hospitalized for depression and was still recovering from this experience.

Descriptive statistics were also calculated separately for two sub-groups of the sample, those who were classified as having a borderline personality organization (BPO) and those who were not. All variables were normally distributed for both sub-groups, with two exceptions. First, community support at Time 1 was not normally distributed among the BPO group due to the presence of outliers. It was normally distributed among the non-BPO group and among the sample as a whole, however; and it was also normally distributed among the BPO group at Time 2. Second, mean differentiation-relatedness of self and object representations at Time 2 was not normally distributed among the BPO group due to the presence of outliers. It was normally distributed among the non-BPO group and among the sample as a whole, however; and it was also normally distributed among the BPO group at Time 1. Because both of these variables were included in subsequent analyses only for the total sample rather than by personality organization sub-groups, no transformations were deemed necessary to normalize the data.

Relationships between dependent variables and potential socio-demographic covariates of age, race/ethnicity, education, religiosity, and history of sexual abuse were examined. Due to the size of the sample and implications for statistical power, it was decided to dichotomize race/ethnicity into two groups, White (Non-Latina) and Non-White. Participants were also classified into four groups according to degree of educational attainment: GED or less, 2-year undergraduate degree/some college, 4-year undergraduate degree, and graduate degree/some graduate school. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and a Oneway ANOVA were computed to establish whether age, education, or religiosity were significant covariates of any of

the dependent variables. An Independent Samples T-Test was computed to establish whether race/ethnicity or sexual abuse were significant covariates of any of the dependent variables.

Once normal distribution of data was confirmed and covariates were identified, multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to examine relations between hypothesized predictors and outcomes of interest, controlling for socio-demographic covariates that were significantly correlated with each outcome variable. Separate analyses were performed for each independent variable and relevant covariates. Analyses used for each of the seven study hypotheses are listed below:

H1: Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test a model predicting outcomes of interest at Time 2 from Borderline Personality Organization (BPO) at Time 1, controlling for socio-demographic covariates.

H2: Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test a model predicting Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality at Time 2 from predictors of interest at Time 1, controlling for socio-demographic covariates. Hierarchical multiple regression was then used to test a model predicting Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality at Time 2 from Need for Closure Trait at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates. A cross-sectional design was used in this analysis because the Need for Closure Scale (NFCS) was administered only at Time 2.

H3: Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test a model predicting psychological distress and adjustment at Time 2 from hypothesized predictors at Time 1, controlling for socio-demographic covariates.

H4: Linear regression was used to test a model predicting change in sexual attractions and sexual behaviors at Time 2 from Borderline Personality Organization at Time 1, controlling

for socio-demographic covariates. Logarithmic regression was then used to test a model predicting change in sexual self-identification at Time 2 from Borderline Personality Organization at Time 1, controlling for socio-demographic covariates.

H5: Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test a model predicting distress and adjustment outcomes at Time 2 from change in sexual attractions, sexual behavior and sexual self-identification at Time 2.

H6: Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test a model predicting distress and adjustment outcomes at Time 2 from incongruence between attractions and behaviors at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates. A cross-sectional design was chosen rather than a longitudinal design for this analysis because it was theorized that incongruence between attractions and behaviors might be time-sensitive, and thus its association with distress and adjustment should be analyzed at one point in time.

H7: Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test a model predicting distress and adjustment outcomes at Time 2 from the interaction between Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality at Time 1 and change in sexuality markers (i.e. attractions, behaviors, and sexual self-identification) at Time 2.

Analyses were examined both for statistical significance at the $p<.05$ level, and for effect size, where a Beta value of .1 indicates a small effect size, a Beta value of .3 indicates a medium effect size, and a Beta value of .5 indicates a large effect size (Cohen, 1988).

After all hypotheses were tested, exploratory post-hoc analyses were conducted to examine additional relationships of interest. These post-hoc analyses are described and presented in the Results section.

After all quantitative analyses were complete, qualitative data were revisited in order to elaborate on patterns identified through quantitative analyses, and also to highlight additional dynamics from the focused interviews that stood out as especially salient and clinically rich. In particular, participants' experiences of change over time in sexual attractions towards men versus women, and their reflections on possible causes and effects of such change, were examined. In addition, the theme of attachment/ sexuality integration (i.e. the degree to which participants described emotional attachment and sexual excitement as integrated within romantic relationships with men and women, versus the extent to which these were experienced as split by gender of partner) was explored in greater depth.

QUANTITATIVE AND MIXED-METHODS RESULTS

Demographic characteristics of sample

Fifty women ages 26 to 36 participated at Time 1 (M=29.6; SD 3.2), and 40 of these women returned to participate at Time 2 (M=30.8, SD=3.1). Full demographic characteristics of the sample are reported below in Table 1.

At both Time 1 and Time 2, a majority of participants self-identified as bisexual (62.5% at Time 1, 50% at Time 2) or as "other" (25% at Time 1, 30% at Time 2), while a few identified as straight (10% at Time 1, 17.5% at Time 2) or as lesbian (2.5% at Time 1 and Time 2). Participants who self-identified as "other" were asked to elaborate on this response. Common responses included alternative self-identifications as "queer;" descriptions of being attracted "to the person, not their gender;" objections to the binary conception of sexuality implied by the term "bisexual;" beliefs that "bisexuality" implied equal attractions to both men and women, which did not fit with participants' own experiences; perceptions that the term "bisexual" did not accurately capture participants' experiences of their desire as shifting over time; and references to a general dislike for "labels."

With regard to current relationship status, at Time 2, 50% of participants described themselves as single, 27.5% as dating (with a nearly even split between those who reported having male vs. female partners), 20% as involved in a committed relationship, marriage or civil union, and 2.5% as involved in multiple romantic relationships. Slightly over one quarter of participants (27.5%) were currently living with a romantic partner.

Also of note, over half of participants (57.5%) reported having been victims of rape or sexual abuse during their lifetimes.

Table 1. *Demographic Characteristics of Sample (N=40) at Time 2.*

Demographic Variable	M	SD	n (%)
Age at Time 2	30.8	3.1	40 (100%)
Sexual Self-Identification at Time 1			
Lesbian			1 (2.5%)
Bisexual			25 (62.5%)
Straight			4 (10%)
Other			10 (25%)
Sexual Self-Identification at Time 2			
Lesbian			1 (2.5%)
Bisexual			20 (50%)
Straight			7 (17.5%)
Other			12 (30%)
Current Relationship Status			
Single			20 (50%)
Girlfriend			5 (12.5%)
Boyfriend			6 (15%)
Committed partnership/Marriage/Civil Union			8 (20%)
Multiple romantic relationships			1 (2.5%)
Living with Partner			
Yes			11 (27.5%)
No			29 (72.5%)
Separated/divorced			
Yes			5 (12.5%)
No			35 (97.5%)
History of Sexual Abuse			
Yes			23 (57.5%)
Before age 13			*14 (35%)*
After age 13			*11 (27.5%)*
Since Time 1			*3 (7.5%)*
No			17 (42.5%)
Race/Ethnicity			
White Non-Latina			18 (45%)
Black/African-American/Caribbean Non-Latina			7 (17.5%)
Latina/Hispanic			7 (17.5%)
Asian (East/South/Southeast Asian)			4 (10%)
Mixed Race			4 (10%)

Demographic Variable	M	SD	n (%)
Education (highest level obtained)	2.9	1.3	40 (100%)
Graduate degree/some graduate school			10 (25%)
4-year undergraduate degree			17 (42.5%)
2-year undergraduate degree/some college			10 (25%)
GED or below			3 (7.5%)
Current Employment			
Full-time			15 (37.5%)
Part-time			13 (32.5%)
Unemployed			12 (30%)
Current Student			
Yes			11 (27.5%)
No			29 (72.5%)
Religion			
None			14 (35%)
Christian: Total			12 (30%)
Catholic			*6 (15%)*
Protestant			*3 (7.5%)*
Other			*3 (7.5%)*
Jewish			2 (5%)
Buddhist			2 (5%)
Agnostic			3 (7.5%)
Other			7 (17.5%)
Religiosity	2.9	.9	
Not at all			12 (30%)
A little bit			8 (20%)
Somewhat			11 (27.5)
Quite a bit			5 (12.5%)
Very			4 (10%)
Current Household Income			
Under $10,000			6 (15%)
$10,000-19,999			5 (12.5%)
$20,000-29,999			8 (20%)
$30,000-39,999			7 (17.5%)
$40,000-49,999			4 (10%)
$50,000-74,999			4 (10%)
$75,000-99,999			3 (7.5%)
$100,000-150,000			2 (5%)
Over $150,000			1 (2.5%)

The sample was diverse with regard to race/ethnicity, educational attainment and current household income. Less than half of participants identified as White Non-Latina (45%), setting this sample apart from the primarily White samples used in much existing research on bisexual women. Women of color comprised 55% of the sample, with 17.5% identifying as Black, African-American, or Caribbean Non-Latina, 17.5% identifying as Latina/Hispanic, 10% identifying as Asian and 10% identifying as Mixed Race.[4] The sample was highly educated, with 25% having completed some or all of a graduate program, 42.5% having completed a 4-year undergraduate degree, 25% having completed some college, and only 7.5% having received a GED or below. Household income ranged from under $10,000 to over $150,000, with most participants earning $20,000-29,000 (20%) or $30,000-39,000 (17.5%) annually. Nearly three quarters of participants were currently employed (37.5% full-time and 32.5% part-time), and 27.5% were currently enrolled as students.

Participants identified with a range of religious traditions and levels of religiosity. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 signifying "very religious" and 5 signifying "not at all religious," the mean level of self-reported religiosity was 2.9 (SD 0.9), with 30% of participants identifying as "not at all religious" and 4% as "very religious."

An independent samples T-test was conducted to determine whether the participants who returned at Time 2 (N=40) and the participants who did not (N=10) differed significantly with regard to demographic factors, sexuality markers, history of sexual abuse, distress (as measured by the GSI), attachment avoidance, attachment anxiety, capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects

[4] Due to the limited sample size, Race/Ethnicity was dichotomized into White and Non-White groups for the purpose of quantitative analyses.

of bisexuality, and/or the presence of a borderline personality organization. The two samples were found to differ only with regard to religiosity ($p<.05$) and attachment anxiety ($p<.01$).

Participants who returned at Time 2 described themselves as less religious on average (M=2.63, SD=1.37) than those who did not return (M=1.80, SD=.92).[5] Indeed, a number of participants who did not return at Time 2 described religious beliefs and/or communities as sources of conflict regarding their bisexuality. It is possible that this conflict contributed to their decisions not to participate in the follow-up interview. In addition, participants who returned at Time 2 demonstrated significantly higher levels of attachment anxiety (M=3.84, SD=1.22) than those who did not return (M=2.61, SD=1.37).

No significant differences existed between the two groups on any other variables. The 40 women who comprise the sample of this longitudinal study can therefore be considered representative of the original sample of 50 women who participated at Time 1, with the caveat that those who returned displayed a lower level of religiosity and a higher level of attachment anxiety at Time 1 than those who did not.

Descriptive statistics

The reliability and distribution of variables at both Time 1 and Time 2 are reported below, in Table 2. All measures were shown to have a high degree of reliability, with the exception of Mean Sexual Attractions at Time 1.

Reliability of Mean Sexual Attractions

[5] Religiosity was measured on a 1-5 likert scale, where 1=very religious and 5=not at all religious.

As reported in Methods (above), a principal components analysis indicated that sexual attractions, fantasies and response to erotica about/towards men versus women made up a single factor at both Time 1 and Time 2, and thus the three components were averaged to yield the variable Mean Attractions. While Mean Attractions at Time 2 demonstrated good reliability (Chronbach's alpha=.87), Mean Attractions at Time 1 was poor (Chronbach's alpha=.58). In other words, on average, individual participants' self-reported sexual attractions, fantasies and response to erotica were more congruent at Time 2 than at Time 1, when they showed a higher degree of variability.

This finding is notable in itself, as it suggests that, at least among this sample of bisexual women, different aspects of sexual attractions may be spread broadly across the Kinsey scale even at a single point in time. In fact, very few participants self-reported identical ratings of their sexual attractions, fantasies and response to erotica at either Time 1 or Time 2. In order to better understand this incongruence, when participants provided different ratings of these three aspects of sexual attractions they were asked to reflect on this incongruence in the focused interview. For example, if a woman stated that she was sexually attracted to "both men and women" (score point 3), that she fantasized about "almost always men, rarely women" (score point 5), and that she felt aroused by erotic imagery featuring "almost always women, rarely men" (score point 1), she was asked to elaborate on her understanding of these three distinct responses.

Table 2. *Distribution of Variables for Total Sample (N=40).*

Variable	Time 1				Time 2			
	M	*SD*	n	r_{xx}	*M*	*SD*	n	r_{xx}
Psychological Symptoms	.56	.42	40	.94	.61	.50	40	.95
Positive Affect	--	--	--	--	30.10	8.9	40	.91
Negative Affect	--	--	--	--	19.25	7.53	40	.89
Self-Esteem	--	--	--	--	20.50	5.52	40	.90
Attachment Avoidance	3.03	1.15	40	.91	3.02	1.19	40	.90
Attachment Anxiety	3.84	1.22	40	.93	3.81	1.41	40	.95
Need for Closure Trait	--	--	--	--	153.38	21.68	40	.83
Need for Closure: Order	--	--	--	--	40.40	9.10	40	.80
Need for Closure: Predictability	--	--	--	--	29.20	6.97	40	.74
Need for Closure: Decisiveness	--	--	--	--	25.45	7.60	40	.83
Mean Sexual Attractions [a]	2.82	1.07	40	.58	2.69	1.46	39	.87
Sexual Behavior [a]	4.74	1.99	34	--	4.29	2.04	38	--
Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality [b]	3.15	.98	40	.87	3.20	.99	40	.87
Internal Pressure for Singular S.O. [b]	2.45	1.18	40	.90	2.43	1.28	40	.90
External Pressure for Singular S.O. [b]	2.65	1.17	40	.87	2.60	1.26	40	.87
Community Support for Bisexuality [b]	2.75	1.17	40	.87	2.80	1.22	40	.87
Community Stigma against Bisexuality [b]	2.63	1.22	40	.91	2.68	1.40	40	.91
Attachment/Sexuality Integration [b]	3.38	.81	40	.82	3.40	.90	40	.82
Mean Differentiation-Relatedness of Self & Object Representations [c]	6.45	.72	40	.81	6.28	.69	40	.81
Mean Differentiation-Relatedness of Self as a Sexual Being [c]	6.15	.80	40	.81	6.00	.90	40	.81

Note: T1 GSI score for Case 10 was winsorized in order to create normal distribution of data.
[a] Measured using 0-6 scale, where 0=exclusively homosexual and 6=exclusively heterosexual.
[b] Measured using 1-5 scale, where 1=low and 5=high.
[c] Measured using 1-10 scale, where 1=low and 10=high.

Participants explained incongruence between attractions, fantasies and response to erotica in many different ways. However, through analysis of the focused interviews a few themes emerged. First, a number of women described their sexual fantasies, and to a lesser extent their sexual attractions, as shifting according to the gender of their current partner – though these shifts could be either concordant or complementary. Following a concordant pattern, some women spoke about fantasizing primarily about men when they were with a male partner, and women when they were with a female partner. Following a complementary pattern, some women described fantasizing primarily about people of the opposite gender of their current partner, which many described as a way of keeping the "other side" of their sexualities alive in the context of a monogamous relationship. In general, participants tended to describe their internal fantasy lives as more fluid, changeable, and affected by relationships and external circumstances than their attractions and response to erotica, which most women described as more stable over time.

Another pattern that emerged involved the fact that, on average, women described their internal fantasy lives as skewed in a more heterosexual direction than their response to erotica, which was skewed in a more homosexual direction. This pattern was especially pronounced at Time 1, when the mean rating of sexual fantasies was 3.23 (SD=1.58) and the mean rating of response to erotica was 2.33 (SD=1.53). This discrepancy decreased slightly at Time 2, when the mean rating of sexual fantasies was 2.90 (SD=1.74) and the mean rating of response to erotica was 2.24 (SD=1.57), but was still notable. A paired-samples T-Test was performed to compare participants' mean ratings of their sexual fantasies about men versus women to their mean ratings of their response to erotica about men versus women, and these factors were found to differ significantly ($p<.01$) at both Time 1 and Time 2.

Many women explained this discrepancy by referring to the differences between commonly available imagery of women versus men, and to a culturally-located experience of women's bodies as objects of visual desire, which some participants contrasted with a more internal experience of tactile desire for men's bodies. For example, participant 47 reflected on her fantasies about men and her arousal by images of women in the following way:

> I don't know what it is, like, visually; perhaps it's that there happen to be more images of sexy women around then sexy men…When I think about being with people of both sexes I tend to get more aroused when I think of actually, like, touching a man, but more so, like, seeing a woman's body. 0:39:04.5 So perhaps I need, like, the physical man there to be aroused, but I don't know, I'm not a psychologist but this might have something to do with the social conditioning of the amount of images that are around...You would know more than I how valid that is. 0:39:27.2 *(I: So your attractions to men feel more tactile, and your attractions to women feel more visual?)* Yeah, like if I see an image of a man I wanna touch it, but I don't necessarily feel like that with an image of a woman. It's arousing, but it doesn't necessarily make me feel like I want to be tactile with it. 0:39:52.9

This was by no means a universal experience, as other participants spoke about feeling aroused visually by men and tactilely by women, while still others made no distinction between visual and tactile arousal by either gender. However, the theme of "more images of sexy women than sexy men" was a common refrain that likely reflects cultural as well as internal factors, for example the fact that much explicitly erotic imagery is manufactured with male viewers in mind, as well as the fact that imagery of beautiful women (e.g. in fashion and "women's" magazines) is marketed to female audiences as objects of identification and aspiration. Many participants commented on these differences and on the ways in which they colored their internal erotic lives.

As to the higher degree of congruence between attractions, fantasies and response to erotica at Time 2, there are a number of possible explanations for this phenomenon. First, it might represent a developmental process, with women tending towards greater congruence between disparate aspects of their sexualities as they mature. As participants spanned a ten-year

age range, however, and as only 12-14 months elapsed between interviews, developmental processes likely do not fully account for this shift.

Second, the higher congruence between attractions, fantasies and response to erotica at Time 2 might reflect a desire among participants to reduce any cognitive dissonance that verbalizing incongruence among different aspects of their sexual attractions might cause, and/or to present an increased sense of self-consistency. Participants who returned for a second interview would have realized, based on their first interviews, that they would be asked about multiple aspects of their sexualities, and also that they would be asked to elaborate on areas of incongruence. Interestingly, at Time 1, many participants expressed surprise when incongruence between different aspects of their sexual attractions was reflected back to them. This suggests that participants may not have been fully aware of the multiplicity that their Kinsey ratings conveyed. If having this multiplicity brought to their awareness caused any dissonance or discomfort following the first interview, it is possible that participants may have been primed, on either a conscious or unconscious level, to provide more congruent responses at Time 2.

Change in sexuality markers from Time 1 to Time 2

Data regarding sexual attractions, behaviors, and self-identifications were collected both at Time 1 and Time 2, and analyses were conducted in order to quantify the extent to which the sample demonstrated change over time in these factors. With regard to sexual self-identification, 30% of participants provided a different descriptor of their sexual identity at Time 2 than they had at Time 1, choosing from the categories straight, lesbian, bisexual or other (see Table 3). Of the 12 women who changed their sexual self-identification at Time 2, 7 had identified as bisexual at Time 1, but identified either as straight (3 women) or as other (4 women) at Time 2. The

remaining 5 women each followed a different pattern: from other to straight, from other to bisexual, from other to lesbian, from straight to bisexual, and from lesbian to other.

Table 3. *Distribution of Change in Sexual Self-Identification at Time 2 for Total Sample (N=40).*

Variable	Time 2	
	n	%
Change in Sexual Self-Identification at T2 (Value of 1)	12	30
No Change in Sexual Self-Identification at T2 (Value of 0)	28	70

Note: Participants indicated whether they self-identified as Straight, Gay/Lesbian, Bisexual, or Other. Participants whose sexual self-identification changed at Time 2 were assigned a value of 1; those who did not were assigned a value of 0.

In order to calculate change in sexual attractions and sexual behaviors, Time 2 attractions were regressed on Time 1 attractions, and Time 2 behaviors were regressed on Time 1 behaviors. The residual was saved in each of these regressions, yielding residualized change scores centered on the mean. As shown in Table 4, the standard deviation for residualized change in sexual attractions was 1.12, and the standard deviation for residualized change in sexual behaviors was 1.53. With regard to sexual attractions, some participants self-reported changes of up to 2.33 points on the Kinsey scale in a homosexual direction, and up to 2.58 points in a heterosexual direction. With regard to sexual behaviors, some participants self-reported changes of up to 3.36 points on the Kinsey scale in a homosexual direction, and up to 3.05 points in a heterosexual direction. Residualized change scores were normally distributed for both sexual attractions and sexual behaviors, with minimal skewness in either a heterosexual or homosexual direction.

Table 4. *Distribution of Residualized Change in Sexual Attractions and Behaviors at Time 2 for Total Sample (N=40).*

Variable	Time 2				
	M	*SD*	Min	Max	*N*
Residualized Change in Mean Sexual Attractions at T2	0	1.12	-2.33	2.58	39
Residualized Change in Sexual Behavior at T2	0	1.53	-3.36	3.05	34

Note: Residualized change scores are centered on the mean, thus the mean is zero. Scores above zero represent change in a heterosexual direction; scores below zero represent change in a homosexual direction. Sexual Attractions and Sexual Behaviors were originally measured using 0-6 scale, where 0=exclusively homosexual and 6=exclusively heterosexual.

Taken together, these data support the idea that a moderate degree of change over time in sexuality markers may be relatively common among bisexual women. Further, this change extends not only to behaviors, which would be expected to change over time among a sample attracted to both men and women, or sexual self-identifications, which are consciously chosen and may shift in response to external as well as internal factors, but also to sexual attractions, which are understood to be the most stable markers of an individual's internal sexual orientation. It is possible that such self-reported changes in attractions may be biased by a desire for congruence between attractions, behaviors and self-identifications, such that changes in behaviors and self-identifications lead the individual to describe her attractions in a congruent manner. The fact that few participants' Kinsey ratings of their sexual attractions, behaviors and self-identifications were congruent across all three domains suggests that self-reported change over time in sexual attractions cannot be fully explained through a desire for congruence, however. The question of whether such change affects psychological distress and adjustment among this population is examined below, in Hypotheses 5 and 7.

Difference in outcomes by personality organization

An independent samples T-test was conducted to determine whether participants who were identified as having a borderline personality organization (n=9) and those who were not (n=31) differed significantly with regard to any outcome variables. Results of this analysis, as well as the distribution of outcome variables for both groups, are presented in Table 5. No significant differences were found between the two groups with regard to psychological symptoms as measured by the BSI. This finding is as expected because the BSI assesses Axis I symptomatology, which does not necessarily overlap with the Axis II symptomatology generally displayed by individuals organized at a borderline level. Participants in the BPO group did demonstrate significantly lower self-esteem, lower capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality, higher internal and external pressure for singular sexual orientation, lower community support, higher community stigma, and lower attachment/sexuality integration than participants with a higher level of personality organization. Sexual behavior did not differ significantly between the two groups, nor did change from Time 1 to Time 2 in either sexual self-identifications or sexual attractions. The BPO group demonstrated significantly lower differentiation-relatedness of self and object representations, however this is to be expected as a score of 6 or lower on the ORI was used as a validity check for BPO cases.

Table 5. *Difference in Outcomes by Personality Organization.*

	Borderline Personality Organization		Non-Borderline Personality Organization			
Variable	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	t	df
Psychological Symptoms at T1	.65	.48	.53	.40	.73	38
Psychological Symptoms at T2	.76	.53	.56	.50	1.03	38
Positive Affect at T2	27.56	10.18	30.84	8.51	-.98	38
Negative Affect at T2	20.11	7.04	19.00	7.76	.39	38
Self-Esteem at T2	15.56	6.29	21.94	4.43	-3.45**	38
Attachment Avoidance at T1	3.19	1.15	2.99	1.17	.44	38
Attachment Avoidance at T2	3.45	1.38	2.90	1.13	1.23	38
Attachment Anxiety at T1	3.65	1.50	3.89	1.14	-.53	38
Attachment Anxiety at T2	4.44	1.28	3.62	1.41	1.56	38
Need for Closure Trait at T2	163.22	24.78	150.52	20.24	1.58	38
Sexual Behavior at T1	4.33	2.66	4.82	1.87	-.54	38
Sexual Behavior at T2	3.71	2.36	4.42	1.98	-.82	38
Presence/Absence of Change in Sexual Self-Identifications at T2	.33	.50	.29	.46	.24	38
Residualized Change in Mean Sexual Attractions at T2	-.34	.99	.10	1.15	-1.05	37
Residualized Change in Sexual Behaviors at T2	-.06	1.63	.01	1.54	-.10	32
Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality (CTP) at T1	2.11	.93	3.45	.768	-4.40***	38
Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality (CTP) at T2	2.00	.71	3.55	.77	-5.41***	38

Cont.

Table 5. *Difference in Outcomes based on Personality Organization, Continued.*

	Borderline Personality Organization		Non-Borderline Personality Organization			
Variable	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	t	df
Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation (IPSSO) at T1	3.22	1.20	2.23	1.09	2.37*	38
Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation (IPSSO) at T2	3.33	.87	2.16	1.27	2.59*	38
External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation (IPSSO) at T1	3.67	1.00	2.35	1.05	3.33**	38
External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation (IPSSO) at T2	3.67	.87	2.29	1.19	3.22**	38
Community Support for Bisexuality at T1 [a]	1.56	1.01	3.10	.978	--	--
Community Support for Bisexuality at T2	1.78	1.09	3.10	1.11	-3.16**	38
Community Stigma against Bisexuality at T1	4.00	1.12	2.23	1.15	4.11***	38
Community Stigma against Bisexuality at T2	4.00	1.12	2.29	1.24	3.71**	38
Attachment/Sexuality Integration at T1	2.67	.71	3.58	.72	-3.37**	38
Attachment/Sexuality Integration at T2	2.56	.73	3.65	.80	-3.67**	38
Mean Differentiation-Relatedness of Self and Object Representations (ORI) at T1	5.74	.64	6.66	.60	-3.98***	38
Mean Differentiation-Relatedness of Self and Object Representations (ORI) at T2	5.72	.55	6.44	.65	--	--
Mean Differentiation-Relatedness of Self as a Sexual Being (ORI-SASB) at T1	5.22	.67	6.42	.62	-5.02***	38
Mean Differentiation-Relatedness of Self as a Sexual Being (ORI-SASB) at T2[b]	5.33	.87	6.19	.83	-2.70*	38

Note: As a Mean Differentiation-Relatedness score ≤6 was used as a validity check for assignment to the BPO group, BPO and Mean Differentiation-Relatedness are highly correlated by definition.

[a] Community Support at T1 was not normally distributed among the BPO group due to outliers. It *was* normally distributed among the non-BPO group, the total sample, and the BPO group at T2.

[b] Mean Differentiation-Relatedness at T2 was not normally distributed among the BPO group due to outliers. It *was* normally distributed among the non-BPO group, the total sample, and the BPO group at T1.

Covariate Testing

Overview: Age was not a significant covariate for any of the dependent variables. Education, religiosity, race/ethnicity, and sexual abuse history were found to be significant covariates for some, but not all, of the dependent variables. These results are elaborated below.

Age: A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to establish whether age was a significant covariate of any of the DVs. No significant relationships were found. See Table 6.

Education: Participants were classified into four groups according to degree of educational attainment: GED or less, 2-year undergraduate degree/some college, 4-year undergraduate degree, and graduate degree/some graduate school. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to establish whether education level was a significant covariate of any of the dependent variables. Participants with higher levels of education experienced lower levels of external pressure for singular sexual orientation (i.e. pressure from others for their sexuality to be "resolved" into either heterosexuality or homosexuality), and were more likely to report change in their sexual self-identification at Time 2. See Table 6.

Religiosity: A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to establish whether religiosity was a significant covariate of any of the dependent variables. Participants with higher levels of religiosity experienced higher levels of internal pressure for singular sexual orientation, external pressure for singular sexual orientation, and community stigma against bisexuality. See Table 6.

Race/Ethnicity (White vs. Non-White): Due to the size of the sample and implications for statistical power, it was decided to dichotomize race/ethnicity into two groups, White (Non-Latina) and Non-White. An Independent Samples T-Test was computed to establish whether

race/ethnicity was a significant covariate of any of the dependent variables. Non-white participants were found to have more psychological symptoms, lower self-esteem, lower capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality, higher external pressure for singular sexual orientation, lower community support for bisexuality, and higher community stigma against bisexuality. See Table 7.

Sexual Abuse: An Independent Samples T-Test was computed to establish whether sexual abuse (in either childhood or adulthood) was a significant covariate of any of the dependent variables. Participants with histories of sexual abuse experienced more psychological symptoms, higher levels of external pressure for singular sexual orientation, and higher levels of community stigma against bisexuality. See Table 8.

Table 6. *Relationship between Age, Education, Religiosity and Outcomes (N=40).*

Outcome Variables	*r*		
	Age	Education	Religiosity
Psychological Symptoms at T2	.17	-.21	-.19
Positive Affect at T2	-.17	.07	.18
Negative Affect at T2	.08	-.06	-.15
Self-Esteem at T2	.04	.16	-.04
Attachment Avoidance at T2	-.10	.02	.05
Attachment Anxiety at T2	-.22	.18	-.08
Need for Closure Trait at T2	.08	-.19	.17
Mean Sexual Attractions at T2[a]	-.23	.03	.05
Sexual Behavior at T2 [a]	-.11	.13	.19
Change in Sexual Self-Identifications at T2	.03	.42**	-.18
Residualized Change in Mean Sexual Attractions at T2	-.21	-.10	.21
Residualized Change in Sexual Behaviors at T2	-.12	-.18	.19
Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality at T2 [b]	.05	.30	-.28
Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation at T2 [b]	-.15	-.17	.35*
External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation at T2 [b]	-.15	-.33*	.38*
Community Support for Bisexuality at T2 [b]	-.14	.30	-.25
Community Stigma against Bisexuality at T2 [b]	-.01	-.29	.37*
Attachment/Sexuality Integration at T2	-.07	.27	-.05

[a] Measured using 0-6 scale, where 0=exclusively homosexual and 6=exclusively heterosexual.
[b] Measured using 1-5 scale, where 1=low and 5=high.
* p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 7. *Difference in Outcomes based on Race, White (N=18) vs. Non-White (N=22).*

	White		Non-White			
Variable	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	t	df
Psychological Symptoms at T2	.38	.24	.79	.59	2.96**	29.19
Positive Affect at T2	31.94	8.55	28.59	9.05	-1.20	38
Negative Affect at T2	17.33	4.80	20.82	8.99	1.57	33.21
Self-Esteem at T2	23.39	4.33	18.14	5.33	-3.37**	38
Attachment Avoidance at T2	2.59	1.15	3.37	1.14	2.15	38
Attachment Anxiety at T2	3.50	1.38	4.06	1.41	1.25	38
Need for Closure Trait at T2	148.44	20.99	157.41	21.87	1.31	38
Mean Sexual Attractions at T2 [a]	2.73	1.34	2.67	1.58	-.12	37
Sexual Behavior at T2 [a]	5.00	1.78	5.77	2.27	1.18	38
Presence/Absence of Change in Sexual Self-Identification at T2	.33	.49	.27	.46	-.41	38
Residualized Change in Mean Attractions at T2	-.22	1.21	.17	1.04	1.07	37
Residualized Change in Behavior at T2	-.12	1.74	.10	1.36	.41	32
Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality at T2 [b]	3.61	.70	2.86	1.08	-2.53*	38
Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation at T2 [b]	2.00	1.24	2.77	1.23	1.97	38
External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation at T2 [b]	2.06	.87	3.05	1.36	2.67*	38
Community Support for Bisexuality at T2 [b]	3.50	.92	2.23	1.15	-3.79**	38
Community Stigma against Bisexuality at T2 [b]	1.89	.96	3.32	1.39	3.69**	38
Attachment/Sexuality Integration at T2 [b]	3.61	.92	3.23	.87	-1.36	38

Note: White coded as 1, Non-White coded as 0.
[a] Measured using 0-6 scale, where 0=exclusively homosexual and 6=exclusively heterosexual.
[b] Measured using 1-5 scale, where 1=low and 5=high.
* p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 8. *Difference in Outcomes based on Sexual Abuse History (N=23) vs. No Sexual Abuse History (N=17).*

	Sexual Abuse History		No Sexual Abuse History			
Variable	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	t	df
Psychological Symptoms at T2	.75	.55	.42	.37	-2.18*	38
Positive Affect at T2	29.30	9.16	31.18	8.64	.65	38
Negative Affect at T2	20.17	7.60	18.00	7.47	-.90	38
Self-Esteem at T2	19.04	5.07	22.47	5.64	1.02	30
Attachment Avoidance at T2	3.06	1.20	1.97	1.22	-.22	38
Attachment Anxiety at T2	3.98	1.42	3.57	1.40	-.93	38
Need for Closure Trait at T2	152.22	22.73	154.94	20.74	.39	38
Mean Sexual Attractions at T2 [a]	2.75	1.64	2.60	1.20	-.31	37
Sexual Behavior at T2 [a]	5.22	2.22	5.71	1.90	.73	38
Presence/Absence of Change in Sexual Self-Identification T1 to T2	.17	.39	.47	.51	2.00	28.58
Residualized Change in Mean Attractions T1 to T2	.13	1.17	-.19	-.19	-.89	37
Residualized Change in Behavior T1 to T2	.00	1.59	.01	1.49	.02	32
Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality at T2 [b]	3.00	1.23	3.47	.72	1.51	38
Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation at T2 [b]	2.74	1.39	2.00	1.00	-1.86	38
External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation at T2 [b]	2.96	1.33	2.12	.99	-2.19*	38
Community Support for Bisexuality at T2 [b]	2.57	1.24	3.12	1.17	1.43	38
Community Stigma against Bisexuality at T2 [b]	3.13	1.36	2.06	1.25	-2.55*	38
Attachment/Sexuality Integration at T2 [b]	3.43	.99	3.35	.79	-.28	38

Note: Sexual abuse history coded as 1, No sexual abuse history coded as 0.
[a] Measured using 0-6 scale, where 0=exclusively homosexual and 6=exclusively heterosexual.
[b] Measured using 1-5 scale, where 1=low and 5=high.
* p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

HYPOTHESES PART I:

Examining the relationship between borderline personality organization, capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality, and predictor/outcome variables

Hypothesis 1 examines the relationship between a number of variables of interest and borderline personality organization at Time 1. Hypothesis 2 examines the relationship between these same variables and capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 2, which is designated as the outcome variable. In addition to these hypothesis-driven analyses, two exploratory analyses were also conducted on a post-hoc basis in order to examine the relationship between borderline personality organization at Time 1 and *change* in outcomes of interest at Time 2, and in order to examine the relationship between three individual subscales of the Need for Closure Scale (desire for order, desire for predictability, and decisiveness) and capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 2. These post-hoc analyses are reported below, as they followed from the results of Hypotheses 1 and 2.

Hypothesis 1: Predicting outcomes at Time 2 from borderline personality organization at Time 1

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test a model predicting outcomes of interest at Time 2 from borderline personality organization (BPO) at Time 1, controlling for socio-demographic covariates. In order to preserve sufficient statistical power, each analysis controlled only for those covariates that were found to be significantly associated with a given dependent variable. Results are presented in Table 9. As hypothesized, individuals with borderline personality organizations demonstrated lower capacities to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality and lower levels of attachment/sexuality integration, both with large effect sizes

(β=-.59 and β=-.51, respectively), and did not differ from individuals without borderline personality organizations with regard to need for closure trait. Contrary to hypothesized relationships, individuals with and without borderline personality organizations did not differ from each other with regard to either attachment avoidance or attachment anxiety, both of which had been hypothesized to be higher among individuals with borderline personality organizations. In addition, individuals with borderline personality organizations reported higher levels of internal and external pressure for singular sexual orientation and community stigma against bisexuality, and also reported lower levels of community support for bisexuality, each with medium effect sizes (see β values below). These variables had been expected not to differ significantly between individuals with and without borderline personality organizations.

Hypothesis 1

Table 9. Relationship between Borderline Personality Organization (BPO) at Time 1 and Outcomes at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=40).

Predictor at Time 1	Outcomes at Time 2								
Borderline Personality Organization	Attachment Avoidance[a]	Attachment Anxiety	Need for Closure Trait	Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation[b]	External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation[c]	Community Support for Bisexuality[d]	Community Stigma against Bisexuality[e]	Attachment/ Sexuality Integration	Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality[f]
b	.12	.25	.25	.36*	.37*	-.35*	.41**	-.51**	-.59***
B	.34	.82	12.71	1.07	1.09	-1.01	1.34	-1.09	-1.39
SEB	.45	.52	8.06	.43	.42	.38	.41	.30	.30

Note: BPO coded as 1, non-BPO coded as 0. SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
Note: In each analysis, controlled for covariates that were significantly associated with the relevant dependent variable (listed below):
[a] Controlled for Race
[b] Controlled for Religiosity
[c] Controlled for Race, Education, Religiosity, and Sex Abuse
[d] Controlled for Race
[e] Controlled for Race, Religiosity, and Sex Abuse
[f] Controlled for Race and Education
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Further insights from focused interviews: The focused interviews of participants who were classified as having borderline personality organizations were examined in order to shed some light on the unexpected relationships outlined above, i.e. with internal and external pressure for singular sexual orientation, and with community support for and stigma against bisexuality. A number of patterns were identified.

The first pattern has to do with the relationship between identity diffusion, splitting, and experiences of pressure to resolve one's sexuality into a binary model (i.e. pressure for singular sexual orientation). It was originally expected that BPO participants would not demonstrate elevated levels of pressure for singular sexual orientation relative to their non-BPO counterparts, because while some would likely be more vulnerable to pressures to "choose" between heterosexuality and homosexuality due to their tendency towards splitting, others would deny or avoid such pressures due to their tendency towards identity diffusion. Instead, however, it was found that even those BPO participants who spoke about their sexuality in a markedly diffuse fashion (e.g. participant 51: "I've been both a man and a woman in this life...I don't go by a title. I'm a spiritual being."), appearing to explicitly define themselves against any pressure for closure with regard to their sexuality, in fact also conveyed a desire to resolve their sexuality into a binary model. For example, participant 51 (quoted above) spoke about her thought process after a psychic told her that she would marry a man and have children:

> The universe said that you're gonna be with this man and you're gonna have kids and all this shit, but then I could be so heavily attracted to women, and I'm like, I need to get that out of my system! But I don't want to say that because I don't want women to just get out of my system. That's so rude, like you know, I just wanna be able to like merge with some other, you know what I mean? But I feel like that's gonna happen still (being with a man), and I don't want to resist that if it's meant to happen, because I'm supposed to be with this fucking man eventually. Like excuse my language, but you know what I mean? Because

> society says like you're gonna be with this man. You're gonna be with this man. 0:21:37.9

In this passage the participant's diffuse sense of self appears to make her especially vulnerable to the influence of others' perceptions of and desires for her, in this case transforming a psychic's prediction into something that "the universe said" would happen. She oscillates between a diffuse desire to "merge with some other," and a desire to split off her attractions to women, i.e. to "get that out of (her) system." This oscillating dynamic between diffusion and splitting likely contributed to the elevated levels of pressure for singular sexual orientation experienced by participants with borderline personality organizations.

Second, in keeping with their reliance on splitting as a defense, most BPO participants represented their experiences of community support for and stigma against bisexuality in relatively polarized ways. They tended to describe their communities as either completely supportive of or completely condemning of bisexuality. While attempts were made to take this polarizing tendency into account when assigning scores for community support and stigma, for the most part it was necessary to rely upon participants' own subjective descriptions of their communities' responses to their bisexuality. Thus, extreme scores for community support and stigma, of which there are many within the BPO group, may be influenced not only by objective reality but also by a participant's difficulties in representing relationships in a nuanced or complex fashion, and reliance on splitting as a defense.

Third, it is possible that the above relationships may be bidirectional, i.e. that high levels of internal and external pressure for singular sexual orientation and community stigma against bisexuality, and low levels of community support for bisexuality, may *contribute to* a tendency towards splitting and identity diffusion. If, for example, the individual is constantly told by others in her environment that she must be either heterosexual or homosexual, she may respond

by splitting off her bisexuality in an attempt to stabilize the self, and/or her sense of herself as a sexual being may become increasingly diffuse. Of note, many non-BPO participants described experiencing these same pressures and did not display splitting or identity diffusion, suggesting that those with an underlying borderline personality organization may be more vulnerable to such a response. However, the possibility of bidirectional influence should be considered when interpreting the results of Hypothesis 1.

Post-hoc exploratory analysis: Predicting change in outcomes at Time 2 from borderline personality organization at Time 1: In order to determine whether *change* in outcomes at Time 2 could be predicted from borderline personality organization at Time 1, an exploratory analysis was conducted on a post-hoc basis, using hierarchical multiple regression and controlling for socio-demographic covariates. Results are presented in Table 10. Borderline personality organization at Time 1 was associated with an *increase* in attachment anxiety at Time 2, with a medium effect size (β=.29). Borderline personality organization at Time 1 was also associated with a *decrease* in capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 2, also with a medium effect size (β=-.25). Borderline personality organization was not found to significantly predict change in any other outcome variables.

These findings suggest that those with a borderline personality organization are at risk of becoming less able to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality over time, and are also at risk of developing an increasingly anxious attachment style in relating with romantic partners over time.

Table 10. Relationship between Borderline Personality Organization (BPO) at Time 1 and Change in Outcomes from Time 1 to Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=40).

Predictor at Time 1	Change in Outcomes from Time 1 to Time 2						
Borderline Personality Organization	Attachment Avoidance[a]	Attachment Anxiety	Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation[b]	External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation[c]	Community Stigma against Bisexuality[e]	Attachment/ Sexuality Integration	Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality[f]
b	.10	.29*	.07	.02	-.02	-.09	-.25*
B	.27	.97	.20	.07	-.08	-.20	-.58
SEB	.38	.44	.21	.22	.15	.16	.25

Note: SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
Note: Relationship between BPO and Change in Community Support from Time 1 to Time 2 was not analyzed due to the fact that Community Support was not normally distributed at T1 among the BPO group.
[a] Controlled for Race
[b] Controlled for Religiosity
[c] Controlled for Race, Education, Religiosity, and Sex Abuse
[d] Controlled for Race
[e] Controlled for Race, Religiosity, and Sex Abuse
[f] Controlled for Race and Education
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Hypothesis 2: Predicting capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 2 from predictor variables at Time 1 and Time 2

Predicting capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 2 from predictor variables at Time 1: Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test a model predicting capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 2 from predictors of interest at Time 1, controlling for socio-demographic covariates. Analyses were conducted separately for each independent variable and covariates. Results are presented in Table 11. As hypothesized, capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality was significantly associated with higher levels of community support for bisexuality, attachment/sexuality integration, and differentiation-relatedness of self and object representations and of self as a sexual being, and was significantly associated with lower levels of internal and external pressure for singular sexual orientation and lower levels of community stigma against bisexuality. Each of these relationships demonstrated large effect sizes (see β values below). Contrary to hypothesized relationships, neither attachment avoidance nor attachment anxiety were significantly associated with capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality. An exploratory post-hoc analysis was run to determine whether the interaction between attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were significantly associated with capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality, and again, no significant relationships were identified.

Table 11. *Relationship between Predictors at Time 1 and Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=40).*

	Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality at Time 2		
Predictors at Time 1	β	*B*	*SEB*
Attachment Avoidance	.06	.05	.13
Attachment Anxiety	.11	.09	.12
Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation	-.62***	-.52	.11
External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation	-.65***	-.55	.11
Community Support for Bisexuality	.80***	.68	.11
Community Stigma against Bisexuality	-.74***	-.54	.10
Attachment/Sexuality Integration	.54***	.67	.17
Mean Differentiation-Relatedness: Self, Mother & Father (ORI)	.46**	.63	.19
Differentiation-Relatedness: Self as a Sexual Being (ORI-SASB)	.46**	.57	.17

Note: Controlled for Race in all analyses. Analyses were conducted separately for each independent variable and covariates. SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Predicting capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality from need for closure trait at Time 2: Hierarchical multiple regression was then used to test a model predicting capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 2 from need for closure trait at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates. A cross-sectional design was used in this analysis because the Need for Closure Scale (NFCS) was administered only at Time 2. Results are presented in Table 12. Contrary to hypothesized relationships, there was no significant association between capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality and need for closure trait.

Table 12. *Relationship between Need for Closure Trait at Time 2 and Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=40).*

	Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality at Time 2		
Predictors at Time 2	β	*B*	*SEB*
Need for Closure Trait	-.20	-.01	.01

Post-hoc exploratory analysis: Predicting capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 2 from Need for Closure subscales at Time 2: In order to determine whether capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality could be predicted from any of the individual subscales of the NFCS, an exploratory analysis was conducted on a post-hoc basis, using hierarchical multiple regression and controlling for socio-demographic covariates. Only three subscales of the NFCS (desire for order, desire for predictability, and decisiveness) were used, as the remaining two subscales (closed-mindedness and intolerance of ambiguity) did not demonstrate adequate reliability (see Methods). Results are presented in Table 13. Desire for

predictability was significantly associated with a lower capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality, with a medium effect size (β=-.37). There were no significant relationships between capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality and desire for order or decisiveness.

Table 13. *Relationship between Need for Closure Subscales at Time 2 and Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=40).*

	Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality at Time 2		
Predictors at Time 2	β	*B*	*SEB*
Need for Closure: Desire for Order Subscale	-.24	-.03	.02
Need for Closure: Desire for Predictability Subscale	-.37*	-.05	.02
Need for Closure: Decisiveness Subscale	.21	.03	.02

Note: Controlled for Race in all analyses. SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Of note, items on the desire for predictability subscale center specifically around experiences of discomfort with not knowing what to expect, for example the item, "I don't like to go into a situation without knowing what I can expect from it," and the item, "I don't like to be with people who are capable of unexpected actions." In the focused interview, many participants who described feeling conflicted about their dual attractions pointed to a sustained state of uncertainty about what to expect as a major source of their conflict. In this case, the source of the unpredictability was primarily internal, and had to do with participants' own desires. For example, participants spoke about the anxiety of not knowing when, in the context of a relationship, their desire for the other gender might assert itself, and of having difficulty fully committing to a partner as a result of this fear. These desires were experienced almost as an

outside force that would surprise the participant and compel her towards action. Paradoxically, anxieties about the unpredictability of their desires sometimes led these participants to leave otherwise solid relationships, leaving them faced with an even more unpredictable future. By contrast, participants with a high capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality generally conveyed an understanding of their desires as complex and multiple, and described a recognition of this multiplicity itself as a "predictable" part of their sexual selves, rather than as a potentially destructive outside force.

HYPOTHESES PART II:

Examining the relationship between global scores derived from the focused interview, need for closure trait, and distress and adjustment outcomes

Hypothesis 3, which consists of a number of different analyses as listed below, examines the relationship between global scores derived from the focused interview at Time 1 and distress and adjustment outcomes at Time 2. It also examines the relationship between need for closure trait at Time 2 and distress and adjustment outcomes at Time 2. (A cross-sectional design was used for the latter analysis because the Need for Closure Scale (NFCS) was administered only at Time 2.) In addition to these hypothesis-driven analyses, two exploratory analyses were also conducted on a post-hoc basis in order to examine the relationship between capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 1 and *change* in distress (as measured by the GSI) at Time 2, and in order to examine the relationship between three individual subscales of the NFCS (desire for order, desire for predictability, and decisiveness) and distress and adjustment outcomes at Time 2. These post-hoc analyses are reported below, as they followed from the results of Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 3: Predicting distress and adjustment outcomes at Time 2 from predictor variables at Time 1 and Time 2

Predicting psychological symptoms at Time 2 from global scores derived from focused interview at Time 1: Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test a model predicting psychological distress as measured by the Global Severity Index (GSI) at Time 2 from predictors at Time 1, controlling for socio-demographic covariates. Results are presented in Table 14. Contrary to hypothesized relationships, no significant associations were identified.

Table 14. *Relationship between Predictors at Time 1 and Psychological Symptoms as measured by the Global Severity Index at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=40).*

	Psychological Symptoms at Time 2		
Predictors at Time 1	β	*B*	*SEB*
Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality	-.14	-.07	.09
Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation	.16	.07	.07
External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation	.16	.07	.07
Community Support for Bisexuality	-.09	-.04	.08
Community Stigma against Bisexuality	.05	.02	.07
Attachment/Sexuality Integration	-.14	-.09	.10

Note: Controlled for Race and Sexual Abuse in all analyses. SEB = Standard error of the regression weight. * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Post-hoc exploratory analysis: Predicting change in psychological symptoms at Time 2 from capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 1: In order to determine whether change in psychological distress as measured by the GSI at Time 2 could be predicted

from capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 1, an exploratory analysis was conducted on a post-hoc basis, using hierarchical multiple regression and controlling for socio-demographic covariates. (This analysis was only conducted for the GSI because it was the only measure of distress or adjustment that was administered both at Time 1 and Time 2). Results are presented in Table 15. No significant associations were identified.

Table 15. *Relationship between Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality at Time 1 and Change in Psychological Symptoms from Time 1 to Time 2, controlling for Race and Sexual Abuse (N=40).*

Predictor at T1	Change in Outcomes at T2
Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality	Psychological Symptoms
β	-.11
B	-.06
SEB	.09

Note: SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Predicting positive affect at Time 2 from global scores derived from focused interview at Time 1: Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test a model predicting positive affect at Time 2 from predictors at Time 1, controlling for socio-demographic covariates. Results are presented in Table 16. As hypothesized, community support for bisexuality was significantly associated with higher levels of positive affect, with a medium effect size (β=.37). In addition, two trends were identified. Capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality was significantly associated with higher levels of positive affect (p<.07), with a medium effect size (β=.30), and attachment/sexuality integration was also significantly associated with higher levels of positive affect (p<.06), with a medium effect size (β=.31). Contrary to hypothesized relationships, there were no significant or near-significant associations between positive affect and internal pressure for singular sexual orientation, external pressure for singular sexual orientation, or community stigma against bisexuality.

Table 16. *Relationship between Predictors at Time 1 and Positive Affect at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=40).*

	Positive Affect at Time 2		
Predictors at Time 1	β	*B*	*SEB*
Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality	.30†	2.71	1.41
Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation	-.21	-1.57	1.20
External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation	-.04	-.29	1.23
Community Support for Bisexuality	.37*	2.77	1.15
Community Stigma against Bisexuality	-.09	-.61	1.06
Attachment/Sexuality Integration	.31††	3.37	1.70

Note: SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
† p<.07, †† p<.06, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Predicting negative affect at Time 2 from global scores derived from focused interview at Time 1: Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test a model predicting negative affect at Time 2 from predictors at Time 1, controlling for socio-demographic covariates. Results are presented in Table 17. Contrary to hypothesized relationships, no significant associations were identified.

Table 17. *Relationship between Predictors at Time 1 and Negative Affect at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=40).*

	Negative Affect at Time 2		
Predictors at Time 1	β	*B*	*SEB*
Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality	-.11	-.82	1.25
Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation	.14	.86	1.03
External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation	.09	.57	1.04
Community Support for Bisexuality	-.12	-.78	1.04
Community Stigma against Bisexuality	.12	.66	.90
Attachment/Sexuality Integration	-.17	-1.57	1.49

Note: SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Predicting self-esteem at Time 2 from global scores derived from focused interview at Time 1: Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test a model predicting self-esteem at Time 2 from predictors at Time 1, controlling for socio-demographic covariates. Results are presented in Table 18. As hypothesized, higher self-esteem was significantly associated with higher capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality, higher community support for bisexuality, and higher attachment/sexuality integration, each with a medium effect size (see β values below). In addition, a trend was identified whereby higher levels of internal pressure for singular sexual orientation was significantly associated with lower self-esteem ($p<.06$), with a medium effect size ($\beta=-.29$). Contrary to hypothesized relationships, there were no significant or near-significant associations between self-esteem and external pressure for singular sexual orientation or community stigma against bisexuality.

Table 18. *Relationship between Predictors at Time 1 and Self-Esteem at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=40).*

	Self-Esteem at Time 2		
Predictors at Time 1	β	*B*	*SEB*
Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality	.41**	2.34	.82
Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation	-.29†	-1.34	.69
External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation	-.20	-.94	.73
Community Support for Bisexuality	.41*	1.91	.78
Community Stigma against Bisexuality	-.25	-1.01	.66
Attachment/Sexuality Integration	.37*	2.52	.96

Note: Controlled for Race in all analyses. SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
† p<.06, * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Predicting distress and adjustment outcomes at Time 2 from need for closure trait at Time 2: Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test a model predicting distress, positive affect, negative affect, and self-esteem at Time 2 from need for closure trait at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates. A cross-sectional design was used in this analysis because the Need for Closure Scale (NFCS) was administered only at Time 2. Results are presented in Table 19. Contrary to hypothesized relationships, no significant associations were identified.

Table 19. *Relationship between Need for Closure Trait at Time 2 and Distress/Adjustment Outcomes at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=40).*

Predictor at T2	Outcomes at T2			
Need for Closure Trait	Psychological Symptoms[a]	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Self-Esteem[b]
β	-.10	.08	-.09	.14
B	-.00	.03	-.03	.04
SEB	.00	.06	.06	.04

Note: SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
[a] Controlled for Race and Sexual Abuse
[b] Controlled for Race
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Post-hoc exploratory analysis: Predicting psychological symptoms at Time 2 from need for closure subscales at Time 2: In order to determine whether psychological symptoms as measured by the General Severity Index could be predicted from any of the individual subscales of the NFCS, an exploratory analysis was conducted on a post-hoc basis, using hierarchical multiple regression and controlling for socio-demographic covariates. Only three subscales of the NFCS (desire for order, desire for predictability, and decisiveness) were used, as the remaining

two subscales (closed-mindedness and intolerance of ambiguity) did not demonstrate adequate reliability (see Methods). Results are presented in Table 20. Higher levels of decisiveness were significantly associated with lower levels of psychological symptoms at Time 2, with a medium effect size (β=-.34) No significant associations were identified between psychological symptoms and desire for order or desire for predictability.

Table 20. *Relationship between Need for Closure subscales at Time 1 and Psychological Distress as measured by the Global Severity Index at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=40).*

	Global Severity Index (GSI) at Time 2		
Predictors at Time 2	β	*B*	*SEB*
Need for Closure: Desire for Order Subscale	-.20	-.01	.01
Need for Closure: Desire for Predictability Subscale	-.01	-.00	.01
Need for Closure: Decisiveness Subscale	-.34*	-.02	.01

Note: Controlled for Race and Sexual Abuse in all analyses. SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Post-hoc exploratory analysis: Predicting positive affect at Time 2 from need for closure subscales at Time 2: In order to determine whether positive affect could be predicted from the desire for order, desire for predictability or decisiveness subscales of the NFCS, an exploratory analysis was conducted on a post-hoc basis, using hierarchical multiple regression and controlling for socio-demographic covariates. Results are presented in Table 21. Higher levels of decisiveness were significantly associated with higher levels of positive affect, with a medium effect size (β=.40). No significant associations were identified between positive affect and desire for order or desire for predictability.

Table 21. *Relationship between Need for Closure subscales at Time 2 and Positive Affect at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=40).*

	Positive Affect at Time 2		
Predictors at Time 2	β	*B*	*SEB*
Need for Closure: Desire for Order	.16	.16	.16
Need for Closure: Desire for Predictability	-.11	-.14	.21
Need for Closure: Decisiveness	.40*	.47	.17

Note: SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Post-hoc exploratory analysis: Predicting negative affect at Time 2 from need for closure subscales at Time 2: In order to determine whether negative affect could be predicted from the desire for order, desire for predictability or decisiveness subscales of the NFCS, an exploratory analysis was conducted on a post-hoc basis, using hierarchical multiple regression and controlling for socio-demographic covariates. Results are presented in Table 22. No significant associations were identified.

Table 22. *Relationship between Need for Closure subscales at Time 1 and Negative Affect at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=40).*

	Negative Affect at Time 2		
Predictors at Time 2	β	*B*	*SEB*
Need for Closure: Desire for Order Subscale	-.21	-.17	.13
Need for Closure: Desire for Predictability Subscale	.12	.12	.17
Need for Closure: Decisiveness Subscale	-.26	-.25	.16

Note: SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Post-hoc exploratory analysis: Predicting self-esteem at Time 2 from need for closure subscales at Time 2: In order to determine whether self-esteem could be predicted from the desire for order, desire for predictability or decisiveness subscales of the NFCS, an exploratory analysis was conducted on a post-hoc basis, using hierarchical multiple regression and controlling for socio-demographic covariates. Results are presented in Table 23. Higher levels of decisiveness were significantly associated with higher levels of self-esteem ($p<.001$), with a large effect size ($\beta=.53$). No significant associations were identified between self-esteem and desire for order or desire for predictability.

Table 23. *Relationship between Need for Closure at Time 2 and Self-Esteem at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=40).*

	Self-Esteem at Time 2		
Predictors at Time 2	β	*B*	*SEB*
Need for Closure: Desire for Order Subscale	.05	.03	.09
Need for Closure: Desire for Predictability Subscale	-.22	-.17	.12
Need for Closure: Decisiveness Subscale	.53***	.38	.08

Note: Controlled for Race in all analyses. SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

The fact that decisiveness was associated with lower levels of distress and with higher levels of positive affect and self-esteem runs counter to hypothesized relationships between need for closure trait (as measured by the full-scale NFCS) and distress and adjustment outcomes, as it had been expected that individuals with higher need for cognitive closure would display increased distress and decreased adjustment.

However, upon looking more closely at the decisiveness subscale in the context of the focused interviews, the logic of these results emerges. Items on the decisiveness subscale center

specifically around an ability to make decisions with a minimal amount of conflict and struggle, for example, “I usually make important decisions quickly and confidently,” and, “When faced with a problem I usually see the one best solution very quickly.” By contrast, the following items are reverse-scored: “When trying to solve a problem I often see so many possible options that it's confusing,” “I tend to put off making important decisions until the last possible moment,” and “I tend to struggle with most decisions.” Participants who were able to make “important decisions” and meaningful commitments in this way fared better than those who struggled to make such decisions and commitments.

This finding resonates with a complex dynamic explored in the focused interviews as well, namely the extent to which individuals were able to make commitments in their lives with regard to love, sex and relationships without excessive conflict, but also without splitting off a part of their sexualities. Indeed, different types of “decisiveness” emerged in the focused interviews, some more rigid and some more flexible than others. At one end of the extreme were participants who experienced their bisexuality as a state of “indecisiveness” that needed to be resolved, and who described attempts to resolve it through force of will. These participants likely scored high on internal and external pressure for sexual orientation, both of which could be understood as pressure for a certain type of “decisiveness.” At another end of the extreme were participants who expressed comfort with their bisexuality, but who also seemed not to be making any significant decisions or commitments with regard to their personal lives (and in some cases also with regard to other areas of their lives). These participants likely scored low on internal and external pressure for singular sexual orientation, but their descriptions often had a somewhat diffuse, drifting flavor.

In the middle were participants who engaged intentionally and reflectively with the challenges their dual attractions might pose for making commitments in their romantic lives, but who ultimately used this process of reflection as a way of helping them to *make* rather than avoid such commitments. For these participants a sense of growth was often evident from Time 1 to Time 2, as their comfort with their bisexuality deepened as they realized they could commit to romantic partners without needing to abandon a part of themselves to do so. It is likely this third group of participants who scored highest on the NFCS decisiveness subscale. Rather than "seeing so many possible options that it's confusing," these participants demonstrated a capacity to see and recognize these options without feeling overwhelmed, and to make commitments with this awareness.

HYPOTHESES PART III:

Examining the relationship between change in and incongruence between sexuality markers, borderline personality organization, distress and adjustment outcomes, and the capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality

The following four hypotheses look specifically at phenomena related to change in sexuality markers (i.e. attractions, behaviors and self-identification) from Time 1 to Time 2, and incongruence between attractions and behaviors at Time 2. Hypothesis 4 tests a model predicting change in sexuality markers at Time 2 from borderline personality organization at Time 1. Hypothesis 5 tests a model predicting distress and adjustment at Time 2 from change in sexuality markers at Time 2. Hypothesis 6 tests a model predicting distress and adjustment at Time 2 from incongruence between attractions and behaviors at Time 2. Hypothesis 7 tests a model predicting

distress and adjustment at Time 2 from the *interaction* between change in sexuality markers at Time 2 and capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 1.

Hypothesis 4: Predicting change in sexuality markers at Time 2 from borderline personality organization at Time 1

Linear regression was used to test a model predicting change in sexual attractions and sexual behaviors at Time 2 from borderline personality organization at Time 1, controlling for socio-demographic covariates. Results are presented in Table 24. As hypothesized, no significant associations were identified.

Table 24. *Relationship between Borderline Personality Organization (BPO) at Time 1 and Change in Sexual Attractions (N=39) and Sexual Behavior (N=34) at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates.*

Predictor at T1	Outcomes at T2	
Borderline Personality Organization	Change in Sexual Attractions	Change in Sexual Behavior
β	-.15	-.02
B	-.51	-.11
SEB	.46	.59

Note: SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Logistic regression was then used to test a model predicting change in sexual self-identification at Time 2 from borderline personality organization at Time 1, controlling for socio-demographic covariates. Results are presented in Table 25. As hypothesized, no significant associations were identified.

Table 25. *Relationship between Borderline Personality Organization (BPO) at Time 1 and Change in Sexual Self-Identification (N=40) at Time 2, controlling for Education.*

Predictor at T1		Outcomes at T2
Borderline Personality Organization		Change in Sexual Self-Identification
OR		3.48
95% Confidence Interval	Lower	.46
	Upper	26.47

Note: OR = Odds Ratio. Participants who reported change in sexual self-identification at Time 2 were assigned a value of 1, and those who did not report change at Time 2 were assigned a value of 0.
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Hypothesis 5: Predicting distress and adjustment outcomes at Time 2 from change in sexuality markers at Time 2

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test a model predicting distress and adjustment outcomes at Time 2 from change in sexual attractions, sexual behavior and sexual self-identification at Time 2. Results are presented in Tables 26-28. Contrary to hypothesized relationships, no significant associations were identified.

Table 26. *Relationship between Change in Sexual Attractions from Time 1 to Time 2 and Outcomes at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=39).*

Predictor	Outcomes at T2			
Change in Sexual Attractions T1 to T2	Psychological Symptoms[a]	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Self-Esteem[b]
β	-.20	.20	-.19	.21
B	-.07	1.20	-.97	.79
SEB	.07	1.32	1.12	.74

Note: SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
[a] Controlled for Race and Sexual Abuse
[b] Controlled for Race
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 27. *Relationship between Change in Sexual Behavior from Time 1 to Time 2 and Outcomes at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=34).*

Predictor	Outcomes at T2			
Change in Sexual Behavior T1 to T2	Psychological Symptoms[a]	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Self-Esteem[b]
β	.19	-.22	.17	-.16
B	.05	-.95	.63	-.39
SEB	.05	1.06	.89	.54

Note: SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
[a] Controlled for Race and Sexual Abuse
[b] Controlled for Race
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Table 28. *Relationship between Change in Sexual Self-Identification from Time 1 to Time 2 and Outcomes at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=40).*

Predictor	Outcomes at T2			
Change in Sexual Self-Identification T1 to T2	Psychological Symptoms[a]	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Self-Esteem[b]
β	-.04	-.25	.02	-.15
B	-.05	-4.79	.36	-1.81
SEB	.17	3.00	2.63	1.69

Note: SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
[a] Controlled for Race and Sexual Abuse
[b] Controlled for Race
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Hypothesis 6: Predicting distress and adjustment outcomes at Time 2 from incongruence between attractions and behaviors at Time 2

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test a model predicting distress and adjustment outcomes at Time 2 from incongruence between attractions and behaviors at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates. A cross-sectional design was chosen rather than a longitudinal design for this analysis because it was theorized that incongruence between attractions and behaviors might be time-sensitive, and thus its association with distress and adjustment should be analyzed at one point in time. Results are presented in Table 29. Contrary to hypothesized relationships, no significant associations were identified. As a validity check, analyses were repeated with incongruence between attractions and behaviors at Time 1 as the predictor variable, and likewise no significant associations were identified.

Table 29. *Relationship between Incongruence between Sexual Attractions and Sexual Behaviors at Time 2 and Distress/Adjustment Outcomes at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=37).*

Predictor at Time 2	Outcomes at Time 2			
Incongruence between Attractions and Behaviors	Psychological Symptoms[a]	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Self-Esteem[b]
β	.17	-.24	.14	-.29
B	.03	-.74	.38	-.53
SEB	.04	.60	.52	.32

Note: SEB = Standard error of the regression weight.
[a] Controlled for Race and Sexual Abuse
[b] Controlled for Race
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

As in the results of Hypothesis 6, while these relationships did not reach statistical significance, small-to-medium effect sizes were evident in the relationships between attraction-behavior incongruence and distress and adjustment outcomes (with β values ranging from .14 to -.29; see above) in the directions expected (i.e. increased distress, decreased positive affect, increased negative affect, increased self-esteem). Of note, the relationship between attraction-behavior incongruence and self-esteem reached a medium effect size (β=-.29), suggesting that with a larger sample size this relationship may have reached statistical significance.

Hypothesis 7: Predicting distress and adjustment outcomes at Time 2 from the interaction between capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 1 and change in sexuality markers at Time 2

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test a model predicting distress and adjustment outcomes at Time 2 from the *interaction* between capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 1 and change in sexuality markers (i.e. attractions, behaviors, and sexual self-identifications) at Time 2. Results are presented in Tables 30-31.

Contrary to hypothesized relationships, no significant associations were identified at the $p<.05$ level. However, a trend was identified whereby the interaction between capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 1 and change in sexual attractions at Time 2 predicted psychological symptoms as measured by the GSI at the $p<.07$ level, with a medium effect size (β=.29). This trend is notable given the small sample size of the present study, and suggests that with a larger sample size this finding may have reached statistical significance (see Table 32 and Figure 8). In addition, while this relationship did not reach statistical significance and did not meet criteria for a trend, the interaction between capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of

bisexuality at Time 1 and change in sexual self-identifications at Time 2 demonstrated a medium effect size (β=.28) in predicting negative affect (see Table 31).

Table 30. *Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality at Time 1 as moderator of the relationship between Change in Sexual Behavior from Time 1 to Time 2 and Outcomes at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=34).*

Predictor	Outcomes at T2			
CTP at T1 x Change in Sexual Behavior T1 to T2	Psychological Symptoms[a]	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Self-Esteem[b]
β	.01	.09	-.17	.18
B	.00	.46	-.78	.55
SEB	.05	.97	.83	.46

Note: SEB = Standard error of the regression weight
[a] Controlled for Race and Sexual Abuse
[b] Controlled for Race
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 31. *Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality at Time 1 as moderator of the relationship between Change in Sexual Self-Identifications from Time 1 to Time 2 and Outcomes at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=34).*

Predictor	Outcomes at T2			
CTP at T1 x Change in Sexual Self-Identification T1 to T2	Psychological Symptoms[a]	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Self-Esteem[b]
β	.17	-.10	.28	-.04
B	.17	-1.80	4.19	-.46
SEB	.18	3.17	2.83	1.75

Note: SEB = Standard error of the regression weight
[a] Controlled for Race and Sexual Abuse
[b] Controlled for Race
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

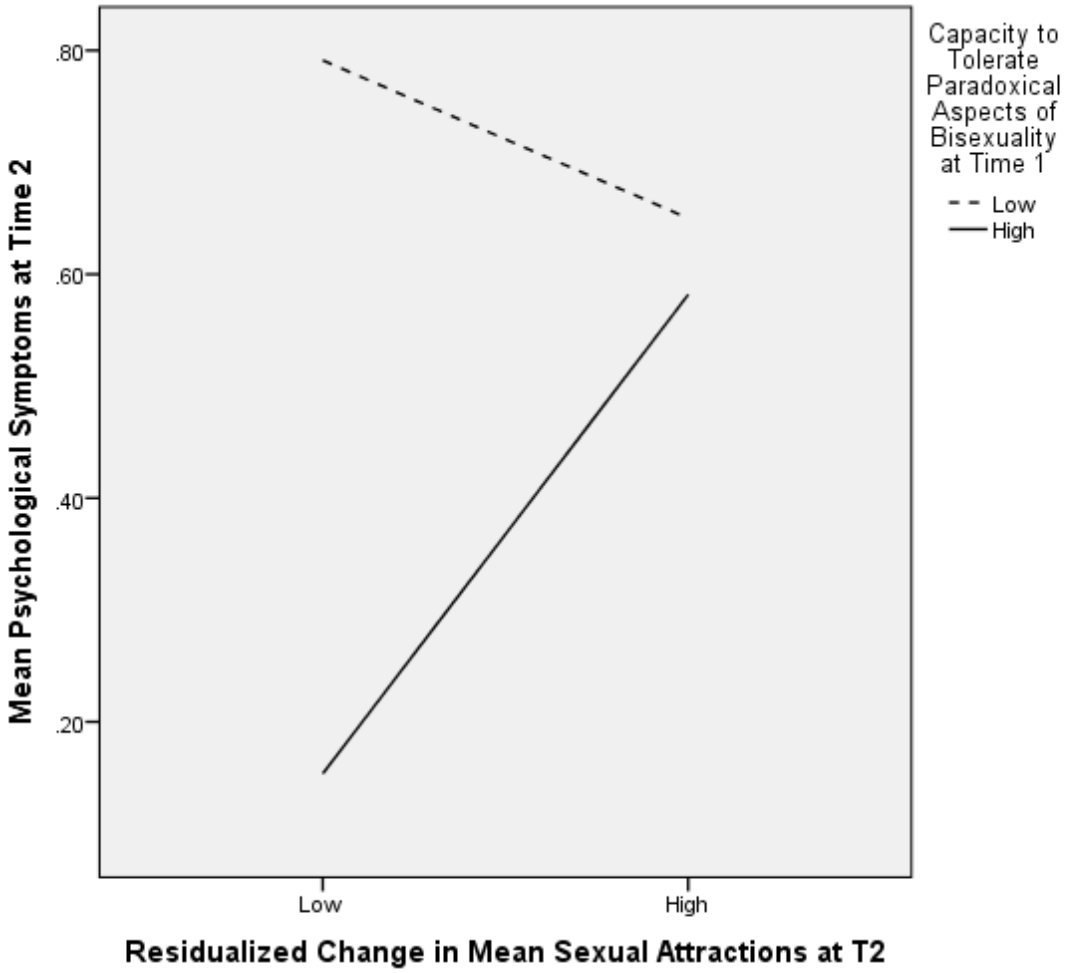
Table 32. *Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality (CTP) at Time 1 as moderator of the relationship between Change in Sexual Attractions from Time 1 to Time 2 and Outcomes at Time 2, controlling for socio-demographic covariates (N=39).*

Predictor	Outcomes at T2			
CTP at T1 x Change in Sexual Attractions T1 to T2	Psychological Symptoms[a]	Positive Affect	Negative Affect	Self-Esteem[b]
β	.29†	-.26	.08	.03
B	.11	-1.74	.44	.13
SEB	.06	1.12	1.03	.62

Note: SEB = Standard error of the regression weight
[a] Controlled for Race and Sexual Abuse.
[b] Controlled for Race
†<.07 *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Plotting the interaction between capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 1 and change in sexual attractions at Time 1: The interaction between capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality (CTP) at Time 1 and change in attractions at Time 2, predicting psychological symptoms at Time 2, is plotted in Figure 10.

Figure 10. *Interaction between Change in Attractions from Time 1 to Time 2 and Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality at Time 1, predicting Psychological Symptoms at Time 2.*



As hypothesized, participants with low capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality (CTP) at Time 1 displayed more psychological symptoms than those with high capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality, with similar outcomes for those with either high or low change in sexual attractions at Time 2. Also as hypothesized, psychological symptoms were lowest among participants with high capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality at Time 1 and *low* change in attractions at Time 2. Participants with high CTP at

Time 1 and *high* change in attractions at Time 2 showed a notable increase in psychological symptoms compared to those with high CTP and low change in attractions, however. Their distress levels still remained slightly lower on average than those of participants with low CTP at Time 1 and either high or low change in attractions at Time 2, yet they clustered closer together with both low-CTP groups than with the high-CTP, low change in attractions group.

This finding suggests that, while capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality may serve as a protective factor against psychological distress, change in sexual attractions may place an additional demand on this capacity that may result in increased distress, at least in the short-term. Of note, results of this study can only shed light on the ways in which these change processes unfold over a relatively brief period of time (12-14 months). Thus, it is possible that change in sexual attractions may temporarily increase distress among individuals with high capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality while these changes are being integrated into the individual's sexual self-concept and negotiated in the context of the individual's relationships with and self-presentation to others, but that this effect may diminish over time as the individual adapts to this change. Further research is necessary to better understand the ways in which these dynamics unfold over time.

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Qualitative coding and analyses of participants' focused interviews at Time 1 and Time 2 yielded numerous insights relevant to the experiences of bisexual women as they negotiate their complex sexualities over time, extending beyond those patterns identified through the quantitative analyses reported above. Due to space constraints, many of these qualitative findings are beyond the scope of this dissertation and will be elaborated in future writings. However, two specific themes stood out as especially salient and clinically rich, and will be described below. The first pertains to participants' experiences of change over time in sexual attractions and self-identifications, their reflections on possible causes and effects of such changes, and their attempts to incorporate these changes into an integrated sense of themselves as sexual beings. The second pertains to the theme of attachment/sexuality integration, examining the extent to which emotional and erotic aspects of relationships were integrated or split by gender for different participants, and considering the ways in which participants' attempts to negotiate these dynamics were shaped by both internal and external factors.

Change over time in sexual attractions and sexual self-identifications

As noted above, many participants' ratings of their sexual attractions, fantasies and response to erotica about/towards men versus women (the average of which is summarized here as "sexual attractions") differed from Time 1 to Time 2. The same was true, though to a somewhat lesser extent, of participants' sexual self-identifications. When change was evident in either of these domains, the interviewer shared the participant's Time 1 responses with her, and asked her thoughts about what might have contributed to this change. Some participants expressed surprise on recognizing that their attractions or self-identifications had shifted over the

past year, but many had some awareness of the change and were able to reflect on how and why this may have taken place.

Across the sample, change in sexual attractions did not necessarily correspond with change in sexual self-identifications. Of the twelve women who demonstrated change in sexual attractions of greater than one point on the Kinsey scale, for example, only four provided a different description of their sexual self-identification at Time 2. Likewise, of the twelve women whose sexual self-identification changed at Time 2, only four reported change in sexual attractions of greater than one point on the Kinsey scale. Those participants who experienced change in attractions without change in sexual self-identifications generally identified either as bisexual or as "other," and described feeling that these identity labels allowed space for some degree of fluidity and change within their sexual attractions. Those participants who reported change in sexual self-identifications with minimal change in sexual attractions generally attributed their decision to identify differently at Time 2 either to shifts in their overall sexual self-concept, to an increased discomfort with labeling their sexuality (as in the case of the five women who changed their sexual self-identification to "other" at Time 2), or to a belief that adopting a new identity-label would positively affect how they were perceived by others.

The overwhelming majority of participants who reported change in their sexual attractions at Time 2 traced this change to relational factors. In other words, most women linked shifts in their internal sexual lives to shifts in their romantic relationships. Of note, very few participants spoke about an internal shift in attractions happening *first*, and inspiring them to seek out new romantic partners. Instead, most participants who reported change described finding a new romantic partner, ending a relationship with a former romantic partner, or deepening a relationship with an ongoing romantic partner, as catalysts for shifts in their inner

erotic lives, as well as shifts in their understandings of themselves as sexual beings. This dynamic is explored in greater depth through case examples below.

Borderline personality organization and change in attractions and self-identifications:

As sexual attractions are often considered the most stable aspect of sexual orientation, it could be argued that change in sexual attractions suggests the presence of identity diffusion or of a borderline personality organization. However, as demonstrated in Hypothesis 4 above, no significant associations were found between borderline personality organization and change in attractions, behaviors or self-identifications among bisexual women. Further, of the twelve participants who demonstrated change in sexual attractions of greater than one point on the Kinsey scale, only three were classified as having a borderline personality organization. The same was true of change in sexual self-identifications, as, of the twelve participants whose sexual self-identification changed at Time 2, only three were classified as having a borderline personality organization.

While borderline personality organization was not found to be a determinant of change in attractions or self-identifications, participants who were classified as having a borderline personality organization did appear to represent and negotiate such changes differently than participants who were not. Specifically, the greater reliance on defenses of splitting and oscillating idealization and denigration displayed by BPO participants appeared to shape the ways in which these participants represented male versus female partners, as well as the ways in which they experienced and made sense of shifts in their sexual attractions and self-identifications. Two examples are provided here to illustrate this pattern.

Participant 5: Participant 5, a 36-year-old Latina woman with a borderline personality

organization, identified as bisexual at both Time 1 and Time 2, but reported a change in mean sexual attractions of -1.95 points on the Kinsey scale at her second interview. This represented a shift from attractions primarily towards men to attractions primarily towards women. At Time 1, she was mourning the recent death of her husband of ten years, who she described in glowingly idealized terms. She said she might turn to other partners "for sex, comfort and companionship" in the future, but would never commit to another relationship, "because I know he's waiting for me in heaven. That's how deep our love was for one another. I know he's waiting for me."

At Time 2, by contrast, she described her relationship with her ex-husband as "that hell he put me through." She said they had both been addicted to crack cocaine when they were together, and that he had prostituted her to pay for drugs. When this writer reflected back some of participant 5's description of her ex-husband at Time 1 and asked about this shift in her perception of him, she stated, "I can't even believe I was saying I was in love. In love with what? Maybe the drugs more than him. Cause when there wasn't no drugs, we were beating each other almost half to death. 0:47:30.3."

Since her first interview, she had started a relationship with a woman she had met in the women's shelter where she was living at the time, and she now presented this relationship in idealized terms, saying, "I love her so much, and I feel more loved, more wanted, protected, and happier than I've ever been in my life with her. Oh, I never had an experience like this in my life, never. 0:52:50.6." She attributed her increase in sexual attractions towards women to this new relationship, as well as to her conviction that "I know I don't want to be with men anymore, because I've been there, and I've done that, and it's just been shit. Shit. I mean with every man I ever been with it's been the same shit over and over." While she presented the new relationship as a completely different experience, however, over the course of the interview it became clear

that her idealization was again covering over an abusive relational dynamic. In response to a question about whether she felt "safe" in her current relationship, she at first said she did but then alluded to her partner having "a temper of the devil." When asked to elaborate, she said that her partner had not hit her "yet," but frequently engaged in fist-fights with other women, and threatened to do the same to her. "She'll act like she's gonna hit me, but she don't," she said.

Participant 5 reported a history of complex trauma beginning in childhood that likely shaped and contributed to her reliance on borderline-level defenses, and that appeared to profoundly shape both her interpersonal relationships and her sense of herself as a sexual being. Based on her two interviews, her attractions to men versus women appeared to shift over time following her attempts to flee bad or abusive objects and to find good objects. She traced her first sexual relationship with a woman to this dynamic, saying:

> I was in one of my relationships (with a man) that was abusive physically and mentally. And it was this female, she was my best friend, she was my best friend, and she was gay all the way. And whenever he would beat me or kick me out, she was the only one that would always be there for me. And I don't know, one thing led to another, you know, she was like, 'Leave him, come be with me.' And I told her, 'I can't do that, because (laughs softly) I've never been with a woman, and I could never *see* myself with a woman, *at that time*. You know, I wasn't *gay*!' But the more time that I spent with her, the more I wanted to be with her, you know? Because I felt *peace* when I was with her. And I felt like shit when I was with him, you know? So I wanted to be at peace, so I would stay over at her house, and I would stay with her. And then I, I don't know, I just fell in love with just being treated like a *person* (tearful voice).

As described in the passage above, she thought of women as a refuge and a source of "peace," and this representation of women colored her feelings towards her partner at Time 2. Yet she had difficulty recognizing the ways in which the same traumatic object-relations appeared to be playing out with both men and women in her life, instead continuing to shift between perceiving male and female partners either as idealized or as denigrated, as rescuers or as abusers. These oscillating object-representations resonated, in turn, with shifts in her understanding of her

attractions and sexuality.

Participant 27: Participant 27, a 28-year-old White woman with a borderline personality organization, identified as "other" at both Time 1 and Time 2, but reported a change in mean sexual attractions of 1.29 points on the Kinsey scale at her second interview. This represented a shift from attractions to "more men than women" to attractions to "almost always men, rarely women."

At Time 1, she had recently cut off contact completely with a woman she had been seeing "secretly" for six years. She explained that she had done so because she was "trying to pull away from it, from being gay, because deep down, I know in my family's sense and in my religion, being gay is a sin." She felt that it would cause "a *scandal*" if her conservative Eastern Orthodox family knew about the relationship, and that it would also "hurt" her parents on a personal level. Yet she also described her ex-girlfriend as "the only person I ever loved." When asked how she identified sexually, she responded:

> I don't know. I'm not sure. Questioning. I wish I could say I'm straight, but I don't know. I'm trying to lean towards men because I don't wanna disappoint my family, and I wanna be, you know, a good Christian, not disappoint my family, be, you know, be *perfect*. But at the same time, the only person I ever loved was a woman. So, questioning.

The idea that she could "try to lean towards men," and that she could influence her internal attractions by force of will, was present throughout her first interview, and was overlaid with an acute awareness of what it meant to be "good" (or "perfect") within her familial and social context.

This effort to disown her attractions to women was not successful even in the context of the interview, however. In fact, the struggle between her desire "to be straight" and her powerful same-sex attractions was both visible and audible, manifesting not only in the content of her speech but also in her body-language, posture, affect and tone of voice. There were palpable

shifts in each of these domains when she spoke about women versus men, to an extent that seemed nearly dissociative at moments.

When speaking about her ex-girlfriend, her voice and posture became sensual and almost rapturous, and she described the relationship in exalted terms, for example saying, "It was like a spiritual level, it was like cloud nine, so to speak. It was the *best* I ever had…I was just in love with her, I was crazy about her, you know. It's (deep breath), the sex was wonderful…We did a lot of fun things together, we traveled together…We went places together, we went to exotic places…(deep breath, sigh) And, we were always, oh my god, it was so much fun. Those were like the best times in my life, you know."

By contrast, she described her relationship with a man she had recently begun dating in blandly positive yet affectless terms. "You know, I like him," she said, her voice suddenly flat, as though deflated. "I'm happy with him, and he makes me laugh, I make him laugh. And we started having sex, and, you know, I care about him, I like, I have feelings for him. I don't wanna hurt his feelings, and I wanna make sure he's happy, and I'm happy, and I want him to be very *happy* (voice sounds sad). I want to be a good wife and a good mother to his children someday."

When she returned at Time 2, she was engaged to this man, who she described as "the perfect guy for me." Reflecting back on the ways in which she felt her attractions towards men versus women had shifted over time, she suggested that at Time 1 she had actually been feeling attracted primarily towards women, but had given a Kinsey rating of "more men than women" because of her desire to cut off her same-sex attractions. Now, however, she reported feeling attracted almost exclusively to men, which she attributed to "being engaged." When asked to elaborate, she stated,

> If you had met me when I was with Christine, I would have said I was attracted almost always to women. But now I say almost always men, because, you know, it depends. *(Could you say more about that?)* Yeah, because when I was with Christine, I was, you know, very attracted to her. It was a very emotional – it was emotional. It was an emotional connection, you know. I felt men weren't as emotional as women, and she was very emotional. It was a very emotional thing. I was physically attracted to men, but I was emotionally attracted to this woman. But now I'm attracted almost only to men, because my fiancé has the physical and the emotional. He's the perfect guy for me. The perfect one.

Based on this description, it seemed as though her relationship with this man had deepened over time and had become more satisfying both sexually and emotionally. And while at Time 1 her descriptions of men had seemed empty of eroticism, at Time 2 she described feeling "turned on" by her fiancé in a way that seemed genuine. However, when asked to give an example of a time when she felt emotionally connected with her fiancé, she suddenly shifted into a regressed tone of voice, and spoke about feeling close to him when he "treats her like a baby":

> When he hugs me and is crying and is like nanana, you know, like what you sing to little babies. You know, treating me like a baby. You know, and you know, and always telling me I look like a little angel when I'm sleeping. And when he tickles me, you know, he's very, he plays very – like a little baby. I like that.

Her shift in tone, the regressed content, as well as her verbal disfluency and repetition all suggested the presence of conflict surrounding this relationship, as well as, perhaps, an attempt to deny her own adult sexuality.

Later in the interview, she said that she planned to keep her attractions to women, and her previous relationship with a woman, secret from her fiancé, because otherwise "it could ruin my relationship with my family, it could ruin my life, it could ruin my future marriage, everything." In part related to her own shame about her same-sex attractions, this decision was also linked to her fiancé's overt homophobia. "He thinks gay people are crazy," she explained. "You know, like he doesn't believe in killing them, or judging them, or stoning them, or whatever, but he thinks they're sick. He's said that." By choosing a partner who held these views, she was

imagining her marriage as a context in which a disowned aspect of her sexual self would be permanently split-off, with the split enforced not only by her own shame but also by her future husband's sanctions.

Pressure for closure in the context of change in attractions and self-identifications:

Some participants who demonstrated change in sexual attractions and/or self-identifications at Time 2 described this change as a source of conflict, as they felt both internal and external pressures to resolve their sexuality into something that both they and others in their lives would experience as more stable over time. Descriptions of this pressure were coded in the focused interview as "internal pressure for closure" and "external pressure for closure," which then served as the basis for the global scores "internal pressure for singular sexual orientation" and "external pressure for singular sexual orientation" (see Methods for further details). Participant 27, described above, could serve as one example of someone who experienced both internal and external pressure for closure regarding her sexuality, and who experienced conflict surrounding ongoing shifts in her sexual attractions. Two additional case examples are provided below to illustrate this pattern.

Participant 33: Participant 33, a 27-year-old White woman, identified as bisexual at Time 1 and as "other" ("queer") at Time 2, and reported a change in mean sexual attractions of -1.75 points on the Kinsey scale at her second interview. This represented a shift from attractions to both women and men at Time 1 to attractions almost entirely to women at Time 2.

At Time 2, she was noticeably more conflicted about her sexuality than she had been at Time 1, and conveyed heightened discomfort with ongoing shifts in her sexuality. This increased internal conflict appeared linked, at least in part, with the fact that over the past year she had ended a relationship with a long-term girlfriend, and described feeling "heartbroken" for much of

the year because of this. At Time 1 she had portrayed her relationship as a source of grounding, a "secure base" of sorts, that helped her to tolerate the paradox inherent in her dual attractions. Without this relationship to ground her, she found herself yearning to resolve these paradoxical aspects of her sexuality in favor of a "clear label." For example, when asked about the shifts in her sexual attractions at Time 2, she responded as follows:

> I'm a very big fan of stability and this doesn't feel stable. So I wish that I could just say I am this and that's it, you know. I wish I could do that, but I can't. And in hardly any aspect of my life can I give such definitive answers because I am constantly changing. I'm very moody. I'm very moody and just like, I don't know, I'm just always changing. *(What would being more "stable" mean for you in terms of your sexuality?)* 0:42:33.1 Just having like a clear label for myself. Just a clear label. *(You'd like a clear label.)* I would. Part of me would and part of me wouldn't. I don't like to be boxed, but at the same time I would like a better, clearer picture of myself.

She reflected that this increased feeling of pressure to find a "clearer picture" of her sexuality was influenced, as well, by difficulties she had been experiencing in dating other women after her breakup, as many potential partners appeared uncomfortable with her bisexuality due to "questions, uncertainties and fear…that I'm gonna leave them for a man." In this way, her desire to resolve her sexuality into something more "stable" also had to do with a desire for future partners to trust her and not to feel threatened by her dual attractions.

After her break-up, participant 33 decided to identify as "queer" rather than as bisexual, a decision she explained as follows:

> Bisexual to me is like a person who dates both genders you know either exclusively or simultaneously. And I don't date men. I'm attracted to them sexually, but I don't date them. I only date women. So I felt like it was ridiculous for me to describe myself as bisexual if I'm just dating women. 0:38:06.4 And I don't like the term lesbian because it kind of confines me into this box that I'm only into women, strictly women, you know, and I'm not like that. I'm too fluid for that, and I don't want to be boxed up by any labels. So I like queer because it's open and it also, it basically just says that I'm not straight, and it also includes like kink and all sorts of things that are non-traditional.

Her ambivalence is clear in this quotation, as she is both trying to define her sexuality more "clearly" but also trying to preserve a space to be "fluid." Identifying as "queer," for Participant 33 as for many other women interviewed in this study, seemed to serve as a useful compromise, though the term held different meanings for different people. In Participant 33's case, her decision to identify as "queer" was also influenced by a desire to be perceived differently, and to be accepted more openly, by the GLBT community. Indeed, later in the interview she observed that, since she abandoned the "bisexual" label and began identifying as "queer," lesbian and other queer-identified women seemed to relate to her differently, with less of the "questions, uncertainties and fear" described above. "They're more comfortable with me as queer, which is practically gay," she said, "than with me as bisexual."

Participant 30: Participant 30, a 31-year-old White woman, identified as gay at Time 1 and as "other" ("queer") at Time 2. Her sexual attractions changed very little over this time period (.71 points on the Kinsey scale, representing a slight shift towards attractions to men), but her understanding of her sexuality changed enough for her to adopt a different identity-label during her second interview. At Time 1, she was in a relationship with a long-term female partner of eight years, but was noticing a reemergence of her attractions to men, especially in the context of the fact that, by her report, she and her partner "never had sex." At Time 2, she and her partner had ended their relationship, and while she still felt she was primarily interested in dating women, she had had a number of "drunken hook-ups" with men since the breakup and was trying to make sense of this.

At both Time 1 and Time 2, Participant 30 spoke about wishing for certainty surrounding her sexuality, and feeling uncomfortable with the ambiguity of her dual attractions. At Time 1,

she described having decided to define herself as "gay" at 23 after beginning her relationship with her long-term girlfriend, even though she still felt attracted to men:

> At the end of school, I was really starting to realize like it felt like I had to *pick* like something to be. Like I couldn't just keep not picking it, you know? Um, and so I did…I started dating my current girlfriend when I was 23, so eight years ago. And it just felt like, 'Well, I'm dating this person, and we're gonna be living together (voice sounds resigned), so I might as well just *be* gay, because that's the thing that I'm gonna be.' You know (laughs softly)? And so it felt like it was more like I had a smorgasbord of things that I could pick from, and I felt like I needed to pick, than anything else. It was more like I needed to make a decision, than being about anything about who I was attracted to, or… And I often, like, there's always that part of me that's like, wow, if I would have met a man would I have been like (imitating lighthearted voice), 'Okay, fine, I'll be straight, that's fine' (laughing), you know? But um, I don't know that, so. *(What do you think about it?)* Well, it's interesting, because I am attracted to men. And I often think that yeah, I probably would have been perfectly as happy (with a man) and probably saved my family a lot of grief (laughs). Or you know, and just I would have been per-, that would have been the choice instead. But I was very gung-ho on being adult and picking a trajectory rather than experimenting.

While in some ways she found it comforting to have "picked a trajectory," in other ways she became increasingly unsettled over time as her ongoing attractions to men reasserted themselves in her internal erotic life. This caused a growing sense of distance between her and her girlfriend that, at Time 2, she felt ultimately led them to end their relationship.

At Time 2, newly single and no longer able to define herself by the gender of a current partner, she decided to identify as "queer" rather than as "gay" because this would acknowledge her attractions to men as well as women. She described feeling very uncomfortable with this shift, however, and missing the "rigid boundaries" that identifying as gay had lent to her sexuality in the past:

> I was just so good at being a lesbian. I feel like it's very hard to admit, like when you are so firmly established in an identity it's so hard to think outside of it. You know, and that's been something that I've had to learn to do. 1:20:04.9 (*What do you think makes it hard?)* I like the rigid boundaries of things in a lot of ways, and it would be really cool if I just fit into a rigid boundary somewhere, but it's just not reality. 1:20:35.2 (*What do you feel would be different if you did fit into rigid boundaries?)* 1:20:39.1 That I'd never have to think about it. Except I would, because then I'd be worried that I was fitting in so much

> into a rigid boundary. Yeah, I think it would just be, it would provide a box, which is nice. I like when things are neat. And that just would be so much, just – I don't know that it would be easier, but it would be like one less thing to think about.

Like Participant 33, Participant 30 expressed a wish for her sexuality to resolve into something more "neat" and stable, but tempered this with an awareness that such "rigid boundaries" would not accurately reflect her dual attractions. In this way, both participants were conscious of the paradox inherent in their bisexuality, but were struggling to tolerate this paradox in the context of internal and external pressures for certainty and closure.

Accepting lack of closure in the context of change in attractions and self-identifications:

While change in sexual attractions and/or self-identifications was a source of conflict for some, many participants who demonstrated change in these areas conveyed a sense of comfort with these shifts, and an acceptance of their sexualities as unfolding over time. Descriptions of this acceptance were coded in the focused interview as "accepting lack of closure." The majority of these participants linked the changes they were experiencing to their current relational context, and were able to speak reflectively about the ways in which shifts in their romantic lives resonated with shifts in their inner erotic lives. These participants were able to integrate these changes into their understandings of themselves as sexual beings without disowning their past relationships and attractions, and without foreclosing the possibility of ongoing change in the future. One extended case example and two briefer case examples are provided below to illustrate this pattern.

Participant 36: Participant 36, a 36-year-old White woman, identified as bisexual at both Time 1 and Time 2, but reported a change in attractions of -2.33 points on the Kinsey scale at Time 2. This represented a shift from attractions to "more men than women" at Time 1 to attractions to "almost always women, rarely men" at Time 2. Between the two interviews, she

fell in love and began a committed relationship with a woman, and she linked this shift in her sexual attractions to this new relationship.

At Time 1, she had been dating a man casually for a few months, but felt they were likely to end the relationship soon. In anticipating being single again, she was trying to think through whether she could see herself more with a woman or a man in the future. At the time she felt she was "leaning slightly towards men," but this "leaning" had complex determinants. While she experienced her bisexuality, and her attractions to women and men, as an integrated part of her identity that she did not expect to resolve over time, she described feeling concerned about the impact her dual attractions might have on a future partner, and especially on a future female partner. Her longest relationship to date, which she described in positive and affectionate terms, had been with a lesbian-identified woman, but this relationship ended in part because of a reemergence of her attractions to men. She described feeling "guilt" and "sadness" about the end of this relationship and about the impact her ongoing attractions to men had on her former partner, and as a result she was concerned that if she began another relationship with a woman she might end up "hurting" her as well. She reflected on this conflict as follows:

> The reason I think I've been pulled more to men partly just feels erotic in inexplicable ways, and partly feels about my guilt over the end of my five year relationship with a woman that I felt was in part because I just kept feeling pulled to men. And I don't want to do that to another woman, because I still feel terrible about it. So I've done Internet dating, and I've only looked for men, because I have felt almost irresponsible involving a woman in my life unless I can sort some of this stuff out about what I want, or whether I feel able to commit in a way that I think someone should trust me in that regard.

In addition to this concern about "sorting out" her ability to commit to a woman, at Time 1 she was also beginning to think more seriously about wanting to have children, and reflected that this desire may have been playing a role in her current "erotic pull" towards men.

This "erotic pull" was reflected in her sexual fantasies as well, which she said had recently been "mostly about penetrative sex with men, with a very conventional male-female erotic." She described these fantasies as "male-female gendered in some really extreme way that surprise me," as in the past her fantasy life had been much more centered around playing with gender roles (e.g. fantasies "about men who themselves liked to be fucked," or about shifting gender roles with women). In response to all of these factors, one possible compromise she was considering was dating only men, and hoping that her close attachments with female friends might fill some of the space left by her ongoing attractions to women.

At Time 2, by contrast, she had "fallen completely and utterly in love" with a woman, who she had been dating for the past several months and was thinking seriously about committing to as a life-partner. While at Time 1 she had conveyed a sense of ambivalence and concern surrounding her relationships with women, at Time 2 her description of her relationship with her female partner was full of confidence and ease. When asked about this shift, she explained, "Things that seemed hard before became easy. I don't know that I ever knew I could be this attracted to someone, and also feel this safe at the same time. It always seemed to me like the two were somehow in tension, but with her, they're not. 0:39:08.9"[6] Reflecting back on her first interview, she said, "I remember having a very high bar for how attracted I had to feel to a woman to go there (i.e. to have a relationship) at all, because there was such an influx of guilt and worry about hurting someone, I just felt like I needed to be really sure that I was really attracted to this person, or I should just not mess with their feelings at all. 0:35:34.2" Her attraction to her current partner had met this "high bar," however, and she had felt strongly that it was worth the risk involved in trying to commit.

[6] This dynamic surrounding the integration of attachment and sexuality will be discussed further in the section below, where Participant 36 is again used as a case example.

Speaking about her experience of committing to her partner in this way, she reflected on the ways in which her feelings about commitment had shifted since her first interview:

> It always had felt like it would be a huge compromise somehow to commit to someone. And for a while I was thinking I was ready for that, that I was ready for the next challenge. I had been in mostly open relationships, and I felt it would be good for me to challenge my impulse to run away. But committing to this relationship, I just don't – it doesn't feel like a challenge. And I understand it's still early days, and there will be times when we argue, and there will be points when a worthwhile challenge may come back in. But I just, it just feels like there are endless amounts to explore with each other. 0:40:19.9

When asked about the "compromise" she had been considering at Time 1, of having romantic/ sexual relationships only with men but seeking ongoing emotional attachments with close female friends, she replied, "Well, it's awfully nice to find it all in one place."

This feeling of integration, and of having "endless amounts to explore," was echoed not only in her emotional relationship with her partner but also in their sexual relationship. While at Time 1 she had described feeling surprised by the "conventional male-female erotic" of her recent sexual fantasies, at Time 2 she described her fantasy life as "utterly changed," with fantasies "almost exclusively about (her) partner" since they began dating. She spoke about a freedom to "play with gender" in their sexual life that she found intensely exciting and satisfying. Reflecting on the role that her attractions to men might play in their relationship over time, she said:

> Whether there's something about the materiality of the body and certain kinds of bodies that I may miss at times, that I don't know. But we both feel a lot of room within our sexual dynamic for playing out gender in a lot of different ways. I mean, she identifies as a lesbian, but she has dreams about men, and probably more often than I do. So I feel like there's room between us for desire to come up in complicated ways, and to be either talked about or not, or to be integrated into our sex life, or to be ignored if it doesn't seem important. 0:52:26.5

Of note, her recognition that both she and her partner had complex desires and identifications vis-à-vis gender opened up a "potential space" of sorts, which allowed her to tolerate the paradox

inherent in her dual attractions – including the possibility that she might, at some point, "miss" men's bodies. In the context of this "gender play" with her partner, she was able to experience this possibility not as a future threat to their relationship, but as something they could face together when and if the time came.

Reflecting on whether her understanding of her sexuality had changed as a result of her current relationship and current attractions primarily towards women, Participant 36 responded that she would always consider herself bisexual regardless of shifts over time in her relationships and attractions. "I've watched myself over too many years to think this now means I'm a lesbian," she said. "I think my desires come in different ways with different people. In different periods I have more desire for one or the other, and that can still be the case I think while being committed to a woman. 0:27:10.1" Later in the interview, she expressed a belief that, even if she were to be in a monogamous relationship with her current partner for the rest of her life, to stop identifying as bisexual "would feel like a strange denial, somehow, of my past." At Time 1, she had expressed a similar sentiment regarding what it meant to her to identify as bisexual:

> Initially I found the term very alienating, partly because it seemed to imply this perfectly equal split, or seemed to imply perhaps that you didn't care at all about a person's sex, and you just were attracted to the inner person in a way that completely disregarded sex or gender, and that neither of those things seemed to apply. And then it eventually seemed to me that well, the fact that no one quite knew what it was probably did make it the best description of what it was, I felt. I didn't think it was easy to put me in a box. This particular box felt vague, but it probably served better than anything else, and it was important to me not to be someone who became the person I was with – so if I was with a man, I'm straight, and if I was with a woman, now I'm a lesbian. That felt disingenuous and also disrespectful of the people I had loved in the past. And so somewhere along the way, I liked about my sexuality that it owned that past.

This description of wanting her sexual self-concept to "own the past," rather than disowning past attractions or relationships, resonated with the sentiments of many other women as they described how ongoing shifts in their sexual attractions were integrated into a coherent sense of

self as a sexual being. Two brief additional case examples illustrating this perspective are provided below.

Participant 49: Participant 49, a 30-year-old Black woman who identified as bisexual at both Time 1 and Time 2, reported a change in attractions of 2.58 points on the Kinsey scale at Time 2. This represented a shift from attractions to "more women than men" at Time 1 to attractions to "almost always men, rarely women" at Time 2. At Time 1, she had recently been engaged in a sexual relationship with a close female friend who also identified as bisexual, and felt that her inner erotic life was shaped by this experience, leading her to fantasize more about women and to notice women in a sexual way. She described having had relationships like this, in which the line between emotional and sexual intimacy became blurred, with other female friends in the past. None of these friendships had yet turned into serious romantic relationships, but she was open to the possibility that one might.

At Time 2, she and her female friend had transitioned away from a sexual relationship, she had begun dating a man, and her attractions had shifted primarily towards men. She made sense of this shift in her attractions in light of her new relationship, and also in light of the fact that she saw herself as more likely to "settle down" with a male partner. Yet she described having been very open with her male partner about her bisexuality, saying, "This has been a part of me for such a long time, you know, being attracted to both sexes, I don't think that's ever gonna go away. It was important to me to tell him who I was."

Participant 14: Participant 14, a 31-year-old Latina woman who identified as bisexual at both Time 1 and Time 2, reported a change in attractions of 1.42 points on the Kinsey scale at Time 2. This represented a shift from attractions to "about equally women and men" to "more men than women." She attributed this shift to the fact that her most recent relationships had been

with men rather than with women, and more specifically that "the last relationship I had was with a guy, and it was a very strong relationship, so I feel I'm just identifying with that more." She was very clear, however, in expressing an understanding of her attractions to both men and women as an ongoing part of her sexuality, saying:

> I'll always be bisexual. Even if I marry a guy, or live with a guy, it doesn't mean I'll stop being bi. It doesn't mean I'll stop being attracted to women. Same thing if I'm with a woman. It doesn't mean I'll stop being attracted to men. *(How do hold onto the other side of your attractions when you are in a committed relationship?)* Well, I tell that person. That's like what makes or breaks the relationship, really. There are certain things that, if I'm going to be serious with someone, they need to know that about me.

Of note, all three of the women quoted here chose to continue to identify as bisexual even as their attractions shifted, and explained this choice by expressing an understanding of their attractions as fluid, responsive to relational context, and subject to change over time.

Attachment/sexuality integration

As noted in the Methods section, the theme of attachment/sexuality integration emerged from grounded theory coding of the focused interviews. It was observed that the extent to which emotional attachment and sexual excitement were experienced as integrated with male versus female partners varied between participants. Some participants described male partners as love-objects (where "love-objects" is used to signify emotional and erotic attachment) and female partners primarily as sex-objects, while others described female partners as love-objects and male partners primarily as sex-objects. Some described emotional and erotic attachment to both genders but in different forms, for example "committed relationships" with men and somewhat more fluidly-defined erotic friendships with women. Others described both men and women as potential love-objects, with varying degrees of integration of sexuality within these love relationships.

Each of these patterns could come with its own challenges. For example, those who experienced one gender as potential love-objects and the other primarily as sex-objects ran the risk of splitting attachment and sexuality by gender, a "division of labor" that could make it difficult to experience both emotional closeness and sexual excitement with a single partner. Some participants did appear to be relying on this split, perhaps in an attempt to stabilize their representation of themselves as sexual beings, and/or to negotiate conflicts surrounding their bisexuality. For other participants, relationships with men versus women were experienced as different, and sometimes dramatically so, but not in a way that appeared driven by internal conflict. In order to illustrate these dynamics, examples from the focused interviews are provided below.

Men as love-objects, women as sex-objects

A number of participants described feeling sexually attracted to both men and women, but having committed love-relationships only, or primarily, with men. For example, Participant 49 identified as bisexual at both Time 1 and Time 2, but expressed some hesitance about this term because "I don't see myself in a romantic involvement in terms of a relationship, serious romantic relationship with a woman, or wanting to get married or anything like that. I would prefer a male husband, but as far as being physically attracted to someone I'm attracted to both…It's a beautiful thing to look at a woman and be with a woman, but men just…balance me out." Similarly, Participant 47, who identified as straight at both Time 1 and Time 2, said, "Sex is one thing; I kind of feel like a mouth is a mouth and a hand is a hand; but in terms of committing yourself to one gender or the other it has always been with men for me...It's not that I'm opposed to a relationship with a woman, but perhaps it's just that emotionally I'm more

attracted to men than I am to women. Or maybe emotionally I like being the woman in the relationship."

Of note, in both these examples particular gender roles are evoked, for example the idea of wanting "a husband," or of wanting to "be the woman in the relationship." When this was the case, the interviewer inquired further in order to understand the meaning of these ideas to the participant. For some, wanting a male partner was bound up with traditional notions of family; indeed, many participants spoke about believing that they could only have a "family" with a man. Others described a more flexible understanding of family and gender roles, and attributed their greater emotional connection with male partners to other factors.

Relating differently to male and female partners in this way was not necessarily a source, or a reflection, of internal conflict. However, it did appear problematic when relating to women as sex-objects reflected a split-off part of the sexual self resulting from internalized homophobia or biphobia. For example, Participant 31 used the terms "homoerotic but heteroemotional" to describe her sexuality, explaining that she often fell "in love with" men on an emotional level but rarely felt sexually excited by them, while she fell "in lust with" women but was not emotionally connected with them. Elaborating on this dynamic with women, she stated,

> Either I respect a woman, and I value her intelligence, and her spirit, and everything... or she's a whore, and I just, you know, am attracted to her, and really it's like a nun-whore thing. And I can't merge them. 1:14:34.2 I can't imagine like respecting a woman, a woman's intelligence, and caring for them, and also merging that with admitting that I feel sexual attraction to them, 'cause I feel like I can only admit the sexual attraction to people I have no personal, you know, relationship with…I always feel like if I did have that kind of relationship with them, then that would be a prohibition against [admitting I'm attracted to them], like I would feel too embarrassed. I think I have a lot of internalized homophobia, to be honest. 1:08:45.6

This final link between her difficulty integrating attachment and sexuality and her "internalized homophobia," which causes her to feel that sexuality with women is only tolerable with

anonymous partners, resonates with themes raised by a number of participants. These participants described keeping their relationships with one gender compartmentalized in order to avoid the pain that might come with allowing themselves to truly invest in a relationship that might be stigmatized, either by actual others or by internalized representations of others (as in internalized homophobia or biphobia). Participant 31 described much pain and conflict around this split, saying that as a result she has not had any lasting romantic relationships.

Participant 29, who demonstrated a similar dynamic, summarized the different ways she relates with male and female partners as follows: "I like to use men like marriage-wise, family-wise, boyfriend-wise, but girls I like, you know, kissing or making out or whatever, and sex." Her choice of the word "use" is telling, as there was a quality of objectification in her descriptions of both male and female partners, though in different arenas. She had previously been married to a man but after five years the relationship ended in divorce, in part because of a lack of sexual desire on her part. By contrast, she described feeling very sexually excited by women, but seeing these relationships as completely removed from any potential for emotional connection or commitment. She stated:

> Girls I like to fool around with, mess around with, not you know bring them home to my family, call them my girlfriend or hold hands or anything like that. I never tell a girl I love you. Never tell a girl I love you. Never. No, I never. It doesn't make sense. You love somebody, no. If you love somebody you date and go out and hold hands and meet the family. With girls I just meet them, fool around, you know, go home, that's it.

On further inquiry, it became clear that part of this compartmentalization of female partners into a purely sexual sphere was related to fears that having a more integrated "love" relationship with a woman would necessarily be more public (e.g. "bringing her home to my family," "holding hands," etc.), and that this would expose the participant to stigma from her community. In this way, splitting off emotional and sexual aspects of her relationships with men and women

appeared to have emerged at least in part from an attempt to stabilize her sexual self in the face of stigma.

For other participants issues of stigma appeared less salient (though they were often still present in subtle ways), and conflicts around attachment/sexuality integration had more to do with which parts of their internal erotic lives they felt could be shared with a primary partner without threatening the relationship. For example, Participant 22, who characterized herself at Time 1 as "sexually attracted to women, but psychologically attracted to men," shared at Time 2 that over the past year she had started a relationship with a male partner with whom, for the first time, she felt both sexually and emotionally intimate. She had been in sexual relationships with women in the past that she experienced as intensely exciting, but had lacked a sense of emotional connection with her female partners, feeling that "we're not enough, there's something missing."[7] With her current male partner she enjoyed sex and felt emotionally close, yet she described noticing that she had difficulty sustaining her sexual excitement towards him over time without relying on fantasies about women. This made her feel guilty and concerned because she worried that she was "disconnecting" from her partner, and also worried that her fantasies about women might reveal her connection with her partner to be "false" in some way. She considered talking about this with him, but had not done so yet because of a concern that it could threaten their relationship.

By contrast, for other participants, seeing women as objects of desire was openly shared with male partners. Some women chose to share this aspect of their attractions with their male partners primarily for the sake of honesty, of being able to openly discuss and process the impact

[7] Participants' experiences of "something missing" with one gender versus the other, and their attempts to negotiate a sense of loss around this experience of "missing," will be addressed in greater depth below.

of their bisexuality on the relationship, and of not feeling that they were harboring a potentially destructive secret. Other participants shared their sexual attractions to women with their male partners as a way of transforming a private aspect of their sexuality into something that could potentially be engaged with, and in some cases enjoyed, together. Among this subgroup, some described incorporating fantasies about women into their shared sex lives. Others reported moving beyond fantasy and into action, either by participating in threesomes with their primary partner and another woman, or by negotiating an open relationship in which they could pursue sexual relationships with women outside their primary relationship.

These ventures into openness of various sorts was experienced by many participants as emotionally risky, and for some it led to conflict within their relationships with both male and female partners. For others it seemed to serve as a defense against intimacy, and a way of keeping many options open without committing to any. Still others treated the women they engaged with sexually more as part-objects than as whole-objects, not fully considering their subjectivity and potential vulnerabilities. Yet some participants managed to find a balance between openness and commitment, and described these experiences as helping them to accept and integrate disparate aspects of their sexuality that, before that point, had felt contradictory or in conflict. For example, Participant 47, who described feeling more comfortable with her dual attractions at Time 2 than she had at Time 1, linked this shift to her decision to explore her attractions to women openly with her male partner, to whom she was feeling increasingly committed and emotionally connected:

> I think perhaps this relationship being such a stable part of my life made me more comfortable feeling okay going with whatever feelings or attractions I have and not second-guessing myself in that way. *(Can you tell me more about that?)* Yeah, we're very emotionally close, and this relationship is something very stable right now in my life when I have all this other stuff that's uncertain around me, which feels really good. And perhaps also because we have had encounters with women as a couple, and that feels like

> something secure as well. This isn't something I have really done in other relationships, had like an ongoing willingness to participate with multiple partners. So perhaps that's made me feel more open about the attractions that I have.

Participant 47 went on to describe the ways in which she felt these experiences had brought her and her partner closer together, and had helped her to feel more confident about committing to him with the understanding that all aspects of her sexual self were welcome in the relationship.

Women as love-objects, men as sex-objects

A number of participants described feeling sexually attracted to both men and women, but feeling drawn only, or primarily, to women for love-relationships. For example, Participant 38, when asked how she identified, responded, "If you're strictly speaking sexually, then I'm bisexual. Subtract emotion from it. *(How so?)* In other words emotionally, I only have emotional relationships with women. But sexually, I can have a sexual relationship with anybody." Similarly, at Time 1, Participant 26 explained, "I can have sex with both, but be in love with a woman." At Time 2, she elaborated on this experience as follows:

> I feel like I'm a little more open to having casual sex with men than with women. Like with women I feel like it's just more, it's *more*. Like, it's a deeper thing. It's more of an emotional connection first, rather than a physical. So…*(And with men how is that different?)* With men it's more of like a sexual thing, more of like, mm, how they're *looking* at me, or like, just *feeling* them, mm, their parts. Um, so, so it's more that primal feeling. Yeah. It's just more like a physical (deep breath) pull, more than like the 'Ahhh' (sigh), 'Ahhh' (sigh) feeling that I have with women.

This description of feeling aroused by men both for "their parts" and for their gaze ("how they're *looking* at me") was representative of many women in this subgroup.

Many of these participants portrayed their desire for men as reducible to a desire for the penis. For example, Participant 19, who described feelings of "intimacy and closeness" as well as sexual excitement with female partners, described her attractions to men as focused on "just their tool. Just their body. I look at them like a piece of meat." Participant 33, who described

close romantic relationships with women and reported feeling "heartbroken" about the end of a long-term relationship with a female partner at Time 2 (see case study above), spoke about men in a purely sexualized fashion, saying,

> I just want them to please me and get out of my face. I'm not very reciprocal with men so you know I probably, I'm not at my best when it comes to sex with men, because I don't care enough. It's kind of like I just want sexual pleasure and I want it to be over. *(When you're with women do you miss anything about being with men?)* No. Maybe like a penis or a phallic object, that's what I miss. But not a man, just that.

Similarly, when describing the difference between her fantasies about men versus women, she stated, "My attractions to men are pretty simple and very mild. It's a sexual thing. I think about them sexually. Mostly just their penises, not really the rest of them. It's just fantasies about the penis. So it's very sexual. But with women I can actually think about dating them and having a relationship and that sort of thing."

Other participants described their attraction to men primarily in terms of the excitement of being able to provoke male desire, which they experienced as subtly different than being able to provoke female desire. This was true for Participant 46, who spoke about being "in love" with her long-term female partner, yet had what she characterized as a "fling" with a man while they were together. She described her relationship with her female partner as both emotionally close and sexually fulfilling, saying, "We're close friends, and there's still a strong physical, sexual factor as well. So it's exciting to have both of those things. We're business…it's like we're business and we're pleasure, you know?" At Time 2 she was in the midst of trying to make sense of her infidelity, both internally and with her long-term partner, who she had told about the "fling." Reflecting on her motivations, she described realizing that "I liked being around him because he made me feel desired." It was difficult for her to articulate what felt different about his desire than her partner's desire, or what felt different about male desire than female desire,

but she kept returning to an experience of the two as different. Although no one made this link directly, this dynamic appears to resonate with participants' descriptions of male versus female bodies, and specifically of the penis. In other words, the experience of provoking male desire may map onto the experience of seeing and knowing one has the power to excite someone in a visible way, as opposed to the more internal experience of female arousal.

Another way in which participants in this subgroup discussed the gaze of others was in terms of the experience of being seen *with* a man, and the status and privileges they felt this conferred on them. Participant 46, quoted above, spoke about the experience of "having the eyes of society accept the model of what's before them" when she and the man with whom she had a "fling" were seen in public. Speaking about this experience, she remarked on the irony of feeling that she was seen as more "respectable" and "legitimate" in that situation than when she was seen with her long-term female partner. Similarly, Participant 19 (also quoted above), when asked if she missed anything about being with men when she was with a female partner, replied, "I guess what I miss about it is the way it looks. You know what I'm saying? *(Can you say more? The way it looks?)* That way that it looks as far as a couple, you know, man-woman couple. I miss the, the way that it looks as far as how society sees it."

In part in response to a desire to be "accepted" in this way by society, family and other communities, as well as to experiences of stigma and micro-aggressions against same-sex relationships, some of the participants in this subgroup described attempting to start serious relationships with men, despite continuing to feel that these relationships lacked emotional depth and that their primary emotional attachments were to women. This was one notable distinction between these participants and those who experienced sexual attractions to both genders and emotional attachments primarily to men. Likely due to the lack of any particular social pressures

to date women instead of men, except perhaps from lesbian-identified friends and communities, none of those participants reported attempting to start serious relationships with women unless something shifted for them internally that made them feel emotionally open to such a relationship. By contrast, multiple women who experienced attachment/sexuality integration only with women reported that they were trying to date men. In addition to responding to stigma, some women also attributed this decision to a belief that they could only have a "family" with a male partner.

One particularly striking example of this phenomenon was described by Participant 19. At Time 1, she was living in New York, and was in a serious relationship with a woman. As quoted above, she described her relationships with women in terms of "intimacy and closeness," and her relationships with men in terms of "just their tool." While she conveyed some conflict around her dual attractions, she was out in most areas of her life and seemed to be working towards a more comfortable relationship to her sexuality. At Time 2, by contrast, she had left New York and moved back to the small Southern town where she grew up in order to care for her mother, who had become ill.[8] Removed from her friends and support-systems in New York, and surrounded by family members who she described as encouraging her to "settle down" with a man and have children, Participant 19 ended the relationship with her female partner and started to go on dates with men. Describing these men, she stated,

> They were nice. Very nice. Very nice. But I just – I only let it go so far. *(Why do you think that was?)* Because my heart wasn't fully there. *(Your heart wasn't fully there?)* Because they were men, probably. *(How does it feel different to you to be with women than to be with men?)* It feels more natural to be with a woman. It's easier. But with a guy, it's like – it's more like a chore. I'm trying to change that, but it's hard.

[8] Her follow-up interview was conducted by phone.

The sense of loss she was experiencing around "trying to change" in this way was palpable throughout the interview. In fact, she described her break-up with her former partner as "traumatic," and reported that in the context of these changes in her life she had become depressed, started drinking more than usual, and started taking anti-depressants and seeing a therapist. She recognized the strain that her attempt to move away from relationships with women was placing on her, yet she said that the time she had spent caring for her mother over the past several months made her "realize what's important" and want to focus on building a family of her own. Asked whether she could imagine building a family with a woman, she said, "I don't want the complication. You know, the process of trying to have a baby. The process of raising a kid without a father. Seeing how other kids react to my kid. Just the way society looks at that type of situation. You know, it's not an easy lifestyle. It's not easy dealing with other people's opinions."

When asked what kind of relationship she imagined for herself in the future, Participant 19 described imagining "being married to a man, and having a few girlfriends on the side." Her husband, she hoped, "would be accepting and not really need to participate." Reflecting on this scenario in the interview, she then added that an even better outcome would be being married to a man and having "a girlfriend there full-time; more of an equal relationship on all things." While she described this as her "ideal vision," she acknowledged it was unlikely, because "a man is not going to want that. He's not going to want to share his woman all the time. He would get jealous." Her attempt to imagine a compromise that would be fulfilling for her is revealing, as essentially she constructs a situation in which she could have someone filling the "husband" role, and presumably also the male sexual role, while still having a "full-time" love relationship with a

woman. Yet she also recognized that this compromise was not "realistic," and that she would continue to be faced with difficult choices that entailed different kinds of loss.

Of note, when describing her relationship with her former female partner, Participant 19 described another type of compromise. In this relationship, she had chosen not to reveal her attractions to men, out of concern that "if I had told her I was bi, she wouldn't have taken a chance with me." Over time, however, her partner, who identified as lesbian, began to "accuse" Participant 19 of being bisexual, despite the fact that she was not sexually active with men while they were together. The thought of her bisexuality was "a threat" to her partner: "It was a threat to her that maybe I would leave her one day for a man. She didn't trust me around any men. She didn't trust me to have any guy friends. She didn't trust any men around me." Ultimately this lack of trust and feeling of threat contributed, along with the external pressures and internal conflicts Participant 19 was experiencing as described above, to the end of their relationship.

As illustrated by this last example from Participant 19's narrative, many participants described finding it much more fraught and challenging to share their sexual attractions to men with female partners than to share their sexual attractions to women with male partners. Notably, while multiple participants in committed relationships with men reported also openly engaging in sexual relationships with women, either alone or with their partners (as described above), *no* participants in committed relationships with women reported also openly engaging in sexual relationships with men. When asked about this, almost all participants referred to a belief that sexual involvement with men would be threatening to their female partners. The same was often presumed to be true as well about open discussion of sexual attractions to or fantasies about men, which was also less common among this sub-group. This heightened sense within same-sex relationships of bisexual desire as threatening, in both action and fantasy, likely has multiple

determinants, among them the powerful pull exerted by hetero-normative societal models of the family and couple. While this sense of threat is understandable in light of such factors, it also appeared to result in participants having less of an opportunity to accept and integrate disparate aspects of their bisexuality in the context of a committed relationship. Over time, this lack of integration itself could pose challenges both for participants themselves and for their partners.

Both men and women as love-objects

A third group of participants reported having been "in love" with both male and female partners, and described emotional attachment and erotic excitement as integrated, to some extent at least, with both genders.

For some, these love relationships evolved differently over time with men and women. A number of participants, for example, described experiencing an initial erotic charge with men that later deepened into an emotional connection, while with women a strong emotional connection tended to come first and to build, over time, into a sexual relationship. In some cases participants also described erotic friendships, usually with women, that shifted somewhat fluidly between platonic and sexual. Participant 36 (see case study above), for example, spoke about sexuality as woven into many of her close female friendships:

> Most of my closest friends are people I have been involved with at some point, intimately. It feels to me in those relationships like it's part of how we know each other, and it was at one time a part of expressing how we cared about each other. It's kind of integrated and an important part of the history of those friendships. It feels in a way like we know about as much as you can know about someone. That there's not some unknown private room, circled off and separate. There are many ways to know people, and different kinds of experiences, but it feels like, I don't know, like there's something meaningful about not having drawn some line around our bodies and said this is what we don't know about each other.

This broad understanding of what intimacy could mean in the context of a friendship was echoed by a number of other participants in this subgroup.

In addition to their reflections on the different ways in which their relationships with men and women evolved over time, many participants also spoke about their attractions to and love relationships with men and women as having different "qualities," for example a "sensual" quality with female partners and an eroticized aggressive quality (with the participant in the role of subject or object of the aggression, or both) with male partners. Attempts to process the different experiences of being with male and female partners, as well as the sense of loss this could sometimes entail, formed a key topic of discussion in many interviews. Some participants experienced these differences as a source of conflict that interfered with their capacities to commit to relationships with partners of either gender, even when they described having had deeply satisfying emotional and sexual relationships with both women and men. Some who were in monogamous relationships with a partner of one gender described a sense of loss when reflecting on the "quality" of the other gender, and were unsure of whether they would be able to discover or create this quality in their current relationship, or whether it was instead a loss to be mourned. Many others, however, related to these differences from a stance of curiosity and reflection, understanding them as representing distinct facets of their inner erotic lives that were interwoven with gender and evoked in gendered ways.

One theme that was raised by multiple participants had to do with the role of power, aggression, and "stereotyped" gender roles in their sexual lives with male versus female partners. For example, Participant 25, when asked if she experienced her attractions to men and women differently, responded:

> Yes, I do. There's something that has to do with more of an element of power, I guess. And I guess generally, though it's not always true, I feel like generally when I'm attracted to men or having fantasies about men, it's that they kind of – they represent this force of power. They're active, or maybe even aggressive in a way. And with a woman, it's usually a lot more of a passive role. *(Why do you think that is?)* I don't know. I guess it just reflects gender roles. I mean it's just – it's stereotypes. But also, I don't know. I

> think sexual attraction is a really tricky thing, and I think it kind of lends another dynamic to something like that. Like, if I'm not seeing things as sexualized, it really bothers me to see a powerful, aggressive man, or a passive woman. These are things that I don't value in society, but sexually there is something erotic about them.

Interestingly, Participant 25 reflected that this sense of men as aggressive and women as passive had more to do with the way she imagined "men" and "women" in fantasy, and with what she found erotic about masculinity and femininity, than with her experiences with actual male and female partners. In fact, she reported that in her sexual life with her male partner, who she had married soon before her second interview, as well as in her fantasy life, which often revolved around women, she herself shifted between "masculine" and "feminine," aggressive and sensual ways of relating. Throughout both interviews, she reflected on the extent to which the erotics of power, aggression and gender roles were necessarily tied up with male and female bodies, versus the extent to which they could be played with in fantasy with partners of either sex. Many participants grappled with this question,[9] especially as they considered committing to monogamous relationships. For Participant 25, as for a number of other women, feeling comfortable committing to a monogamous partner involved both recognizing what she found exciting about these gendered dynamics and also opening a potential space in which both gendered positions were available to both members of the couple.

Another theme that some members of this sub-group discussed was the way in which safety and desire sometimes mapped onto gender, and could be experienced as in tension. A related issue was the role that personal object-relations, for example the quality of relationships with mother versus father, played in shaping participants' emotional experience of being with male versus female romantic partners. At Time 1, for example, Participant 36 (see case study

[9] For another example of this dynamic, please see the case study of Participant 36 in the section above on change over time in sexual attractions.

above) described experiencing a "needy and scared and intensely erotic place" with men that she did not experience with women, and that she linked to aspects of her relationship with an absent father as she was growing up. With men, as she had with her father, she felt "an erotics around a fear of being left, or wanting the person who's not there." With women, as she had with her mother, she felt "safe and at ease," yet to some extent this safety could work against eroticism. These roles had begun to shift for her at Time 2, however, in the context of having fallen "completely and utterly in love" with a woman. During this interview she described moments in which she had suddenly felt this "desire, fear of loss" dynamic, which she usually associated with men, with her female partner. Although these moments were unsettling to her at the time, she also spoke about them as helping her to integrate experiences of safety and closeness with experiences of desire and separateness, and also helping her to unlink these two experiences, to some extent, from gender. As quoted in the case study above, she remarked of her current partner, "I never knew I could be this attracted to someone and feel this safe at the same time. It always seemed to me that the two were somehow in tension, but with her, they're not."

Among participants who described having been in love with both men and women, most reported that it was very important to them to be open with their partners about their bisexuality, both as part of their history and as part of their inner erotic lives. This was more the case for women in this sub-group than for those who were sexually attracted to both genders but saw only one gender or the other as potential love-objects. For many of these participants, being open in this way with romantic partners helped them to build, and/or to maintain, a sense of integration with regard to their dual attractions. It also helped them to negotiate experiences of loss they might be feeling in committing to a partner of one gender and "giving up" love-objects of the other gender. Many openly shared their fantasy lives with romantic partners, which they

reflected could serve as a way of keeping the other side of their sexuality alive and present in the relationship, as well as inviting their partners to "play with gender" together.

Participant 25, for example, reported being "completely open" with her husband about her attractions to and fantasies about women. While they were "in a monogamous relationship and planning to keep it that way," in the realm of sharing fantasies she felt that "anything really is possible and acceptable." In fact, she described feeling that their commitment to monogamy helped her and her partner to feel more free to explore different aspects of their inner erotic lives, including attractions to others, in the context of their relationship with the underlying safety of knowing they would remain together. When asked about any sense of loss she might be feeling in making a monogamous commitment, she replied:

> I don't feel like I'm losing something, like a certain part of who I am or something – really I'm just gaining something. *(Do you ever miss women? Or do you feel like you would in the future?)* You know, right now I don't. Of course, it's impossible to know what's going to happen in the future, but in terms of fantasy and stuff, they're very present for me. So in that way, I don't miss them like they've disappeared. It's just kind of a step removed or something. And for right now, that feels okay for me. That feels comfortable.

This acknowledgement of the possibility of change over time, paired with a sense of integration and a capacity for commitment, represents the delicate balance that many women in this study were attempting to achieve.

DISCUSSION

The primary aims of this study were as follows: 1) to identify intrapsychic and environmental factors that contribute to bisexual women's capacities to tolerate paradox and ambiguity with regard to their sexualities, including factors related to character structure and identity integration; 2) to identify intrapsychic and environmental factors that influence psychological conflict and distress versus adjustment among this population; and 3) to understand the ways in which multiplicity and change within the sexual self are negotiated both internally and in the context of social, familial and romantic relationships. The study's longitudinal design allowed processes of change over time in women's sexual attractions, behaviors and self-identifications to be examined, and its integration of quantitative and qualitative methods granted insights into the ways in which participants themselves understand and relate to these change processes.

Due to the mixed-methods nature of this research – in which quantitative analyses were used to examine relationships identified through qualitative findings, and qualitative results were further examined to shed light on patterns identified through quantitative analyses – examination and discussion of certain study findings have already begun in the context of the Results section. The following discussion will continue this examination, and will consider the broader significance and implications of the results of this study taken as a whole.

Discussion of results regarding demographic factors

The sample of the present study differs from a random sampling of the population of the United States on a number of demographic factors, most notably with regard to relationship status and sexual abuse history. Rates of committed relationships, marriages or civil unions

within this sample were significantly lower than the national average, and rates of sexual abuse were significantly higher than the national average. Possible interpretations and implications of these findings are discussed below.

The number of women in this sample who reported being involved in a committed relationship, marriage or civil union (20%) is significantly lower than the national average reported in the *National Family Growth Survey* (Chandra et al, 2005), which found that 47% of women ages 25-29 residing in the United States were, or had previously been, married, and that this number rose to 72% for women ages 30-34 and to 73% for women ages 35-39. While it would be expected that the rate of marriage would be lower among a bisexual sample than among the majority heterosexual sample used in the *NFGS*, especially given that same-sex marriage had not yet been legalized in New York State when the present study was conducted, it is notable that so few women described their relationships (regardless of their legal status) as "committed."

This finding likely has multiple determinants, ranging from the internal to the societal. At the individual level, low rates of committed relationships may be related to the internal conflicts many women described with regard to reconciling bisexuality and monogamy, as well as to a widely-held belief, reported in the focused interviews of many participants, that it was necessary to be partnered with a man in order to have a "family." The latter belief caused a number of women in relationships with female partners to choose not to commit to their partners due to an anxiety that they would not be able to "build a family" together. These women appeared to remain in a sort of limbo, in love with a woman but holding out for a man who could be a "husband and father." At the level of relationships, many women spoke about the difficulty of finding partners who were comfortable with their bisexuality, and especially spoke about

experiences of stigma from within the GLBT community. A number of women reflected that, while it was easy to find casual partners, especially among heterosexual men who subtly or overtly fetishized female bisexuality, it was much more difficult to find partners who were comfortable committing to a serious relationship with a bisexual, as this evoked partners' own anxieties that they might eventually be abandoned for someone of the opposite sex. At a societal level, experiences of stigma from the broader culture likely also contributed to the challenges many women described in committing to a romantic relationship, including the lack of legal rights to marry a same-sex partner, the idea that a "family" could only be started by a man and a woman, and the stigma many women experienced from religious communities that condemned their sexualities as wrong or sinful.

The sample of this study also differed significantly from the national average with respect to histories of sexual victimization. Over half of participants (57.5%) reported having been victims of rape or sexual abuse during their lifetimes. By contrast, the *National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey* (Black et al, 2011), a recent large-scale national study, found that 18.3% of women residing in the United States had been victims of sexual violence during their lifetimes. When results from the *NIPSVS* were broken down by sexual orientation it became clear that significantly more bisexual women (46.1%) had been victims of sexual violence than had either lesbian women (13.1%) or heterosexual women (17.4%) (Black et al, 2011).

Disparities between rates of sexual victimization among heterosexual, lesbian/gay and bisexual individuals have been documented in a number of other studies to date. While estimates vary between studies, higher rates of sexual victimization are consistently found among sexual minorities than among heterosexuals, with the highest rates of victimization reported by bisexuals. Analyzing a different national sample, the *National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol*

and Related Conditions, Roberts and colleagues (2010) found that 47.3% of bisexual women reported having experienced unwanted sex, compared to 44.0% of lesbians and 13.4% of heterosexual women. A meta-analysis of studies examining prevalence of sexual abuse by sexual orientation (Friedman et al, 2011), found that, on average, 40.4% of bisexual female adolescents reported having experienced sexual abuse, compared with 32.1% of lesbian females and 16.9% of heterosexual females. While rates of sexual abuse were lower for males on average, they were still highest for bisexual males (24.5%) compared with gay (21.2%) and heterosexual males (4.64%). Another meta-analysis of studies examining prevalence of sexual victimization among sexual minorities (Rothman et al, 2011) found prevalence estimates of lifetime sexual abuse among lesbian and bisexual women ranging from 15.6-85.0%, and ranging from 11.8-54.0% for gay and bisexual men.

The reasons for these disparities are the topic of much recent study and debate. While a detailed discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this paper, some existing theories will be briefly mentioned. A number of scholars suggest that sexual minorities may be at elevated risk for sexual victimization as a result of stigma associated with their sexual orientation or gender expression (e.g. Balsam, 2003; Roberts et al, 2010; Rothman et al, 2011). Others suggest that sexual victimization, and especially childhood sexual abuse, may influence the ways in which individuals experience and express their sexuality following the abuse. No research to date supports the idea of a direct causal link between sexual abuse and the development of a minority sexual orientation (e.g. Balsam, 2003; Friedman et al, 2011; Roberts et al, 2010; Walker, Hernandez & Davey, 2012), and the idea that sexual abuse could "cause" individuals to become homosexual or bisexual is problematic because of its potentially stigmatizing implications. However, some research has attempted to trace more subtle ways in which sexual abuse may

affect sexual identity development. For example, one study found that sexual abuse was associated with earlier awareness and identification of same-sex sexual attractions (Morris and Balsam, 2003). Another qualitative study of lesbian and bisexual women who had experienced sexual abuse (Robohm et al, 2003) found that, while slightly over half of participants reported that they did not believe their abuse had affected their sexuality and/or coming out process, nearly half of participants believed it had. The links described by women in this study varied widely, ranging from an experience of sexual abuse as engendering distrust of male sexuality (if the perpetrator was male); an early awareness of sexual feelings following the abuse that contributed to earlier identification of same-sex attractions; an increase in positive feelings about identifying as queer; and an anxiety about whether one's same-sex attractions were "valid" or were in fact rooted in fear of men (Robohm et al, 2003). Other participants felt their experiences of sexual abuse had not shaped their sexual orientation, but had more broadly shaped their experiences of themselves as sexual beings, and their degree of comfort with sex and relationships.

Considering results of the present study in light of this literature, it is possible that the relationship between sexual abuse and gender of object-choice may be bidirectional. As discussed above, sexual minorities may be at elevated risk for sexual abuse. In addition, women who are sexually abused by males – and who have some underlying level of bisexual attractions – may choose, over time, to seek out female partners because of a greater sense of safety, among other reasons. Of note, this is not meant to suggest that women may "become" bisexual as a result of sexual abuse, but instead that sexual abuse by males may influence behaviorally heterosexual women who identify as straight but hold underlying attractions to both sexes to shift towards bisexual self-identification and behavior. In the context of the focused interview, a

number of women in this sample described gravitating towards female partners following experiences of sexual abuse by men, although all reflected that in retrospect their attractions to women predated the abuse.

In any case, the high rates of sexual victimization reported by bisexual women, both in the present sample and in the national samples reported above, may contribute to the higher rates of psychological distress among bisexuals discussed in the review of literature. Indeed, within the present study, women with a history of sexual abuse reported greater rates and severity of psychological symptoms, and also experienced higher rates of external pressure for singular sexual orientation and of community stigma against bisexuality. This fits with results of other studies that have documented elevated rates of emotional distress and symptomatology among sexual minorities who experience sexual victimization (e.g. Balsam, 2010; Cramer et al 2012; Roberts et al, 2010; Robohm et al, 2003). This issue should continue to be examined through future research.

To place this issue in the context of the larger themes of this study, it should also be noted that trauma is by definition a challenge to integration (e.g. Cortois & Ford, 2009; Herman, 1992; Van der Kolk, 2006). Thus, if bisexual women do indeed experience higher rates of sexual trauma than their straight or lesbian peers, it makes sense that this could result not only in heightened conflict and distress, but also in difficulties with identity integration of the sexual self, as well as difficulties tolerating paradox and ambiguity. In order to tolerate paradox, one needs to be able to "play," and trauma shuts down the capacity to play. Losing access to this type of creative engagement with one's sexuality, while potentially harmful for individuals of any sexual orientation, may take a particular toll on bisexuals, as the amount of complex and potentially paradoxical "information" they must integrate about their sexualities is so high.

Finally, a number of studies have found that a high percentage of individuals diagnosed with borderline personality disorder also have histories of trauma and abuse, and that individuals with histories of complex trauma often display similar personality characteristics as those with borderline personality organizations (e.g. Cortois & Ford, 2009; Herman, 1992; Van der Kolk, 2006). This may shed some light on the relatively high incidence of borderline personality organization within the present study. While no direct links were identified between sexual abuse history and borderline personality organization in this sample, it is possible that this link may have been evident if experiences of trauma other than sexual victimization had been assessed.

Discussion of results regarding borderline personality organization

Results of this study indicate that women who are organized at a borderline level have more difficulty tolerating paradoxical aspects of bisexuality than those who are organized at a neurotic level, that this difficulty increases over time, and that they are especially vulnerable to a number of other factors that may contribute to conflict surrounding their dual attractions, including internal and external pressure for singular sexual orientation, community stigma, and a tendency to split emotional attachment and sexual attraction by gender of partner. By definition, individuals organized at a borderline level have difficulty tolerating ambiguity and paradox with regard to representations of self, other, and affective experience, and often rely on splitting in an attempt to stabilize these diffuse representations (e.g. Kernberg, 1977). It follows that these individuals would have difficulty tolerating ambiguity and paradox with regard to their sexualities, and, further, that they would be more likely than individuals with more integrated identities to split emotional attachment and sexual excitement by gender of partner in an attempt to stabilize the sexual self (see Qualitative Results, above, for more detailed discussion of this

point). In addition, while it was hypothesized that internal pressure for singular sexual orientation would not be significantly associated with borderline personality organization, to some extent it also follows that these individuals would be more likely to experience such pressure, because a desire for identity to be "resolved" into a binary model could be understood as another sequela of splitting (see Results for further discussion).

As discussed in the Results section, further examination of the qualitative interviews suggested that the relationships between borderline personality organization and external pressure for singular sexual orientation, community support and community stigma (which also ran counter to hypotheses that these associations would be non-significant) may be bidirectional. In other words, while it is possible that these individuals did experience heightened levels of external pressure for singular sexual orientation and community stigma and lower levels of community support, it is also possible that their *representations* of these experiences were more polarized than those of their neurotically-organized peers due to their tendency towards splitting, as well as their tendency to project their own negative judgments onto others. Accordingly, the causal nature of these results is uncertain.

The study also indicates that, while no significant association was found between borderline personality organization and either attachment anxiety or attachment avoidance when assessed cross-sectionally, individuals organized at a borderline level experienced increased attachment anxiety over time when reassessed at Time 2. Although the cross-sectional finding runs counter to hypothesized relationships, it can be understood in the sense that attachment anxiety and avoidance are both normative ways of coping with different attachment experiences, and thus are not necessarily associated with pathology. However, the fact that attachment anxiety increased over time for the BPO group and not for the rest of the sample points meaningfully to

the ways in which the particular challenges of negotiating dual attractions may affect BPO individuals over time. When faced with ongoing ambiguity and complexity with respect to the sexual self, and with limited ego resources that would help the individual to tolerate this ambiguity, it appears that individuals organized at a borderline level may increasingly rely on an attachment style that involves seeking high levels of intimacy, approval and reassurance from romantic partners. In this context, increased reliance on an anxious attachment style may represent an attempt to stabilize the self through dependence on and identification with significant others.

To some extent, the BPO subset of the sample could be understood as meshing with what the neo-Freudians (e.g. Akhtar, 1984; Erikson, 1956) describe as "bisexual diffusion," in the sense that their sexual self-representations, as well as their representations of intimate relationships, often appeared colored by a more global tendency towards identity diffusion. Based on the present study, however, it is not possible to make a clear link between a bisexual orientation *per se* and these diffuse representations of intimate relationships and of the sexual self. In other words, if a comparative study were conducted across sexual orientation groups, similar levels of identity diffusion might also be evident among the sexual self-representations of straight and lesbian individuals organized at a borderline level. Identity diffusion with respect to the sexual self may be more immediately *apparent* among bisexual individuals organized at a borderline level because this diffusion plays out along the lines of sex and gender, categories that are culturally privileged and highly visible. Yet one would expect that such diffusion would be apparent in the sexual self-representations of all individuals who display a borderline personality organization, regardless of sexual orientation. In order to examine this question it would be necessary to conduct a study with a comparative sample, in which lesbian, straight and bisexual

women with different levels of personality organization could be compared; and/or to examine a representative sample of the population for prevalence of identity diffusion among lesbian, straight and bisexual subgroups.

One piece of evidence from the present study that goes against a portrayal of multiplicity and change within the sexual self as representative of identity diffusion is the fact that borderline personality organization was not significantly associated with change in sexuality markers, nor was it significantly associated with incongruence between sexual attractions and behaviors. Instead, change in sexual attractions, behaviors and self-identifications were seen across this bisexual sample as a whole regardless of personality organization, including among many participants who demonstrated a nuanced and integrated sense of their own identities (see Qualitative Results for examples and more detailed discussion). As noted above, a comparative study with lesbian, straight and bisexual subgroups would be necessary to address these questions more fully.

In interpreting these results in light of the theory presented here it should be noted that, while some theories conceptualize bisexuality as reflecting a diffuse identity (as discussed above and in the Review of Literature), sexual orientation and fluidity of object choice alone are *not* defining criteria of borderline personality organization as a structural diagnosis. For an individual to be conceptualized as organized at a borderline level, he/she must be experiencing difficulties in a number of other areas of functioning, including ego weakness, pathology of object relations, identity diffusion, impaired reality testing, and reliance on primitive defenses such as splitting and projection (e.g. Kernberg, 1977). In critiquing theories that associate bisexuality with identity diffusion, my intent is not to oversimplify the literature regarding borderline personality organization, but rather to consider the ways in which broader cultural

understandings and judgments of bisexuality may also be reflected in psychological and psychoanalytic theory.

Discussion of results regarding capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality

A number of factors, both intrapsychic and environmental, were found to be associated with capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality. As hypothesized, women with higher capacities to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality also had higher levels of differentiation-relatedness of self and object representations, community support for bisexuality, and attachment/sexuality integration, and lower levels of borderline personality organization (as described above), internal and external pressure for singular sexual orientation, and community stigma against bisexuality. In addition, women with high desire for predictability demonstrated lower capacities to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality. Each of these results have meaningful implications for theory.

The construct of differentiation-relatedness of self and object representations defines identity integration, at least in part, in terms of a capacity to tolerate ambivalence in one's representations of self and others without destabilization. The fact that differentiation-relatedness predicted capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality suggests that such a model of identity integration can be usefully applied not only to a general understanding of identity but also to our understanding of sexual identity, at least for bisexuals. As such, rather than suggesting that identity integration must involve the resolution of "contradiction" within the self (e.g. Akhtar, 1984; Erikson, 1956), these findings instead support an alternative model of identity integration built around the toleration of multiplicity within one's self and one's relationships with others (e.g. Bromberg, 2001; Diamond, 2008; Dimen, 2003; Levy-Warren, 2013; Pizer,

1998). Since this study was based only on a bisexual sample, these conclusions cannot be generalized to straight and lesbian women. However, if, following Freud (1905), everyone is indeed born with bisexual attractions that become sublimated to varying degrees in adulthood, I would argue that all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation, must negotiate some degree of multiplicity within their sexual selves, and that their capacities to tolerate such ambiguity have implications for their experiences of identity integration.

To shift to another finding, the fact that both internal and external pressure for singular sexual orientation predicted a decreased capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality points to one way in which "cognitive dissonance" (e.g Festinger, 1957) may be experienced by bisexual women. Specifically, it suggests that when bisexual women feel compelled, by internal and/or external forces, to "resolve" their bisexuality into a binary model, they begin to experience their ongoing dual attractions as "dissonant" and conflictual. By contrast, when they and those around them convey an acceptance of bisexuality as a valid sexual orientation that need not be "resolved" into either heterosexuality or homosexuality, experiences of "dissonance" are replaced by toleration of paradox. The fact that women in this sample showed great variability with regard to both these factors (i.e. pressure for singular sexual orientation and capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of sexual orientation) suggests that "cognitive dissonance" is far from a universal or inevitable response to bisexuality.

Results suggest that when such dissonance is experienced, a number of external factors are likely at play, including external pressure for singular sexual orientation and community stigma against bisexuality. Indeed, while stigma sometimes took the form of overt homophobia or biphobia, it was often intertwined with expressions of the view that bisexuality is a "phase" that must be resolved into a purely heterosexual or homosexual orientation. Such a view

essentially has the effect of rendering bisexual desire invisible, demanding that bisexual individuals "choose" either heterosexuality or homosexuality in order to be recognized as mature sexual beings. Taken together, these findings suggest that one way in which stigma and "minority stress" (e.g. Meyer, 2003) may uniquely affect bisexuals is by making it more challenging for them to tolerate and openly express the inherently ambiguous aspects of their sexualities, both internally and in the context of social and intimate relationships.

Another factor that appeared to contribute to "dissonance" for some was an experience of attachment and sexuality as split by gender, with little integration between the two. Participants who described such an experience were found to have more difficulty tolerating paradoxical aspects of bisexuality. These results suggest that in order to feel comfortable with the complexities posed by a bisexual orientation it is important to know that one is able to experience both emotional attachment and sexual excitement as integrated with a single partner (either male or female), rather than experiencing these aspects of intimacy as split by gender of partner. (For a more detailed discussion of this theme, please see Qualitative Results.)

Results of this study suggest a complex relationship between capacity to tolerate ambiguity and paradox with respect to bisexuality and one's more global capacity to tolerate lack of cognitive closure, both of which may have implications for an individual's vulnerability to experiencing "cognitive dissonance." While it was hypothesized that these two capacities would be positively correlated, results instead indicate that this correlation holds only for one aspect of need for closure (desire for predictability) and not for others (desire for order, decisiveness). As discussed in the Results section, desire for predictability specifically pertains to experiences of discomfort with not knowing what to expect, an experience that likely maps more closely onto the concept of "cognitive dissonance" than do desire for order or decisiveness. In the focused

interview, many participants who described feeling conflicted about their dual attractions pointed to a sustained state of uncertainty about what to expect from their internal erotic lives as a major source of their conflict. By contrast, participants with a high capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality generally conveyed an understanding of their desires as complex and multiple, and described a higher level of comfort with the idea that different aspects of their sexualities might shift over time. (For a more detailed discussion of this finding, please see Results.)

With regard to attachment to romantic partners, results suggest that one's global attachment style, when used to describe one's romantic relationships in general, does not predict toleration of paradoxical aspects of bisexuality, but that experiences of emotional safety (or lack of safety) with a *specific* romantic partner may influence this capacity. While it had been hypothesized that women who scored high on attachment anxiety and/or attachment avoidance on the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale would have greater difficulty tolerating paradoxical aspects of bisexuality, in fact no significant associations were found between these variables. However, in the focused interviews a pattern was noted whereby women who described emotionally-safe relationships with *specific* romantic partners also tended to feel more able to tolerate paradox and ambiguity with respect to their sexualities. Such partner-specific attachment security (described in greater detail in Qualitative Results) provided a "secure base" that allowed women to gain comfort in acknowledging and exploring their sexualities without feeling that either they or their partners were threatened by such exploration.

One possible explanation for the lack of significant findings regarding global attachment style in romantic relationships is the fact that the ECR provides scores only for attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance, but not for attachment security. If such a score had been

available, a significant relationship might have been identified. Alternatively, as suggested by the qualitative findings noted above, it is also possible that the link between security of attachment and toleration of paradox depends more on the level of emotional safety within a specific relationship, and with a specific partner, than it does on an individual's global attachment style. This question could be usefully examined through future research, perhaps incorporating a measure such as the Adult Attachment Interview (George, Kaplan & Main, 1985) in order to assess attachment style with greater rigor.

Discussion of results regarding the relationship between psychological distress and adjustment, hypothesized predictors, and change over time in sexuality markers

Results of this study indicate that the psychological distress and adjustment of bisexual women is predicted by multiple factors at three different levels of experience: the intrapsychic (capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality, internal pressure for singular sexual orientation, and decisiveness), the relational (attachment-sexuality integration), and the environmental (community support for bisexuality). In addition, the trend ($p<.07$) that was identified whereby the interaction between change in sexual attractions and capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality predicted psychological distress adds a fourth dimension to this equation, that of change over time. One broad implication of these findings for theory and research is simply to underscore the many different factors that are at play, and to suggest that the mental health of bisexuals will not be understood fully or accurately if only one of these levels of analysis is considered. A similar perspective is exemplified by a recent qualitative study of bisexual adults by Ross, Dobinson & Eady (2010), which identified risk and protective factors at the "individual, interpersonal, and social" levels. Further examining these different levels of

experience as they relate to the mental health of bisexuals may serve as a useful template for future research.

Interestingly, with respect to the variables derived from the focused interviews, the above findings pertained more to psychological adjustment (as assessed through a measure of self esteem and a measure of positive affect) than to psychological distress (as assessed through a measure of Axis I psychological symptoms). Participants with higher capacities to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality, higher attachment-sexuality integration, and/or higher community support for bisexuality also had higher levels of self-esteem and positive affect, but did not have fewer psychological symptoms. Participants with less internal pressure for singular sexual orientation had higher levels of self-esteem, but did not report either higher positive affect or fewer psychological symptoms. Results of the focused interviews suggest that each of these factors played an important role in shaping the extent to which women felt comfortable with themselves as sexual beings, and were able to embrace and enjoy their sexualities – experiences that likely contributed, in turn, to positive affect and self-esteem. However, the link with psychological distress remained less clear.

One way of understanding this finding is that many of the themes explored in the focused interview, from which these variables were derived, had to do specifically with identity and sense of self with regard to sexuality. The link between these themes and self-esteem is more intuitive than the link with distress, especially as operationalized through a measure of Axis I symptomatology (the BSI). Indeed, as noted in the above discussion of results regarding borderline personality organization, the predictor variables measured here would likely demonstrate a greater association with Axis II symptomatology than with Axis I

symptomatology. Although the present study did not include an objective measure of personality disorders, this could be a fruitful direction for future research.

The one variable that did significantly predict psychological distress in a main effect was decisiveness, a personality-level variable derived from the Need for Closure Scale that assesses the extent to which individuals are able to make important decisions without excessive conflict. Participants with higher levels of decisiveness reported fewer psychological symptoms, more positive affect, and higher self-esteem. While this finding was unexpected, given the hypothesis that need for closure (across all subscales) would be associated with elevated distress and decreased adjustment among this population, it in fact sheds light on an important counterpart to the capacity to tolerate ambiguity and paradox: namely, the capacity to make "important decisions"[10] and meaningful commitments, even in "paradoxical" circumstances.

As discussed in the Results section, women who displayed one of these capacities without the other, i.e. a capacity to tolerate paradox without a capacity to commit, or visa-versa, expressed greater conflict around their dual attractions. At one extreme, premature "decisiveness" could function as an attempt to shut down the complexities posed by dual attractions. At the other extreme, toleration of paradox could become paralyzing if it meant remaining constantly in a state of possibilities while avoiding any substantive choices or commitments. Indeed, results from the focused interviews suggest that the women who appeared best able to negotiate the challenges posed by their dual attractions were those who were able to make meaningful commitments in their lives with regard to love, sex and relationships without excessive conflict, but also without splitting off a part of their sexualities.

[10] A number of items on the decisiveness subscale are worded in terms of "important decisions," e.g. "I tend to put off making important decisions until the last possible moment." For further examples please Results, where these items are discussed in greater detail, or Appendix A, where all items are listed.

The relationship between change over time in sexuality markers and distress and adjustment outcomes was also examined, in order to shed light on the extent to which such change was experienced as a source of conflict. Of note, change over time in attractions, sexual self-identifications and sexual behaviors did not demonstrate any main effects with regard to psychological distress or adjustment outcomes, nor did incongruence between sexual attractions and sexual behaviors. It is possible that these relationships may have reached significance with a larger sample size, and greater statistical power. However, in the context of the present study, these findings support the idea that multiplicity, "fluidity" and change (e.g. Diamond, 2008; Dimen, 2003; Weinberg et al, 1994) may be a relatively normative aspect of the bisexual self, and is not necessarily correlated with conflict or distress within a bisexual sample. As discussed below, in order to determine whether change in sexuality markers is or is not associated with conflict or distress for the population more broadly, rather than for bisexual women in particular, it would be necessary to conduct a similar study with straight, lesbian and bisexual comparison groups. This would be a useful direction for future research.

Finally, a trend ($p<.06$) was identified whereby the interaction between capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality and change over time in sexual attractions was associated with psychological distress. Specifically, women with low capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality demonstrated elevated distress, regardless of their degree of change in sexual attractions. Women with high capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality and low change in sexual attractions demonstrated significantly lower levels of distress. Women with high capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality and high change in sexual attractions demonstrated an increase in distress compared to those with low change in attractions.

As discussed in Results, this finding suggests that, while capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality may serve as a protective factor against psychological distress, change in sexual attractions may place an additional demand on this capacity that may result in increased distress, at least in the short-term. Of note, results of this study can only shed light on the ways in which these change processes unfold over a relatively brief period of time (12-14 months). It is possible that change in sexual attractions may temporarily increase distress among individuals with high capacity to tolerate paradoxical aspects of bisexuality while these changes are being integrated into the individual's sexual self-concept and negotiated in the context of the individual's relationships with and self-presentation to others, but that this effect may diminish over time as the individual adapts to this change. This hypothesis should be tested through longer-term longitudinal research examining the ways in which these phenomena unfold over time. In addition, given that many women reported shifts in their sexual attractions linked to changes in their romantic relationships (as noted in Qualitative Results), it is also possible that heightened distress with change in attractions could be a result of loss and mourning of a former relationship, as well as loss and mourning of the fantasies associated with being partnered with someone of one gender versus the other.

Implications

Implications for theory: Overall, results of the present study complicate neo-Freudian theories of "bisexual diffusion" (e.g. Akhtar, 1984; Erikson, 1956), and demonstrate the usefulness of post-modern theories of multiplicity and plasticity within the sexual self for understanding the experiences of bisexuals (e.g. Bromberg, 2001; Diamond, 2008; Dimen, 2003; Harris, 2009). Likewise this study provides preliminary support for an alternative understanding

of identity integration for bisexual women built around the toleration of paradox and ambiguity, as these may exist both cross-sectionally and in the context of change over time (e.g. Levy-Warren, 2013; Pizer, 1998).

In its examination of change-processes among bisexual women, results of this study provide further support for the idea of "sexual fluidity" proposed and documented by Lisa Diamond in her longitudinal research with sexual minority women (2008), and expands on her research in order to examine the ways in which such "fluidity" interfaces with identity integration and psychological adjustment. As discussed above, the present research suggests that a number of different intrapsychic and environmental factors influence the extent to which bisexual women experience their identities as integrated in the midst of change, versus the extent to which they experience such change as destabilizing. These results, and the nuances they provide, could usefully inform contemporary theorizing about "fluidity" in female sexuality, which constitutes a relatively new object of theory and research.

As noted above, the present study provides some evidence for "cognitive dissonance" (e.g. Festinger, 1957) among this population, but this appears to be the case primarily when individuals are faced with internal or external pressures to "resolve" their sexualities into a binary model that does not fit their inner experience. Thus, results of this study suggest that cognitive dissonance is *not* a result of bisexuality itself, but rather of attempts to "resolve" bisexuality.

Such pressures for false resolution of one's dual attractions could, in fact, be understood as a form of "minority stress" (e.g. Meyer, 2003) faced specifically by bisexuals. Indeed, much existing theory that portrays bisexuality as a "transitional phase" or a state of confusion that must be resolved in order to achieve a mature identity could be understood as contributing to such

minority stress, by communicating the message that the paradox inherent in bisexuality cannot be tolerated and must instead be foreclosed. These ideas have meaningful implications for theory-building within clinical psychology and psychoanalysis, as discussed in the Review of Literature. They also have implications for minority stress theory, which does not yet capture the specific ways in which stigma is experienced by individuals whose identities are stigmatized by nature of being ambiguous or "paradoxical."

Another implication for theory surrounds the ways in which participants described their understanding of how and why shifts in their internal erotic lives occurred, especially as these took place within the context of intimate relationships. Specifically, as described in the Qualitative Results, the majority of women who reported change over time in their sexual attractions or self-identifications traced these changes to shifts in their romantic lives, for example beginning a relationship with a new partner, ending a relationship with a former partner, or deepening a relationship with a long-term partner. These narratives add an additional layer of complexity to traditional "coming out" narratives, in which one's "authentic" sexuality is understood to be innate, and experiences of change over time revolve around one's discovery, acceptance and disclosure of this "authentic" sexual self (e.g. Domenici & Lesser, 1995; Eliason & Schope, 2007).

While such narratives capture one important aspect of sexual orientation, namely the extent to which individuals are born with attractions primarily to men, women or both, they do not account for the ways in which intrapsychic and relational factors may also influence sexual desire, and they also do not account for the extent to which, at least for some individuals, sexual desire may shift over time. Adrienne Harris' (2008) view of gender and sexuality as "softly assembled," and Muriel Dimen's (2003) critique of dualism with respect to gender and sexuality

as “a set-up,” offer alternative perspectives on this issue. Along a similar line, and informed by results of her ten-year longitudinal study of change over time among sexual minority women, Lisa Diamond (2008) proposes that we may be born not only with a primary sexual orientation (gay/lesbian, straight, or bisexual), but also with varying capacities for “fluidity” with respect to this primary orientation. This idea, which resonates with the results of the present study, is intriguing, and deserves further theoretical elaboration.

Interestingly, to some extent these post-modern perspectives echo Freud’s (1905) argument that we are all born with a capacity for bisexual identifications and attractions, and that the form that these identifications and attractions take in our adult lives are shaped not only by biology but also by our psychodynamics and our intimate and familial relationships. Each of these perspectives is useful in understanding the experiences described by the participants in the present study, and provide examples of the ways in which theories of sexual identity development might develop alternative, less linear, narratives that account for the ways in which relational context and internal experiences of one’s sexuality may mutually influence each other.

Implications for policy: Results of this study show that bisexual women who experience higher levels of community support for bisexuality also experience higher self-esteem and positive affect. This finding has implications for policy, as it suggests that helping communities to better understand and support the experiences of bisexuals, and also helping bisexuals to better support each other, will in turn contribute to psychological adjustment among this population.

This raises the question of what “community support” may look like with respect to bisexuals. Following the present research, it can be concluded that one important way of demonstrating support for bisexuals involves understanding the ways in which their narratives

regarding sexual identity development may differ from traditional coming-out narratives. As discussed above, results of this study suggest that while some bisexual individuals may experience their attractions to men and women as relatively stable and consistent over time, others may experience their attractions and sexual self-identifications as evolving in a less linear fashion, influenced not only by internal factors but also by relational factors. These experiences may not always fit neatly into the more linear narratives used to describe gay and lesbian identity development. Yet both LGBT communities and mainstream society often convey the message (either subtly or overtly) that if one is a sexual minority, traditional coming-out narratives describe the only legitimate way of coming into one's own as a sexual being.

Such a message can have insidious effects for individuals whose own stories do not fit this model. Organizations and communities that seek to influence policy with regard to sexual minorities should consider this when choosing how to frame their portrayals of sexual identity development. This issue should also be considered specifically by LGBT communities in terms of the messages they convey regarding who can be a legitimate member of the community and who cannot.

Finally, while the idea of forming communities of support specifically for bisexuals is a complicated one for a number of reasons, it is still worthy of consideration. This is especially true given that bisexuals tend to describe a lack of belonging as a major source of distress with regard to their sexuality. Among the barriers that might complicate such an idea is the fact that many individuals who are attracted to both sexes do not identify as "bisexual," instead adopting other identity labels such as "queer," or choosing not to adopt an identity label at all. For these individuals, the idea of joining a "bisexual community" might not fit with their understandings of their own sexualities. For example, the questioning of binaries and dichotomies with regard to

gender and sexuality is foundational to the meaning of "queerness." Thus, for individuals who identify in this way, the idea of further subdividing communities by sexual orientation might seem to miss the point. In addition, to form a separate "bisexual community" would likely involve a significant sense of loss for many individuals who consider themselves a part of the LGBT community, even when they may feel excluded by this community at times. At the same time, it may be possible to find creative ways in which bisexual, "queer" and unlabeled individuals could support each other without needing to reify their identities and group affiliations.

Implications for treatment: Results of this study suggest that it is important for therapists not to conceptualize bisexuality as a phase or a state of confusion that must be resolved, as such an assumption may be iatrogenic. Instead, therapy with bisexual individuals – as, indeed, with all individuals – should aim to nurture a capacity to tolerate ambivalence and ambiguity without needing to fall back on rigid defenses or to split off parts of the self. At the same time, therapists should also be attentive to the delicate balance between toleration of paradox and a capacity to make meaningful commitments, as results of this study suggest that both are important in allowing bisexuals to successfully negotiate their dual attractions.

It may be useful for therapists working with bisexual women to be aware that some degree of change over time in sexual attractions, behaviors and self-identifications may be relatively common among this population, and that such change is not necessarily experienced as a source of conflict, although some women may experience it this way. In addition, while experiences of change and fluidity in the sexual self may be interwoven with a borderline personality organization for some, this is not the case for the majority. Therapists should be careful not to interpret such changes as indications of identity diffusion unless other aspects of an

individual's personality functioning support this interpretation. Noting and inquiring about changes in a patient's sexual attractions, behaviors and self-identifications in a non-judgmental yet curious fashion may provide a fruitful space for patients to reflect on what these changes mean to them, and to integrate them into their understandings of themselves as sexual beings and in relation to others.

Therapists should also be attentive to themes of attachment/sexuality integration, and may find it useful to inquire about the ways in which relationships with men and women may be experienced differently, as a "bisexual" label may in fact conceal much complexity with regard to how relationships are experienced by gender of partner. When discussing this theme with patients, therapists should also keep in mind that attachment and sexuality often operate independently, and need not be integrated in all relationships; yet having a *capacity* to experience the two as integrated appears to contribute to better adjustment.

Further, at least for some women, integrating attachment and sexuality in the context of a committed relationship may involve being able to openly share attractions towards and fantasies about the opposite gender of one's current partner, with one's partner. When participants felt such attractions and fantasies needed to be hidden from their partners, they often came to experience their excitement about the opposite gender as intrusive, threatening, and potentially disruptive to their primary relationships. Somewhat paradoxically, feeling that such excitement needed to be hidden ultimately made the fantasies associated with this excitement even more powerful. In addition, fantasies about the opposite gender were sometimes used to defend against the primary relationship. For example, participants sometimes described reaching the conclusion that if they were dissatisfied with a current partner it must be due to their partner's gender, and

choosing to disengage from the relationship as a result, rather than negotiating the specifics of their dissatisfaction together with their partner.

By contrast, women who were able to share their dual attractions and fantasies openly with romantic partners were less likely to use these attractions defensively, and also were less likely to experience these attractions as posing a serious threat to their relationships. In addition, many women described ways in which sharing their dual attractions with their partners became a source of shared excitement, fantasy and mutual "play," which in turn helped them to integrate these attractions more fully into their sense of themselves as sexual beings.

Building this type of openness depends not only on the individual but also on her partner, and on the level of trust between them. Thus, when discussing these issues with a patient, clinicians should be aware of both partners' contributions, and should be mindful of how safe or unsafe (emotionally or otherwise) it might be for an individual to share her dual attractions with a particular partner. In addition, if questions about sharing or hiding one's attractions and fantasies in the context of a relationship become central to an individual treatment, couples therapy may also be considered.

Another issue relevant to clinical practice is the particular ways in which loss and mourning may come into play for bisexuals, especially in the context of making long-term commitments to a particular partner. If an individual experiences deep, ongoing attractions to both men and women, both sets of attractions will be elaborated in fantasy, with a whole array of emotional associations, self-experiences, and images of what the future would be like with a man versus with a woman. Committing to one partner, therefore, involves loss and mourning not only of particular men or women who the individual may have loved in the past or may feel attracted to in the future (an experience that all people share, regardless of sexual orientation), but also of

the *fantasy* associated with the idea of a relationship with the other gender. Thus, when working with a bisexual individual who is in the process of making a long-term commitment, clinicians should listen for the ways in which loss and mourning may be present, and should help the individual to elaborate what they are mourning in fantasy as well as in reality.

These issues may be especially potent for individuals whose attractions and understandings of their own sexualities have shifted in response to falling in love with a particular man or woman, when they may not previously have expected to be attracted to someone of this gender (as described in Qualitative Results). These individuals may find themselves in a situation in which the reality of their current relationship is deeply satisfying and compelling, but the majority of their fantasies about love, sex, family, etc. are intertwined with the opposite gender. This is a unique challenge that many bisexuals, especially those who become aware of their dual attractions later in life, may face. Clinicians can help individuals navigate these challenges by providing a setting in which love for a particular partner as well as loss and mourning for one's fantasies of the other gender can both be discussed openly, without implying that one must negate the other. Over time, psychotherapy may also serve as a space in which new fantasies – about the self as a sexual being, about the self in relation with a particular partner, and about the self in relation with men or women – can be explored, elaborated and integrated into the individual's psychic life.

Limitations

As noted above, one major limitation of the present study involved the fact that the sample consisted entirely of bisexual women, with no comparison groups. Thus, all conclusions can be generalized only to within-group differences among bisexual women, and cannot shed

light on the ways in which bisexual women may differ from lesbian and heterosexual women. For example, it is possible that some of the associations that were not significant within the present study might be significant when comparing bisexual subjects to heterosexual and homosexual subjects, for example the relationship between change over time in sexuality markers (i.e. sexual attractions, behaviors, and self-identifications) and borderline personality organization, as well as the relationship between change in sexuality markers and psychological distress and adjustment. This question should be examined further through future research.

Another limitation surrounds this study's relatively small sample size, which had implications for statistical power. For example, some quantitative analyses yielded small to medium effect sizes, and were not statistically significant. With a larger sample size, such relationships may have been significant. While the sample size of the present study was constrained by time, staffing and financial resources, conducting a similar study with a larger sample size might yield more significant results.

Certain research questions posed by the present study may have been better addressed with the use of additional measures. In particular, questions regarding borderline personality organization and Axis II symptomatology could have been addressed with greater rigor if an objective measure of personality disorders had been included. In the absence of such a measure, clinical classification of participants into a "borderline personality organization" sub-group based on focused interview data allowed such questions to be addressed on a preliminary basis. However, such clinical classifications were limited both by the fact that they were not designed to identify the presence or absence of BPD as defined by the DSM, and also by the fact that they were based specifically on the ways in which participants presented when discussing their sexuality. Given these limitations, it is possible that some participants who were particularly

conflicted about their sexualities may have demonstrated higher levels of identity diffusion and relied more heavily on splitting when discussing this topic than they would have when discussing more general topics. Differentiation-Relatedness scores based on the Object Relations Inventory were used as a validity check for assigning participants to the BPO group as an attempt to address this limitation, as this measure assesses identity integration in a more global fashion by asking participants to describe self, mother and father. Nevertheless, results regarding borderline phenomena would have been stronger had an objective measure of personality disorders been incorporated into the study.

Directions for future research

As proposed above, two major directions for future research would be to conduct a similar study with a larger sample size, and to conduct a similar study with heterosexual and homosexual comparison groups. Such studies would address limitations of the present research as detailed above, and would expand upon the ways in which the dynamics of identity integration, change over time, and toleration of paradox and ambiguity may differ between bisexual, heterosexual and homosexual women.

Another idea that would serve as a useful counterpart to the present research would be to conduct a similar study with bisexual men, and/or to conduct a similar study with bisexual male and bisexual female comparison groups. It has been suggested that female sexuality may be more "fluid" than male sexuality (e.g. Chivers et al, 2005; Diamond, 2008). However, to date no longitudinal research has examined this hypothesis as it relates to male sexuality as it unfolds over time, with consideration of the impact of cultural factors that assume a binary model of sexuality for men even more than they do for women. Given the distinct cultural representations

of and responses to male versus female bisexuality, conducting such a study with dually attracted men would likely yield different findings that those presented here, and would offer valuable insights into the ways in which the negotiation of bisexuality is influenced by sex.

Yet another direction for future research would be to continue to follow up with the women who participated in the present study, thus gathering additional longitudinal results. As few longitudinal studies currently exist in this area of sexuality research, continuing to follow this sample over time could add complexity and nuance to the findings reported over this first 12-14 month period.

Conclusion

This longitudinal, mixed-methods study examined internal, relational and environmental factors influencing psychological distress and adjustment among adult bisexual women, with a focus on women's capacities to tolerate paradox and ambiguity with regard to the sexual self in the context of change over time. Issues related to personality organization and identity integration were also examined. In addition, qualitative analyses were used to examine the ways in which change over time in sexual attractions and self-identifications were understood by participants and integrated into their self-concepts, to understand the extent to which different participants experienced emotional and erotic aspects of relationships as integrated or split with male versus female partners, and to consider factors that shaped the ways in which participants' attempted to negotiate these dynamics.

Taken as a whole, results of this study suggest that bisexual women fare best when they do not attempt to "resolve" their sexualities into a binary model, when they are able to share their dual attractions openly with their primary romantic partners, when they are able to experience

emotional attachment and sexual excitement as integrated in romantic relationships, when their communities are supportive of their dual attractions, when they are able to tolerate paradox and ambiguity with respect to their sexualities, and when they are able to make important decisions without excessive conflict. Results also suggest that bisexual women organized at a borderline level, while they may not demonstrate increased distress as measured by Axis II symptoms, face particular challenges in that they have more difficulty tolerating paradoxical aspects of bisexuality than those who are organized at a neurotic level, that this difficulty increases over time, and that they display an increasingly anxious attachment style over time, likely in an attempt to stabilize the self in the face of ambiguity. Following from these findings, implications for theory, policy, and clinical practice, as well as directions for future research, were proposed.

APPENDIX A

QUANTITATIVE MEASURES
AND
FOCUSED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Consent Form for Study:
Dually Attracted Women's Experiences and Connections

We are asking you to take part in a study of sexual identity. You will be asked questions about your past and current relationships, your sexuality, your attractions, and your fantasies. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to fill out a few questionnaires that will take approximately 30 minutes. You will also be asked to participate in an interview that will take approximately one hour. The interview will be digitally recorded. The purpose of the taping is to allow the study's research staff to examine closely the experiences that are discussed. The audiotape will be transcribed by a transcription service. Your responses to all of the questions will be kept strictly confidential. You will be allowed to review any audio recordings and request that any data not be used if you feel uncomfortable. You may refuse to participate at any time, or may refuse to answer any question, but we hope you will answer all of them.

The researchers are planning one or more future studies. We may ask you to participate in future research, if that is okay with you. To provide you with information about those studies, we will need to contact you in the future. To do so, we request that you provide us with identifying information such as your name and address. The sheet with this information, as well as this consent form, will be separated from the questionnaire and will be kept confidential and stored in secure files. If we contact you, you may refuse to participate in future studies.

Risks and Benefits: You may experience some emotional unease or some of the study questions might make you uncomfortable. If you wish to speak to someone about this unease or discomfort, please call Jane Caflisch, principle investigator, at City College at 347-825-6518, and she will make a referral to a professional in the Psychological Center. Other people may appreciate being able to discuss these issues with the interviewer. Although a possible risk is breach of confidentiality, the study will safeguard your confidentiality as detailed below in the Confidentiality section. This study is not designed for your direct benefit. However, you will be compensated for your time and the study is expected to benefit science and other individuals.

Research Standards and Rights of Participants: You may refuse to participate. If you do not want to answer specific questions, you will not have to do so and you will not be penalized in any way.

Confidentiality: No identifiable information will be shared with anyone outside of the study. The information obtained from the interviews and questionnaire will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law. Any identifying information that you provide will be separated from the questionnaire and will be kept in a locked file at the offices of the research staff. Your questionnaires and the digital recording of your interview will only be identified by a numeric code.

Compensation: You will receive $30.00 for participating in this study.

If you have any questions about this study, please email or call Jane Caflisch, 347-825-6518, DAWNresearch@gmail.com. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, call Ms. Lissy Wassaff, IRB Administrator at City College, at (212) 650-7902.

I have read and understood the information above. The researchers have answered my questions. I may refuse to answer any question I want. I consent to take part in this study and so indicate by signing this form below. Two copies of this form are provided. One is for me. The other form, the one I signed, is to be returned with the questionnaire in the enclosed addressed and stamped envelope

Participant's Name (print): _____

*Signature:*_____ *Date:* _____

Future Research

Dear Participant,

As we just mentioned, we hope to continue to do research in this area in the future. If you are comfortable being contacted for future voluntary IRB approved research studies please fill out the information below. This information is completely confidential and will only be used for the specific purposes designated above.

Thank you.

Name:_____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Cell Phone #: _____ Alternate Phone # :_____

Email Address:_____ 2nd Email option: _____

Additional Contact Person (in case your information has changed):

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Phone Number: _____ Email Address:_____

SIGNATURE: _____ Date: _____

Demographic Information: About You

The purpose of this form is to gather some basic background information on those individuals participating in this study. Please circle the appropriate number or write in the answer where it is specified.

1. Age:_____

2. Biological Sex:
   [1] Male
   [2] Female
   [3] Other (specify): _____

3. What is your current religion?

   [1] Evangelical Protestant Christian (that is, Jehovah's Witness, Pentecostal) (specify:) _____
   [2] Other Protestant Christian (for example, Baptist, Episcopalian). Please specify:_____
   [3] Catholic/Roman Catholic
   [4] Jewish
   [5] Islamic/Muslim
   [6] Agnostic
   [7] Other (specify:) _____
   [8] None

4. How religious do you consider yourself to be?
   [1] Not at all
   [2] A little bit
   [3] Somewhat
   [4] Quite a bit
   [5] Very

5. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?:
   [1] Graduate school degree
   [2] Some graduate school
   [3] 4-year undergraduate college degree
   [4] 2-year undergraduate college degree
   [5] Some college
   [6] High school diploma
   [7] GED
   [8] Some high school
   [9] Graduated from elementary school
   [10] Some elementary school

6. What is your race?
    [1] Black
    [2] White
    [3] East Asian
    [4] South/Southeast Asian
    [5] Middle Eastern
    [6] Pacific Islander
    [7] Indigenous American/Native peoples of the Americas
    [9] Mixed race (specify using above terms):_____
    [10] I classify myself ethnically and not racially

7. What is your ethnicity? (If mixed, please circle both)
    [1] African American (North America)
    [2] Native American
    [3] Latino/Hispanic
    [4] European American
    [5] Caribbean Non Latino
    [6] Asia/Middle Eastern
    [7] Western European
    [8] Central/Eastern European
    [9] African
    [10] Australian
    [11] Other_____

8. What is your sexual orientation?
    [1] Exclusively heterosexual (I am *only* attracted to people of the opposite gender)
    [2] Mostly heterosexual (I am *usually* attracted to people of the opposite gender)
    [3] Bisexual (I am sexually attracted to people of both genders)
    [4] Mostly homosexual (I am *usually* attracted to people of the same gender as me).
    [5] Exclusively homosexual
    (I am *only* attracted to people of the same gender as me)
    [6] Uncertain/questioning

9. Are you currently involved in a romantic relationship?
    No: [1] Single, not dating
    [2] Single, dating

    Yes:
    [3] I have a girlfriend that I do not live with
    [4] I have a girlfriend I live with
    [5] I have a boyfriend that I do not live with

[6] I have a boyfriend I live with
[7] I am in a committed partnership/ marriage/ domestic/civil union
[8] I am in multiple romantic relationships

10. Past relationship history:
[1] I am currently separated from spouse/ partner
[2] Divorced
[3] Widowed
[4] None of the above

11. Are you currently employed?
[1] I work full-time
[2] I work part-time
[3] I am unemployed but seeking employment
[4] I am unemployed and not seeking employment right now

12. Are you currently a student?
[0] No, I am not enrolled in any school at this time
[1] Yes, I am a full-time student
[2] Yes, I am a part-time student

13. How many people are in your household? _____

14. What is your current household income in U.S. dollars?
[1] Under $10,000
[2] $10,000 - $19,999
[3] $20,000 - $29,999
[4] $30,000 - $39,999
[5] $40,000 - $49,999
[6] $50,000 - $74,999
[7] $75,000 - $99,999
[8] $100,000 - $150,000
[9] Over $150,000

Brief Symptom Inventory (Deragatis, 1993)

Below is a list of problems and complaints that people sometimes have. For each one, indicate how much that problem has bothered or distressed you during the past 7 days, including today. Please indicate whether each problem has bothered you not at all, a little bit, moderately, quite a bit, or extremely.

0. Not at all
1. A little bit
2. Moderately
3. Quite a bit
4. Extremely

1. Nervousness or shakiness inside.	0	1	2	3	4
2. Faintness or dizziness.	0	1	2	3	4
3. The idea that someone else can control your thoughts.	0	1	2	3	4
4. Feeling others are to blame for most of your troubles.	0	1	2	3	4
5. Trouble remembering things.	0	1	2	3	4
6. Feeling easily annoyed or irritated.	0	1	2	3	4
7. Pains in heart or chest.	0	1	2	3	4
8. Feeling afraid in open spaces.	0	1	2	3	4
9. Thoughts of ending your life.	0	1	2	3	4
10. Feeling that most people cannot be trusted.	0	1	2	3	4
11. Poor appetite.	0	1	2	3	4
12. Suddenly scared for no reason.	0	1	2	3	4
13. Temper outbursts that you could not control.	0	1	2	3	4
14. Feeling lonely even when you are with people.	0	1	2	3	4
15. Feeling blocked in getting things done.	0	1	2	3	4
16. Feeling lonely.	0	1	2	3	4
17. Feeling blue.	0	1	2	3	4
18. Feeling no interest in things.	0	1	2	3	4
19. Feeling fearful.	0	1	2	3	4
20. Your feelings being easily hurt.	0	1	2	3	4
21. Feeling that people are unfriendly or dislike you.	0	1	2	3	4
22. Feeling inferior to other.	0	1	2	3	4
23. Nausea or upset stomach.	0	1	2	3	4
24. Feeling that you are watched or talked about by others.	0	1	2	3	4
25. Trouble falling asleep.	0	1	2	3	4
26. Having to check and double check what you do.	0	1	2	3	4
27. Difficulty in making decisions	0	1	2	3	4
28. Feeling afraid to travel on buses, subways, or trains.	0	1	2	3	4
29. Trouble getting your breath.	0	1	2	3	4
30. Hot or cold spells.	0	1	2	3	4
31. Having to avoid certain things, places, or activities because they frighten you.	0	1	2	3	4
32. Your mind going blank.	0	1	2	3	4
33. Numbness or tingling in parts of your body.	0	1	2	3	4
34. The idea that you should be punished for your sins.	0	1	2	3	4
35. Feeling hopeless about the future.	0	1	2	3	4
36. Trouble concentrating.	0	1	2	3	4
37. Feeling weak in parts of your body.	0	1	2	3	4

38. Feeling tense or keyed up.	0	1	2	3	4
39. Thoughts of death or dying.	0	1	2	3	4
40. Having urges to beat, injure, or harm someone.	0	1	2	3	4
41. Having urges to break or smash things.	0	1	2	3	4
42. Feeling very self-conscious with others.	0	1	2	3	4
43. Feeling uneasy in crowds.	0	1	2	3	4
44. Never feeling close to another person.	0	1	2	3	4
45. Spells of terror or panic.	0	1	2	3	4
46. Getting into frequent arguments.	0	1	2	3	4
47. Feeling nervous when you are left alone.	0	1	2	3	4
48. Others not giving you proper credit for your achievements.	0	1	2	3	4
49. Feeling so restless you could not sit still.	0	1	2	3	4
50. Feelings of worthlessness.	0	1	2	3	4
51. Feeling that people will take advantage of you if you let them.	0	1	2	3	4
52. Feelings of guilt.	0	1	2	3	4
53. The idea that something is wrong with your mind.	0	1	2	3	4

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

Please indicate whether you "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," or "strongly disagree" with each of the following statements.

1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly Disagree

2. I feel I have a number of good qualities.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly Disagree

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly Disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly Disagree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly Disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly Disagree

10. At times I think I am no good at all.

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Strongly Disagree

Positive and Negative Affect Scale (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988)

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you have felt that way over the past seven days, including today. Use the following scale to record your answers.

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

_____ interested
_____ distressed
_____ excited
_____ upset
_____ strong
_____ guilty
_____ scared
_____ hostile
_____ enthusiastic
_____ proud
_____ irritable
_____ alert
_____ ashamed
_____ inspired
_____ nervous
_____ determined
_____ attentive
_____ jittery
_____ active
_____ afraid

Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR)

Kelly A. Brennan, Catherine L. Clark, & Phillip R. Shaver

The following statements concern how you feel in romantic relationships. We are interested in how you generally experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Respond to each statement by indicating how much you agree or disagree with it. Write the number in the space provided, using the following rating scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree Strongly			Neutral/ Mixed			Agree Strongly

___ 1. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.
___ 2. I worry about being abandoned.
___ 3. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.
___ 4. I worry a lot about my relationships.
___ 5. Just when my partner starts to get close to me I find myself pulling away.
___ 6. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.
___ 7. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.
___ 8. I worry a fair amount about losing my partner.
___ 9. I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.
___ 10. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him/her.
___ 11. I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.
___ 12. I often want to merge completely with romantic partners, and this sometimes scares them away.
___ 13. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.
___ 14. I worry about being alone.
___ 15. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.
___ 16. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.
___ 17. I try to avoid getting too close to my partner.
___ 18. I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.
___ 19. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.
___ 20. Sometimes I feel that I force my partners to show more feeling, more commitment.
___ 21. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.
___ 22. I do not often worry about being abandoned.
___ 23. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.
___ 24. If I can't get my partner to show interest in me, I get upset or angry.

___ 25. I tell my partner just about everything.
___ 26. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.
___ 27. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.
___ 28. When I'm not involved in a relationship, I feel somewhat anxious and insecure.
___ 29. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.
___ 30. I get frustrated when my partner is not around as much as I would like.
___ 31. I don't mind asking romantic partners for comfort, advice, or help.
___ 32. I get frustrated if romantic partners are not available when I need them.
___ 33. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.
___ 34. When romantic partners disapprove of me, I feel really bad about myself.
___ 35. I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.
___ 36. I resent it when my partner spends time away from me.

Need for Closure Scale
Webster, D. M. & Kruglanski, A. W. (1994).

Read each of the following statements and decide how much you agree with each according to your beliefs and experiences. Please respond according to the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

_____ 1. I think that having clear rules and order at work is essential for success.
_____ 2. Even after I've made up my mind about something, I am always eager to consider a different opinion.
_____ 3. I don't like situations that are uncertain.
_____ 4. I dislike questions which could be answered in many different ways.
_____ 5. I *like* to have friends who are unpredictable.
_____ 6. I find that a well-ordered life with regular hours suits my temperament.
_____ 7. When dining out, I like to go to places where I have been before so that I know what to expect.
_____ 8. I feel uncomfortable when I don't understand why an event occurred in my life.
_____ 9. I feel irritated when one person disagrees with what everyone else in a group believes.
_____ 10. I hate to change my plans at the last minute.
_____ 11. I don't like to go into a situation without knowing what I can expect from it.
_____ 12. When I go shopping, I have difficulty deciding exactly what it is that I want.
_____ 13. When faced with a problem I usually see the one best solution very quickly.
_____ 14. When I am confused about an important issue, I feel very upset.
_____ 15. I tend to put off making important decisions until the last possible moment.
_____ 16. I usually make important decisions quickly and confidently.
_____ 17. I would describe myself as indecisive.
_____ 18. I think it is fun to change my plans at the last minute.
_____ 19. I enjoy the uncertainty of going into a new situation without knowing what might happen.
_____ 20. My personal space is usually messy and disorganized.
_____ 21. In most social conflicts, I can easily see which side is right and which is wrong.
_____ 22. I tend to struggle with most decisions.
_____ 23. I believe that orderliness and organization are among the most important characteristics of a good student.
_____ 24. When considering most conflict situations, I can usually see how both sides could be right.
_____ 25. I don't like to be with people who are capable of unexpected actions.
_____ 26. I prefer to socialize with familiar friends because I know what to expect from them.
_____ 27. I think that I would learn *best* in a class that *lacks* clearly stated objectives and requirements.

_____ 28. When thinking about a problem, I consider as many different opinions on the issue as possible.
_____ 29. I like to know what people are thinking all the time.
_____ 30. I dislike it when a person's statement could mean many different things.
_____ 31. It's annoying to listen to someone who cannot seem to make up his or her mind.
_____ 32. I find that establishing a consistent routine enables me to enjoy life more.
_____ 33. I enjoy having a clear and structured mode of life.
_____ 34. I *prefer* interacting with people whose opinions are very different from my own.
_____ 35. I like to have a place for everything and everything in its place.
_____ 36. I feel uncomfortable when someone's meaning or intention is unclear to me.
_____ 37. When trying to solve a problem I often see so many possible options that it's confusing.
_____ 38. I always see so many possible solutions to problems I face.
_____ 39. I'd rather know bad news than stay in a state of uncertainty.
_____ 40. I do not usually consult many different opinions before forming my own view.
_____ 41. I dislike unpredictable situations.
_____ 42. I *dislike* the routine aspects of my work (studies).

Need for Closure Subscales

Order: 1, 6, 10, 20, 27, 32, 33, 35, 42
Closed Mindedness: 2, 4, 9, 24, 28, 34, 38, 40
Ambiguity: 3, 8, 14, 21, 29, 30, 31, 36, 39
Predictability: 5, 7, 11, 18, 19, 25, 26, 41
Decisiveness: 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 22, 37

Order subscale items:
1. I think that having clear rules and order at work is essential for success.
6. I find that a well-ordered life with regular hours suits my temperament.
10. I hate to change my plans at the last minute.
20. My personal space is usually messy and disorganized.
23. I believe that orderliness and organization are among the most important characteristics of a good student.
27. I think that I would learn *best* in a class that *lacks* clearly stated objectives and requirements.
32. I find that establishing a consistent routine enables me to enjoy life more.
33. I enjoy having a clear and structured mode of life.
35. I like to have a place for everything and everything in its place.
42. I *dislike* the routine aspects of my work (studies).

Closed mindedness subscale items:
2. Even after I've made up my mind about something, I am always eager to consider a different opinion.
4. I dislike questions which could be answered in many different ways.
9. I feel irritated when one person disagrees with what everyone else in a group believes.
24. When considering most conflict situations, I can usually see how both sides could be right.

28. When thinking about a problem, I consider as many different opinions on the issue as possible.
34. I *prefer* interacting with people whose opinions are very different from my own.
38. I always see so many possible solutions to problems I face.
40. I do not usually consult many different opinions before forming my own view.

Intolerance of ambiguity subscale items:
3. I don't like situations that are uncertain.
8. I feel uncomfortable when I don't understand why an event occurred in my life.
14. When I am confused about an important issue, I feel very upset.
21. In most social conflicts, I can easily see which side is right and which is wrong.
29. I like to know what people are thinking all the time.
30. I dislike it when a person's statement could mean many different things.
31. It's annoying to listen to someone who cannot seem to make up his or her mind.
36. I feel uncomfortable when someone's meaning or intention is unclear to me.
39. I'd rather know bad news than stay in a state of uncertainty.

Desire for predictability subscale items:
5. I *like* to have friends who are unpredictable.
7. When dining out, I like to go to places where I have been before so that I know what to expect.
11. I don't like to go into a situation without knowing what I can expect from it.
18. I think it is fun to change my plans at the last minute.
19. I enjoy the uncertainty of going into a new situation without knowing what might happen.
25. I don't like to be with people who are capable of unexpected actions.
26. I prefer to socialize with familiar friends because I know what to expect from them.
41. I dislike unpredictable situations.

Decisiveness subscale items:
12. When I go shopping, I have difficulty deciding exactly what it is that I want.
13. When faced with a problem I usually see the one best solution very quickly.
15. I tend to put off making important decisions until the last possible moment.
16. I usually make important decisions quickly and confidently.
17. I would describe myself as indecisive.
22. I tend to struggle with most decisions.
37. When trying to solve a problem I often see so many possible options that it's confusing.

Sexual Risk Behavior Assessment Schedule—Adapted for Study (Meyer-Bahlburg et al., 1994)

Please remember to make note of additional questions asked and moments of digression. You may integrate elements of the focused interview into the SERBAS but the questions from the SERBAS must be asked verbatim.

A. Psychosexual Milestones

The following questions will ask you about your relationships with women and men. We need to make sure we have good information about the kinds of sexual experiences and relationships people have, so we'll be talking about this in detail. Whatever you tell me will be kept confidential.

A003. When you think about sex, do **you** think of yourself as

1. Gay
2. Bisexual, or (Go to A005)
3. Straight
8. Other

SPECIFY: _____

A004. Was there ever a time when you thought you might be bisexual?

1. No (BOX ABOVE A007)
2. Yes

A005. How old were you when you first thought that you might be bisexual?

___ ___
AGE

A006. How old were you when you first thought of yourself as really being bisexual?

___ ___ (NEVER, 00)
AGE

IF A003 WAS ANSWERED 'LESBIAN'/GAY,' SKIP TO A008. OTHERWISE, CONTINUE.

A007. Was there ever a time when you thought you might be a lesbian/gay?

1. No (SECTION E.)
2. Yes

A008. How old were you when you first thought that you might be lesbian/gay?

___ ___
AGE

A009. How old were you when you first thought of yourself as really <u>being</u> lesbian/gay?

___ ___ (NEVER, 00)
AGE

B. Lifetime Partners and Occasions

Next I will ask you some questions about your past sexual relationships. It's important that you be as up front as possible. I'm not here to judge you and you don't have to justify yourself. People have many different values and make many different choices about sex.

INTERVIEWER: WHERE APPROPRIATE, ELICT PARTICIPANT'S VERNACULAR EXPRESSION. IF PARTCIPANT DOES NOT VOLUNTEER IT, REVIEW EXAMPLES THAT ARE PROVIDED IN BRACKETS FOLLOWING PRACTICE DESCRIPTION.

Before we start, let's take a little time to review all the types of sex people may get into.

* Manual sex, when you touch your partner's naked penis, vagina, or clitoris with your hand, or your partner touches your naked penis with his/her hand. (PROBE FOR PARTICIPANT'S TERM) (for example, some people call this jerking each other off]
_____

* Oral sex, when you put your mouth or tongue on your partner's penis, vagina, or clitoris, or when your partner puts his/her mouth or tongue on your penis. (PROBE FOR PARTICIPANT'S TERM) [for example, some people call this going down; frigging; sucking off]
_____

* Anal-oral sex, when you put your mouth or tongue on your partner's anus/rectum or when your partner does this to you. (PROBE FOR PARTICIPANT'S TERM) [for example, some people call this doing the Hershey highway]
_____

* Anal fingering, when you put your finger in your partner's anus/rectum or your partner does this to you. (PROBE FOR PARTICIPANT'S TERM)
_____

* Anal insertion of objects, when you put objects such as vibrators, dildos, or cucumbers in your partner's anus/rectum, or when a partner does this to you. (PROBE FOR PARTICIPANT'S TERM)
_____

* Anal intercourse, when you put your penis in a partner's anus/rectum or when a male partner puts his penis in your (anus/rectum). (PROBE FOR PARTICIPANT'S TERM) [for example, some people call this butt fucking]

  _____

* Vaginal fingering, when you put your finger in your partner's vagina. (PROBE FOR PARTICIPANT'S TERM) [for example, some people call this finger fucking]

  _____

* Vaginal insertion of objects, when you put vibrators, dildos, cucumbers, or other objects in your partner's vagina. (PROBE FOR PARTICIPANT'S TERM)

  _____

* Vaginal intercourse, when your partner puts his penis in your vagina. (PROBE FOR PARTICIPANT'S TERM) [for example, some people call this fucking]

  _____

* Anything else which includes genital contact or genital stimulation with a partner. (PROBE FOR PARTICIPANT'S TERM)

Current Sexual Partners (Past Year):

TO AID RECALL, FIRST REVIEW WITH PARTICIPANT HIS LIFE PATTERN DURING THE PAST YEAR (TODAY'S DATE, ONE YEAR AGO) UP UNTIL TODAY. COVER THE FOLLOWING AREAS: LIVING SITUATION, SCHOOL ATTENDANCE, ANY SALIENT LIFE EVENTS.

Now I'd like to focus on your sexual life in the past year, since our first interview. Before we start, I'd like to take a minute to make sure you're clear about this period. Our last interview took place on (GIVE DATE OF FIRST INTERVIEW). Can you remember anything that was happening in your life that makes that time stand out for you? For example, was there anything unusual happening at school, or at home, or with your friends? Or was there a special holiday, or birthday?

Current Female Partners and Occasions

Let's talk about your sexual experiences with women over the past year.

B.001 Let's try to count up all the different women you have had any kind of sex with in the past year. _____

Current Male Partners and Occasions

Now let's talk about your sexual experiences with men over the past year.

C.001 Let's try to count up all the different men you have had any kind of sex with in the past year._____

D. Sexual Abuse

I am now going to ask you a few questions about unwanted sexual experiences.

D003. Since our interview last year (GIVE DATE), have you had unwanted or uninvited sex with anyone?

(If yes, using grid below, list ages, elicit perpetrator gender, and establish relationship. Then continue with indented question below.)

After the first perpetrator, ask:

Were there any other people you had unwanted or uninvited sex with since our last interview? (For up to 3 perpetrators, probe using grid below.)

Estimated Participant Age	Estimated Perpetrator Age	Perpetrator Gender 1=M 2=F	Relationship 1=Non-relative 2=Relative
1: a	b.	c.	d.
2: a.	b.	c.	d.
3: a.	b.	c.	d.

4. Interviewer: Circle whichever applies:
[0] 3 or less perpetrators

Interviewer: If any abuse has been reported, continue. Otherwise go on to section E.

Thank you for sharing that with us. We know it can be hard for many people to talk about this. Please let me know if you'd like to talk some more about it, so that I can connect you with someone who can listen and help when we've finished the interview.

D017. Is this something you'd like?

No……..1
Yes…….2

If No: That's fine, I just wanted to make sure you're okay with this. Thank you again.
If Yes: I'll make sure I get back to this at the end of the interview.

D018. In this study, we're trying to understand how sexual experiences like these affect women's sexuality. Now let's try to clarify some more details about the sexual experiences with the (person/people) we just discussed. Did they involve any of the different types of sexual activities, like genital touching, oral sex, anal sex, or vaginal sex that we listed earlier?

No……1 (Section E)
Yes……..2

D019. O.K. Did you include him/her/them when we talked about your lifetime sexual experiences before?

No……..1
Yes…….2

Interviewer: We are now going to switch gears and return to some questions about your sexuality, attractions and fantasies.

HAND RESPONSE CARD TO PARTICIPANT FOR THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

F001. INTERVIEWER'S KINSEY RATING OF BEHAVIOR - SEXUAL RELATIONS, **PAST YEAR** E003 AND E009AVS. E022 AND E028A CIRCLE ONE CODE.

1. ENTIRELY HOMOSEXUAL
2. LARGELY HOMOSEXUAL, ONLY INCIDENTALLY HETEROSEXUAL
3. LARGELY HOMOSEXUAL, MORE THAN INCIDENTALLY HETEROSEXUAL
4. EQUALLY HETEROSEXUAL AND HOMOSEXUAL
5. LARGELY HETEROSEXUAL, MORE THAN INCIDENTALLY HOMOSEXUAL
6. LARGELY HETEROSEXUAL, ONLY INCIDENTALLY HOMOSEXUAL
7. ENTIRELY HETEROSEXUAL
8. HAD NO SEXUAL RELATIONS

The next questions cover sexual attractions, thoughts and fantasies.

F002. Let's talk for a moment about sexual attractions, for instance when you are walking down the street and there are many different people around, or when you are standing in line somewhere. In the **past year**, when you felt you were sexually/erotically attracted to someone: Were you more often sexually/ erotically attracted to men or to women? (INTERVIEWER: BE CAREFUL TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER EROTIC ATTRACTION IS PRESENT AND NOT JUST ADMIRATION.)

HAND SUBJECT CARD

(IF ABOUT EQUAL, SCORE 3.)

(IF MORE TO MALES:) Which situation describes you best: You were **more** attracted to men than women, or, you were **almost** always attracted to men and **only** rarely to women, **or,** you were **always** attracted to men and **never** to women.

(IF MORE TO FEMALES:) Which situation describes you best:

You were **more** attracted to women than men, **or,** you were **almost** always attracted to women and **only** rarely to men, **or,** you were **always** attracted to women and **never** to men?

6. Always men, never women
5. Almost always men, rarely women
4. More men than women
3. About equally men and women
2. More women than men
1. Almost always women, rarely men
0. Always women, never men
9. DID NOT HAVE SEXUAL ATTRACTIONS

IF SUBJECT SAYS NEVER FOR ONE SEX AND ALWAYS FOR THE OTHER, USE PROBE:

So you're saying that in the past 6 months, you never felt a sexual attraction to a (man/woman)
IF INDICATED, CORRECT YOUR CODING

F003. Now, I want to ask you the same questions about sexual thoughts and fantasies, as you may have them when you masturbate, or while you are making love, or in your night dreams, or day dreams. In the **past year**, when you had sexual thoughts or fantasies in any of these situations: Did you have sexual thoughts and fantasies more often about men or about women?

(IF ABOUT EQUAL, SCORE-3.)

(IF TO MALES:) Which situation describes you best: You had sexual thoughts and fantasies **more** often about men than about women, **or,** you had sexual thoughts and fantasies **almost** always about men and **only** rarely to women, **or,** you had sexual thoughts and fantasies **always** about men and **never** about women?

(IF TO FEMALES, ASK ANALOGOUS QUESTIONS)

6. Always men, never women
5. Almost always men, rarely women
4. More men than women
3. About equally men and women
2. More women than men
1. Almost always women, rarely men
0. Always women, never men
9. DID NOT HAVE SEXUAL FANTASIES

IF SUBJECT SAYS NEVER FOR ONE SEX AND ALWAYS FOR THE OTHER, USE PROBE:

So you're saying that you never had sexual thoughts and fantasies about (men/women) in the past 6 months?

IF INDICATED, CORRECT YOUR CODING.

F004. How about photographs of half-dressed or nude men and women in magazines or books, or sexy and erotic scenes in movies and TV shows, or sexy stories? In the **past year**, when you saw or read such material: Were you sexually turned on more often by material on men or on women?

(IF ABOUT EQUAL, SCORE 3.)

(IF TO MALES:) Which situation describes you best: You were **more** turned on by material on men than on women, **or,** you were **almost** always more turned on by material on men and **only** rarely by material on women, **or,** you were always turned on by material on men and **never** by material on women?

(IF TO FEMALES, ASK ANALOGOUS QUESTIONS)

6. Always men, never women
5. Almost always men, rarely women
4. More men than women
3. About equally men and women
2. More women than men
1. Almost always women, rarely men
0. Always women, never men
9. HAD NO SEXUAL IMAGERY OR EROTICA

IF SUBJECT SAYS NEVER FOR ONE SEX AND ALWAYS FOR THE OTHER, USE PROBE:
So you're saying that in the past 6 months, when you watched sexy movies or read sexy magazines and so on, you were never sexually turned on by (men/women)?
IF INDICATED, CORRECT YOUR CODING

Internet sex partners

	No	Yes
1. I went online to look for internet sex partners.	0	1
If yes,		
1a. I'm interested in finding males.	0	1
1b. I'm interested in finding females.	0	1
2. I had sex with a partner I met over the internet.	0	1
If yes,		
2a. Male.	0	1
2b. Female	0	1

SERBAS FOLLOW UP

Regarding your most recent romantic partner (regardless of whether sexually active):
1. How often do you see him/her: less than once a month (1), once every few weeks (2), once a week (3), a few times per week (4), daily (5)?
2. How much time do you spend talking with him/her in person or on the phone, by email, and so on: just a little bit (1), a bit (2), somewhat (3), a lot (4), a whole lot (5)?
3. Would you like to spend more time with him/her: no (0), just a little bit more (1), a bit more (2), a lot more (3), a whole lot more (4)?

Are you and your partner:

1. Dating?
2. Committed to one another but not living together?
3. Living together but neither married nor registered domestic partners?
4. Married or registered as domestic partners?

(1) Yes (0) No

In the future:
1. Do you see yourself sharing a life with a romantic partner?
2. Do you see yourself getting married or registering as domestic partners?
3. Do you see yourself having a wedding or commitment ceremony?

(0) not at all (1) just a little bit (2)maybe (3) likely (4) very likely (5) definitely

Follow-up Interview Guide*

Background

This guide provides an overview of the focused interview process as well as simple themes and potential questions for the actual interview. This is a guide in that there are no strict rules to follow or questions that have to be asked. Instead, it is a starting point and a reference sheet to help stimulate exploration of the themes and areas of interest.

This interview guide lays out the major areas of inquiry and the hypotheses so that we have a sense of the relevance of the different data we are looking to obtain. We are looking for the subjective experience of each subject and to discover their definitions and understandings of themselves as dually attracted women in a variety of areas.
The criteria for effective focused interviewing are as follows:

1. *Range*: interviewees should be encouraged to give a full range of responses without feeling limited in any way
2. *Specificity*: the interview should elicit highly specific information from each question and the overall experience being described
3. *Depth*: interviewee should help the subject describe the affective, cognitive and evaluative meanings of their sexuality and attractions as well as previous experiences pertaining to it.
4. *Personal context*: the interview should evoke highly personal and distinctive aspects of the interviewees experience and allow them to elaborate on their personal associations and meanings.

We are looking for the **behaviors, affect and cognitions** of the participants both in their lives and in the interview situation. We want to understand their **attractions, behaviors and fantasies**. The order of the questions and the specific details of how you ask the questions or get to the information you need is unimportant. The key is to get at these ideas and themes and walk away with an understanding of these women that answers our core questions.

Central Question: Identity Integration and Ambiguity Tolerance

At its core, the interview is trying to get at each woman's identity integration and ambiguity tolerance, and her capacity to reflect coherently on her own experience of her sexuality. This capacity can be captured through some specific questions, but mostly through a general sense of the woman's ability to hold multiple aspects of herself, herself as a sexual being, and her relationships in mind. We want to know about how each woman thinks about and understands her sexuality. Many of these questions will not be asked directly, but you will be looking to find out about these different aspects of each woman as you move through the interview.

Things to look for throughout the interview related to this theme:

* This Interview Guide and the Interview Outline that follows were written by the author and were provided to and reviewed with the other two interviewers prior to conducting follow-up interviews.

- Use of words: “I *was* a lesbian” v. “I *am* bisexual” v. “I *was with* women”
    - Use of adjectives and tone in different moments
    - Are there times when she is shut-off/disconnected?
- Are her dual attractions understood as a “conflict” that must be resolved, “figured out,” “solved,” etc., or as a “paradox” that can be negotiated, explored, tolerated, “played with,” etc.?
    - What role do environmental factors, including the perceptions/judgments/etc. of others, play in this?
    - What role does intrapsychic conflict play in this?
- Transitions and shifts in behaviors and understanding of sexuality over time, why and how each woman comprehends these shifts
- Are there differences in the ways in which participant describes being with people of different genders? Is one more prominent? Does language/affect “feel” different when describing men vs. women?

Change over Time

This interview will be looking specifically at change over time with respect to the issues outlined in the interview guide. Time 1 protocols should be reviewed prior to meeting for the follow-up interview, and the interviewer should be familiar with the participant’s general responses at Time 1 so that changes can be queried.

Throughout the interview guide, questions should ascertain:

1) where the participant is currently with regard to these issues,
2) how this may have changed or remained stable since last year, and
3) how she makes sense of this change/stability.

Follow-Up Interview Outline

Introduction:

- In this interview, we are interested in learning about the ways in which your thoughts, feelings, and experiences surrounding sexuality and relationships have evolved since our first interview (provide date).
- Most of my questions will ask you to talk about the ways in which things have changed – or remained stable – since last year.
- Then at the end of the interview we will talk more about where you are right now in your thinking about a few issues related to your sexuality.

Beginning of Interview:

- Has anything significant happened or changed in your life since our first interview (provide date)?
    - Explain that this can relate to any area of life, e.g. employment, finances, family, friends, etc. (not just sexuality and relationships).
- How have you made sense of and/or coped with this event/change?

Sexual Orientation:

Note: Many of these issues will be addressed in the SERBAS. But these are issues that you should be sure to cover, getting a sense of:

1) where the participant is currently with regard to these issues,
2) how this may have changed or remained stable since last year, and
3) how she makes sense of this change/stability.

<u>Sexual Self-Concept</u>

- Current sexual self-identification; change since last year
- Current feelings about bisexuality in general; change since last year
- Current feelings about own sexuality/attractions; change since last year
- Construction of narrative about dual attractions over lifetime:
    - Disowned?
    - Seen as "transitional phase"?
    - Seen as stable element of identity?
    - Seen as a "conflict" to be resolved, or a "paradox" to be lived with?

<u>Attractions</u>

- Content of attractions:
    - Who are you currently attracted to?
    - Have your attractions changed since last year? If so, how do you make sense of this?
    - Has anything changed in your life that you feel has contributed to this shift in attractions? (E.g. shift from a male to a female partner accompanied by shift from fantasies primarily about women to primarily about men?)

    - Who do you imagine you will be attracted to in the future?
- Level of conflict surrounding attractions:
    - Feelings about attractions, and having attractions to both sexes
    - Degree of openness about attractions with romantic partner(s) over past year
    - Attitude of romantic partner(s) about attractions over past year
- If in steady relationship:
    - Feelings surrounding having attractions to individuals of opposite sex from partner?
    - Degree of openness about attractions with current partner over past year
    - Partner's attitudes about these attractions over past year

Fantasies

- Content of fantasies:
    - Who/what do you daydream about? Think about when you masturbate? Think about during sex?
    - Can you tell me about these fantasies?
    - How have your fantasies changed since last year? If so, how do you make sense of this?
    - Has anything changed in your life that you feel has contributed to this shift in your fantasy life?
- Level of conflict surrounding fantasies:
    - Feelings about fantasy life, and about having fantasies about both sexes
    - Degree of openness about fantasies with romantic partner(s) over past year
    - Attitude of romantic partner(s) about fantasies over past year
- If in steady relationship:
    - Feelings surrounding having fantasies about individuals of opposite sex from partner?
    - Degree of openness about fantasies with current partner over past year
    - Partner's attitude towards these fantasies over past year

Social Context

Community

- Over the past year, who do you see as your community?
- How open have you been with this community about your sexuality over the past year? Has this changed?
- How do they feel about your sexuality? Has this changed over the past year? If so how do you make sense of this?
- Overall, do you feel this community accepts your sexuality? Understands it? Celebrates it? Has this changed over the past year?

Family

- How open have you been with your family about your sexuality over the past year? Has this changed?
- How would you describe your family's attitude towards your sexuality over the past year? Has it changed?

- Do different family members perceive your sexuality differently than others? Are there some family members who you are more "out" to than others? If so, why?
- Is there one sex that you are more comfortable talking about being attracted to with your family? If so, what makes it easier? Has this changed over the past year?
- Is there one sex that you think your family is more comfortable with you pairing with? Does this impact your behavior/desire/identity? Has this changed over the past year?
- Overall, do you feel your family accepts your sexuality? Understands it? Celebrates it? Has this changed over the past year?
- Do you feel your family's attitude towards your sexuality has impacted your own capacity to understand, accept, express and celebrate your own sexuality? Has this changed over the past year?

Friends

- How open have you been with your friends about your sexuality over the past year? Has this changed?
- How would you describe your friends' attitudes towards your sexuality over the past year? Have they changed?
- Do different friends perceive your sexuality differently than others? Are there some friends who you are more "out" to than others? If so, why?
- Is there one sex that you are more comfortable talking about being attracted to with your friends? If so, what makes it easier? Has this changed over the past year?
- Is there one sex that you think your friends are more comfortable with you pairing with? Does this impact your behavior/desire/identity? Has this changed over the past year?
- Overall, do you feel your friends accept your sexuality? Understand it? Celebrate it? Has this changed over the past year?

GLBT Community

- How engaged have you been with the GLBT community over the past year? Has this changed from earlier in your life? If so, how and why?
- How open have you been with the GLBT communities with which you are involved about your sexuality over the past year? Has this changed?
- How would you describe the attitudes of the GLBT communities with which you are involved towards your sexuality? Have these attitudes changed over the past year?
- Is there one sex that you are more comfortable talking about being attracted to with GLBT community members? Has this changed over the past year?
- Is there one sex that you think GLBT community members are more comfortable with you pairing with? Does this impact your behavior/desire/identity? Has this changed over the past year?
- Overall, do you feel the GLBT community accepts your sexuality? Understands it? Celebrates it? Has this changed over the past year?
- If with a male partner – How have members of the GLBT community reacted to your relationship? How have you felt about this?

Personal Impact

- How do you think the attitudes of your family, friends, community, and the GLBT community towards your sexuality have affected your own behavior/desire/identity over the past year? Has this changed? If so, how/why?

Relationships

Themes

- Capacity for closeness and intimacy within romantic relationships, and whether this differs with male vs. female partners
- Attachment security within romantic relationships, and whether this differs with male vs. female partners
- Patterns of object-relatedness, and whether these differ with male vs. female partners
- Attachment/sexuality split:
    - Does participant tend to compartmentalize attachment (closeness, intimacy, safety, security) and sexuality within relationships? If so, does this tend to be split along gender lines?
    - E.g. describing feelings of closeness, safety, and "sharing everything" with female partners, vs. just wanting sex with male partners
    - If this split is present, how does participant make sense of it?

If with steady romantic partner:

- Sex of current romantic partner
- Length of relationship with romantic partner
- Same partner who you described last year, or new partner?
    - If same partner, probe about ways in which following issues have changed over past year
- How open have you been with your current partner about your sexuality over the past year? Has this changed? Or, if with new partner, have you been more or less open than with past partners?
- How would you describe your partner's attitude towards your sexuality over the past year? Has it changed? Or, if with new partner, is it different from past partners' attitudes?
- How do you feel with your partner emotionally? Do you feel safe with him/her? Has this changed over the past year? Or, if with new partner, how does this compare with how you have felt with partners in the past?

If not with steady romantic partner:

- Ask same questions as above but referring to *last* romantic partner, and/or current or past casual partners.
- How long has it been since that relationship ended?
- Feelings/level of conflict surrounding choosing a romantic partner

Monogamy

- Where have your relationships over the past year fallen in terms of their degree of monogamy?

- Has this changed over the past year?
- How does this affect your understanding of your sexuality? (E.g. If you are in a monogamous relationship with a man, does that mean you are straight?)
- Do you feel you can be monogamous and be bisexual? If so, how? If not, what makes it challenging/impossible?

Sense of Loss

- If currently with a woman, do you miss being with men? Do you think about being with men? How do you feel about this? Has this changed over the past year?
- If currently with a man, do you miss being with women? Do you think about being with women? How do you feel about this? Has this changed over the past year?
- What do you see in your future? Do you feel you will always miss being with the gender opposite your partner's, or do you expect these feelings may change? How?

Friendships

- Could you think of one or two closest friends? Who are they? Same friends you described last year?
- Sex of primary friend
- Sexuality of primary friend (if friend is female, is she also attracted to women?)
- How physically affectionate are you with your closest friend(s)? Do you cuddle? Hold hands? (in public? in private?) Do you ever engage in kissing/holding/etc? Has this changed over the past year?
- How do you feel emotionally with your closest friend(s)? Do you feel safe with her/him/them? Has this changed over the past year?
- How does your current partner, or how have your past partners, felt about your relationship with this friend? (E.g. Threatened? Comfortable?) Has this changed over the past year?
- How do you understand your friendships in relation to your dual attractions and relationships?

Closing Questions:

Introduction: We have been talking about change over the past year. To shift gears, these last questions have to do with where you are right now with respect to a few issues.

- Do you experience attractions to both women and men as a conflict in your life? If so, how do you think about that, and how does it affect you? If not, how do you experience it? Has this changed over the past year?
- Do you feel you can have attractions to both women and men and be in a committed, monogamous relationship? If so, how? If not, why not? Is this something you want?
- How do you see these issues surrounding your sexuality playing out over time? What kind of relationship do you imagine yourself in in the future, and with whom? Do you feel like this has changed since last year?

- What would be your ideal vision of how your sexuality would play out over time (i.e. how you would like things to be), and who you would be with in the future? Is this the same or different than what you realistically expect/imagine?
- Since you reached your 20s, what has been the most challenging experience you have faced related to the issues we've been discussing? Could you describe this experience and how you managed it?
- Is there anything else that may be important for me to know that we have not covered today?

APPENDIX B

FOCUSED INTERVIEW CODEBOOK, FOCUSED INTERVIEW SCORING RULES, ORI "SELF AS SEXUAL BEING" SCORING RULES

Focused Interview Codebook

Bold Underlined = Conceptual category
Bold = Variable (The actual Atlas codes are listed underneath)
***Bold Asterisk** = Supercode (appears in Atlas with an Asterisk at the beginning; sub-codes listed underneath)
Plain Text = Regular Code (appears in Atlas as listed here)

Identity Integration/Disconnection

Identity Integration *(Macro code; not assigned to individual quotes, but rather to interview as a whole)*
***Identity Processing** *(indication of a movement toward integration)*
Developmental Perspective *(i.e. statements demonstrating an understanding of one's sexuality and identity as unfolding over time)*
Identity Conflict
***Identity Disconnection**
Cutting off Same Sex Rships/Attractions: Wish
Cutting off Same Sex Rships/Attractions: Behavior

Internal Response to Dual Attractions

Internal BiComfort *(may overlap with identity processing)*
Internal BiNegativity *(may overlap with identity conflict or disconnection)*
Internalized Homophobia *(i.e. internalized stigma directed specifically toward gays and lesbians and/or toward one's own same-sex attractions, as opposed to toward bisexuals and/or toward one's own dual attractions)*
Not Belonging *(internal feeling of not belonging in any community)*

Sense of Loss

Sense of Loss Reflective
Sense of Loss Stuck

Pressure for Closure/Accepting Lack of Closure

***Accepting Lack of Closure**
Accepting Lack of Closure: Family, Friends, GLBT, Other Community, Partner, Self, Society
Person Not Gender *(e.g. statements that the individual is "attracted to the person not their gender")*

***Pressure for Closure**
Pressure for Closure: Family, Friends, GLBT, Other Community, Partner, Self, Society

Change Over Time

***Change Over Time**
Change Over Time: Attractions
Change Over Time: Behavior
Change Over Time: Identity
Change in Attractions Follows Relationship
Change in Identity Follows Relationship
Alternating Partners by Gender

Attachment Sexuality Integration/Split

***Attachment Sexuality Integrated**
Attachment Sexuality: Integrated
Attachment Sexuality: Integrated: Men
Attachment Sexuality: Integrated: Women
Attachment Sexuality: Integrated: Partner
Attachment Sexuality: Integrated: Different Order By Gender

***Attachment Sexuality Split**
Attachment Sexuality: Split
Attachment Sexuality: Split: Men
Attachment Sexuality: Split: Women
Attachment Sexuality: Split: Partner

Family Construction Flexible/Traditional

***Family Construction Flexible**
Family Construction Flexible: Other
Family Construction Flexible: Other: Acted On
Family Construction Flexible: Self
Family Construction Flexible: Self: Acted On

***Family Construction Traditional**
Family Construction Traditional: Other
Family Construction Traditional: Other: Acted On
Family Construction Traditional: Self
Family Construction Traditional: Self: Acted On

Inner Erotic Life

Fantasies *(Note: Identified through grounded theory)*
Fantasies about Androgynous Partner
Fantasies about Body Parts
Fantasies about Both Sexes
Fantasies about Men & Women Together

Fantasies about Same Gender as Partner
Fantasies about Opposite Gender of Partner

Attractions *(Note: Identified through grounded theory)*
Attractions to Opposite Gender of Partner
Attractions to Gender of Partner
Only Attracted to Gay Men
Only Attracted to Women

Incongruence Processing
Incongruence: Disconnection
Incongruence: Integration

Miscellaneous *(Note: Identified through grounded theory)*
Asexual
S&M
Only in Love with Women
Women: Narcissistic Object

Gender Roles *(This refers to the participant's own representations of gender roles)*

Gender Roles: Flexible
Gender Roles: Rigid
Gender Role Switch with Male vs. Female Partners *(i.e. the participant experiences herself as more "masculine" with partners of one gender and more "feminine" with partners of the other gender)*

GLBT Involvement

GLBT: Involved
GLBT: Selectively Involved
GLBT: Neutral
GLBT: Not Involved
Bi Community *(i.e. the participant describes belonging to a "bisexual community," as differentiated from the larger GLBT community)*

Degree of Outness

***Out**
Out: Family, Friends, Partner, GLBT, Work, Religious, Other Community

***Selectively Out**
Selectively Out: Family, Friends, Partner, GLBT, Work, Religious, Other Community

***Fear of Outness**
Fear of Outness: Family, Friends, Partner, GLBT, Work, Religious, Other Community

***Not Out**
Not Out: Family, Friends, Partner, GLBT, Work, Religious, Other Community

Community Support vs. Stigma

***Support**
Support: Family, Friends, Partner, GLBT, Work, Religious, Other Community, Society

***Acceptance**
Acceptance: Family, Friends, Partner, GLBT, Work, Religious, Other Community, Society

***Tolerance**
Tolerance: Family, Friends, Partner, GLBT, Work, Religious, Other Community, Society

***Stigma**
Stigma: Family, Friends, Partner, GLBT, Work, Religious, Other Community, Society

Voyeurism
Voyeurism: Partner *(i.e. participant describes partner as "supporting" her bisexuality, but in a voyeuristic way)*

***Friends: Attraction/Sexual Activity**

Friends: Attraction
Friends: Physical Affection
Friends: Sexual Activity

Romantic/Sexual Relationship History

Current Relationship
Current Partner: Female
Current Partner: Male

Past Relationships
Most Recent Partner: Female
Most Recent Partner: Male
Divorce
Infidelity

Relationship Security

***Secure**
Secure: Family, Friends, Partner, Past Partner

***SemiSecure**
SemiSecure: Family, Friends, Partner, Past Partner

***Insecure**
Insecure: Family, Friends, Partner, Past Partner

Monogamy

***Open Relationship**
Current Rship: Open: Without Partner *(i.e. sexual/romantic involvement outside primary relationship)*
Current Rship: Open: With Partner *(i.e. threesomes, etc. with partner)*
Past Rship: Open: Without Partner
Past Rship: Open: With Partner
Want: Open
Want: Open: Without Partner
Want: Open: With Partner

***Monogamous Relationship**
Current Rship: Monogamous
Past Rship: Monogamous
Want: Monogamy

Bisexuality & Monogamy *(This refers to participants' responses to question of whether they believe that bisexuality and monogamy are in conflict)*
Bisexuality & Monogomy: Possible
Bisexuality & Monogamy: Conflict
Bisexuality & Monogamy: Not Possible

Pathology

***Defenses** *(Note: Identified through grounded theory)*
Splitting
Idealization
Denigration
Projection
Identity Diffusion/Boundary Compromise
Grandiosity
Avoiding Reflection
Intellectualization
Obsessionality

***Thought Process** *(Note: Identified through grounded theory)*
Circumstantial
Concrete

***Symptoms** *(Note: Identified through grounded theory)*
Anxiety
Depression
Bipolar Disorder
Narcissism
Shame
Perfectionism
Antisocial Behavior
Drug Abuse
Addiction
Impulsivity
Violent Ideation
Paranoia
Regression
Self Destructive Behavior
Psych Hospitalization

Potential Covariates

***Trauma**
Trauma: Parental DV
Trauma: Physical Abuse: Female
Trauma: Physical Abuse: Male
Trauma: Sexual Abuse/Assault: Female
Trauma: Sexual Abuse/Assault: Male
Trauma: Verbal/Emotional Abuse: Female
Trauma: Verbal/Emotional Abuse: Male

Sex Work
Sex Work

***Recent Stressors** *(Note: Identified through grounded theory)*
Stressor: Bereavement
Stressor: Breakup
Stressor: Homelessness
Stressor: Separation from Friends/Community
Stressor: Illness
Stressor: Caring for ill family member

Scores derived from focused interview data

Community support for bisexuality: Scoring Rules

(Jane Caflisch, 2012)

A five-point scale assessing the extent to which the individual describes experiencing support for her bisexual orientation from significant people in her life. Degree of support is signified in the qualitative interviews by the codes "acceptance" (experiences of others as "fine with," but not actively supportive of, the participant's bisexuality), and "support," (experiences of others as actively supportive of her bisexuality), both of which are followed by a code indicating which community is being described (i.e. partner, family, friends, GLBT, religion, work, other community, society). The global Community Support score takes into account both the *number* of communities from which the participant reports receiving acceptance and/or support regarding her bisexual orientation, as well as the *degree* of support (i.e. "support" vs. "acceptance") she feels from these communities. It also considers the internalization of positive/accepting views of bisexuality (coded as "internal comfort with bisexuality"), as opposed to internalized homophobia or biphobia. Finally, it considers the extent to which others in the participant's life express openness to alternative family structures, e.g. the idea that it is possible to have a family with a woman as well as with a man (coded as "family construction traditional: other").

1. Participant reports that none of the significant individuals and/or communities in her life express either acceptance or support of her bisexuality.

2. Participant reports that 1-2 of the significant individuals and/or communities in her life accept her bisexuality, but are not actively supportive; and that the majority of the significant individuals and/or communities in her life are neither accepting nor supportive.

3. Participant reports that approximately half of the significant individuals and/or communities in her life express acceptance of her bisexuality, and 1-2 may also express active support; however about half express neither acceptance nor support.

4. Participant reports that the majority of the significant individuals and/or communities in her life express acceptance of her bisexuality, and at least 2 express active support.

5. Participant reports that almost all of the significant individuals and/or communities in her life express acceptance of her bisexuality, and at least half also express active support.

Relevant codes from focused interview:

- **Support: Family, Friends, Partner, GLBT, Work, Religious, Other Community, Society** (In ATLAS each of these codes starts with the relevant community, e.g. Family: Support)
- **Acceptance: Family, Friends, Partner, GLBT, Work, Religious, Other Community,**

Society (In ATLAS each of these codes starts with the relevant community, e.g. Family: Acceptance)

- **Internal Bi-Comfort**: This refers to the internalization of positive/accepting views towards bisexuals and/or towards the participant's own dual attractions.
- **Family Construction Flexible: Other**: This code is used when the participant describes others in her life expressing openness to alternative family structures, e.g. the idea that it is possible to have a family with a woman as well as with a man.)
- **Family Construction Flexible: Other: Acted On**: Same as above, but in this case the participant has acted on this more flexible view of family, e.g. by marrying and/or having a child with a female partner, or even by having an open marriage.

Community stigma against bisexuality: Scoring Rules

(Jane Caflisch, 2012)

A five-point scale assessing the extent to which the individual describes experiencing stigma against her bisexual orientation from significant people in her life. Degree of stigma is signified in the qualitative interviews by the codes "stigma" (experiences involving overt homophobic/biphobic comments from others) and "tolerance" (experiences of microaggressions, such as people outwardly conveying an attitude of "tolerance" but never wanting to meet her partners, referring to female partners as "her friend," etc.), both of which are followed by a code indicating which community is being described (i.e. partner, family, friends, GLBT, religion, work, other community, society). The global Community Stigma score takes into account both the *number* of communities (i.e. partner, family, friends, GLBT, work, religion, other community, society; each coded separately in the qualitative interview) from which the participant reports experiencing stigma regarding her bisexual orientation, as well as the *degree* of stigma (i.e. "tolerance" vs. "stigma") she feels from these communities. It also considers the internalization of stigma against bisexuality and against homosexuality (coded as "internalized biphobia" and "internalized homophobia"), as well as the individual's description of feeling she does not belong in any community because of her bisexual orientation (coded as "not belonging"). Finally, it considers the extent to which others in her life express the view that she can only have a family with a man (coded as "family construction traditional: other").

1. Participant reports that none of the significant individuals and/or communities in her life express either overt stigma or more subtle microaggressions (coded as "tolerance") towards her bisexuality.

2. Participant reports experiencing microaggressions (coded as "tolerance") towards her bisexuality from 1-2 of the significant individuals and/or communities in her life, but denies any experiences of overt stigma from these individuals and/or communities.

3. Participant reports experiencing microaggressions towards her bisexuality from approximately half of the significant individuals and/or communities in her life, and may also report experiencing more overt stigma from 1-2 individuals and/or communities.

4. Participant reports experiencing microaggressions towards her bisexuality from the majority of the significant individuals and/or communities in her life, and reports experiencing overt stigma from at least 2 of these individuals and/or communities.

5. Participant reports experiencing microaggressions from almost all of the significant individuals and/or communities in her life, and overt stigma from the majority of these individuals and/or communities.

Relevant codes from focused interview:

- **Stigma: Family, Friends, Partner, GLBT, Work, Religious, Other Community, Society** (In ATLAS each of these codes starts with the relevant community, e.g. Family: Stigma)
- **Tolerance: Family, Friends, Partner, GLBT, Work, Religious, Other Community, Society** (In ATLAS each of these codes starts with the relevant community, e.g. Family: Tolerance)
- **Internal Bi-Negativity**: This refers to internalized stigma directed towards bisexuals and/or towards the participant's own dual attractions.
- **Internalized Homophobia:** This refers to internalized stigma directed specifically towards gays and lesbians and/or towards the participant's own same-sex attractions.
- **Not Belonging**: This refers to a participant's internal experience of not belonging in any community because of her bisexuality.
- **Family Construction Traditional: Other**: This code is used when the participant describes others in her life telling her that she can only have a family with a man.)
- **Family Construction Traditional: Other: Acted On**: Same as above, but in this case the participant has acted on this externally-imposed view of family, e.g. by deciding to marry a man "so I can have a family." This code would *not* be used in all cases where the participant married a man, just in cases where she explicitly states she did this because others have told her it's the only way to have a family.

Internal pressure for singular sexual orientation: Scoring Rules

(Jane Caflisch, 2012)

A five-point scale assessing the extent to which the individual describes experiencing internal pressure and/or desire to "choose" or resolve her bisexuality into either heterosexuality or homosexuality; i.e. internal pressure to identify as purely heterosexual or purely homosexual, to have romantic partners of only one gender, and/or to deny or attempt to cut off her attractions to either men or women. Individual instances of such pressure were coded in the focused interview as "pressure for closure: self," or, where appropriate, as "cutting off same-sex relationships/attractions." By contrast, descriptions of feeling comfortable with dual attractions as they are, without needing to resolve them, were coded as "accepting lack of closure: self." The global Internal Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation score assesses both the *number* of coded instances of such pressure for closure, as well as the *degree* of internal pressure the participant reports experiencing (i.e. how severe/rigid it is).

1. Participant expresses a strong internal acceptance of her dual attractions as a stable part of her sexuality that she does not seek to "resolve" over time.

2. Participant expresses an overall internal acceptance of her dual attractions as a stable part of her sexuality that she does not seek to "resolve" over time, but also expresses a subtle sense of loss or conflict around this, e.g. expressing that it would be "easier" if she were straight or gay.

3. Participant expresses ambivalence about her dual attractions, at times expressing a recognition that they are a stable part of her sexuality, but at other times expressing a wish that they could be "resolved" into a binary model.

4. Participant reports wishing the majority of the time that her dual attractions could be "resolved" into a binary model, but also expresses some recognition that such "resolution" is not possible and/or would come at a high cost to her authenticity, relationships and sense of self.

5. Participant reports actively trying to cut off aspects of her sexuality in an attempt to "resolve" it into a binary model, e.g. stating "I'm trying to be straight" or "I'm trying to get rid of my fantasies about women (or men)," reporting that she has cut off all contact with current or past partners of one gender in an attempt to disown her attractions to that gender, etc. She appears to believe that such "resolution" is possible, and does not acknowledge the internal and interpersonal costs that such attempts at cutting off aspects of her sexuality will likely cause.

Relevant codes from qualitative interview:

- **Pressure for Closure: Self**: This code is used when the participant describes a sense of internal pressure to identify as purely heterosexual or purely homosexual. Participant describes a sense of discomfort and distress surrounding ongoing attractions to both genders. If a participant has many Pressure for Closure: Self codes in the qual interview and few Accepting Lack of Closure: Self codes, her score for IPSSO will be high.

- **Cutting off same-sex rships/attractions:** Sub-code under Pressure for Closure: Self. Refers to a desire to "cut off" relationships with and/or attractions to one gender because of distress surrounding dual attractions, e.g. stating "I'm trying to stop fantasizing about women," or "I cut off contact with my ex-girlfriend because I didn't want to be tempted."
- **Accepting Lack of Closure: Self:** This code is used when the participant describes feeling comfortable with her dual attractions as they are, without feeling she must "choose" or "resolve" them. If a participant has many Accepting Lack of Closure: Self codes in the qual interview and few Pressure for Closure: Self codes, her score for IPSSO will be low.

External pressure for singular sexual orientation: Scoring Rules

(Jane Caflisch, 2012)

A five-point scale assessing the extent to which the individual describes experiencing pressure from others for her bisexuality to "resolve" into either heterosexuality or homosexuality; i.e. pressure to identify as purely heterosexual or purely homosexual, to have romantic partners of only one gender, and/or to deny or attempt to cut off her attractions to either men or women. Individual instances of such pressure were coded in the focused interview as "pressure for closure: other." By contrast, the code "accepting lack of closure: other" was used when the participant described instances of others in her life communicating a sense of comfort with her dual attractions as they are, without pressuring her to resolve them. Both are followed by a code indicating which community is being described (i.e. partner, family, friends, GLBT, religion, work, other community, society). The global External Pressure for Singular Sexual Orientation score assesses both the *number* of communities from which the participant reports experiencing this pressure, as well as the *degree* of pressure the participant reports experiencing from others (i.e. how severe/rigid it is).

1. Participant denies experiencing pressure to "resolve" her bisexuality into a binary model from any of the significant individuals or communities in her life, and describes these individuals and communities as conveying an attitude of acceptance of her dual attractions as a stable part of her sexuality.

2. Participant reports experiencing subtle pressure to "resolve" her bisexuality into a binary model from 1-2 of the significant individuals and communities in her life, but describes this pressure as relatively vague and non-prescriptive (e.g. a parent expressing that it would be easier to understand her sexuality if she were gay or straight, but not suggesting that she should therefore *be* gay or straight). She describes the rest of the significant individuals and communities in her life as conveying an attitude of acceptance of her dual attractions as a stable part of her sexuality.

3. Participant reports experiencing subtle to moderate pressure to "resolve" her bisexuality into a binary model from approximately half of the significant individuals and/or communities in her life. However she describes at least 2 of these significant individuals and/or communities as conveying an attitude of acceptance of her dual attractions as a stable part of her sexuality.

4. Participant describes experiencing subtle to moderate pressure to "resolve" her sexuality into a binary model from the majority of the significant individuals and/or communities in her life. She describes at least 1 of these individuals and/or communities as conveying an attitude of acceptance of her dual attractions as a stable part of her sexuality.

5. Participant describes experiencing moderate to severe pressure to "resolve" her sexuality into a binary model from the majority of the significant individuals and/or communities in her life. She denies that any of the significant individuals and/or communities in her life convey an attitude of acceptance of her dual attractions as a stable part of her sexuality.

Relevant codes from qualitative interview:

- **Pressure for Closure: Family, Friends, Partner, GLBT, Work, Religious, Other Community, Society:** This code is used when the participant describes a sense of external pressure to identify as purely heterosexual or purely homosexual.
- **Accepting Lack of Closure: Family, Friends, Partner, GLBT, Work, Religious, Other Community, Society**: This code is used when the participant describes instances of others in her life communicating a sense of comfort with her dual attractions as they are, without pressuring her to "choose" or "resolve" them.

Attachment/Sexuality Integration: Scoring Rules

(Jane Caflisch, 2012)

A five-point scale assessing the extent to which the individual describes a capacity to experience emotional attachment and sexual excitement as integrated within romantic relationships, versus a tendency to split emotional and sexual aspects of relationships by gender of partner (i.e. experiencing sexual excitement with one gender and emotional attachment with the other). Individual instances of these phenomena were coded in the focused interview as "attachment sexuality split" and "attachment sexuality integrated." These codes were further refined by the gender being described, as well as by whether the individual was speaking about her current partner, thus yielding the codes "attachment sexuality split: women," "attachment sexuality integrated: women," "attachment sexuality split: men," "attachment sexuality integrated: men," "attachment sexuality split: partner," and "attachment sexuality integrated: partner." The global Attachment/Sexuality Integration score assesses both the *degree* to which attachment and sexuality are described as split versus integrated, as well as the *number* of relationships in which the two are described as split vs. integrated.

1. No current or past relationships with either gender in which attachment and sexuality are described as integrated. Emotional attachment is split off from sexuality, and is also split rigidly by gender of partner. Actual or potential partners of both genders are described almost exclusively as sexual objects and/or part objects.

2. Attachment and sexuality are split by gender of partner in most relationships, with one gender "holding" the participant's sexuality and another gender "holding" the participant's emotional attachments. This split is less rigid than in score point 1, however. Participant describes having past or present emotional attachments to at least one partner, but may also describe sexual attraction as a conflict in the context of this relationship, e.g. only feeling turned on during sex with her partner if she fantasizes about someone of the opposite gender. Splitting of attachment and sexuality by gender of partner appears to be an attempt to stabilize ambivalence about participant's self as a sexual being.

3. At least one relationship with partner of one gender in which attachment and sexuality are described as integrated. Partners of other gender are still described in very split terms, however, e.g. when asked about attractions to men, stating "I just want them to please me and get out."

4. At least one relationship with partner of one or both genders in which attachment and sexuality are described as integrated. While participant may describe specific relationships with partners of either gender in primarily sexual or primarily emotional terms, these terms are not generalized to "men" or "women" as a whole (as in score points 3 or below). Participant may still be struggling to make sense of the ways in which sexuality and emotional attachment may feel different to her with men vs. women, however, and she describes this being an ongoing source of some conflict. Participant may also describe a general lack of emotional commitment across her romantic relationships, suggesting that while she has the capacity for attachment/sexuality integration there is still some conflict here.

5. At least one relationship with partner of one or both genders in which attachment and sexuality are described as integrated. While participant may describe specific relationships with partners of either gender in primarily sexual or primarily emotional terms, she describes feeling that she *could* connect with either male or female partners in a way that integrates sexuality and emotional attachment. Participant may acknowledge ways in which sexuality and emotional attachment may feel different to her with men vs. women, but does not describe this as a source of much conflict in her relationships and/or sense of self as a sexual being. Participant describes a relatively high level of emotional commitment in at least one romantic relationship, past or present.

Relevant codes from focused interview:

- **Attachment Sexuality Integrated – subcategories:**
- **Attachment Sexuality: Integrated**: This code is used when the participant describes attachment and sexuality as integrated in her relationships in general.
- **Attachment Sexuality: Integrated: Men**: This code is used when the participant describes attachment and sexuality as integrated in her relationships with men.
- **Attachment Sexuality: Integrated: Women**: This code is used when the participant describes attachment and sexuality as integrated in her relationships with women.
- **Attachment Sexuality: Integrated: Partner**: This code is used when the participant describes attachment and sexuality as integrated in her relationship with a specific partner.
- **Attachment Sexuality: Integrated: Different Order By Gender**: This code wasn't assigned often, but it describes when a participant describes attachment and sexuality as integrated in her relationships but coming in a different order depending on her partner's gender, e.g. describing feeling sexually attracted to men first and then building a level of emotional attachment, vs. feeling emotionally attracted to women first and then experiencing sexual attraction afterwards.

- **Attachment Sexuality Split - subcategories:**
- **Attachment Sexuality: Split**: This code is used when the participant describes attachment and sexuality as split by gender in her relationships in general.
- **Attachment Sexuality: Split: Men**: This code is used when the participant describes attachment and sexuality as split in her relationships with men, i.e. as relating with men either primarily in sexual terms or primarily in emotional terms.
- **Attachment Sexuality: Split: Women**: This code is used when the participant describes attachment and sexuality as split in her relationships with women, i.e. as relating with men either primarily in sexual terms or primarily in emotional terms.
- **Attachment Sexuality: Split: Partner**: This code is used when the participant describes attachment and sexuality as split in her relationships with a specific partner, i.e. as relating with this partner either primarily in sexual terms or primarily in emotional terms.

Capacity to Tolerate Paradoxical Aspects of Bisexuality: Scoring Rules

(Anna Levy-Warren and Jane Caflisch, 2011)

A five-point scale assessing the degree to which the individual describes disparate aspects of their bisexuality as incompatible, and needing to be split off, denied, or dissociated from one another; in conflict, and needing to be changed, fixed, resolved or figured out; or compatible, and able to coexist as seemingly contradictory aspects of each woman's complex bisexual identity.

1. Disparate aspects of bisexuality are seen as incompatible and there are efforts to deny them or split them off. There is a sense of discontinuity in identity as it shifts across partners, time periods, self-definitions, and relationships. Additionally, there is a lack of recognition of the discontinuities. There are very split representations of male vs. female partners based on stereotypical representations of gender. Examples include an active decision to "eliminate" attractions to and fantasies about women, even though there is a clear identification with "being attracted to women"; expressing being in love with women but actively terminating relationships with them because of it does not fit (family/ religious/other) aspirations for the self.

2. Disparate aspects of bisexuality are seen as conflicting and in opposition to one another, though they are acknowledged to have occurred over time. The narrative may contain binaries and these binaries are assumed to be mutually exclusive, often consistent with social norms. There is a sense of discontinuity in identity as it shifts across partners, time periods, self definitions, and relationships; however, there is a developing awareness of these shifts as contradictory and discomforting. There is clearidentity diffusion; lack a cohesive sense of self and frequently there are chameleon-like characteristics. An example is someone who reports not being attracted to men, but who can't imagine a life with a woman because of traditional upbringing.

3. Disparate aspects of bisexuality are seen as conflicting, they are acknowledged as having occurred over time, and there are repeated efforts to "resolve" the conflicts. The interviewee demonstrates a certain pressure to choose between partners, genders, relationships, ways of defining her sexuality and gender orientation. There may be awareness of social pressures to force choices insofar as these contradictory aspects of her sexuality, and she recognizes that the external pressure is the source of discomfort, but holds the goal as being to resolve her conflicting desires (rather than to renounce this pressure). There is a sense of continuity to her sexual-identity, replete with open acknowledgment of contradictions. An example is a woman who is able to acknoweldge being bisexual but discusses her lack of community and how this leaves her unable to manage her bisexual-identity.

4. Disparate aspects of bisexuality are acknowledged as co-existing in dialectics.
There is awareness of social pressure to choose between paradoxical aspects of her sexuality, and a conscientious effort to reject such choices as well as to reject efforts to resolve conflict. These efforts reflect an aspiration towards acceptance of paradox. Some areas that are being worked on that are seen as conflictual but there is an overall sense that it will work out in the end.

5. Disparate aspects of bisexuality are seen as paradoxical parts of a complex bisexual-identity. There is a healthy integration of contradicting affections, behaviors, and constructs of gender and sexual-orientation identity and a self-compassionate acceptance of paradox that provides a sense of continuity in the identity over time. Examples include explicit statements about comfort with identity with self and others.

Differentiation and Relatedness Scale for ORI "Self as Sexual Being"

Based on Diamond, D., Blatt, S.J., Kaslow, N. & Stayner, D. (1991/2009). *Differentiation-Relatedness of Self and Object Representations.* Unpublished research manual, Yale University.

Adapted by Lauren DeMille, 2013.

The following are guidelines for scoring the degree of differentiation and relatedness on the item on the Object Relations Inventory (Blatt, Chervron, Quinlan, Schaffer, & Wein, 1988) in which participants in the DAWN study (designed by Anna Levy-Warren and Jane Caflisch) are asked, "Describe yourself as a sexual being." It is based on a scale of differentiation and relatedness developed by Diamond, Blatt, Stayner, & Kaslow, 1991.

The scale takes into account the following dimensions to consider when scoring the ORI for differentiation and relatedness:
- *Rigidity*
- *Complexity*
- *Time perspective*
- *Sense of agency and autonomy*
- *Relatedness and reciprocity*

To the dimensions above, this guide adds specific considerations for scoring differentiation and relatedness when women describe themselves as sexual beings. An overarching guideline when isolating these scale points for this item was the degree to which the sexual self is differentiated from and related to the rest of one's identity, in addition to the quality of the self described.

Score Points

Level 4. Self-other idealization or denigration.

Representation of self or other is described in unitary, polarized, idealized or denigrated terms.

Original Scoring Criteria:
Descriptions at this level are characterized by extreme, exaggerated, one-sided idealization or denigration of self or other (either-or). These descriptions show evidence of polarization with one side of the pole (positive or negative) emphasized, and without any attempt at integration. This all-encompassing quality lacks any reference to conditionality or any sense of qualification or modulation. The descriptions may come across as hallowed, caricatured or unreal in their level of idealization. Idealization and denigration may at times be included in the same description but will appear as separate static extremes (or part proprieties) of self or other or will lack the oscillation between extremes that is seen at the next level 5. Idealization or denigration of the other seems to provide a tenuous sense of consolidation and stability.

Revised Scoring Criteria, Self as Sexual Being:
This level shows extremes of positive or negative aspects of the self without attempts at integration. When both positive and negative qualities are present, items are scored at this level

when these qualities exist as static extremes, rather than as oscillating, as is characteristic of the next level. At this level, marked difficulty or overwhelm in answering the question might be apparent, as differentiating a sexual self proves challenging, and may evoke aggression that is poorly differentiated from sexuality.

Example:
005 "Like loving, I'm very loving. Loving, caring, but to a point. Like for my wife, for instance, I love her so much. But there's a certain point where she'll do something I ask her not to do, and me and her we fist fight. But I feel overwhelmed. I can't say a good person, but I'll try to understand somebody. [And as a sexual being?] I'm a happy person. Just happy sexual being, I don't know. I don't understand the question, but…"

Level 5. Semi-differentiation.

Representation of self or others is dominated by primitive (extreme) polarization of experiences, and by oscillation between positive and negative representations of self or other. There may also be strong emphasis on concrete, physical, properties of the object in an attempt to stabilize a tenuous cohesion of self and other experience. Descriptions are also characterized by oscillations around themes of closeness and distance, control and abandonment, intense rage versus idealizing love.

Original Scoring Criteria:
Descriptions at this level are most often marked by an oscillation between disparate aspects of one's experience of self and other that have been split into dramatically opposed, mutually exclusive polarities with an all-encompassing absolute quality and with no or little sense of contextual influences or temporal perspective. In contrast to level 4, however, there is marked oscillation between dramatically opposite qualities (both-and) or an emphasis on manifest external features out of context. Oscillation between extremes of relatedness might include, for instance, an overwhelming closeness versus an unbridgeable distance, invasive control versus abandonment, or intense rages versus idealizing love. This oscillation may also appear in a preoccupation with issues of control and autonomy. It reflects the intense struggle to preserve a fragile, vulnerable, emerging sense of self from the intrusion of the other. The oscillation between positive and negative descriptors indicates some rudimentary attempts towards integration of polarized qualities, but the descriptors remain extreme and polarized at this level. This may be compared to more modulated contradictory descriptors and to less threatened, more positive emphasis on self-directedness and autonomy, as seen in higher levels. Disparate aspects of self or others are experienced and grappled with but they are not integrated into a multi-dimensional modulated description. They are described in absolute, mutually exclusive terms, with little or no sense of contextual influences or temporal perspective such as placing one aspect in the past and the other in the present.

Descriptions at this level can also include an inordinate emphasis on, or limitation to, concrete, physical properties, bodies or body parts, often depicted in stilted, two-dimensional, sometimes grotesque, terms. This marked focus is viewed as another expression of an attempt to stabilize tenuous representations of self and other. It should be noted that this type of concrete descriptions might reflect a more basic cognitive or developmental style, rather than the defensive blocking

suggested here, thus serving both defensive and adaptive purposes. However, a description that is limited to physical descriptions is not necessarily a 5. In other words, a description that focuses on physical characteristics of self and how they are similar or different to the other may be scored as a 3. Or a description that focuses on physical characteristics but that is extremely disorganized could be classified as a 2. But when there is a rigid adherence to concrete properties of the individual or situation, it is likely that the description should be scored as a 5.

Revised Scoring Criteria, Self as Sexual Being:
At this level, oscillations and splitting are apparent. This struggle over integrating disparate aspects of the self might manifest as a clear struggle over closeness and distance or internal versus external control, as well as representing gender in a split or oscillating manner. The oscillation characteristic of this level may manifest as referencing rules about or limits on sexual behavior in response to anxiety about sexuality. The split in gender might be used to stabilize a tenuous sense of sexual identity and difficulty integrating dual attractions into a relatively stable sense of self. Dual attractions at this level are represented more as causing confusion (with a possible corollary of disfluency) than as a conflict. Sexual behavior, gender, or bodies may be described in a concrete, stilted, or possibly grotesque way.

Examples:
029: I am bisexual. I like guys and girls. Not the same, though. Like I probably wouldn't have like a girlfriend. I was married to a man though for 5 years so I probably would have a boyfriend again which I did [not?] have since my divorce. But girls I like to fool around with, mess around with like you know [not?] bring home to my family, my girlfriend or hold hands or like that. So I like men more than girls, but the same really.

032: So I think, I feel like I'm pretty loose sexually, but I generally am attracted, well I think I'm, I think I'm mostly attracted in terms of wanting to be with someone, with men. But I'm probably almost equally excited about making out or having sex with both genders. Although I should say almost like, I'm not that, like I feel like I'm not that attracted to most people in both genders. But that doesn't you know, I don't know if that is a slight difference like a subtle difference. But I think I'm also like equally probably like excited about sex. Although I don't know if that would be the case in the long term. I haven't had many relationships. [….] [W]hen I'm really like serious and I want to like be with someone for good, like I guess I just think about a guy whereas that would bring me something like a partner.

021: I'm normal, I guess. As far as I know. I don't know what normal is. I don't know. What do you mean? I think I'm open-minded and normal. [Open-minded and normal?] Yeah, well, I'm open-minded to deal with – to try different things as far as sexual activities, but not too many different things. Different things I would be willing to try. And I always have been open-minded about that, but also want to keep it in the normal range. [Normal range?] Yeah, like – the people I knew, so open-minded, we never had sex with animals, not like that. Not that open-minded. But like willing to try – well, I did try this, actually. I did actually with two guys, or a girl and a guy, two girls – never did two girls, but I did two guys and a girl and a guy, and you know – so – open-minded, that's why I was trying stuff like that.

Level 6. Emergent, ambivalent constancy and cohesion, and an emergent sense of relatedness.

Original Scoring Criteria:
Starting from this level, the representations of self and of others are more differentiated and integrated. However, at this transitional level, unique characteristics of self or other are lacking**.** Descriptions reflect an emerging consolidation of disparate aspects of self and other, expressed in somewhat more modulated, integrated and stable representations, but are marked by a hesitant, equivocal or ambivalent movement towards this integration and stabilization. Positive and negative aspects of self and other are present, but there may also be some indications of idealization or denigrating without being one-dimensional. Descriptions at this level are not subject to extreme fluctuations or the need to denigrate or idealize, or if such fluctuations are present the individual shows some perspective on the extreme views of self and other and there is some sense that the individual is struggling to integrate these extremes. Level 6 descriptions may consist simply of a list of appropriate, role conventional characteristics that do not seem to reflect a sense of the uniqueness of the individual. However, these characteristics are not limited to concrete proprieties as in level 5. These descriptions may sometimes be banal, clichéd, or somewhat stereotyped, without being unduly polarized in a negative or positive direction. Thus, relatedness includes an emergent but an equivocal sense of tolerance for and ability to bring together divergent aspects of interpersonal experience. Self-descriptions are often characterized by trial identifications or distinctions that also convey a sense of tentative movement toward a more individuated and cohesive sense of self. In sum, it should be noted that there are several different routes to scale point 6, but they all converge around the sense that there is an emergent integration and differentation of self and significant others, but that this may be tenuous and subject to fluctuations, reliance on banal, stereotyped characteristics or trial identifications that appear to be waystations towards stabilization and integration of concepts of self and significant others.

Revised Scoring Criteria, Self as Sexual Being:
At this level, descriptions show more integration but lack unique characteristics. The representation of oneself as a sexual being is more integrated, but movement towards this integration is more ambivalent. Descriptions of the sexual self may include elements that are conventional, banal, or clichéd, but are not as concrete as at Level 5. Sexual identity labels and gender may be used in more concrete (rather than expressive) ways. For instance, a sexual identity label may be adopted based on quantitatively observable behavior (rather than internal preference), such as one's degree of sexual activity with one sex over another. Or gender may be used in stereotypical role characteristic ways as a means of explaining one's sexuality. The prompt to describe oneself as a sexual being may be interpreted as asking about sexual behavior, and responses may include describing one's current sexual behaviors as a means of representing one's sexual self. Similarly, in the face of a tenuous sense of integrated identity, past behavior may be referenced as predictive of future behavior, in the face of uncertainty.

Examples:
"I don't know what it is with my wiring, but I just visually – I'm like a man, you know. Like just responding to the female body."

004: I am really sexual. I like to use humor a lot to talk about sex. Like with my man – oh I have been in a relationship with a man for 10 years. Also I can have sex a lot, I like to have sex a lot,

like morning, noon and night. And my man gives me that. I am really sensual and like with women versus men I am different. Like you know how there is a top and a bottom? Like with men I tend to be more submissive and with women I am much more dominant.

39: I would say that I am queer, bisexual, polyamorous in terms of labels. I would say that while I have tried very hard to be a slut, I'm really just somewhat promiscuous. (*Laughs*) My friends seem to be a lot sluttier than I am. And I can't keep up, because I just don't have the energy. I'm really the person at the sex party that's talking about politics instead of fucking.

037: You know, I don't really see myself as a sexual being. I really don't see myself from the outside. I guess [now that my daughter is a little older I have] started noticing oh wait, what am I wearing? Look at the way I dress. It's like, come on; I haven't bought a pair of shoes in over a year. And I don't wear jewelry anymore.

052: Yes, I'm very sexual, however it's, well my sexuality also was a huge part of my personality and who I am, and I believe women should take a hold of their sexuality and they should strive to be their own sexual being, not in relation to others, and not really like in a, I don't mean in a sense that they should be masturbating all the time or anything. I mean like they should take their pleasure into their own hands, but I do have kind of, what's the word, I am a little bit, hmm, I guess, gosh, I lost my words, but I'm not very, well I'm not promiscuous. I guess I'm the opposite of that, yeah, I feel as if I'm a sexual being and I should embrace my sexuality and so on, but I don't take that to mean promiscuity or anything like that. I just mean that you're in a relationship, in a sexual relationship with someone, that you should be your own sexual being and not always only think about pleasing the other person, but become who you are in that way.

Level 7. Consolidated, constant (stable) self and other.

Representations at this level are integrated, differentiated and modulated. Distinguishing qualities and characteristics are emphasized and there is a sense of tolerance for and integration of disparate aspects of self and others. Relationships may be described in unidirectional terms, but there are indications of understanding of others' thoughts, feelings and motivations in depth.

Original Scoring Criteria:
Descriptions at this level reflect consolidated and stable representations of self and other. Thoughts, feelings, needs, and fantasies are differentiated and more modulated. At this level, representations include an increasing tolerance and integration of disparate aspects of experiences of self and other. Characteristics and qualities are described more conditionally, with some references to temporality and environmental context. These descriptions are often marked by expressions of sympathetic understanding such as attempts to recognize and take into account specific situational factors that can influence another's, or one's own, behavior or viewpoint. Cause and effect relationships are depicted in relatively uncomplicated, largely unidirectional terms. Self descriptions often emphasize a positive self-assertion, in which the individual's own opinions, interests, and qualities are defined and articulated. Descriptions of others also tend to emphasize specific distinguishing qualities and characteristics. The descriptions may have some touches of playfulness and humor, which implies a

perspective on the relationship that is lacking at the lower levels. However, if humor is used defensively, then a lower score is indicated. Another important characteristic of descriptions at this level is the emphasis on the completeness of the description. There must be a sense of a coherent, modulated and integrated sense of self and other in the initial response before the inquiry in order for the description to be rated as a 7. The inquiry may clarify certain aspects of the description or even bring out others (e.g. sympathic understanding), but the integrity of the description should be evident at least in some nascent form in the original response and not primarily dependent on inquiry. In other words if the description is highly polarized, oscillating, or bland in the free association it should be rated a 7. Thus, from scale point 7 on, the characteristics of the scale point should be reflected in the spontaneous narrative. The inquiry may amplify the narrative, but the majority of the defining characteristics ought to be in the spontaneous description. In addition, the bulk of the narrative should not be canned or clichéd but rather should convey a unique vibrant person or relationship.

Revised Scoring Criteria, Self as Sexual Being:
The sexual self is represented as more coherent and integrated at this level. Context and temporality might be referenced, which modulates the response and adds more complexity. For instance, one might locate oneself developmentally in terms of "coming out," or show sensitivity to how context affects sexual identity, including degree of being "out" around sexual minority status. Responses at this level may acknowledge a sense of development and change underway or as possibilities for the future. At this level, sexuality is starting to be represented more conceptually, for instance, as being a facet of one's sense of self, connected to the rest of identity, but sufficiently isolatable to describe as a separate component of personality.

Examples:
042: Um, yeah. I definitely, um, my sexuality's a huge part of my identity. Um, and it's also just something that, one of like my great joys in life (*laughs softly*), so. Um, I, um, I am bisexual. Um, I've been with a man for a few months now, and I'm actually kind of going through (*clucking*) changing the way I think about my bisexuality. I used to feel very much like I'm totally bisexual, like I could end up with a man, I could end up with a woman, who knows. And I'm starting to feel now more like I, um, I will end up with a man, and that's what I want for a whole bunch of reasons, but sex definitely being one of them. Um, yeah, I don't know, I'm a pretty sexual person (*laughs*), I don't know.

046: […] I'm changing definitely from my perspective of sex in the past to now. I feel like maybe I have an unhealthy relationship with it. It was a place where I used to kind of go to not have to talk and not have to like delve like into certain places, but now that I find myself in a relationship with a woman, it's…sex is definitely not a place to go hide. I'm finding that it's a very intimate thin and I'm not uncomfortable with sharing it, it's just a new relationship to sex in general. So that's been something to me as a sexual being.

016:Well, I guess that, in the past, I was always very active like that, active in music and active in other things, but I was never – like everyone would describe me as asexual, like kind of what's going on with [name]? Like, you know. I probably would be gay and I'd have gay relationships. I've always lived a gay lifestyle, but I just never – like I totally would have that very bad breakup, I guess I just never really like – and then I started to define myself as gay, because I came out to my mother, and once I came out to my mother, I just sort of like realized the social

aspect of like being gay, and you know, that changed things after I was 24. But I haven't been in a relationship in a really long time, and I don't plan – I would be in a relationship, actually. I would, but I don't find anybody, and yeah, I'm – I'm – I guess I'm, you know, really only the past few years I've been saying that I'm gay, because I've been trying to talk to more people, and because I'm in the young Democrats, I have to say that. So that one other thing. Since I've been involved with the young Democrats and event planning for them, it's become like an issue, because there's other gay members, and they're young gay men, actually, and now that they're like out in the group, I've come out to the group, and you know, I have to defend myself too since I was considered like I don't want to like – it was something that I had to like talk about. Not talk about, you know, but talk about if people come up to me and talk to me about it. Because I'm – otherwise I wouldn't have said anything. So in these two years, I've been trying to tell people that I'm gay. When I got involved with the young Democrats, I've been like – it's been like all the past two years has been like coming out. Like I've been telling everybody. And meeting gay people.

Level 8. Cohesive, individuated, empathically related self and others in reciprocal relationships.

At this level a new dimension is added to the description of self and other as both more uniquely defined and reciprocally related. Descriptions of relationships are not unidirectional, as can be the case at level 7. In addition to a modulated, integrated and coherent portrait of the self and other found in level 7, descriptions are marked by a definite sense of the unique consolidated identity of self and other , by an in depth understanding and relatedness to others, and by a capacity to understand the perspective of others.

Original Scoring Criteria:

Descriptions at this level reflect a cohesive, nuanced and related sense of self and other in which varied characteristics and qualities are recognized and increasingly integrated. Aspects of the self and other are emphasized that distinguish and define a unique sense of identity. These descriptions often express an interest in understanding and differentiating feelings and motivations through interpersonal contact and communication, often reflecting references to potential or experienced differences between intentions and actual behavior. These descriptions also include references to using one's own thoughts and feelings to appreciate and understand the other empathically. Behavior is often depicted in ways that suggest a more complex, context-related understanding of cause and effect and an appreciation that a given action may have shades of meaning depending on its context. These descriptions also include a constructive emphasis on a complex balance of independence and dependence in relationships, on career and work choices, and on future directions and possibilities that reflect the experience of an increasingly stable and cohesive sense of identity. These descriptions should also be characterized by an understanding of the reciprocal impact and interaction of self and other. In sum, descriptions at level 8 are characterized by a 1) a definite sense of the unique consolidated identity of self and other; 2) an in depth understanding and relatedness to others and a sense of being enriched by relationship to others; 3) a capacity to understand multiple perspectives of self and others; 5) a sense that self and other are well differentiated, so that one is not overly controlled by or dependent on the other to maintain one's sense of identity even when perspectives of self and other diverge.

Revised Scoring Criteria, Self as Sexual Being:
At this level, responses show an interaction between a conceptual understanding of sexuality and actual sexual experiences and desires. Descriptions evince an ability to observe the sexual self and assess how it is integrated into other aspects of identity. Reciprocity may be evident between one's sexual identity and other parts of identity, with the possibility for mutual influence. Reciprocity might also be evident in the relationship between the sexual self and other people, demonstrating how sexuality can be intensely personal but also connected to others, and possibly evolving in relation to another. At this level, there can be an even more complex acknowledgement than at the previous level that the sexual self can change and evolve over time, but also that it connects to parts of the self that are experienced as essential. Descriptions at this level may demonstrate the idea that sexuality is a larger concept than sexual behavior and sexual identity label, though it can encompass them.

Examples:
036: I'm, well, in most of my life I've been intensely sexual. It turns out that during pregnancy I've been somewhat sexual, but as the pregnancy goes on less so, which is disorienting. In a sort of, but to describe myself as a general matter in life, I guess I tend to be a pretty flirtatious person sort of in general, but also within kind of intimate settings generally really kind of playful as well as intense. So it's like overlap between the intimacy and the sexuality. It feels really integrated into the rest of life.

035: How do I put this? Fluid would be the first thing that comes to mind. Not in the sense of me being like well you know complete, like it doesn't matter or anything, it just means that who or what I'm attracted to changes a lot. I think it depends on the person more than anything fixed like gender or a particular look. My sexuality is definitely linked to my imagination; very strongly so. Let me see what else? There are many layers of ways of being sexual that I can relate to. [Fluid?] I don't have a type in the sense of, or maybe, not in the sense of where you can say, okay, you know, 5 foot 10 to 6 foot 3, you know, this color hair, this color eyes, this build, yeah, S--- is gonna go for it. It's not like that. It's more like you know the type is fluid and that the externals are not going to draw me in initially. I mean it's like, and then of course certain combinations of traits it's like there's no one personality for me either so it's, you know, it changes. It depends on how I relate to a person as opposed to something fixed about the person that doesn't, you know, that doesn't change.

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