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Examining Differences in Identity Disclosure Between Monosexuals and Bisexuals

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ABSTRACT

Sociological research has uncovered many ways social factors and locations influence identity disclosure decisions and strategies among sexual minorities. However, most research has examined only monosexual sexual minorities (i.e., lesbian and gay identified respondents) or lumped various sexual minorities together as one despite similarities and differences in experience and social recognition. In this article, we drew on insights from Queer Theory to compare and contrast social factors that influence identity disclosure among monosexual and bisexual sexual minorities,respectively. Utilizing data from the 2013 Pew Research Center Survey of LGBT adults, we demonstrate ways bisexual identity disclosure experiences both confirm aspects of existing research on monosexual sexual minorities, and reveal nuances and variations typically missing from such literature. In conclusion, we draw out implications for (1) understanding similarities and differences between monosexual and bisexual identity disclosure experiences, and (2) the usefulness of expanding sociological analyses beyond monosexual issues, concerns, and populations.

Echoing mainstream media and political discourse in contemporary America, sociological scholarship to date usually focuses exclusively on the experiences and concerns of monosexual people (i.e., people attracted to only one sex and/or gender) without much attention to bisexual (or otherwise sexually fluid) others (see Monro et al. 2017 for review). While experiences, similarities, and variations within and between monosexual (i.e., lesbian/gay/heterosexual) populations have been explored extensively in past literature (see Schrock et al. 2014 for review), very little research has investigated the experiences of bisexual people or variations within or between bisexual and monosexual populations (Moss 2012). This is especially important because emerging scholarship suggests that recent societal gains by monosexual minorities who identify as lesbian and gay do not necessarily translate into similar progress on the part of non-monosexual sexual minorities (see also Eisner 2013). Similar to the ways sociology had to escape the "heterosexual imaginary" (Ingraham 1994) to understand contemporary lesbian and gay experience, our discipline will likely need to move beyond an almost exclusive focus on monosexual experience to develop understandings of contemporary bisexual experiences and populations.

This may be especially important to the ongoing development of sociologies of sexualities (and sociology more broadly) in light of recent critiques of the monosexual limitations of the field at present (Monro et al. 2017; Moss 2012). Especially considering that estimates suggest the bisexual population makes up at least—and often slightly more than—half of the entire sexual minority population in the United States (Gates 2012), the absence of this population in existing studies suggests sexualities is the only field where the second largest population is not included in our

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frameworks (Monro et al. 2017). It may be well past time for sociology—following recent efforts in public health (Meyer et al. 2017) and medical science (Jeffries 2014)—to move beyond this blind spot by incorporating bisexual existence and experience into our theoretical and methodological considerations of sexualities and society more broadly (Monro et al. 2017).

The present article undertakes this process by utilizing data from the 2013 Pew Research Center Survey of LGBT Adults, a nationally representative sample of LGBT Americans, to compare the experiences of lesbian/gay respondents to their bisexual counterparts. Specifically, we explore variations in lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) experiences with identity disclosure to demonstrate the usefulness of developing comparative analyses of LGB populations (see also Worthen 2013). In so doing, we investigate the social factors that influence identity disclosure among cisgender lesbian/gay and cisgender bisexual[1] respondents with attention to both similarities and differences. In conclusion, we discuss the implications of our findings for, as Moss (2012) suggested, developing a sociology that is not limited to only monosexual experience (see also Monro et al. 2017), and suggest theoretical pathways such studies could explore in future research.

Queer theory and the conflation of LGB

To understand and explore variations in the experiences of monosexual and bisexual sexual minorities, we drew on queer theory. Queer theory calls into consideration how some ways of thinking, knowing, and being are socially constructed as normal, natural, or taken for granted at the same time others are defined socially as unusual, unnatural, and worthy of disdain (Butler 1999; Foucault 1978; Warner 1999). As such, understanding any social pattern requires deconstructing the interpersonal, institutional, and structural elaboration of it through the ongoing actions of social beings, groups, and institutions (Crawley and Broad 2008). Specifically, queer theorists focus on the construction of some categories as normative, ahistorical, and beyond question so that people are systematically socialized to leave these categories free from scrutiny in the daily operations of social life (Ingraham 1994). For example, a sociology mostly limited to the study of monosexual people masks the importance of critically evaluating binary interpretations of sexuality as well as the role such interpretations play in the continued subordination of non-monosexual people (Sedgwick 2008).

Queer theory allows us to recognize the absence of analyses of monosexuality in scholarship as the latest example of dominant ideologies existing unexamined in scholarship until minority populations gain more mainstream attention. The same way such attention led to the emergence of sociologies evaluating, for example, cisnormativity (Westbrook and Schilt 2014), masculinities (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009), heterosexuality (Cragun and Sumerau 2015), and whiteness (McDermott and Samson 2005) in recent decades, increasing mainstream attention to sexual fluidity may lead to the emergence of sociologies wherein bisexuality is granted explicit and systematic attention (see also Moss 2012). At present, however, non-monosexuality (whether identified as bisexual or otherwise) often remains an unexamined comparison group in studies of monosexual populations (Monro et al. 2017), and even examples of sexual fluidity are typically interpreted in monosexual terms (see, e.g., Burke 2016; Ward 2015). In addition, as Worthen (2013) noted, efforts to combat the marginalization of sexual minorities may benefit monosexual sexual minorities only if they rely upon implicit fortification of monosexual assumptions and perspectives (see also Cragun and Sumerau 2015; Eisner 2013).

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[1]In the rest of this article, we refer to these populations as bisexual and LG, lesbian/gay, monosexual minorities. We further note that we do not include transgender people in this analysis because there were too few cases in the overall data set for statistical use. That said, it is important to note that transgender people are often bisexual, lesbian, and/or gay themselves and that these findings among cisgender respondents may vary in many ways among transgender respondents. We would echo recent calls for greater incorporation of transgender people in quantitative survey designs (Sumerau et al. 2016), and suggest another missing piece of this literature would involve comparisons between cisgender, nonbinary, and transgender bisexual, lesbian, and gay identity disclosure processes and experiences.

Given the almost exclusive focus on monosexual populations to date, many questions about variations between monosexual people (whether members of the dominant heterosexual category or members of the subordinate lesbian/gay category within the binary) and non-monosexual people remain unanswered. In this study, we offer answers to some of these questions by comparing experiences of monosexual and non-monosexual sexual minorities. In what ways may these groups experience similar social processes like the disclosure of their sexual identities? In what ways might such comparisons benefit sociological knowledge concerning sexual experiences, diversity, and inequalities? Following other quantitative research utilizing queer theory (Cragun and Sumerau 2017; Worthen 2013), we thus hypothesize that the incorporation of a new population (i.e., bisexuals) into existing "knowledge" and "frameworks" predicated upon a taken-for-granted norm (i.e., monosexuality) will reveal nuances and complications currently missing from sociology.

Disaggregating LGB identity disclosure

To test this hypothesis, we turn our attention to one of the most studied aspects of contemporary sexual minority experience—identity disclosure. While overwhelmingly focused on monosexual minorities who identify as lesbian and/or gay (Worthen 2013), sociologists have long noted the centrality of identity disclosure experiences and practices among sexual minorities (see also Adams 2011). As one component in broader social and political processes of coming out or being seen as sexual minorities, identity disclosure refers to the decision—conscious or otherwise—to alert others to one's status as a nonheterosexual, nonmonosexual, noncisgender, or otherwise unexpected type of social being. Since contemporary interpersonal and structural relations are built upon the assumption of monosexual, cisgender heterosexuality (Eisner 2013), those who do not fit such assumptions typically become visible to others only by accidentally or intentionally alerting others to their presence (see also Sumerau, Cragun, and Mathers 2015). Decisions about sexual identity disclosure, as Adams (2012) noted, are central to contemporary sexual minority experience and broader social relations.

Sociologists exploring such experiences have noted common features that facilitate or lessen the chances of identity disclosure among lesbian and gay people. Shilo and Savaya (2011), for example, noted the importance of feeling accepted socially and especially by friends and family in decisions about identity disclosure (see also Meyer 2007; Schrock et al. 2014; Ueno 2010 for reviews). Likewise, researchers have found that lesbian and gay people are less likely to disclose their identities to others if they feel shame, guilt, or fear related to their sexual desires or practices, or if they perceive that others may respond to such disclosure in a negative manner (see, e.g., Adams 2011; Klein et al. 2015; Meyer et al. (2017)). Further, research consistently demonstrates that lesbian and gay people's own religiosity or location within religious contexts often influences decisions about identity disclosure (see, e.g., Barton 2012; Pitt 2010; Wolkomir 2006). The combination of these insights suggests that external interpretations of homosexuality (i.e., families, friends, and religions) play a large role in the identity disclosure decisions and practices of lesbian and gay people.

While much less common at the present stage of sociological history, existing studies of bisexual experience suggest both similarities and differences. In the former case, interdisciplinary survey researchers find that expected reactions from family, friends, and religions often exert influence upon bisexual identity development (see, e.g., Mulick and Wright 2002; Rust 1995). In fact, such research consistently demonstrates that families, friends, and religions typically view bisexuality even more negatively than homosexuality (see, e.g., Cragun and Sumerau 2015; Dodge et al. 2008; Herek 2002). While these findings suggest similarities between LGB people in relation to identity experience and disclosure, studies exploring bisexual identity disclosure also reveal differences. For example, scholars find that bisexual people often strategically disclose their identities in some portions of their lives while keeping silent in others (McLean 2001), often must manage relatives and other significant others who seek to place them in monosexual binaries (i.e., "You're really gay or really straight now right"; Moss 2012) and often cannot count on support from other sexual minorities in their own disclosure experiences (Eisner 2013).

Although generally conducted in isolation from one another in sociology, the potential for similar and different experiences with identity disclosure reveals the importance of comparing and contrasting LG and bisexual experience (Worthen 2013). While LG people face a heteronormative world wherein mainstream society defines them as unnatural or otherwise negative, bisexual people face both this same heteronormative context *and* LG subcultures where they are marginalized for their disruption of monosexual assumptions (Eisner 2013). While sociologists have made much progress outlining the mechanisms at the heart of the former patterns, we know far less about the processes embedded within the latter pattern (Cragun and Sumerau 2015). Building on these insights, the current project subjects LGB similarity and difference to critical inquiry in hopes of expanding sociological understanding of contemporary American sexual politics beyond exclusively monosexual analysis.

To this end, we explore similarities and differences between LGB respondents concerning experiences of identity disclosure often noted in prior literature. Specifically, we assess the ways LGB people negotiate disclosure in relation to families and friends, and the social factors. In so doing, our analysis confirms much existing scholarship on lesbian and gay identity disclosure patterns while showing some ways bisexuals match and deviate from such patterns. As a result, our analysis provides an empirical affirmation of recent calls for sociology to incorporate bisexuality and other non-monosexual experiences and populations into existing analyses of contemporary social relations and inequalities (Compton 2015; Scherrer et al. 2015; Sin 2015).

Data and methods

Data for the current analysis are taken from the Pew Research Center 2013 Survey of LGBT Adults. The data in this survey were collected from a nationwide sample of self-identified LGBT adults, 18 years of age or older. The survey was conducted by the GfK Group using KnowledgePanel. The survey questionnaire was developed by the Pew Research Center with the advice and counsel of two external researchers, Gary J. Gates and M.V. Lee Badgett, and with the assistance of a focus group of LGBT adults. KnowledgePanel members were recruited using a combination of online survey, random digit dialing, and address-based sampling methodologies.

The 2013 Pew Research Center Survey consists of a random sample of adults who agreed to be part of the GfK KnowledgePanel. The GfK KnowledgePanel participants completed surveys in exchange for modest monetary incentives. This survey was administered online with no interviewers present. As stated earlier, the survey was not collected anonymously; however, the Pew Research Center states that due to the high level of trust between respondents and the survey organization, and given that the survey was administered online, respondents were likely to give honest responses regarding sensitive issues (e.g., sexual behavior, religious practices). At the time the survey was conducted, 5.2% of GfK KnowledgePanel respondents self-identified as LGBT. Respondents who identified as LGBT in their profile survey completed screening questions about their sexual orientation and gender identity to reconfirm their eligibility to participate in the survey. Respondents who did not reconfirm as LGBT were excluded from the survey.

The original sample included 3,645 persons who self-identified as LGBT in response to the profile questionnaires regarding sexual and gender identity. However, only active members of the GfK KnowledgePanel were eligible for inclusion in the survey, and only one person per household who self-identified as LGBT was randomly selected to partake, which resulted in 1,924 panelists who were invited to take part in the survey. Of the 1,924 panelists, 1,422 participants completed enough of the initial interview to be eligible for the study. The total sample size resulted in 1,197 LGBT participants, which includes 398 gay men, 277 lesbians, 497 bisexuals, and 43 transgender adults. The sample sizes relating to LGBT identity (e.g., gay men, lesbians) were categorized by the Pew Research Center for the public data set. In addition, respondents in this data set were asked *only* whether they identify as male or female and not given a third sex/gender option. The surveys were not collected anonymously, and to protect respondents' identities, certain variables were modified or removed from the public data set.

In our analysis, we have excluded the 43 respondents who identify as transgender and conducted two separate analyses of LG respondents only and bisexual respondents only. Of the remaining 1,154 participants, sample sizes of 632 LG respondents and 436 bisexual respondents are retained for the *identity disclosure to parents* binary logistic regression analyses. Sample sizes of 601 LG respondents and 403 bisexual respondents are retained for the *identity disclosure to siblings* binary logistic regression analyses, and sample sizes of 663 LG respondents and 462 bisexual respondents are retained for the *identity disclosure to friends* binary logistic regression analyses. In addition, excluded participants were removed from the data set because of missing or incomplete responses to various questions. The final sample was weighted in several steps: First, a base weight was calculated for the entire KnowledgePanel panelists. Second, a poststratification weight was calculated for all members to produce a nationally representative sample of the U.S. adult population. Next, additional weighting was factored to account for the LGBT members of the panels, with additional adjustments to calculate the weighted average of the Hispanic share of LGBT respondents. A final weight variable is calculated into the analyses.[2]

Dependent variables

Disclosed sexual orientation to parents and disclosed sexual orientation to siblings

Questions concerning disclosure to parents and siblings are structurally identical and therefore are combined here for brevity. In this section, the portion of the original questions that are different ("mother," "father," "brother," "sister") are represented as [m/f/b/s].

For the statistical analyses, two items concerning whether respondents disclosed their identity to their mom or dad [and similarly for brother(s) or sister(s)] are collapsed and recoded to create the disclosed sexual orientation to parents variable [and the siblings variable]. "Did you ever tell your [m/f/b/s] about your sexual orientation or gender identity?" The possible responses are (1) yes, told my [m/f/b/s]; (2) no, did not tell my [m/f/b/s]; and (3) not applicable. Respondents were then asked a follow-up question if they answered "not applicable." The possible responses include (1) [m/f/b/s] was not a part of your life, (2) your [m/f/b/s] passed away before you could tell her [him], and (3) some other reason (open-ended response). From these two items, a new, complete item in the data set regarding identity disclosure to [m/f/b/s] is created with the following responses: (1) yes, told [m/f/b/s]; (2) did not tell [m/f/b/s], but could have; (3) n/a [m/f/b/s] not part of life or sick/died before could tell her [him]; and (4) refused or n/a with no explanation.

For the analyses, respondents who answer "yes, told [m/f/b/s]" to at least one parent [or to at least one sibling] are coded (1) to represent respondents who disclosed to parents [or to siblings]. Respondents who did not tell either parent [or any sibling] about their sexual orientation, but had the opportunity, are coded 0 for disclosure to parents [or disclosure to siblings].

Disclosed sexual orientation to friends

Whether respondents disclosed their sexual orientation to their friends is measured using the following question: "Have you told any close friends about your sexual orientation or gender identity?" The possible responses are (1) yes, told one or more close friends and (2) no, did not. The variable is recoded (1) to represent who told their friends about their sexual orientation. Respondents who did not disclose their sexual orientation to their friends are coded 0.

Independent variables

Perceived social acceptance in the United States

Individuals' perceptions of social acceptance in the United States is measured using the question that asks respondents to compare the level of social acceptance of the LGBT population to 10 years ago in the United States. The question is, "Compared to 10 years ago, would you say the level of social

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[2]For detailed information regarding the survey weighting, see the Pew Research Center 2013 Survey of LGBT Adults Codebook.

acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people in the country today is …" The possible responses are (1) a lot more accepting, (2) a little more accepting, (3) no different, (4) a little less accepting, and (5) a lot less accepting. For these analyses, we reverse-coded this variable so that higher scores represent greater perceived acceptance. This variable is entered as a scale for each analysis. Only valid responses are included in the analyses. That is, "refused to answer" is omitted from the analyses.

Close friends who identify as LGBT
The number of close friends monosexuals and bisexuals have who identify as LGBT is measured using the following question: "How many of your close friends are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender?" The possible responses are (1) all or most of them, (2) some of them, (3) only a few of them, and (4) none of them. In these analyses, we reverse-coded this variable so higher scores represent greater perceived acceptance. This variable is entered as a scale for each analysis. Only valid responses are included in the analyses. "Refused to answer" responses are omitted.

Acceptance of one's own sexual orientation
Acceptance of one's own sexual orientation is measured using a single question: "Thinking about your sexual orientation of gender identity, do you think of it as mainly something positive in your life today, mainly something negative in your life today, or doesn't it make much of a difference either way?" The possible responses are (1) mainly something positive, (2) mainly something negative, and (3) doesn't make much of a difference either way. Dummy variables are created to represent respondents who view their sexual orientation as something positive, something negative, and does not make a difference. Those who view their sexual orientation as something that does not make a difference serve as the reference category in the analyses.

Control variables

Importance of religion
Respondents' stated that importance of religion is one of the most widely used survey measures of individual subjective religiosity. The question in the Pew data set is, "How important is religion in your life?" The possible responses to this question are (1) very important, (2) somewhat important, (3) not too important, and (4) not at all important. For this analysis, respondents who answered religion is very important or somewhat important are coded as 1, and respondents who answered religion is not too important or not at all important are coded as 0. Only valid responses are included in the analyses.

Educational attainment
Educational attainment is measured as (1) less than high school, (2) high school, (3) some college, and (4) bachelor's degree or higher. In these analyses, educational attainment is entered as a scale variable. Only valid responses are included in the analyses. That is, "not asked" and "refused to answer" are omitted from the analyses.

Political ideology
Political ideology is measured by using the question in the survey: "In general, would you describe your political views as …" The resulting codes in the Pew data set are (1) very conservative, (2) conservative, (3) moderate, (4) liberal, and (5) very liberal. In these analyses, political ideology is entered as a scale variable. Only valid responses are included in the analyses.

Race
Respondents' race is identified by using the question concerning race and Hispanic identification. For the purpose of these analyses, respondents who identify as "non-Hispanic white," "black," "Hispanic (regardless of race)," and "other race/ethnicity (not specified)" are included. Dummy variables for

"black," "Hispanic," and "other race/ethnicity" are created with "non-Hispanic white" serving as the reference category.

Age

Age is measured as (1) 18–24, (2) 25–34, (3) 35–44, (4) 45–54, (5) 55–64, (6) 65–74, and (7) 75+. In these analyses, age is entered as a scale variable. Only valid responses are included in the analyses.

Sex

Sex[3] is measured as (1) male and (2) female. Sex is coded 1 to represent male respondents and 0 to represent female respondents. Respondents who refused to answer are recoded as missing.

Analytic strategy

We run three separate binary logistic regression analyses for LG respondents and three separate binary logistic regression analyses for bisexual respondents. These analyses examine the effects of social acceptance of the LGBT population on the dependent variables of identity disclosure to parents, siblings, and friends. We also examine the effects of the additional control variables of subjective religiosity, political ideology, and the various sociodemographic variables on the likelihood of identity disclosure among monosexual and bisexual respondents to parents, siblings, and friends.

Results

Table 1 displays the means, standard deviations, and sociodemographic variables for the dependent and independent variables of monosexual and bisexual respondents. Table 1 shows that 74% of LG respondents told their parents about their sexual orientation compared to 43% of bisexual respondents who disclosed their identity to their parents. Comparatively, 80% of LG respondents told their siblings about their identity compared to 52% of bisexual respondents who told their siblings. Table 1 reveals that a higher percentage of LG respondents (95%) and bisexual (82%) respondents have disclosed their identity to their friends compared to their parents and/or siblings.

Predictors of identity disclosure to parents among LG and bisexual respondents

Tables 2 and 3 present the results for the binary logistic regression analyses of LG and bisexual respondents' perceived social acceptance at the societal, group, and individual levels, as well as the sociodemographic variables on the dichotomous dependent variables of predicting identity disclosure to parents, siblings, and friends. Tables 2 and 3 present the logistic regression coefficient (β)/odds ratio and the standard error in parentheses. Tables 2 and 3 show that the parents model for LG respondents is statistically significant, chi-square ($p < .001$) with a pseudo r-square of .163, and the parents model for bisexual respondents has a statistically significant chi-square ($p < .001$) with a pseudo r-square of .253. Tables 2 and 3 display the binary results of the indicator of identity disclosure to parents among LG and bisexual respondents regressed on the social acceptance independent variables.

Tables 2 and 3 show that as the number of close friends who identify as LGBT increases, monosexual (odds ratio $[OR] = 1.407$, $p < .01$) and bisexual respondents ($OR = 1.782$, $p < .001$) are significantly more likely to tell their parents about their identity.

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[3]Respondents in this data set were asked *only* whether they identify as male or female and not given a third sex/gender option. A separate question asks respondents whether they "consider themselves to be transgender." If yes, respondents were then asked if they are (1) transgender, male to female; (2) transgender, female to male; (3) transgender, gender nonconforming; or (4) no, not transgender. The final sample size resulted in 43 transgender adults. Thus, the small sample size prohibits us from conducting a separate analysis of transgender adults, and the absence of an option in the survey precludes any recognition of whether intersex adults are captured by the sample.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and proportions for predictors of sexual orientation disclosure to parents, siblings, and friends.

Independent variable	Lesbians and gays			Bisexuals		
	M/Proportion	SD	N	M/Proportion	SD	N
Parents (1 = told at least 1 parent, 0 = did not tell either parent, but could have)	.742[a]	—	643	.439	—	449
Siblings (1 = told at least 1 sibling, 0 = did not tell either sibling, but could have)	.805[a]	—	610	.529	—	416
Friends (1 = told friends, 0 = did not tell friends)	.953[a]	—	674	.820	—	477
Perceived social acceptance of LGBT in U.S. today, compared to 10 years ago (5-point scale)	4.61	.592	671	4.32	.755	476
Close friends who are LGBT (4-point scale)	2.82	.797	672	2.43	.731	473
Acceptance of one's own sexual orientation						
Does not make much difference (reference group)	.475	—	320	.715	—	339
Something positive	.458	—	309	.238	—	113
Something negative	.067	—	45	.046	—	22
Importance of religion		—			—	
Not important (reference group)	.559	—	376	.596	—	282
Important	.441	—	297	.404	—	191
Educational attainment (4-point scale)	3.45	.738	675	3.18	.815	479
Political views (5-point scale)	3.63	.931	673	3.54	.942	476
Race and ethnicity						
White, non-Hispanic (reference group)	.754	—	509	.756	—	362
Black	.062	—	42	.081	—	39
Hispanic	.119	—	80	.086	—	41
Other races	.065	—	44	.077	—	37
Male	.590	—	277	.270	—	129
Female (reference group)	.410	—	398	730	—	349
Age (7-point scale)	3.94	1.53	675	3.07	1.65	479

Note. LGBT = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender.
[a]Significant differences between monosexuals' and bisexuals' probability of identity disclosure.

Table 2 shows that LG respondents who view their sexual orientation as something positive, compared to those who do not think it makes a difference, are significantly more likely to disclose their identity to their parents ($OR = 2.624$, $p < .001$). In addition, LG respondents who view their identity as

Table 2. Binary logistic regression results of three models: Predictors of sexual orientation disclosure to parents, siblings, and friends among lesbian and gay adults.

Independent variable	Parents model	Siblings model	Friends model
Perceived social acceptance of LGBT in U.S. today, compared to 10 years ago	.278/1.321 (.175)	.490/1.633* (.194)	.749/2.116* (.286)
Close friends who are LGBT	.341/1.407** (.130)	.469/1.599*** (.146)	.598/1.818* (.266)
Acceptance of one's own sexual orientation (does not make much difference)			
Something positive	.965/2.624*** (.231)	.878/2.407*** (.266)	.861/2.365 (.545)
Something negative	−.865/.425** (.329)	−1.483/.227*** (.354)	−1.719/.179*** (.529)
Importance of religion (not important)	.458/1.580* (.216)	.184/1.203 (.244)	.085/1.089 (.437)
Educational attainment	.146/1.157 (.114)	−.120/.887 (.132)	.373/1.452 (.226)
Political views	.110/1.117 (.108)	.225/1.252 (.126)	−.259/.772 (.232)
Race-ethnicity (white, non-Hispanic)			
Black	.036/1.037 (.411)	.401/1.493 (.489)	.945/2.573 (1.096)
Hispanic	−.692/.500** (.266)	−.107/.899 (.306)	−1.297/.273* (.474)
Other races	−.097/.908 (.383)	−.220/.802 (.415)	.054/1.055 (.842)
Male (female)	.010/1.010 (.222)	−.307/.736 (.255)	.520/1.681 (.433)
Age	−.249/.780*** (.072)	−.069/.933 (.081)	−.335/.715* (.132)
Constant	−1.349	−2.196	.772
N	632	601	663
Chi-square	70.897***	75.210***	48.044***
Cox & Snell R square	.109	.120	.072
Nagelkerke R square	.163	.194	.230

Note. Cell entries are given as logistic regression coefficients/odds ratios with the standard errors in parentheses. Variance inflation factors lower than 1.214 for all three models. LGBT = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$, two-tailed tests.

Table 3. Binary logistic regression results of three models: Predictors of sexual orientation disclosure to parents, siblings, and friends among bisexual adults.

Independent variable	Parents model	Siblings model	Friends model
Perceived social acceptance of LGBT in U.S. today, compared to 10 years ago	−.161/.851 (.148)	.031/1.031 (.157)	.162/1.176 (.171)
Close friends who are LGBT	.578/1.782*** (.165)	.409/1.505* (.160)	.386/1.471* (.195)
Acceptance of one's own sexual orientation (does not make much difference)			
Something positive	.455/1.576 (.276)	.325/1.384 (.291)	1.122/3.072* (.451)
Something negative	−.965/.381 (.552)	−.121/.886 (.523)	.020/1.020 (.573)
Importance of religion (not important)	−.092/.912 (.237)	.602/1.826* (.246)	.649/1.914* (.305)
Educational attainment	−.443/.642*** (.137)	−.415/.660* (.136)	.332/1.394* (.168)
Political views	.104/1.110 (.124)	−.040/.961 (.135)	.062/1.064* (.151)
Race-ethnicity (white, non-Hispanic)			
Black	−.643/.526 (.364)	−1.208/.299*** (.371)	−.155/.857 (.441)
Hispanic	.063/1.065 (.332)	−.748/.474* (.350)	−.284/.752* (.429)
Other races	−.681/.506 (.458)	−.837/.433 (.444)	−.337/.714 (.482)
Male (female)	−.880/.415** (.280)	−1.200/.301*** (.291)	−1.690/.184*** (.306)
Age	−.288/.750*** (.083)	−.123/.884 (.802)	−.203/.817* (.088)
Constant	1.056	1.004	−.371
N	436	403	462
Chi-square	88.181***	77.277***	83.684***
Cox & Snell R square	.189	.180	.173
Nagelkerke R square	.253	.240	.276

Note. Cell entries are given as logistic regression coefficients/odds ratios with the standard errors in parentheses. Variance inflation factors lower than 1.222 for all three models. LGBT = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$, two-tailed tests.

something negative, compared to those who do not think it makes a difference, are significantly less likely to tell their parents about their identity ($OR = .425$, $p < .01$). Table 2 also reveals that LG respondents who believe religion is important are more likely to disclose their identity to their parents compared to those who believe it is not important ($OR = 1.580$, $p < .05$).

Table 3 reveals that there are significant differences between male and female bisexual respondents' likelihood of disclosing their identity to parents, unlike with monosexual respondents, bisexual respondents who identify as male, compared to female respondents, are significantly less likely to tell their parents about their sexual orientation ($OR = .415$, $p < .01$). Table 3 also shows that educational attainment and age are significant predictors of disclosure to parents among bisexual respondents. Table 2 shows that ethnicity and age are significant predictors of identity disclosure to parents among LG respondents.

Predictors of identity disclosure to siblings among LG and bisexual respondents

Next, we examine the effects of the different predictors on whether LG and bisexual individuals disclose their identity to their siblings. Tables 2 and 3 include the results from the binary logistic regression analyses of identity disclosure among LG and bisexual respondents to siblings. Tables 2 and 3 show that the siblings model for LG respondents has a statistically significant chi-square ($p < .001$) with a pseudo r-square of .194 and the siblings model for bisexual respondents has a statistically significant chi-square ($p < .001$) with a pseudo r-square of .240.

Table 2 reveals that as LG respondents' perceptions of social acceptance of the LGBT population increases they are significantly more likely to tell their siblings about their identity ($OR = 1.633$, $p < .05$). However, the results reveal that societal acceptance of the LGBT population is not a significant predictor of identity disclosure to siblings among bisexual respondents.

Tables 2 and 3 show that as the number of close friends who identify as LGBT increases for LG respondents ($OR = 1.599$, $p < .001$) and bisexual respondents ($OR = 1.505$, $p < .05$), both groups are significantly more likely to tell their siblings about their identity.

Table 2 reveals LG respondents' view of their own identity significantly predicts whether they disclose their identity to their siblings. LG respondents who view their identity as something positive,

compared to those who believe their identity does not make a difference, are significantly more likely to disclose their identity to siblings ($OR = 2.407$, $p < .001$). Similarly, LG respondents who view their identity as something negative, compared to those who believe their identity does not make a difference, are significantly less likely to tell their siblings ($OR = .227$, $p < .001$).

Table 2 for LG respondents reveals that the remaining sociodemographic variables are not significant predictors of identity disclosure to siblings. However, for bisexual respondents there are several significant predictors regarding the likelihood of identity disclosure to their siblings. Table 3 shows that, for bisexual respondents, those who view religion as important, compared to those who believe religion is not important, are significantly more likely to disclose their identity to their siblings ($OR = 1.826$, $p < .05$). Table 3 shows that bisexual respondents who identify as male, compared to female, are significantly less likely to disclose their identity to their siblings ($OR = .301$, $p < .001$). Table 3 also reveals education and race to be significant predictors of identity disclosure to siblings among bisexual respondents.

Predictors of identity disclosure to friends among LG and bisexual respondents

Finally, we examine the effects of social acceptance and the other predictors on identity disclosure among LG and bisexual respondents to friends. Tables 2 and 3 show that the friends model for LG respondents has a statistically significant chi-square ($p < .001$) with a pseudo r-square of .230, and the friends model for bisexual respondents has a statistically significant chi-square ($p < .001$) with a pseudo r-square of .276.

Table 2 shows that as LG respondents' perceived social acceptance of the LGBT population in the country increases they are significantly more likely to tell their friends about their identity ($OR = 2.116$, $p < .05$). As the number of close LGBT friends increases, LG respondents ($OR = 1.818$, $p < .05$) and bisexual respondents ($OR = 1.471$, $p < .05$) are significantly more likely to disclose their identity to friends.

Tables 2 and 3 reveal that acceptance at the individual level significantly predicts whether LG and bisexual respondents disclose their identity to friends. Table 2 shows that LG respondents who view their identity as something negative, compared to those who believe their identity does not make a difference, are significantly less likely to disclose their identity to their friends ($OR = .179$, $p < .001$). Table 3 reveals that bisexual respondents who view their identity as something positive, compared to those who believe their identity does not make a difference, are more likely to tell their friends about their identity ($OR = 3.072$, $p < .05$).

Table 3 reveals that subjective religiosity is a statistically significant predictor of identity disclosure among bisexual respondents to friends. Bisexuals who believe religion is important, compared to those who believe religion is not important, are more likely to tell their friends about their identity ($OR = 1.914$, $p < .05$).

Similar to the parents and friends models, bisexual respondents who identify as male, compared to female, are significantly less likely to tell their friends about their identity ($OR = .184$, $p < .001$). In addition, Table 2 reveals that race is a significant predictor of identity disclosure to friends among LG respondents. Table 3 shows that education, political views, and age are significant predictors of identity disclose to friends among bisexual respondents.

Discussion

Drawing on insights from queer theory and initial sociological analyses of bisexuality in recent years, we set out to explore similarities and differences in identity disclosure between monosexual (i.e., LG identified) and bisexual sexual minorities. We hypothesized that the incorporation of bisexual experience into literatures built on only monosexual experience would reveal nuances and complications currently missing from sociological understandings of sexualities and identity

disclosure. To test this, we examined monosexual and bisexual experiences of identity disclosure in comparison to one another and found our hypothesis to be supported.

Rather than simply comparing monosexual populations or conflating LGB and bisexual populations, for example, following Worthen (2013), we sought to disaggregate sexual minority populations to examine variations in their experiences with a common element of sexual minority experience. As our analysis shows, monosexual sexual minorities who identified as lesbian or gay were much more likely to disclose their sexual identities to parents, siblings, and friends than their bisexual counterparts, but variation exists within this pattern. Both groups were more likely to disclose their identities to friends than to family members, and to siblings than to parents. Further, the rates of disclosure were much more similar in relation to friends, while experiences with family revealed rather large discrepancies (see also Scherrer et al. 2015). Our findings lend empirical weight to recent sociological works calling for exploration of the ways monosexual and bisexual people experience contemporary social relations in *both* similar *and* different ways (Cragun and Sumerau 2014; Monro et al. 2017; Moss 2012).

Our results also reveal some ways such variation emerges in the social lives of monosexual and bisexual sexual minorities. In relation to broader social relations, for example, both monosexual and bisexual people are more likely to disclose their sexual identities to their parents, siblings, and friends as the number of close friends increases. Put simply, sexual minority respondents need a larger social network of LGBT people they know will affirm them to disclose their identities. This may result from ongoing marginalization they experience throughout society (Schrock et al. 2014). Hence, close ties within sexual minority communities may provide a safety net when disclosing sexual identity no matter how their parents, siblings, and friends react, and lower levels of acceptance in sexual minority communities (Eisner 2013) may explain lower rates of disclosure among bisexuals. That is, the development of established friendships provides support before risking negative reactions. These findings suggest there may be much to learn from examining monosexual and bisexual experiences in families and explicitly LGBT spaces to tease out the amount of support or lack thereof.

We see a similar pattern in variations among LG and bisexual respondents concerning disclosure to other groups and especially friends. Whereas LG respondents are significantly more likely to disclose their identities if they believe the country has become more accepting of LGBT people, this is not a significant predictor for bisexuals. Considering how rarely positive portrayals or discussions of bisexuality occur in contemporary media, academic, or political discourse (see Monro et al. 2017 for review), it is not surprising that perception of societal change would not have much influence on bisexual respondents. Similar to gay and lesbian people in previous decades who decided or were forced to disclose their identities with little to no broader social support or affirmation, mainstream recognition of bisexuality has likely not yet reached a point where it enters the decision-making processes of bisexual people.

The combination of these findings reveals the importance of monosexual norms in the structuring of sexual minority experience. While explicitly LGBT and explicitly heterosexual spaces may be different in many ways, bisexual people report shared experiences of erasure due to assumptions that everyone will be only one sexuality in both types of settings (Eisner 2013). As a result, bisexual people disrupt unspoken but fundamental norms in both types of settings and often must navigate their own sexual and identity-related experiences on a more personal level because they are unable to access community resources often noted in studies of lesbian and gay identity disclosure (McLean 2001). While sociologists have begun to outline many ways monosexual people experience hetero and homo normative spaces (Schrock et al. 2014), as well as the ways race, class, sex, gender, and religion often shape such spaces (Ward 2015), the lower rates of disclosure among bisexuals in our analysis suggest it may be time to begin examining the ways bisexual people experience these same contexts (see also Moss 2012).

Our results also reveal variation in the relationship between how one views their sexual identity and whether one discloses such an identity to others. Whereas positive feelings about their sexual identities significantly influence identity disclosure for lesbian and gay respondents (Klein et al. 2015), this is not

the case for bisexual people. Although research regularly notes the importance of positive evaluations of one's identity claims—sexual or otherwise—and especially in relation to sexual minorities (see, Rodriguez 2010; Schrock et al. 2014 for reviews), our results suggest these claims have been limited by the focus on only monosexual respondents in previous literatures. What might explain this difference between bisexual and monosexual sexual minorities?

Existing interdisciplinary scholarship on bisexual people suggests at least two possible answers. First, previous research consistently shows that bisexuality is evaluated even more negatively than homosexuality and heterosexuality by Americans regardless of other sociodemographic factors (see, e.g., Cragun and Sumerau 2015; Rust 1995; Worthen 2013). It may be the case that since bisexual people are, at present, unlikely to experience much if any positive reactions to their sexual identities, they are less likely to consider such affirmation important or even know what it feels like in the first place (Eisner 2013). Bisexuals, like their lesbian and gay counterparts in previous decades (Warner 1999), may have not yet reached enough social acceptance for feelings about their own sexual identities to make much difference in their disclosure decisions.

Second, though likely related to the first hypothesis, previous research reveals that bisexual people typically deal with *both* negative stereotypes typically directed at lesbian and gay people (Eliason 1997) *and* specific negative stereotypes directed at bisexuality itself (Worthen 2013). Especially considering academic works within the past 10 years suggesting that male bisexuality might not even exist (Diamond 2009), it may be that bisexual people have very little opportunity for developing positive self-concepts in the first place. If bisexuals are not likely to find many positive opinions about themselves outside of their personal experience and potentially supportive individual friends, then it would not be surprising if their decisions about identity disclosure have little to do with perceptions about themselves as good or bad people. Rather, they might be more likely to disclose in hopes of challenging stereotypes they face in much the same way lesbian and gay activists have long done (Warner 1999), and view disclosure as a pathway to positive feelings about their identities rather than the result of such feelings.

Although these hypotheses are only two possible explanations for the patterns in our data, the bigger point remains that *a hallmark of sociological understanding about sexual minority experience no longer holds true when bisexual people are added into the theoretical model.* In much the same way sciences have done throughout history, this finding creates an opportunity to refine our theoretical assumptions by examining the potential causal and related factors at the heart of such variation. In so doing, sociologists may both refine existing notions of sexual identity development and experience and move beyond a sociology of almost exclusively monosexualities.

Our results also reveal another subfield where such refinement may be especially fruitful—religion. While sociologies of religion have explored numerous aspects of religious sexual minority experience over the past 40 years (see Rodriguez 2010; Sumerau et al. 2015; Wilcox 2009 for reviews), they have focused almost entirely on monosexual minorities in relation to heterosexual religious norms. While such scholarship has taken many forms and produced a wide variety of important insights into the relationships between religion and sexualities, our results reveal one way it has been limited by monosexual foci, population samples, and assumptions to date. Monosexual individuals are more likely to disclose their sexual identity to parents when religion is important to them, whereas bisexual sexual minorities are more likely to come out to siblings and friends when religion is important.

Once again, if we adopt what Moss (2012) called a "bisexual lens," previous interdisciplinary studies of bisexuality suggest a couple possible explanations. First, as suggested in the growth of evangelical sexual subcultures online (Burke 2016) and celibate for Jesus groups (Creek 2013), religions have often left a little room for bisexuality—as long as it remained private—in their conflicts with lesbian and gay rights groups (see also Erzen 2006; Robinson and Spivey 2007). For example, bisexuals could disclose their identities, and the most likely reaction would involve others in the religion seeking to emphasize and affirm the heterosexual side of their desires. Especially considering the lack of support bisexuals often to receive in LG communities (Eisner 2013), this type of affirmation—while imperfect—may have often been the only type bisexual people could hope to

access prior to or alongside the development of LGBT friends. Although sociologists have typically focused only on the monosexual binary to date, there may be interesting nuances within religious communities related to bisexuality, and changes on the horizon as more and more sexually fluid people (identifying as bisexual or otherwise) pursue greater social visibility.

Second, echoing strategies by some gay and lesbian people over the years (Adams 2011), bisexual people may be more likely to disclose their identity to religious people due to the monosexual focus of many religions. The same way lesbian and gay people sometimes identified as bisexual first to allow themselves a better chance of familial acceptance created via familial hopes that bisexual would ultimately come to look like heterosexuality in public, bisexual people may disclose to religious people knowing that such people might interpret the disclosure as only temporary or a phase or nothing to worry about (see also Gates 2012). In so doing, they could begin disclosure processes that would allow them to build LGBT social networks in other aspects of their lives so these interpersonal resources—the same types of resources lesbian and gay people get from affirming monosexual minority communities—would be ready once the religious people in their lives realized it was not a phase or temporary. For bisexual people, this type of tactic may be similar to LG people who secretly visit explicitly LGBT settings to build support before disclosing their identities to others who may react in a negative fashion. It may be a stop gap between the closet and openly bisexual lives.

While there may be many other possible explanations to the variation uncovered in our study, once again we note—as queer theories suggest—the incorporation of a previously missing population into existing sociological theories may reveal limitations in our existing knowledge. While our results confirm much previous scholarship on monosexual minorities (Rodriguez 2010) and existing awareness of significant sex gaps in bisexual identity disclosure (Rust 1995), they also reveal missing elements of sociological theory due to the almost exclusive focus on monosexual populations within the field. As Monro and associates (2017) suggested after reviewing the past 50 years of sexualities scholarship in the social sciences, we ask what might a sociology of bisexuality look like, and what might it add to existing sociologies of sexualities, identities, interpersonal patterns, structural patterns, or inequalities? The ultimate finding from our comparison of lesbian/gay and bisexual experiences with identity disclosure is that it empirically demonstrates the importance of seriously considering these questions.

To move scholarship in sociology, in sexualities, in identity disclosure processes, and concerning the incorporation of bisexualities, however, it is important to note that despite the contributions of this piece, there are some limitations of note that may guide further study. In relation to sex/gender disparities among openly bisexual people, for example, our analysis finds similar patterns in identity disclosure, but we are unable to further tease out these differences with the current data. This limitation points to the usefulness of developing data for intersectional approaches to bisexualities and relationships between bisexual, lesbian, gay, and heterosexual populations. Especially considering that some studies suggest bisexuals are more likely to be members of other racially, gendered, and (non)religious groups (see Worthen 2013) and more likely to be marginalized in health and economics (Jeffries 2014), intersectional analyses of these population—as have at least begun to occur with other groups historically missing from sociological scholarship over time (Monro et al. 2017)—may be especially useful.

Contemporary patterns in quantitative methodologies also create at least two more limitations that could direct further study Sumerau et al. (2017). Throughout our analysis, for example, we utilize the most common quantitative measures in studies of lesbian/gay identity disclosure for comparative purposes. At the same time, qualitative explorations of LG experience suggest that these factors may play out in nuanced and complex ways related to context, setting, and interpersonal dynamics within and between communities (Schrock et al. 2014). Like prior studies of LG identity disclosure utilizing quantitative methods, our analysis thus leaves open questions about the ways these dynamics play out in everyday life (Adams 2011). Second, despite including transgender people in the sampling efforts, the Pew Survey we used—similar to most current quantitative surveys (see Adams (2011))—left no ability to tease out and explore transgender and intersex experience quantitatively. As such,

our analysis is another example of the importance of incorporating measures of transgender and inter-sex experience as well as building sizable-enough samples of such populations for comparison and analysis.

Conclusion

Our analysis sheds light on some ways the examination of similarities and differences between monosexual and bisexual populations may benefit sociological knowledge of sexualities, identities, and inequalities. Considering that stratification systems are built upon and maintained via the promotion and acceptance of normative and deviant categories and the promotion of visibility for the normative and the rendering of invisibility for the deviant (Warner 1999), fully understanding social and sexual patterns requires examining both mono and fluid sexualities systematically, independently, and comparatively. To this end, our analysis revealed significant differences in the ways cisgender lesbian/gay and bisexual people experience identity disclosure. Although it may be unique at the present stage of sociological history (Monro et al. 2017), our study empirically demonstrates the usefulness and importance of expanding sociological scholarship beyond monosexuality in hopes of making sense of the entirety—rather than only the monosexual—of social and sexual relations.

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