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Learning to be Queer: College Women's Sexual Fluidity

Leila J. Rupp, Verta Taylor, and Shaeleya D. Miller

In John Irving's novel, *In One Person*, the bisexual narrator, echoing a line uttered by his first love, the transsexual librarian Miss Frost, says "please don't put a label on me—don't make me a category before you get to know me!" (Irving 2012, 425). It is a sentiment increasingly shared by queer women college students on our campus, the University of California, Santa Barbara. Rather than call themselves "lesbian" or even "bisexual," many are embracing identities as "pansexual," "queer," or "fluid," or refusing to adopt any label at all. In this way these students reflect the research on and popular understandings of the sexual fluidity of women: women's openness to bisexual attractions and behavior; the lack of fit among desire, behavior, and identity; and the shifts in women's desires, behaviors, and identities across their lifetimes (Diamond 2008; Golden 2006). Although we set out to study women who identified as anything other than heterosexual, some of the students identify as "genderqueer" rather than as women, so technically the population consists of female-bodied individuals. We use the gender-neutral pronouns "ze/hir/hirs" or "they/their/theirs" for individuals who prefer to be referred to in that way. We analyze the stories of these college students from the perspective of queer theory, which emphasizes the anti-essential and fluid nature of gender and sexual identity (Butler 1990; Carrera, De Palma, and Lameiras 2012), and collective identity theory, which points to the ways that social movements and other groups create collective self definitions that draw boundaries between "us" and "them" (Taylor and Whittier 1992). We draw on these perspectives both to explore the meaning of fluid sexual and gender identities and to understand how these

students come to embrace identities consistent with sexual fluidity or, in a few cases, to reject an identity altogether.

We find that women students call themselves “queer” and “pansexual” because their desires are expansive and include the possibility of attraction to transgender and genderqueer people; their identities shift and more fixed identities do not always fit; and their new fluid identities evoke a rejection of binary sexualities and have political meaning. Students come to these new collective identities when they arrive on campus through courses and literature on sexuality and queer theory and socialization in queer organizations and the campus queer community. This process reveals what Anthony Giddens (1987) has conceptualized as the double hermeneutic, in which social science research and the concepts of individuals and groups have a complex two-way relationship with each influencing the other. In this chapter, we demonstrate that the identities non-heterosexual women college students embrace are influenced by the scholarship on queerness and sexual fluidity, which itself originated in the increasingly fluid and non-binary sexual identities adopted by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals.

The Setting

The University of California, Santa Barbara, is a stunningly beautiful campus of just over twenty thousand students, 85 percent undergraduates, perched on the edge of the Pacific. The undergraduate population is about half students of color and about a third first-generation college students. The relatively progressive Research I university is highly ranked as a party school in large part because of student life in the adjacent community of Isla Vista. Although Isla Vista is often not a friendly or safe place for queer students, there is a large, visible, and diverse queer

community on campus, revolving around numerous student organizations serving various constituencies. The Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity flyer announces that the Center provides a community space on campus for “self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, queer, questioning, two-spirit, same gender loving, as well as people with intersex conditions.” Student organizations include the Queer Student Union and Associated Students Queer Commission; groups for different races and ethnicities, including Black QUARE, La Familia De Colores, and Queer Asian Pacific Islanders (QAPI); more specialized groups, including Friendly Undergraduate Queers in it Together (FUQIT), Kink University: A Fetish Fellowship (KUFF), and Students for Accessible and Safe Spaces (SASS). There is a residence hall for queer students, Rainbow House; gender-inclusive housing for transgender and genderqueer students; and an LGBTQ studies minor, housed in the Department of Feminist Studies. The university has a top ranking as queer-friendly on the “campus pride index.” Queer student activists are a diverse group in terms of gender identity, sexual identity, and ethnicity. Although not representative of all universities, there is no reason to think that UC Santa Barbara is unique in terms of the queer community on campus (see Rupp and Taylor 2013; Rupp et al 2014).

Our analysis is based on 125 interviews with women students who identify as anything other than heterosexual. As Table 1 shows, at UC Santa Barbara, as on campuses across the country, the vast majority of students identify as heterosexual (see Armstrong, England, and Fogarty 2012 for a description of the Online College Life Survey). Our interviewees were about half white and half students of color (see Table 2), and they listed a variety of sexual identities, including bisexual, lesbian, queer, fluid, pansexual, gay, not straight, uncertain, and none (see Table 3). The three top identities for both white women and women of color were bisexual,

lesbian, and queer, but with a reversed order, with white women most likely to call themselves bisexual and women of color most likely to call themselves queer (see Table 4). More women of color (48%) than white women (33%) adopted fluid identities (i.e., anything other than bisexual, lesbian, or gay), although this might be a result of more white women interviewed in the earlier phases of the project, when fluid identities were less common. In the interviews from 2006 to 2009, the racial/ethnic composition of the interviewees was 60% white women and 40% women of color, and only 28% of the students as a whole adopted fluid identities. For the 2010-2012 interviews, women of color accounted for 58% and white women 42% of the interviewees, while 45% embraced fluid identities. The racial/ethnic shift is in part a result of an increasing student of color population on the campus and the growth of queer of color organizations. In any case, no pattern of difference emerged between white students and students of color in terms of their understandings of fluid identities.

Interviews were conducted by undergraduate students enrolled in a course on female same-sex sexuality in 2006, 2007, and 2012; by undergraduate and graduate research assistants from 2009 to 2011; and by Shaeleya Miller in 2011 and 2012 as part of her dissertation research. Students in the course located their own interviewees, and personal contacts and snowball sampling produced the students interviewed by research assistants. We utilize students as interviewers because we have found that similarity in age and status facilitates rapport. The semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed and covered desire, love, sexual behavior, relationships, identities, the coming out process, community participation, and political involvement. All the names used are pseudonyms.

Three Stories

Omara is Mexican American, the daughter of a gardener and a teacher's assistant who grew up in a small coastal community not far from San Francisco. She identifies as pansexual or "just queer." She had a boyfriend in high school but found herself attracted to women, although it was not until her first year in college that she had a relationship with a woman.

Acknowledging her desire, in high school she first identified as lesbian, then bisexual, and came to pansexual and queer only "after coming to college and being exposed to these different identities." Being in "this really diverse community with people that identify as transgender and genderqueer" opened up the possibility of having a relationship "with a person that identifies as, like, neither male or female or woman or man."

Sometimes, Omara says, she identifies as bisexual "to other people that don't really understand" the identity pansexual. She is not out to her family, which she describes as very traditional. One time she tried to explain bisexuality to her mother, who responded that bisexuals are confused. Referencing her Mexican heritage, Omara, commented, "You know, it's just totally ... I guess American, I don't know." She found it easier to "figure myself out" when she came to UC Santa Barbara because the atmosphere was "way more open."

Aldara is a white queer student whose father came to the United States from Greece as a child. When she was sixteen, living in a town between San Francisco and Sacramento, she fell into a relationship with a girlfriend who shared her artistic interests, and they stayed together until her first year of college. At first she thought the relationship was "an exception," and she had no word for her identity. "Like I knew that I just was too open as a person" to identify as a lesbian, "because I knew that I had had real feelings for men before, too." She says, "I don't

think I really understood, I just didn't understand a lot of the language that there was to identify myself with at all. So it was kind of difficult."

Aldara defines herself now as queer rather than bisexual because she's attracted to "FtM identifying people, to men, to women." Even so, she says she sometimes feels limited by the word queer "because I understand that it's privileged and I understand that a lot of people still find it offensive, and when it comes to that—I feel like I have to identify as bisexual. But, like for me, queer is what describes me best, because I really feel like I change every day. Like my sexual desire, who I find attractive, so queer is the word that works best for me."

She began using the word queer "since I started going here and heard the word. I started doing my own research on it," and when she googled "queer," the first thing she found was an article about how this was the word used at UCSB. She began to visit Rainbow House and went to Queerpalooza, a mixer where the leaders of all the queer organizations introduce their groups to new students. Then Aldara started going to all the meetings "and by the end of that year I was an officer for the next year and by the end of that year I was co-chair the next year, so I took on a lot of responsibility really fast." Aldara connects her queer identity not only to organizations on campus, but also to her classes. She recognizes how privileged she is to be exposed to academic work about sexuality. "And it's kind of crazy the way that education can change your view. I always think about that, I feel like if our whole nation had to take the classes I take, how different would the world be!"

Tee has a Taiwanese father and white Christian mother and identifies as queer and genderqueer. Ze grew up in a mostly Asian neighborhood in Los Angeles county and attended a high school ze describes as "very Asian and conservative and terrible." Ze sees hir Asian identity and queer identity as somewhat in conflict, explaining "there's no word for 'gay' in Taiwanese,"

although the Asian side of hir family is more accepting of hir queer identity than the white side. At UC Santa Barbara ze launched Queer Asian Pacific Islanders because there was no student organization for Asian queers.

When ze was a sophomore in high school, ze fell in love with a girl. It was a first for both of them, and ze likes to say “I thought I was straight for the first two weeks of my relationship with my first girlfriend.” When ze came out to hir parents, hir mother kicked hir out of the house, and ze moved into an apartment with some queer friends.

Tee explains that ze identifies as queer “because ‘lesbian’ doesn’t cover it. Because first off it makes implications about my gender identity. And also it makes implications about other people’s gender identity, and I think trans and genderqueer people are super hot. So ‘lesbian’ is too exclusive, I think. So, yeah, but I mean it’s taken awhile to get here.” Ze majored in feminist studies, which clearly has had an impact on hir “getting here.” Learning feminist and queer theory changed the way ze thought about hirself. “I went from straight, straight to lesbian, there was no bi, bisexual phase at all, because once I kissed a girl I, like, knew it.” Despite shifting hir identity to queer, ze thinks the word is sometimes limiting, “and I wish it wasn’t so academic.” People out in the world “don’t understand the whole umbrella concept.”

The Meaning of Fluidity

Like Omara, Aldara, and Tee, students coming from different backgrounds use the terms “queer,” “pansexual,” or “fluid” to describe both an individual and a collective identity that signals expansive sexual desire, shifting and fluid sexual identities, and a political embrace of non-binary genders and sexualities. As these stories make clear, “queer” is both an umbrella term, covering a range of more specific identities, and also an identity that students embrace, so

those who call themselves “pansexual” or “fluid” or other more traditional identity labels can also see themselves as queer. April, for example, a queer Vietnamese American student, says “I’m pretty solid about identifying as queer. It’s just such a broad term, an umbrella term, so I feel like even if I was still, like, bi or trans or anything, then I would still fall into that category.” Nicole, a Mexican American student, calls herself queer because it is “more broad and includes everything.”

Expansive desire

Fundamental to fluid identities is not only at least the possibility of attraction to both women and men, but sometimes rapid shifts in sexual desire. Valeria, a Latina who identifies as a “lady-loving lesbian,” or a “raging lesbian,” describes thinking of herself for a time as pansexual but then realizing that “I’m really not pansexual because I don’t think I could love everyone, like I can’t really love men.” In contrast, Aldara, as we have seen, explains that she is “too open as a person” to identify as lesbian because she had also had attractions to men and her desires “change every day.” Other students, too, emphasize how quickly the direction of desire can change. Shae, a Korean American student, says that she sticks with “queer” “just because I think I’m just constantly like up and down and changing.” Clara, a Latina, says “it’s always changing” so she calls herself fluid. A white student, Phoenix, who identifies as fluid, also emphasizes shifting desire: “Sexual feelings for me change, you know, within a day, honestly. Sometimes I wake up and I’m like, ‘I’m feeling extra queer today.’ And like, ‘I wanna get me some ladies. But then other days, I feel like I want a man in my life. I mean, a male-bodied person.”

That qualification—“a male-bodied person”—points to another aspect of expansive desire: that it includes attraction to transgender and genderqueer individuals, sometimes just in

theory, sometimes in practice. Omara, as we have seen, describes being able to see herself as being involved with “a person that identifies as neither male or female or woman or man,” Aldara includes FtMs in her list of people she finds attractive, and Tee thinks trans and genderqueer people are “super hot.” Biracial Emma, who is Mexican and white and identifies as queer, does so, she says, because “bi’s not inclusive of trans people.” Sara, also Latina, explains her acceptance of “queer” because “I am mostly attracted to women, but also to androgynous and genderqueer individuals.” Jessica, who calls herself a “white-washed” Chinese American and who started a bisexual group on campus, says she is actually pansexual, which she defines as having “an attraction to men, women, and any genders that fall outside those two.”

Shifting identities

Students describe not only fluidity of desire but also fluidity of identities. Emma connects the meaning of “queer” to changes in identities over time. “I used to think I was straight, and then I thought I was bi, and then I stopped having crushes on guys, so I thought I was a lesbian, then I got a crush on a guy and I dated him so then I was bi again, and I just say I’m queer.” Emilia, a Latina student who identified as queer on her demographic sheet, also calls herself a lesbian in her interview. She explains, “I would say I identify as a lesbian because I’m attracted to other women but I also understand that it could be, sexuality could be fluid.” If she fell in love with a man, then she supposes she would identify as queer. Many students listed the ways the identities they claimed had changed over time. Gabriella, a queer African American student, says, “I was straight. And then I was like, ‘OK, I’m bisexual. I’m bi.’ Then after that I guess I was like, I was fluid, kind of. And then it’s lesbian, it was lesbian, and then I was fluid again. And now I’m just queer. Yeah, it does change all the time. But it’s never heterosexual.”

The fluidity that emerges from students' discussions of their desires and identities works against the adoption of more fixed identities such as "lesbian," even though some students call themselves that, and even against "bisexual," which they believe reinforces the sex and gender binary that dictates women's attraction to men. Vanessa, a white lesbian, is annoyed that "people think that lesbians don't exist sometimes cuz, like, women are supposed to be more fluid." Melissa, also white and identifying as fluid, distinguishes herself from lesbians as "people who knew since they were like two or like five years old" that they desired girls. Queer white Rachel does not like the "finality of the word 'lesbian'," "it seems like there is no going back from there." Tee, as we have seen, rejects "lesbian" because the term is too exclusive. April, who sees herself in the future with a woman, hints at the required fluidity of the identity queer when she says, "the thing is that, I don't want to, like, defeat the purpose of me labeling myself as queer because I'm open to any gender." Om, who is white, queer, genderqueer, and in a relationship with Tee, echoes Tee in saying, "if I were to describe myself as a lesbian that means I am a woman who desires other women. And that's not true because I'm a genderqueer dating another genderqueer."

Even more common is a rejection of the term "bisexual" as having negative connotations and as not sufficiently fluid. Gloria, who is white, refers to girls at her high school who did "the bisexual thing, like, for boys" and "make a bad name for all of us." She also dislikes the attitude that "Oh you just wanna fuck everything that moves because you're bisexual." So, she says, "that's why I like to use the word 'queer' instead because I wanna get away from the word 'bisexual.'" April describes bisexual as having "kinda a heavy stigma," and queer white Alex agrees, noting that "a lot of queer people really have an issue with bisexuality." Multiracial

Missy (Mexican, Japanese, and white), also prefers “queer” to “bisexual,” finding the word “not attractive” or “appealing” and also too binary, since she could imagine being attracted to a transwoman or transman. Jessica, who considers herself “actually” pansexual, deliberately adopts the term “bisexual” as a way to fight such stereotypes.

A number of interviewees emphasized the difference between their personal or individual identities and the collective nature of queer identities. Understanding what an identity entails and feeling that it is the right identity to embrace personally are two different things. Brittany, a white student who calls herself “bisexual queer,” recognizes that “pansexual” or “omnisexual” might technically describe her sexuality, but “those don’t feel like, I can’t own those, it doesn’t sit when I say it, like I don’t feel like omnisexual.” Likewise Phoenix can understand “queer” as an adjective meaning non-normative and as an inclusive umbrella term, but “the reason I don’t understand it as a personal identity is because I don’t feel it....And I think it takes feeling it to really understand what it means. And so I tried it on and it just didn’t stick ‘cause I don’t feel it.” Adrianna, a Latina student who refuses to identify because “I just like whoever I like,” explains that adopting an identity, which she tried, “just didn’t feel right... it didn’t feel like it fit.”

Beyond binaries

The inclusion of attraction to transgender and genderqueer people as part of a fluid identity makes it clear that moving beyond binary thinking about gender and sexuality is central to what it means to be queer, pansexual, fluid, or to even to be “anti-identity.” Shae says queer means to her, “in it’s simplest form, I guess I would say, just saying ‘fuck you’ to binaries. You know? Just basically ‘fuck you’ to everything.” As that sweeping statement suggests, “queer” also connotes a political commitment. Om calls herself queer “because I am also, you know,

anti-oppression, anti-establishment, anti-racism, anti-sexism.” Phoenix says that queerness “definitely involves, like, my political identity.” Om started using queer “when I understood better the political implications of it.” Elena, a queer Puerto Rican/Salvadoran, says, “I like to think about it as like very political, ...I would just say it's, like, very all-encompassing as well.” A Chicana, Amaya, considers queer a “political statement.” She loves telling people she is queer because it shocks them and is “a really nice way of taking something that was once used against me.... The term ‘queer ‘has given me a lot of power.”

As this suggests, the umbrella sense of queer can be a very unifying one, making clear how powerful it is as a collective identity. As Om says, “it’s collective. It’s including everyone, like, with their own personal identities in a larger group.” Another white student, Amelia, makes a similar point when she says that “it’s easier to identify with the community if there’s one, like, singular identification.”

“Queer,” as an umbrella term, then, encompasses a range of identities, some more fixed and some more fluid. The students who call themselves queer, pansexual, fluid, or who reject an identity do so to signal their expansive desires, shifting and fluid identities, and as a political move beyond binary genders and sexualities. Our analysis reveals that both their activist and academic experiences at the university play an important role in the process of learning to be queer.

Learning to be Queer

As Omara’s, Aldara’s, and Tee’s stories makes clear, both coursework and the impact of the vibrant queer community on campus facilitate the move to fluid sexual and gender identities. Whether students are already out or experience same-sex desire for the first time in college, the

impact of classes and queer groups is evident. Melissa refers to Lisa Diamond's book, *Sexual Fluidity*, in explaining that she has sex only with girls and wants to have sex only with girls but identifies as fluid rather than lesbian because she is attracted to guys and has dated them and made out with them but would not have sex with them or want to be in a relationship. Regina, a white queer student, says simply "when I got to college I learned about the term 'queer' and its meaning to incorporate all sexualities that are not heterosexual." She stopped calling herself a lesbian and adopted "queer." Likewise, Tee says that "through many feminist studies classes" she realized that "'lesbian' obviously didn't work anymore" so "I'm sticking with 'queer.'" Emilia, like so many others, dated her use of the term "queer" to her first year of college: "I think I was just getting more involved in the queer community and I was learning more about what it meant —what it means—to be queer." Brittany says "I've always been bisexual queer" but explains that at a recent queer student conference "I think I just started letting go of the identity bisexual" and started saying "I'm queer." Elena sometimes uses queer interchangeably with bisexual because "at least here people seem to be more positive when I say queer." She describes going to a first big queer meeting and "they're like, 'Well, we use queer on this campus 'cause it's a political term.'"

As we can see in Tee's story, students learned how to describe their gender identities as well as their sexual identities through involvement in the queer community and language learned in feminist and queer studies courses. Tee describes having always been gender non-conforming but having "reached a place where I feel pretty confident about who I am" because "I'm more educated, or at least more educated in feminist and queer theory," which allowed her to learn "more about myself." The potential of "queer" to allow for multiple gender identities made it a preferred sexual identity for genderqueer students as well. Om suggested that queer was the

most appropriate sexual identity for hir “because the word ‘queer’ doesn’t have any gender connotation to it.” For students like Om, who suggested that “my sexuality sort of led me to queer theory and feminism,” theories and concepts learned in coursework provided them with new ways of describing their own experiences in more representative ways. Kacy, who is black and genderqueer, described learning in college that gender identity was different from sexual identity and subsequently questioning whether or not they were transgender. Through conversations with other queer students, Kacy reports that “I think I’m more questioning my gender identity, ...I feel more ok with it.”

Some had never heard the term “queer” before, while for others it had only a negative association. Mackenzie, a white lesbian, had a hard time with the word “‘cause where I come from the word ‘queer’ wasn’t used positively.” Vanessa also says that “where I come from queer is like a horrible insult.” Om “never considered it before coming to UCSB because I really only knew the, you know, negative connotations of it.” At Queerpalooza, Vanessa reported, “they kept saying queer queer queer-this, ...I was, like, bombarded with it” and “slowly I got used to it.” Madison, a Taiwanese American bisexual, had “never heard the word ‘queer’ until I came to college.” It was at a meeting of Queer Asian Pacific Islanders [QAPI] that her friends “were all laughing at me and explaining it to me afterwards.”

Sometimes students feel pressure to adopt the identity queer, either from individuals or from the community in general. Sandra, a white bisexual student, tells of the woman with whom she had her first sexual relationship announcing “So you’re queer now. You know that right? No more exercising your heterosexual privilege. You’re queer. You need to stick with us and you need to take a political stance.” Alexandra, the bisexual daughter of Russian immigrants

who was co-chair of the Queer Student Union, says sometimes she had to use the label “queer” because “part of your duty is to be a really public face.” Jessica called herself bisexual and queer “because I identified strongly with the Queer Student Union and the umbrella term ...for the people that go to the school and talk about this in academia and stuff.” The influence of theory is evident through a student-led seminar, “The Judith Butler Experience,” that delved deeply into gender and queer theory. The undergraduates who participated in the informal course identified strongly as queer and tended to police the use of other sexual identities such as lesbian, gay, and bisexual.

Like Aldara, who calls “queer” a privileged term, students define it as a word for educated people, not necessarily appropriate for their families and friends back home, especially in communities of color or strongly Christian white families. Kacy explains that queer “encompasses every single type of identity but it is geared for the more educated individuals, “cause if you are educated you get to know what it means.” They say that “back home if I’m talking with my friends who aren’t college educated and who aren’t gay they wouldn’t understand what I mean by queer.” Emma makes the same point, saying “I know a lot of people not in college aren’t comfortable with ‘queer.’” Esthela, who is from Shanghai, calls herself queer but also would not use the term at home because people wouldn’t know it “and I don’t wanna be, like, ‘Oh, I learned it from somewhere else.’” Sara references her economically disadvantaged Mexican American background in saying that “‘queer’ was way more predominant here than it was at home” in San Bernardino county.

As a result, students also adopt different identities in different contexts. Esthela explains that “officially I’ll say I just identify as queer, but once it came to close friends I would say,

maybe, lesbian,” suggesting how valorized the identity queer is among activist students. White queer Abigail says that how she identifies depends “on who I’m talking to, depending on, like, what’s easiest I guess. I feel like queer is mostly how I identify but, like, I can fall into lesbian, bi, pan, queer, whatever.” Likewise Gesa, from Germany, identifies as both queer and lesbian, using terms in both English and German depending “on what I think the other person understands and thinks when I say certain things, when I use certain terms.”

For all these students, coming to the university and encountering or seeking out the queer community, queer organizations, and classes on queer topics helped to verify their desires and behaviors and often shifted their individual identities to accord more closely with the collective identity of “queer.”

Conclusion

Women students at the University of California, Santa Barbara, call themselves “queer” or “pansexual” or “fluid” as both individual and collective identities that connote expansive desire, including for transgender and genderqueer people, shifting and fluid identities, and a political commitment to non-binary genders and sexualities. They may come to campus with non-heterosexual desires, experiences, and identities, but they tend to encounter the concept of queer through activist organizations, coursework in queer studies, and other queer students. Here we see Giddens’ double hermeneutic at work. The concept of sexual fluidity is based on academic research on queer individuals and communities; and, in turn, queer scholarship, coursework on sexuality and gender, and queer campus organizations influence students to embrace fluid desires, behaviors, and identities. We do not mean to imply that the students we studied are blindly accepting the identity labels advocated by queer activists and theorists.

Elsewhere, we have argued that the acceptability of same-sex sexual behavior in the college hookup scene, specifically women kissing and making out with other women and threesomes, provides opportunities for women to explore fluid sexual identities (Rupp et al 2014). The fact that so many women students reported that a whole host of sexual identity labels—whether queer, gay, lesbian, or bisexual—just do not feel right shows that there is individual agency at work in the process of forming and embracing sexual identities. Other scholars have pointed out the close connection between the anti-identity and anti-essential politics of queer activists and academic queer theory, in part because most of the early proponents of queer theory were themselves activists (Eleftheriadis 2014). Our analysis here suggests that the impact of queer theory may, in fact, be more significant than has been recognized because it offers up a collective identity that is being embraced by student and other activist groups. We find that the increasingly complex relationship among women students' individual sexual desires, behavior, and identities and their willingness to claim fluid identity labels is often the result of commitment to the queer community and to the tenets of queer academic research, all of which allows them to learn to be queer on campus.

Table 1: Sexual Identities of Women Students, Total and UCSB, Online College and Social Life

Survey, UCSB

Sexual Identity	Total	UCSB
Heterosexual	92%	94%
Homosexual	3%	2%
Bisexual	3%	3%
Not sure	2%	2%

Table 2: Ethnicity of Interviewees

Ethnicity	% of total
White (n=57)	46%
Latina (n=27)	22%
Asian American (n=19)	15%
Bi/Multiracial (n=16)	13%
African American (n=5)	2%
Middle Eastern (n=1)	1%
None claimed (n=1)	1%

Table 3: Sexual Identities of Interviewees

Sexual identity	% of total
Bisexual (n=33)	26%
Lesbian (n=31)	25%
Queer (n=29)	23%
Fluid (n=10)	8%
Pansexual (n=8)	6%
Gay (n=9)	7%
None, not straight, uncertain (n=5)	4%

Table 4: Sexual identity by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Bisexual	Lesbian	Queer	Fluid/Pansexual	Gay	None, Unsure, Not straight
White	35%	28%	19%	14%	4%	0
Women of color	19%	22%	27%	13%	11%	8%

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