"We Don't Do That": Negotiating Graduate Education as a Bisexual+ Student

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Abstract: Bisexual+ people comprise the largest portion of the queer and trans community, yet there is limited research on bi+ subpopulations and a particular absence of literature exploring bisexual+ student identities and experiences. Much of the extant bi+ college student literature has centered on undergraduate experiences, leaving graduate experiences underexplored. Through this narrative inquiry study, guided by a queer theoretical framework, we sought to understand how bi+ graduate students navigate academic and professional contexts and how systems of power influence their identity negotiation narratives. Findings revealed pervasive bisexual+ erasure in academic contexts, pressure to conform to normative notions of professionalism, and the selective upholding and/or reimagining of professionalism. Implications for research and practice designed to improve graduate education are offered.

Keywords: bisexual+, graduate education, professionalism

Introduction

Bisexual+ people comprise the largest portion of the queer and trans community (Jones, 2023). Yet there is limited research on bisexual+ subpopulations and a particular absence of literature exploring bisexual+ student identities and experiences (Prieto et al., 2023). Those who study bisexual+ students tend to center undergraduate experiences (e.g., Garvey et al., 2018; King, 2011; Lowy, 2017; Prieto, 2023; Tavarez, 2022a, 2022b). To our knowledge, there are no peer-reviewed studies that uniquely examine bisexual+ students' graduate school experiences. The limited research that exists includes bisexual+ graduate students among larger samples of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals (e.g., Chen et al., 2023; Chu et al., 2024).

Despite the dearth of literature, extant research demonstrates that bisexual+ people encounter various forms of systemic oppression, including heterosexism (Chatterjee, 2022), monosexism (Prieto, 2022), and bisexual erasure (Nelson, 2023). Bisexual individuals often have their identities disaffirmed or the validity of bisexuality questioned (Hayfield, 2021) and experience a double stigmatization as they seek belonging within heterosexual, lesbian, and gay communities (Doan Van et al., 2019). Bisexual undergraduates have reported difficulty identifying role models among their faculty and administrators and accessing bi-affirming programming (Lowy, 2017; Tavarez, 2022a). When campus services for queer and trans students exist, bisexual students often feel excluded (Tavarez, 2022a). This lack of inclusion leads bisexual students to believe they do not matter (Lowy, 2017).

It is unclear how much bisexual+ graduate students share in these experiences or what challenges might be unique to the graduate student role. Academia has been described as fundamentally rooted in neoliberalism, Eurocentrism, heteronormativity, and patriarchy (Cisneros et al., 2022; Grande, 2018); when compounded by monosexism, educators can anticipate bisexual+ graduate students are navigating an often-hostile campus landscape. Further, graduate students frequently hold research, administrative, and/or teaching assistantships and may be highly aware of notions of respectability and "appropriateness" within these academic and professional contexts (White & Nonnamaker, 2011). As such, bi+ graduate students learn to enact their identity following these implicit norms (Cech & Waidzunas, 2011).

Extending upon the first author's study on bisexual undergraduates' identity negotiation narratives (Prieto, 2023; Prieto Godoy, 2020), we seek to explore how bi+ graduate students navigate academic and professional contexts. The purpose of this narrative study is to understand the experiences of bisexual+ graduate students relative to their sexual identities and how they negotiate their bisexuality in graduate school. Two research questions guided this study: (1) What narratives of identity negotiation do bisexual+ graduate students tell? and (2) How do systems of power influence bisexual+ students' narratives of identity negotiation?

A Note on Language

Bisexual+ describes people who are attracted to multiple genders, including bisexual, pansexual, omnisexual, polysexual, and queer identities, among many others. Much of the literature on bisexual+ people has been limited to bisexual people or has used the term bisexual. Throughout this paper, we use bisexual+ or bi+ as umbrella terms to describe anyone with a physical, emotional, and/or romantic attraction to more

than one gender (Bisexual Resource Center, n.d.). We use bi+ rather than non-monosexual or plurisexual because it is more widely used by bisexual+ individuals and more frequently cited in academic literature. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the term may unintentionally marginalize those who do not identify with the term bisexual but who experience attraction to people of more than one gender. When reporting on existing literature, we retain the terminology used by the original authors, as the language researchers choose has implications for the application of their scholarship. The students whose narratives we present in this paper all identified with the term bisexual+ and also described themselves as bisexual, queer, and pansexual, among other compound labels (e.g., bi/pan, panromantic demisexual).

Literature Review

We begin our review of the literature with an overview of the systems of oppression affecting bisexual+ graduate students, including monosexism, binegativity, and bisexual+ erasure. These various iterations of oppression shape the context in which identity negotiation occurs. Next, we overview graduate education and professionalism. We then highlight queer and trans graduate student experiences before discussing the theoretical frameworks guiding this study.

Bisexual+ Oppression

Bisexual+ students contend with multiple forms of oppression, some of which are unique to their bisexuality (e.g., monosexism and bisexual erasure), while others are rooted in racism (Duran, 2021; Patton, 2011), classism (Van Dyke et al., 2021), and other interlocking systems of oppression (Duran et al., 2024). Additionally, researchers have begun to identify how prejudice against pansexual and asexual people functions in ways alike and distinct from how bisexual people experience discrimination (Hayfield, 2021; Winer, 2024). There is limited research on bisexual+ people that explores these intersections and nuances (Prieto et al., 2023); we review the literature that describes what is known about this student population.

Monosexism refers to the distinct form of oppression facing bisexual+ people and the assumption that individuals fall into binary categories of gay or straight (Hayfield, 2021). Binegativity stems from monosexism and refers to prejudice against bisexual+ people and the stigmatization of bisexuality (Hayfield, 2021). We use the term binegativity rather than the more commonly used biphobia because it linguistically shifts the focus from an irrational fear of bisexuality to a question of power (Weiss, 2011).

Binegativity manifests as a host of negative stereotypes about bisexuality, including that bisexual people are unfaithful (Serpe et al., 2020), attention-seeking (Cipriano et al., 2022), or desiring membership in the queer community while also maintaining heterosexual privilege (Hayfield et al., 2014). Additionally, plurisexual individuals often have suppositions made about their sexual identity based on the perceived gender of their partner, resulting in the incorrect assumption that they are either straight or gay (Cipriano et al., 2022). This assumption places a burden on plurisexual people to "prove" their sexuality in ways monosexual individuals do not experience (Cipriano et al., 2022). Some bi+ people internalize these negative or delegitimizing beliefs (Henningham, 2021), which may cause them to downplay or minimize their sexuality, resulting in isolation and erasure (Boccone, 2016).

Bisexual+ erasure occurs when bi+ people do not see their identities represented in media, research, theory, and social institutions (Hayfield, 2021). In higher education, bisexual+ erasure results in limited attention to addressing binegativity, minimal representation and affirmation of bisexuality in the curricula, and failure to provide resources tailored to bi+ students' interests and needs (Garvey et al., 2018; Lowy, 2017; Prieto, 2023). Additionally, bisexual+ students report disaffirming experiences even within the LGBTQ+ spaces supposedly meant to uplift them (Prieto Godoy, 2020; Tavarez, 2020a).

The erasure described above is closely related to bisexual invisibility and is exacerbated by the fact that people can often provide "tentative but clear (and strongly gendered) images of typical gay men and lesbians, and of typical heterosexual men and women," but are often unable to offer a "clear image of the typical bisexual" (Hayfield, 2013, p. 21). As such, bisexual+ people wishing to make their sexuality visible may be unsure how or forced to rely on homophobic, monosexist, and trans-oppressive social scripts, which are often misinterpreted (Nelson, 2020b). Nevertheless, research demonstrates many bi+ people feel validated when others recognize their sexuality; they want to be seen (Nelson, 2020b). Conversely, some bisexual+ people may not seek greater visibility. In fact, bisexual people are less likely than their monosexual peers to disclose their sexuality to others, instead presenting as something other than bisexual in the interest of self-preservation (Mohr et al., 2017).

Additionally, bisexual+ people of color report feeling a tension between their racial and queer identities, with some even viewing their identities as "mutually irreconcilable" (Lim & Hewitt, 2018, p. 331). This tension results from the construction of whiteness as normative and a central part of queer identity through higher education's institutional commitments (Lange et al., 2022), as seen in LGBTQ centers (Catalano & Tillapaugh, 2020) and training curricula designed to foster queer allyship (Fox & Ore, 2010; Lange, 2019). This centering of whiteness extends to ideals of professionalism in higher education, which we expand upon in the following section.

Graduate Education and Professionalism

Graduate school can be a rewarding experience as those who complete their degrees engage in experiences that may lead to scholarly and professional identity development (Choi et al., 2021; Emmioğlu, 2017; Rizzolo et al., 2016). However, graduate studies are notoriously difficult and threaten students' physical, mental, and financial well-being (Posselt, 2021). In fact, scholars have found graduate students experience high rates of depression, anxiety, chronic stress, and/or emotional exhaustion (Evans et al., 2018; Levecque et al., 2017). This finding is unsurprising given the neoliberal nature of higher education, which privileges productivity and faculty autonomy over student well-being (Posselt, 2021).

Institutions socialize students into this neoliberal academic culture, providing students with information on professional dress, communication, and expectations (Perez et al., 2022). These messages of professionalism are often conveyed through constructions of success and coded in white, middle-class, cisgender values (Cooper, 2019; Perez et al., 2022; Rios, 2015). Definitions of professionalism vary depending on context but often convey attitudinal and behavioral workplace expectations (Evetts, 2003; Hodgson, 2005; Perez, 2021). Therefore, professionalism functions as a discursive tool associated with power, reinforcing hegemonic norms for an ideal worker (Acker, 1990; Evetts, 2003; Hodgson, 2005).

Those who do not embody these norms are pressured to conform, which can lead individuals to feel they cannot fully be themselves or truly belong to a group, community, or organization (Cooper, 2019; Rios, 2015). Literature on professionalism in higher education tends to focus on career development, with many scholars calling for decentering white middle-class norms (e.g., Garriott, 2020; Muzika et al., 2019). Yet research has also begun to explore how queer and trans graduate students of color "refashion" professionalism to resist "neoliberal intellectualism, coloniality, and arbitrary institutional grammars" (Salas-SantaCruz, 2020, p. 37).

Researchers have also investigated how notions of professionalism are distinctively anti-queer in higher educational spaces (Davies & Neustifter, 2023; Mizzi & Star, 2019). Scholars theorize heteroprofessionalism as a heterosexist and cissexist form of professionalism wielded against queer and trans people to maintain heteronormativity in the workplace (Mizzi, 2013, 2016; Mizzi & Star, 2019). Given the fear heteroprofessionalism produces in queer and trans people, individuals may regulate their self-presentation in accordance with cisheterosexist norms (Davies & Neustifer, 2023). To the researchers' knowledge, no studies apply this notion of professionalism specifically to bisexual+ students outside of larger samples of queer and trans folk.

In addition to problematic constructs of professionalism, researchers have documented epistemic injustice—the dismissal of certain ways of knowing based on power imbalances and claims to legitimacy—within the academy (Gonzales et al., 2024) and racial, religious, and sexuality-based prejudice within graduate education (Ambrose et al., 2023). Although academic guidance and support from supervisors and members of the department/college can facilitate graduate student success (Bastalich, 2017; Posselt, 2018), queer and trans graduate students must nevertheless traverse this hostile environment in pursuit of their degree. Gonzales et al. (2024) argue that epistemic injustice is an issue of power, privilege, and positionality, as those with authority and opportunity establish what is deemed legitimate. This process of legitimacy is also disciplinarily bound, meaning that graduate students are explicitly taught which knowers and what knowledge productions are legitimate (Gonzales et al., 2024). Therefore, we can expect our collaborators' academic disciplines will impact their graduate school socialization.

Queer and Trans Graduate Students

College campuses remain unwelcoming environments for queer and trans students due to heterosexism, monosexism, and trans oppression (Lange et al., 2019). Much of the extant higher education literature has illuminated how queer and trans students experience this environment; however, the focus has primarily been on undergraduates. An emergent body of scholarship has begun to explore queer and trans graduate student experiences, although most studies were not limited to only graduate students or did not disaggregate LGBTQ+ samples (e.g., Chu et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2023; Goldberg et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2017; Stout & Wright, 2016). Vaccaro (2012) spotlighted the unique experiences of LGBT graduate students, noting that they often come to campus only for classes and that their graduate school experiences are highly dependent upon those departmental spaces and program faculty. LGBTQ graduate students noted they did not share their sexual identity with their faculty, given the "professional" nature of the relationship (Chu et al., 2024, p. 332). Additionally, students paid significant attention to their professional identity and expectations (e.g., what it means to be a social worker or an attorney; Vaccaro, 2012).

Relatedly, scholars have noted disciplinary differences in students' experiences. For example, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields have been described as depoliticized (Friedensen et al., 2021) and often take an identity-neutral approach to pedagogy and curricular content, at best erasing sexual identity and, at worst, promoting an actively hostile environment (Hughes, 2018; Linley et al., 2018). Conversely, humanities disciplines may foster a more inclusive environment for queer and trans students (Linley & Nguyen, 2015). It is reasonable to conclude that, even within the same institution, bisexual+ graduate students will have different experiences depending on their discipline or departmental context.

Queer and trans graduate students' experiences are also informed by their ambiguous role within higher education institutions. Although enrolled in the university as students, they often hold many roles with unique responsibilities and expectations. Those who serve as graduate teaching assistants may feel uncertain about whether they should disclose their sexual or gender identity to their students for fear they may be perceived as biased or advancing a personal agenda (Mobley et al., 2020; Nielsen & Alderson, 2014). Conversely, LGBQ instructors may hope that sharing their identities will open students' minds to new perspectives (Nielsen & Alderson, 2014; Orlov & Allen, 2014). Although these studies were not conducted with graduate students specifically, they speak to the complex considerations graduate student instructors must weigh as they negotiate their identities on the college campus. Unfortunately, studies exploring the unique intersection of bisexuality and graduate education remain absent from higher education and sexuality literature.

Theoretical Frameworks

We paired a queer theoretical lens with an exploration of identity negotiation to understand how bi+ graduate students make sense of the limitations that the academy places on them.

Queer Theory

Poststructuralists focus on deconstructing the individual as an autonomous agent with an emphasis on challenging binary logics (Derrida, 2014/1966; Foucault, 1990; Fuss, 2013). Employing queer theory as a poststructural framework allowed us to analyze the systems of power shaping bisexual+ graduate student experiences. Queer theory has rightfully been critiqued for, at times, ignoring, marginalizing, or mischaracterizing bisexuality (Callis, 2009; Gurevich et al., 2012); nevertheless, it holds promise for the "analysis of transgressive identities, and multiple fluid desires" (Monro, 2015, p. 47). By engaging queer theory here, we share Burrill's (2009) hope that such theorizing "may help to avoid the dangers of reinforcing rigid definitions and excluding numerous individuals" (p. 498). Our study is also a response to Callis' (2009) assertion that queer theory would benefit from greater attention to bisexual individuals and experiences.

We drew on several queer theoretical concepts, including performativity (Butler, 1990, 1993), liminality (Abes & Kasch, 2007), and various iterations of normativity (e.g., heteronormativity, homonormativity, and mononormativity; Duggan, 2003; Wiegman & Wilson, 2015). Scholars engaging performativity as a theoretical construct recognize that identity is fluid, expressed, and enacted (Butler, 1990). Identity is performatively constituted when a person acts in ways associated with dominant conceptualizations of gender (Butler, 1990). The production of hegemonic gender norms, themselves a function of whiteness, through performative action is the foundation upon which

heterosexuality rests (Butler, 1993). When bisexual individuals deviate from these norms, however, they are seldom read as bisexual. Bisexuality is rendered invisible by binary logics of sexuality and gender (Hartman, 2013). The liminal nature of bisexuality exacerbates this invisibility.

Liminality refers to an in-betweenness and, as such, functions as a resistance strategy (Abes & Kasch, 2007) and a queer analytic tool (LeMaster, 2011). In both instances, it offers a lens through which to understand the performance of identity and normativity. Lastly, heteronormativity refers to the assumption that most people are heterosexual, and thus queer sexualities deviate from this hegemonic standard (Butler, 1990). Homonormativity recognizes the existence of lesbian and gay people but does not challenge heteronormative values, instead seeking inclusion within heteronormative social structures (Duggan, 2003). Mononormativity privileges heterosexual, lesbian, and gay (i.e., monosexual) identities as "normal" and treats the attraction to multiple genders as deviant. In engaging these constructs, we acknowledge queer theory has, at times, been inattentive to race (Allen & Mendez, 2018; Johnson, 2001). We draw on Allen and Mendez (2018), who argued that any consideration of heteronormativity and its manifestations must be understood within "the racialized and the gendered context of contemporary U.S. society" (p. 77). Highlighting queer theoretical concepts, while remaining cognizant of racism and other axes of oppression, allowed us to bring into focus students' experiences with monosexism, bisexual+ erasure, and respectability (Joshi, 2012).

In this study, we investigate how bisexual+ graduate students navigate professional expectations in academia. By centering bisexual+ individuals, we can consider the relationship between those who "belong" in heteronormative environments such as academia (e.g., heterosexual) and those who are excluded (e.g., gay and lesbian) from perspectives that do not fit neatly into either category, disrupting this insider/outsider dichotomy (e.g., bi+). Attention to communities that fall outside of the monosexual binary allows for a reimagining of community, which may lead to a broader political coalition. It also provides people with more choices of how to define themselves and illuminates the diversity within sexually marginalized communities. By suggesting there are many queer identities to choose from, such research allows for the displacement of heterosexuality as the default and homosexuality as the opposed other. The most effective resistance to such a dichotomy may be those who reject both options through the destabilization of sexuality categories (Namaste, 1994).

Identity Negotiation

Butler (1993) was clear that performativity is not a radical or voluntary choice; rather, it entails "repetition, very often the repetition of oppressive and painful gender norms . . . This is not freedom, but a question of how to work the trap that one is

inevitably in" (Butler, 1992, p. 84). Considering identity negotiation, an agentic process whereby people must manage multiple social identities and the assumptions others hold of those identities (Deaux & Ethier, 1998), allowed us to explore how bisexual+ students navigate academia. As people move through their social worlds, they must respond to their environment in a way that feels most suitable (Deaux, 2001), meaning individuals have agency in how they enact their identity across shifting contexts and circumstances. This agency might entail changing or adopting new identity labels, associating with new communities, and making choices to cope with discrimination (Deaux & Ethier, 1998).

Identity negotiation strategies fall into two overarching categories—identity negation and identity enhancement (Deaux & Ethier, 1998). Negation strategies allow an individual to distance themself from an identity they may experience as undesirable, whereas enhancement strategies are used when someone wishes to assert their identity. Asserting a bisexual+ identity, however, becomes challenging given the liminal, often invisible nature of bisexuality and the tendency for others to default to monosexist assumptions (Nelson, 2020a; Prieto, 2023). It may thus be easiest for bisexual+ people to choose to deemphasize the importance of their identity. This negation strategy, which Deaux and Ethier (1998) term lowered identification, provides the means to address immediate threats without abandoning a salient aspect of one's identity.

This strategy operates similarly to covering, where one chooses to "tone down a disfavored identity to fit into the mainstream" (Yoshino, 2007, p. ix). Covering involves downplaying queer traits and the adherence to heterosexual norms and functions as a form of assimilation. Ultimately, the decision to cover should be made freely, yet in a heteronormative, monosexist society, it is typically demanded of bisexual+ people (Yoshino, 2007). The pressure to deemphasize one's queerness in pursuit of inclusion highlights the way respectability and queerness exist in tension in students' lives (Joshi, 2012).

Methodology

This study was guided by a narrative methodological approach, which allowed bisexual+ graduate students to tell their own stories. We sought to dismantle the imposed binary of researcher and subject; rather than conducting research on or for bisexual+ people, we committed to conducting research with them. Therefore, we worked to "queer [the researcher-participant] divide" (Jourian & Nicolazzo, 2017, p. 600) by inviting participants (who we refer to as our collaborators) to guide the interview, understanding that researchers' power resides in controlling both the process and creation of knowledge (Boser, 2006). Narrative inquiry allowed us to engage with our collaborators' stories to understand experiences and honor those experiences as sources of knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). We selected this methodology because narrative inquiries are closely related to social justice (Chase, 2011; Misawa, 2012) and have the power to mobilize people toward social change (Riessman, 2008). In this way, research creating (counter)narratives alongside collaborators has liberatory aims and may elicit healing because counternarratives challenge hegemonic cultural ideals (Peters & Lankshear, 1996), including hetero-, homo-, and mononormative conceptualizations of sexuality. A queer theoretical framework attuned us to these normative ideals. In pairing narrative inquiry with queer theory, we followed Seidman's (1994) assertion that queer theory "make[s] strange or 'queer' what is considered known, familiar, and commonplace, what is assumed to be the order of things...leaving permanently open and contestable the assumptions and narratives that guide social analysis" (p. xi). Collaborators' stories served as the data through which we could make sense of bi+ graduate students' experiences (Misawa, 2012) while centering often silenced perspectives.

Sampling

We began data collection in Fall 2020. We recruited collaborators through social media (e.g., Reddit, Twitter, Facebook) and by asking colleagues to share the opportunity with whoever may be interested. By tapping into our professional networks of diverse graduate-level faculty, administrators, and students, we hoped that our call for collaborators would reach a wide variety of eligible grads. Due to the popularity and intelligibility of the term bisexual, coupled with our desire to be inclusive of a wide array of multi-gender attracted students, we used the term "bisexual+" on all recruitment materials. We did not apply any operational definitions of what it means to be bisexual+, instead allowing respondents to self-identify. While the use of an umbrella term such as bisexual+ may provide a sense of inclusion for many who experience multi-gender attraction, others may not resonate with the label (Olivo et al., 2024). As such, we acknowledge that not all bisexual+ perspectives will be represented in our findings.

Fourteen collaborators contributed to this research (Table 1: Collaborator Demographics); a fifteenth student chose not to continue past the first interview, and his data was not included. We used purposeful sampling to identify an interested pool of bi+ graduate students (Patton, 2002); maximum variation sampling aided in assembling a diverse group of students from various academic disciplines and geographic regions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). We made intentional efforts to recruit cisgender men and students of color, both of whom are often underrepresented in bisexuality research (Chickerella & Horne, 2022; Duran, 2019). For instance, we published a digital flyer in the bisexual men subreddit (r/bisexualmen).

Table 1

Collaborator Demographics

Pseudonym	Pronouns	Degree	Discipline	Region	Gender	Sexuality	Race	Ethnicity
Della	she/they	Academic Doctorate	Psychology	Northeast	NB	Bisexual	White	Italian, but it's not very important to me
David	he/him	Academic Doctorate	Psychology	West Coast	Male	Bisexual/queer	White	Jewish
Sam	she/her	Academic Doctorate	Anthropology	South	Woman	Bisexual	White	German American
Geraldine	she/her	Academic Doctorate	Linguistics	Midwest	Female	Bisexual	Black Biracial	
Gwendolyn	she/her	Academic Doctorate	Linguistics	West Coast	Female	Bi/pan, asexual-spectrum	White	Jewish
Nyx	they/them	Masters	Literature	Mid-Atlantic	Genderfluid	Bisexual	White	White
K.V.	they/them	Academic Doctorate	Mathematics	Mid-Atlantic	Nonbinary	Bisexual (panromantic demisexual)	White	Scandinavian-American
Brooke	she/her	Professional Doctorate	Psychology	Mid-Atlantic	Woman	Bisexual/pansexual	Asian	Asian - Taiwanese
Tyrone	he/him	Academic Doctorate	Sociology	Midwest	Man	Bi	Blackity Black	
Grace	she/her	Academic Doctorate	Sociology	Midwest	Woman	Queer	Mixed race	
Olivia	she/her	Masters	Social Work	West Coast	Femme/agender	Bisexual	Mixed race (Asian and white)	Japanese / Irish
Max	they/them or he/him	Academic Doctorate	Chemistry	Midwest	Transmasculine/nonbinary	Pansexual/queer	White	2nd gen Italian/Polish American
Sasha	any	Academic Doctorate	Education	Midwest	Nonbinary	Queer	European White	Russian
Janelle	she/her	Professional Doctorate	Psychology	Midwest	Woman	Bisexual	Black	

Note: The terms used in this table reflect the identity language participants used for themselves.

Narrative analysis in a poststructural study encourages multiple analytic strategies, including thematic and dialogic/performance analysis (Riessman, 2008). We began by reading each transcript to gain a deep understanding of each collaborator's story and to sensitize ourselves to emerging themes. We then individually coded a subset of the transcripts using descriptive and process coding (Saldaña, 2016). Together, we established a shared coding scheme, which we then used to code all transcripts. Finally, we themed the data by progressing from individual data segments to phrases and passages that more broadly captured collaborators' shared experiences. The use of queer theory and deconstructive analysis (Czarniawska, 2004; Martin, 1990) attuned us to how power structured collaborators' identity performance. This analysis illuminated how binaries (e.g., gay/straight, man/woman) shaped collaborators' lives and how they understood their own identities.

Goodness and Researcher Positionality

Goodness strategies included peer review, the presentation of negative cases and rich, thick descriptions, and transparency around study limitations (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Jones et al., 2014). Consistent with a poststructural worldview, our aim was not to present one singular truth but to credibly present collaborators' insights. Because our backgrounds inevitably shape our research process and the way collaborators engaged with us (Pasque et al., 2012), we offer a brief explication of our positionalities. Kaity's research on bisexual undergraduate identity negotiation informed her interest in this work. As she collected and analyzed her data, she recognized how her graduate student experience at times differed from the undergraduates with whom she spoke. Throughout this follow-up study, Kaity reflected on her experiences as a bisexual/queer white cisgender woman in a queer-affirming department and how those identities informed what and how collaborators chose to share. Victoria is a bisexual/queer cisgender Tejana. Her interest in sexuality research emerged in her personal reflections at a Predominately White Institution, where her racial and ethnic identity were most salient. Victoria reached out to Kaity to investigate graduate student identity negotiation to better understand how institutions limit or enhance bisexual+ students' sexual identity. We further explore our positionality in relation to sexuality research in Prieto and Olivo (2022).

Findings

Collaborators' narratives of graduate school education revealed the nuanced ways graduate students traversed academia, including how they grappled with professional norms as queer people. Findings illuminate how bisexual+ graduates conceptualized professionalism and how their understanding of professionalism constrained and—to a much lesser extent—encouraged their ability to enact their bisexual+ identities. Bisexual+ erasure acted as a mechanism that limited graduate students' abilities to negotiate their identities as desired. This erasure was true for their sexuality and other marginalized identities, including race and gender. While some students internalized problematic notions of professionalism, others reimagined professionalism as a queer performance. Findings demonstrate how students learned to exist and resist in higher educational settings and how some reimagined their professional identities.

Bisexual+ Erasure in Academic Contexts

Collaborators reported an absence of messaging about bisexuality throughout their academic careers and in society more broadly. Given the erasure of bisexuality and bisexual experiences on campus, students often did not feel comfortable coming out. As Max explained, sharing their pansexuality "would be considered weird to disclose in a work environment." Yet collaborators were not ashamed of their identity. Rather, they employed negotiation strategies that allowed them to share their sexuality without feeling as though they were doing something uninvited or inappropriate. Nyx engaged in this negotiation strategy when they taught undergraduates opting for more generalized terms such as "queer." Though Nyx did specify that should their bisexuality be relevant to the class, they would feel comfortable revealing that to their students. This idea of not hiding one's sexuality but also not sharing unless invited to do so was a common theme among collaborators.

Even in the rare instances where sexuality was foregrounded in academic contexts, bisexuality was notably absent. Olivia captured this when she shared, "Queer theory really just means gay theory, and a lot of the queer research is just about gay and lesbian people." Sasha described a nearly identical experience when she was taught by a lesbian faculty member who studies queer theory. She lamented, "it still felt like just gay theory, not queer theory… It's still felt very black and white. We didn't talk a lot about sexuality as a spectrum." Other times, bisexuality was framed in negative terms. As Brooke explained, in her clinical fieldwork, her colleagues discussed bisexual behaviors in clients as possibly displaying "identity disturbance." It should be noted that students were critical of how faculty *taught* queer theory and not necessarily the theory itself. Bisexual+ students expressed frustration with the lack of acknowledgment and engagement with bisexual content in spaces that were explicitly labeled queer. This example shows how even queer faculty upheld stable identity categories grounded in monosexist assumptions, creating boxes in which students did not fit. Thus, students had to exist within liminal spaces outside of the categories presented to them by those considered authorities in the field.

While students were frustrated with the lack of bi+ representation in the classroom, positive representations of bisexual+ identities had the potential to offset this erasure. For example, Della reflected on their experience changing advisors

stating that she sought queer mentorship in her graduate studies and ended up switching advisors from a straight woman to a bisexual woman advisor. Della questioned how different her initial two years of graduate school would have been if she had that representation sooner, noting, "I've sought out mentorship from other queer people, but I think, you know, seeking someone with identities more similar to mine may have benefited me." Collaborators understood the importance of mentorship in academia and appreciated the limited instances when their sexuality was reflected in faculty role models or professional organizations. Unfortunately, this dynamic places an undue burden on marginalized faculty, as Grace explained:

> In undergrad, there would be support groups and let's talk about what it's like to come out to your parents and all of this random stuff. And there's been none of that at the graduate level. The closest thing I can think of is we have one faculty member who is gender nonconforming, and they are also queer, but they have also made it very clear that they don't want to serve as a resource to everyone about that...We often place that expectation on individuals in authority when that's probably unfair to do…but there's, I wouldn't even begin to be able to tell you where you go for that kind of support on [institution's] campus.

While Grace noted the absence of bi+ representation on campus, as a person of color, Grace was able to see the difference between her and white bi+ students:

> ...people who don't really need to question their racial identity, it can be like sexual identity is the battle that they really have to struggle with. But for me, my racial self, self-identity has shifted so much between middle school and grad school that that's really been where a lot of my energy has been focused and I think personally, because I am so straight passing, there hasn't been like an external pressure to figure out my sexual identity in a way that's acceptable to other people the way that race is so visible that I do have to figure that out.

Despite Grace articulating a difference between her own queer identity exploration and that of white queer students, when explicitly asked if Grace believed her race or cultural background impacted her sexual identity, she was quick to say, "Oh, not really."

Collaborators explored and negotiated their identities largely in the absence of minoritized faculty role models. The limited presence of queer faculty and the hegemonic nature of cisheteronormativity and monosexism shaped students' graduate school experiences and constructions of professionalism.

Constructions of Professionalism in Higher Educational Settings

Of the 14 collaborators, 12 had graduate assistantships, including one administrative, three research, and nine teaching positions. One held both teaching and research roles, one was unemployed, and one was a full-time student affairs practitioner. Given these institutional roles, collaborators recalled receiving messages on professionalism from those around them. While none were directly told not to disclose their sexual identities, many received indirect messaging about the (in)appropriateness of revealing their identities. For example, Max shared that their chemistry department emphasized ideals of merit, stressing identity (e.g., sex, gender, race) was "irrelevant information." Max stated:

> It sort of felt like a don't ask, don't tell type situation. Like if you were smart and did smart kid things they didn't care. Like if you proved your worth through academics and through research they wouldn't care as long as you didn't do anything too weird was the vibe I got.

Max described a culture that explicitly touted meritocracy wherein marginalized groups had to prove their worth constantly. For example, Max described a professor who proudly proclaimed he had yet to graduate a "female" doctoral student. This professor challenged the women in the department to be the first and felt the women should prove themselves to him. Max recalled the professor not honoring Max's pronouns (he/they) and dismissing his trans identity. While Max did not identify as a woman, he felt a shared camaraderie with the women in the department due to the blatant differential treatment towards cis men. Although Max was able to clearly identify misogyny in the chemistry department, he also acknowledged the lack of recognition of other marginalized groups by faculty teaching about "social issues in chemistry." Max shared:

> [There was] a seminar taught by the head of the department, and she had a day where she talked about social issues in chemistry, and it literally was only about women. No mention of people of color, no mention of definitely not queer people. Like no mention of socioeconomic status. It was just about women. And I was sitting there like, hmmm.

Not only was there a lack of acknowledgment, but Max also recalled that he and other trans students lost professional opportunities due to their trans identities. For example, trans students applying to STEM programs were advised by more senior trans peers to conceal their gender identity on applications to prevent discrimination. Max's concerns of discrimination due to his trans identity were exacerbated by peers questioning his sexual identity due to the gender of the person he was dating. Max's peers made assumptions about Max due to their appearance. This experience led Max to

downplay the significance of their pansexuality to protect themselves from not only being misgendered but also from others mislabeling their sexuality.

Additionally, Sam, a cisgender woman in the Anthropology department, shared how normative ideals of professionalism intersected with her gender and sexuality. She explained, "Generally masculine women are not valued unless they're also very physically attractive. So, you want the woman to be assertive and smart and all that, but she also has to be beautiful." Sam reported feeling pressure to not only *act* professionally but to look physically attractive, which she interpreted as appearing feminine. Bisexual+ women found themselves navigating both the pressure to present as feminine and attractive (understood within the confines of cisheteronormativity), as well as concerns regarding their sexualization as bisexual+ women. Sam elaborated:

> I think often bi women are sexualized. That's kind of a trope. And so, I don't want some frat guy to get all perked up when I mentioned that... I tend not to foreground my sexuality on campus for any reason, just because I'm trying to be kind of professional.

While femininity was both praised and objectified in cisgender women, it was met with skepticism or hostility in others.

Sasha, who recently came out as non-binary and uses any pronouns, reported their colleagues gossiping about his gender presentation. Sasha identified as a cisgender man at the time of our interview and shared that their colleagues expressed concerns about professionalism as Sasha had long, full, beautiful hair at the time.[1] Their hair and clothing clashed with the organization's ideals of professionalism:

> I think it's because of the toxic [academic culture], you know? I'm talking about, like, "Have you heard?" [imitating gossip], you know? That kind of gossipy thing...I don't know that my clothing has anything to do with my ability because I can see my ability to just work literally three years in a row. I did not have areas of improvements [on my performance evaluations].

Sasha reported that despite receiving excellent reviews of her work, she still faced criticism due to her queer presentation.

In the same way, collaborators were cautioned against *looking* queer; they were also encouraged not to discuss their bisexuality. Della pointed out the hypocrisy in the way ideals of professionalism required not disclosing one's queerness:

> Sometimes, when you talk about sexual orientation, it feels like you're being crass and talking about sex and your sex life...like, "That's not professional. We don't do that. We don't talk about sex or our relationships." But if a straight person talked about their sexuality, we wouldn't think about it the same way.

Della expressed frustration with heteronormative privilege and heterosexual standards defining professionalism. These standards were enforced by both institutional and interpersonal pressures and exacerbated by bisexual+ erasure.

Upholding and/or Reimagining Professionalism

While the institution created the physical and metaphorical boundaries within which collaborators were meant to place themselves, there were those who pushed back and intentionally brought all their identities to the table despite pressures not to. Tyrone emphasized how difficult this was when he shared:

> I try not to have that mentality of "this is the battle we're fighting right now" because that's the same thing that's been told to queer people for decades, particularly queer folks in the Black community, right? …one point that I always try to make is that all of this has its roots in white supremacy. All of it — racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia — it's *all* wrapped up in the same roots and we can't say that we are trying to attack one issue without attacking all of them.

Tyrone fought to have others acknowledge all his identities despite the myriad systems of oppression that sought to control him. He openly identified as bisexual and spoke up when others mislabeled him. He found it important to dismantle monosexist assumptions, recognizing the harmful impact of these assumptions on bisexual+ people. For many years, Tyrone believed that bisexuality was not a "real thing," which added to his confusion and fueled his belief that "being gay is a choice." He now understood sexuality was malleable and socially constructed; therefore, he could attempt to redefine the boundaries he was given despite the potential consequences of this resistance.

Similarly, Sasha wanted to redefine the boundaries of professionalism and be visible as a queer person to their students:

> I'm very, very frickin' queer when I'm at work and I'm very fluid about it and I'm not ashamed of it with [the

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1 In recognition of the dearth of literature on bisexual+ cisgender men, Sasha felt it was important that this aspect of their experience be highlighted. We reference Sasha's identity at the time of our interview at his suggestion.

students I supervise] ...I think a lot of them love it and I know a lot of them have found me, not as a mentor…I don't know. Some people told me that I inspire them. But then I feel like a fraud, you know?... For a lot of [my students] it was important to meet me and see me being extra queer, sassy, feminine, you know, and at the same time professional, getting shit done.

Sasha's resistance to notions of professionalism was important to his self-actualization as a queer person but also to the students he was tasked with supporting. They elaborated:

My [straight male] students, they would come up to me and say, "Hey, I'm in [the] business world. I don't know… how to make [my long hair] professional" …I was like, "Here's [a] man bun. Here's how you do this." …And it was really cool because they would actually talk to me. They're like, "I didn't want that. But people have been telling me I'm unprofessional" and I was like, "Fuck unprofessional." I'm like, "I don't give a shit. You see me being professional being great and doing my job."

Similarly, Della, a white non-binary psychology student, sought to redefine the boundaries presented to them. Della reimagined professionalism so that her representation and mentorship of other queer students was a part of her professional identity. They shared their bisexual identity immediately with students to signal:

There's some things I'm not going to tolerate...my disclosure was important for a student feeling welcomed and safe in a way that I hadn't. I think that that's a really professional thing. Mentorship and support of younger students is the most professional thing I can think of.

Additionally, Della, David, Gwendolyn, and Nyx recognized the white privilege they held, and most made it a point to speak up when faced with problematic discourse on issues of gender and sexuality. Gwendolyn was weary of this approach stating, "I shouldn't be like getting up on a soapbox and speaking for everyone." Most collaborators reflected on what it meant to be white and queer and how this led to feelings of safety that allowed them to be more outspoken than their colleagues of color. Thus, some felt a responsibility to speak up when problematic discourse occurred. Despite the explicit acknowledgment of whiteness as a privilege, little thought was expressed about how whiteness impacts one's sexuality from white students. As David stated, "whiteness tends to be like invisible and assumed and I don't know how it influences my sexuality."

Although whiteness was described by some white collaborators as a protective force, others did not feel the same, particularly those holding additional minoritized identities. Max's identity as a transmasculine person made him feel vulnerable and unsafe in most campus spaces. Thus, Max often did not speak up when problematic discourse on gender or sexuality occurred to protect himself. Grace also limited voicing her opinions on gender and sexuality in higher educational spaces; however, her reasoning differed greatly from Max's.

Grace, a multiracial queer cis woman, attended both progressive undergraduate and graduate institutions. Therefore, Grace attributed her progressive schooling to the fact that she had not experienced some of the discrimination and hardships that other collaborators from more conservative campuses experienced. However, Grace expressed frustration with what she perceived as expectations to perform her queerness. In fact, she felt that her multiple marginalized identities were often tokenized even by the people closest to her in her sociology department, which made her feel guarded.

...I don't want other people to weaponize my identities on my behalf and I don't want people to spend all their free time questioning them and those have predominantly been the responses I've been greeted with both in undergrad and grad school. So, why would I bother?

Grace shared her frustration, particularly with her peers, demanding she present her identities in ways she felt were restrictive. Throughout the interview, Grace asserted that she did not feel a need to be unapologetically out and found the concealment of her sexuality was a means to not only protect herself but to resist what she perceived as tokenization. Grace grew up in an affluent urban community and was not only familiar with liberal institutional pressures but frustrated with feeling pigeonholed into the categories peers told her were the most important. Grace refused to conform to what she perceived as institutional actors telling her how she *ought* to be based on her intersecting identities.

Discussion

Whether institutions intentionally or unintentionally set boundaries around collaborators' identities and expressions is irrelevant. Although institutions may take purposeful albeit performative action to highlight marginalized groups, students found aspects of themselves stifled; bisexual+ graduate students cannot enter most campus environments as complex, nuanced people. Each collaborator's narrative was unique and highlighted how multiple identities, cultures, and contexts influence the selection and experience of identity negotiation strategies. Nevertheless, some commonalities emerged from the data.

Findings revealed collaborators were forced to negotiate their identities within white, hetero-, and mononormative environments that communicated clear messaging about professionalism. As Strouse (2015) explained, "professionalism privileges rigor and seriousness, and it exiles

flamboyance, camp, and irony—sensibilities historically associated with queers" (p. 124).

For queer graduate students, showing up as a professional requires adhering to the norms of "respectable queerness," which demands alignment to "social norms that are gendered, white, middle-class and heterosexual" (Joshi, 2012, p. 416). It also means negotiating their identities within heteroprofessional academic contexts that privilege meritocracy over authenticity and tokenize, devalue, and erase queer and trans scholars, particularly those of color (Bacchetta et al., 2018).

White students, especially those assumed to be cis and straight, were able to find safety in either conforming to or speaking out against rigid notions of professionalism. Students of color also confirmed or reimagined professionalism, but they did not describe the same sense of safety as white peers. Although white students acknowledged their white privilege, albeit superficially, little discourse engaged how their whiteness impacted them outside of their comfort speaking up when they encountered problematic rhetoric. Foste's (2020) enlightenment narrative (e.g., a discursive strategy one may use to present as racially conscious) may be at play here for white bi+ students seeking to be seen as "good white people" (Sullivan, 2014, p. 3).

Additionally, although some collaborators of color saw their sexuality and race as intertwined, Grace reminds us not all bi+ people of color feel their sexual and racial identities are intrinsically related. Rather, Grace reported viewing these identities as distinctive while also acknowledging that white bi+ students were able to focus their attention on what she deemed "not as visible" an identity (i.e., bisexuality). These findings echo previous research on queer students of color and the diversity of how race and sexuality impact one's identity (Duran, 2021).

This issue of identity and identity negotiation is complex. Though students felt comfortable speaking out against anti-queer rhetoric, they often did not explicitly tell others of their bi+ identity. It is important to recognize that collaborators stressed they were not necessarily hiding the fact that they were bisexual+. Rather, either the circumstances did not appear relevant, or they did not feel invited to share more about their sexuality. Although it is impossible to know if collaborators, such as Grace, chose not to self-disclose as bisexual due to internalized –isms, scholarship suggests concealing one's minoritized sexual identity can function as a resistance strategy, particularly for queer people of color (Brockenbrough, 2015).

The need to downplay one's sexuality was particularly pronounced in STEM fields, specifically chemistry and math. Previous literature investigating sexuality in STEM departments asserted that these departments often encouraged the sexual identity erasure of students and even promoted an actively hostile environment (Friedensen et al., 2021; Hughes, 2018; Linley et al., 2018; Miller, 2021). Miller et al. (2021) describe STEM culture as a "bro culture" characterized by hypermasculinity, assumed heterosexuality, the treatment of sexual and gender minoritized students as invisible or inferior, and the objectification of cisgender women. Moreover, scholars have described STEM fields as identity neutral wherein colorblindness, gender neutrality, and meritocracy are promoted at the expense of identity-affirming and humanizing curricula (Leyva et al., 2022; Gutzwa et al., 2024). The resultant environment reifies cisheteropatriarchy, normative whiteness, and their intersections (Leyva et al., 2022), prompting students to engage in self-protective strategies such as adherence to heteroprofessional norms. Our STEM collaborators echoed these findings. For example, Max dealt with this reality by downplaying and covering his sexual and gender identities within his chemistry department (Yoshino, 2007). Max avoided people in the department, including those he felt a bond with, to avoid dealing with the hostile culture. Additionally, collaborators from the humanities reported a more inclusive environment (Linley & Nguyen, 2015). However, even when departments or campuses gestured towards diversity and inclusion, there was little to no messaging regarding bisexuality.

Our collaborators found ways to challenge professional norms (Salas-SantaCruz, 2020) or to enact their sexuality and gender in support of other queer people. By applying a queer theoretical lens to identity negotiation, however, we trouble the agency collaborators had over these choices. Engaging Butler's (1990, 1993) work on performativity, Valocchi (205) theorized the way identity enactments are both produced and constrained by "the conscious and unconscious adherence to the norms and cultural signifiers of sexuality and gender" (p. 756). For bi+ people, the way these norms are (mis)understood and upheld is obfuscated by the liminal nature of bisexuality. This fact means collaborators' agency was heavily influenced by interlocking systems of power and oppression, including heteronormativity and mononormativity, and there were many institutional contexts in which outness did not seem feasible.

As Valocchi (2005) explained, the social self "is partly autonomous from the power structures that construct the self;" it is both constrained by and capable of pushing back against these forces (p. 755). An individual's identity is thus not determined by the cultural context; rather, the context provides a set of resources from which an individual can strategically choose. Our collaborators encountered a culture in which representations of bisexuality were extremely limited and largely negative. Rather than using this as an opportunity to lean into bisexuality's liminal nature, working the in-betweenness as a resistance strategy through which they could be uniquely themselves, most collaborators chose to ignore or downplay their bisexual identity. Only a few students, including Della, Tyrone, and Nyx, felt comfortable putting themselves out there as bi+ people. All of the bisexual+

graduate students with whom we spoke, however, found ways to persist in their programs despite cultural norms that pushed them to the margins. Next, we discuss ways to create campus environments that allow bisexual+ students to thrive.

Implications for Research and Practice

Findings offer implications for research and practice and contribute to the limited literature on both bisexual+ students and graduate student experiences. Although the findings presented in this article deepen the field's understanding of the interplay between whiteness and monosexism, future publications from this study will more deeply and critically engage the narratives of bi+ graduate students of color as they relate to their racialized experiences. Concerning future research, we highlighted the nuanced experiences of trans, genderfluid, and nonbinary students and those with marginalized racial and ethnic identities. Graduate students with multiple marginalized identities are particularly in need of inclusion in future research, specifically queer and trans students of color (Duran, 2019). Bisexual+ biracial and multiracial students are another student community necessitating further study given their unique experiences holding two liminal identities (Cepeda & Prieto, 2022). Additional research exploring differences between disciplines or highlighting the unique challenges facing STEM students would also make an important contribution to the literature.

We invite scholars to engage narrative methods in the study of plurisexualities. Riessman (2008) reminds us that "narratives do political work. The social role of stories—how they are connected to the flow of power in the wider world—is an important facet of narrative theory" (p. 8). Narratives like those presented in this manuscript celebrate marginalized communities' experiential knowledge (Misawa, 2012) and foster belonging (Riessman, 2008). Bisexual+ students have shared that participation in narrative research has given them the freedom to discuss their sexuality and feel more confident (Prieto Godoy, 2020). It is our hope that bisexual+ students will read their peers' narratives and feel less alone in their experiences. Further, they might gain deeper insights into the agency they have to negotiate their identity and the systems of power constraining that agency.

The extant bisexual+ college student research has neglected to meaningfully engage with practical implications, particularly those specific to bi+ students (Prieto et al., 2023; Duran et al., 2024). That which does engage has ignored systemic power, centered deficit and monosexist assumptions and has failed to account for students' intersecting identities (Duran et al., 2024). We disrupt this problematic practice in the bisexuality literature by offering implications for those who seek to create more affirming campus and department environments.

Our collaborators offered several suggestions, supported by the literature, including mentorship programs, enforced anti-

discrimination policies, and education for faculty and administrators on queer and trans issues. Sasha, who worked in higher education, suggested a program that would engage queer alumni, faculty, and staff who could mentor undergraduates. These types of mentorship programs are critical as research shows that there is a deficit in mentoring relationships for queer students (Graham, 2019). Relatedly, bisexual+ graduate students desired research support and help navigating collegiality and professionalism. Effective graduate student advising and mentoring must be identity-conscious and equity-minded (Griffin, 2020; Wofford et al., 2023). Faculty professional development should stress the importance of acknowledging and discussing identity, as some faculty may fear doing so is inappropriate. Social, professional, and scholarly identities are intertwined; if faculty wish to see their students succeed in professional and academic contexts, they must be aware of how strategic identity negotiations can help students navigate these often hostile spaces. Likewise, faculty should take care to incorporate bi+ scholars and experiences into the curricula (Prieto, 2023).

Mentoring programs and other professional development opportunities require meaningful institutional support and cannot only fall to queer people, who are already emotionally drained by navigating hostile institutional environments (Mandala & Ortiz, 2021). Nyx suggested a graduate student union could pressure the university to act and offer "a more organized place to share these concerns and build solidarity with other grad students." Graduate student organizations thus have the potential to offer social support and a sense of belonging but also material support. Importantly, student leaders and campus administrators must take care to ensure affinity spaces are inclusive of bi+ students by addressing biphobia; Tavarez (2022a) offers robust guidance in this area.

Lastly, our collaborators hoped their peers, particularly those with privileged identities, would confront prejudice so the responsibility for pointing out homophobic and racist behaviors did not rest on marginalized individuals' shoulders. To reduce the emotional burden on marginalized students, faculty and administrators can model this behavior by disrupting microaggressions. This behavior change requires educating themselves on supporting a diverse array of student communities. Queer and trans resource centers, multicultural centers, and centers of teaching and learning can offer such training, such as Ohio State's "Creating LGBTQ Inclusive Classrooms" workshop (Ohio State, 2024). These trainings should highlight the unique assets and needs of bisexual+ people. We also encourage schools and colleges to take up the important work of self-education so that inclusion becomes an institution-wide effort.

Conclusion

Institutions erect boundaries around people's lives by reifying the limited categories with which individuals are allowed to

identify. Although the university may not explicitly instruct students not to disclose their sexuality, bisexual erasure and the discourse surrounding professionalism left collaborators feeling constrained when it came to their bisexuality. Graduate students' academic departments drastically modified their ability to show up as bisexual+ people. If academia strives to be inclusive, organizational members must consider how marginalized students are restricted in their ability to enact all facets of their identity and allow for a space for bisexual+ students to explore their professional futures in expansive, affirming ways.

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