

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Formation of Identity and Sexual Orientation of Young Filipino Bisexuals: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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Abstract: Topics concerning LGBT, specifically bisexuals, are not as widely researched like that of topics concerning heterosexuals. Hence, little is known about LGBT individuals. However, due to some researches that are conducted by various advocates, organizations, and researchers, many aspiring researchers aim to explore the topics concerning LGBT like identity and sexual orientation. Thus, this research aims to explore the formation of identity and sexual orientation of young Filipino bisexuals, specifically, to formulate a formation of identity and sexual orientation of young Filipino bisexuals model that is drawn from the experiences, perceived origin of bisexuality, and factors affecting identity formation of the participants. This study utilized an interpretative phenomenological analysis, qualitative research design, and thematic analysis to analyze the gathered data. Five bisexual participants were chosen using purposive homogenous sampling technique. The result of the study showed that there are five stages of formation of identity and sexual orientation of bisexuals. There are Stage 1: disorientation of sexuality, Stage 2: deconstruction of the self, Stage 3: revelation of sexuality to interpersonal relationships, Stage 4: rationalization of bisexuality and reaching out towards other LGBT, and Stage 5: reconstruction of the self. Moreover, the perceived origins of bisexuality of the research participants were based on the principles of nature and nurture. In addition, the factors that affected their identity formation were: society, family, stigma/discrimination, culture, peers, social media, work, self, and internalized sexual stigma.

Keywords: Identity Formation, Sexual Orientation, Bisexuals, Qualitative Research, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Bisexuality and other topics that lie within the spectrum of LGBT or lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgenders, are often put behind the spotlight. Topics regarding non-heterosexuals are not taken seriously in discussions even during this century (Garcia, 1996). Due to the society's heterosexist

stand, topics concerning LGBT, bisexuals in particular, are not explored thoroughly in comparison with subjects concerning heterosexuals. As a result, there is little knowledge that is known concerning bisexuals. There has been quite a range of researches that pertains to identity formation. Primarily, these

researches are focused on heterosexuals. However, there is a rise in the number of research that aims to explore topics concerning LGBT like identity and sexual orientation.

According to Garcia (1996), the tendency of individuals to sexual impulses and follow the inclination of individuals that are of the same or opposite sex, also known as sexual orientation, can be viewed in two ways: “1) as biological or psychological property to be observed in all human populations, and 2) as an invention (label) specific only to those cultures which have deemed it an important distinction” (p. 11).

On the other hand, as discussed by Feist, Feist, and Roberts (2013), identity is defined as the discovery of what people want to be and what they do not want to be. Moreover, “Identity Confusion is a syndrome of problem that includes a divided self-image, an inability to establish intimacy, a sense of time urgency, a lack of concentration on required tasks, and a rejection of family of community standards” (Feist et al., 2013, p. 233). Identity confusion is a normal and a healthy part of discovering a stable identity, although too much of it may lead to problems like regression (Feist et al, 2013). Clear identity and personality integration is needed and lacking of it is observed in chronic delinquent (Oliveros, 1999). Hence, an individual must be able to identify themselves clearly.

The process of forming and integrating an identity for LGBT individuals are often considered to be intricate (Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2011). Some young LGBT individuals are clouded by the heteronormativist view of the society and internalized sexual stigma; hence, they find it difficult to accept their identity as LGBT.

As argued by Rosario, Schrimshaw, and Hunter (2011), the primary exploration of an identity is a process known as identity formation, and this includes the awareness of one’s sexual orientation. Identity integration, on the other hand, is the incorporation of the identity to the self and this is done by engaging in various LGBT-affiliated programs and groups. Thereby, significantly helping the LGBT individuals to love themselves and accept their identity as LGBT (Morris, 1997; Rosario, Hunter, Maguen, Gwadz, & Smith, 2001; Rosario,

Schrimshaw, Hunter, & Braun 2006, as cited in Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2011)

There are some researches that have identity formation of LGBT as its scope. However, they focused on the identity formation of the LGBT population in general, not specific to bisexuals, not to mention that these identity formation models are all authored by Western experts and are based on Western population. Hence, an identity formation model that is applicable specifically to Filipino bisexuals is needed.

Bisexuality

As defined by the American Psychological Association or APA (2008) sexual orientation is the emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to people of the opposite sex, same sex, or both sexes. Bisexuality is defined by the APA (2008) as the romantic, sexual, or emotional attraction to a person of the same sex and opposite sex. The expression of sexual orientation is through behaviors that are directed towards other people because sexual orientation is defined by interpersonal relationships. It is between middle childhood to early adolescence that sexual orientation usually transpires. According to scientists, there is no clear and certain origin that pinpoints why a certain person is homosexual, bisexual, or heterosexual.

According to Parker (2015), as compared with other American LGBT, bisexuals consisting of 28% only, are considered to be less likely to disclose their sexuality to significant individuals in their life.

Identity Formation of LGBT

As cited by Oliveros (1999), Cass introduced a model depicting the stages of identity formation as identity formation model. This model has six different stages which are undergone or being undergone by homosexuals and bisexuals that are starting to come-out or identify and accept themselves as homosexuals and bisexuals. These are the following stages:

Stage 1: Identity Confusion – Commonly known as pre-coming out. Individuals are not aware of their homosexual/bisexual tendencies and they are not able to identify what is wrong about it.

Behavioral problems, psychosomatic illnesses, and suicidal tendencies and attempts are their only way of communicating their confusion (Coleman, 1985, as cited in Oliveros, 1999).

Stage 2: Identity Comparison – This is the stage wherein they can identify their homosexual/bisexual tendencies. This is also the stage when they come out and tell other people. This stage is considered to be crucial because the reaction of the confidant is very influential to the homosexual/bisexual that is opening up. Positive reaction of the confidant might cause resolution of the conflict he/she is encountering. And, negative reaction may cause otherwise. This stage is also known as coming out (Coleman, 1985, as cited in Oliveros, 1999). According to Oliveros (1999), homosexuals/bisexuals' decision to come out is heavily triggered by social factors.

Stage 3: Identity Tolerance – This is the stage where the homosexuals/bisexuals are moving toward homosexual/bisexual identity. Hence, this is where the exploration and experimentation begin (Coleman, 1985, as cited in Oliveros, 1999).

Stage 4: Identity Acceptance – As the name implies, this is the stage where the homosexuals/bisexuals are starting to rationalize/accept/legitimize himself/herself as a homosexual/bisexual. Communication with other homosexuals/bisexuals is also characterized on this stage.

Stage 5: Identity Pride – this is the stage where the homosexuals/bisexuals are identifying and recognizing the pride of homosexual/bisexual individuals, its culture, and its greatness. On this stage, devaluation of heterosexuality might be observed (Coleman, 1985, as cited in Oliveros, 1999).

Stage 6: Identity Synthesis – According to Coleman (1985) (as cited in Oliveros, 1999),

this is the stage of integration. They integrate their sexual identity to themselves. This is the stage where they accept and choose to become homosexuals/bisexuals (Coleman, 1985, as cited in Oliveros, 1999).

This research aimed to explore the identity formation and sexual orientation of young Filipino bisexuals. It also tried to formulate a model on the formation of identity and sexual orientation of young Filipino bisexuals model that is drawn from the experiences, perceived origin of bisexuality, and factors affecting identity formation.

Methods

This research utilized a qualitative research design and a Willig's (2008) approach of interpretative phenomenological analysis. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data that I gathered. Qualitative research design "describes the differences in the *kind* or *quality* of behavior" (Evans & Rooney, 2014, p. 17). On the other hand, "Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is an approach which is dedicated to the detailed exploration of personal meaning and lived experience" (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 25). Basically, IPA is the interpretation of the researcher to the experiences of the participants (Willig, 2008). IPA is the design that is used by researchers when they want to know how people see and give meaning to their experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2015).

I used IPA to interpret the data consisting of experiences of participants to achieve the aims of the research. I used a semi-structured interview because "semi-structured interview provides an opportunity for the researcher to hear the participant talk about a particular aspect of their life or experience" (Willig, 2008, p. 24). This kind of research design and research method is relevant to this study because this study is focused on exploring the concepts of the variables and on the nature or quality of a behavior, not on its quantifiable aspects (Evans & Rooney, 2014).

Sampling

The research participants consisted of Filipino bisexuals aged 19–24 years old. The participants of

this research are in accordance with the two guiding principles in selecting participants. The first principle is representativeness. According to Alvesson and Ashcraft (2012), it is fine to have slight differences with the interviewees so long as they are still part of the group that the research is studying on. The second principle is quality. Defining quality is dependent on the study, but for this case, I “would be eager to use the resources (e.g., intellectual, verbal, emotional, moral) of qualified people with the ‘right’ experiences and an ability and willingness to communicate these” (Alvesson & Ashcraft, 2012, p. 247).

Being “closeted” and secretive is apparent during the early stages of identity formation of an LGBT individual. Thus, this research made use of non-probability sampling techniques. Non-probability technique is used for researches that aim to require data to come from a population that has certain characteristic/s (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This research made use of a purposive homogenous sampling technique. This sampling technique is characterized by acquiring samples that share the same characteristic (“Purposive Sampling,” n.d.).

For this case, I utilized purposive homogenous sampling technique to get samples that are bisexuals. Additionally, this research also used referral sampling or snowball sampling. This kind of sampling is defined to be a kind of sampling that is used when the population of a certain group is difficult to locate. Initially, I used purposive homogenous sampling technique to gather bisexuals target research participants. But there are difficulties in gathering target research participants, thus, I used referral sampling or snowball sampling. Subsequently, when I was able to gather the samples, I waited for them to contact me through email to discuss how the interview will be done. Once I already found a participant coming from that certain group, I asked the participant to refer other people of the same group to refer them to me (Evans & Rooney, 2014). Following the recommendation of Guest et al. (2006), Kuzel (1992), and Romney et al. (1986) (as cited in Evans & Rooney, 2014), the suggested number of participants is 4 to 12. Due to the difficulty in looking for participants, the final number of participants was five.

Instrument

I utilized an email and face-to-face semi-structured interview. The questionnaire that was adapted from Oliveros (1999) for her research about identity formation model of Cass. This kind of interviewing is also regarded as non-directive (Willig, 2008). I opted to use an email interview where it was more efficient (e.g., the participant lives in a distant place). The guide questionnaire is a very substantial guide questionnaire for it tackles all the necessary information needed from the participants.

I made use of open-ended questions to let the participants speak of their experiences in their own words and perspectives (Evans & Rooney, 2014). This kind of structure is the most applicable to the topic of this research since this research mainly aims to explore the formation of identity and sexual orientation of bisexuals. I opted to have the interview to be done face-to-face to establish a human connection and a more personal relationship with the participant (Evans & Rooney, 2014). Also, the data gathered from a face-to-face interview will be directly from the participants.

Data Gathering Procedures

Phase 1 of the data gathering officially started when I identified the population that the study focused on. Consequently, I gathered samples from the said population through various non-probability sampling techniques, in which the technique will depend on the condition.

Phase 2 of the data gathering started when the interviews started. As mentioned above, this research utilized two means of interviewing the participants. The research participants were interviewed either through a face-to-face interview or an email interview. The one-on-one face-to-face interview with the participant happened in a private area, wherein I and the interviewee were the only people in the said private area. I opted the interview to be one-on-one to respect their privacy. Also, as advised by Smith and Osborn (2015), having the respondent be alone with the researcher when the interview is being conducted would be better, because semi-structured interview can become intense and involved, and should be uninterrupted.

I exchanged emails with the participants in the email interview. I sent them a copy of the guide questionnaire for them to answer. After answering it, they sent it back to me together with the consent forms. I just sent them an email if ever there were additional questions.

Phase 3 of the data gathering was the debriefing. After gathering the data and information I needed, a debriefing session was conducted for each participant. The debriefing session included: clarification of the things or aspects of the research that they misunderstood, disclosure of all the details that were not included in the consent and assent forms, and if necessary, find out if the participants were harmed (e.g., if the participant remembered a repressed memory that is painful), to make sure that the harm was eradicated or reduced (Evans & Rooney 2014). Fortunately, no one was hurt in the course of this research.

Data Analysis

This research made use of thematic analysis in analyzing the gathered data. According to Willig (2008), the analysis of data using thematic analysis required transcriptions that were gathered during data gathering. This is also my initial encounter with the text and referred to as the first stage. The second stage of thematic analysis was where I assigned, determined, and named the *themes*, wherein these themes show commonality in each part (Willig, 2008). "Theme titles are conceptual and they should capture something about the essential quality of what is represented by the text. Psychological terminology may be used at this stage" (Willig, 2008, p. 58). In the third stage, I related the themes that were identified in stage two. Themes might form concepts wherein they share characteristics and meanings (Willig, 2008). The clustering of themes has to be in relation to the data that was originally gathered. "The fourth stage of analysis involves the production of a summary table of the structured themes, together with the quotations that illustrate their theme"; "The summary table needs to include the cluster labels together with their subordinate theme labels, brief quotations and references to where relevant extracts may be found in the interview transcript (i.e., page and line numbers)" (Willig, 2008, p. 58).

Limitations of the Study

Four out of five interviews were conducted online (email). Using these forms of interview, the human connection between the participants and I was compromised. I was not able to see the non-verbal communication cues of the participants. Moreover, four of the participants were female bisexuals. There might be a difference in the result of the study if the number of male and female participants were balanced.

Results

Table 1 shows that there are five stages that a Filipino bisexual goes through. These stages are drawn from the experiences, perceived origin of bisexuality, and factors affecting identity formation of the participants. The perceived origin of bisexuality is observed in the second stage of the model. On the other hand, factors affecting identity formation is present in all of the stages of the model, meaning, these factors have affected significantly, positive or negative, the process and the bisexuals themselves.

Table 1 presents the stages of formation of identity and sexual orientation of bisexuals model. The whole identity formation process is classified into five different stages. There are five superordinate themes that illustrate the formation of identity and sexual orientation model. Moreover, the thematic table shows the superordinate themes and subthemes that emerged during the analysis of the data. In addition, given that this is a qualitative study with only five participants, the results cannot be used to generalize the whole Filipino bisexual population. This is just a presentation of the lived experiences of the research participants.

The first stage discusses the confusion/non-confusion of the research participants with regard to their sexuality. Moreover, non-settlement with a sexual identity and encounter of information about LGBT is tackled in the said stage/superordinate theme. The second superordinate theme presents the process of the deconstruction of the self. This stage focuses on the process of exploring the sexuality, the realization of bisexuality, repression, social alienation, and difficulty from integrating the self. The third stage/superordinate theme presents the revelation of sexuality to interpersonal relationships

Table 1*Superordinate Themes and Subthemes of Formation of Identity and Sexual Orientation of Filipino Bisexuals*

Superordinate Themes	Subthemes
Stage 1: Disorientation of Sexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning Sexual Identity (Confusion) • Non-settlement with a Sexual Identity • Information About LGBT
Stage 2: Deconstruction of the Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual Exploration • Indication of Bisexuality • Realization and Perceived Origin of Bisexuality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature • Nurture • Repression • Social Alienation • Difficulty from Integrating the Self
Stage 3: Revelation of Sexuality to Interpersonal Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to Disclose One's Sexuality • Selective Disclosure • Reasons of Non-Disclosure • Characteristics of a Good Confidant • Techniques in Disclosing • Positive Emotional Quality of the Confidant's Response to Coming Out • Feelings About Disclosing • Problems with Coming Out
Stage 4: Rationalization of Bisexuality and Reaching Out Towards Other LGBT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for a Clear Identity • Concept of Acceptance • Self-Acceptance • Normalization of Bisexuality • Connection with LGBT • Positive Emotional Quality of LGBT Social Connection • Valuation of LGBT Pride • Disregard of Heterosexual Institution
Stage 5: Reconstruction of the Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technique in Dealing with Stigma/Discrimination • Standing Against Gender Labels • Becoming and Advocate for LGBT • Positive Regard Towards Bisexuality • Positive Results of the Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence • Optimism • Love for Oneself

of the participants. This stage/superordinate theme discusses the need (of the participants) to disclose, the characteristics of a good confidant, the lacking of a good confidant and its consequence, techniques utilized by the participants in disclosing, the feelings about the confidants' reaction to coming out, and the feelings of the participants about coming out itself. Moreover, problems with coming out, and selective

disclosure and its reason are also discussed in this particular stage. The fourth stage/superordinate theme is associated with the rationalization of bisexuality and reaching out towards other LGBT. In this particular stage, the following are discussed: the need for a clear identity, normalization of bisexuality, the concept of acceptance, self-acceptance and lacking of it, valuation of LGBT pride and the disregard of heterosexual

institution, the void of dichotomy between LGBT and heterosexuals, connection with LGBT and its emotional quality, and the reason why there are some bisexuals that do not actively seek LGBT connection. The last stage/superordinate theme revolves around the reconstruction of the self. It highlights the implication of the experience of the process, why they want to become advocates for LGBT, their techniques in dealing with the stigma, consequences of stigma, and the research participants' regard to their bisexuality.

Identity formation, in general, is heavily affected by several factors. These factors are mainly social. Moreover, these factors either help or worsen the experience of their pursuit of their identity. These factors are mainly environmental factors. It may be the society, culture, family, peers, work, and so forth. However, the self is also a factor that affects the identity formation of bisexuals. This includes internalized sexual stigma and optimism in life.

Stage 1: Disorientation of Sexuality

Basically, this stage is the stage wherein the bisexuals tend to feel "disoriented" of their sexuality. They feel confused of their sexuality, and this is followed by their strategies in order to alleviate or get through this confusion.

Questioning sexual identity (confusion). Society's norm is very dominating that it seems wrong if one tries not to conform to it. Confusion is directed to sexual identity and it is brought up by the society's gender norms. Basically, the confusion is all about the deviance from the gender norms. It is best illustrated by Research Participant 1's excerpt below:

Kasi syempre nung una naramadaman ko na yun, "ay may iba, hindi ako kagaya ng marami." So andun yung iniisip ko, "ano ba, bakla ba o hindi bakla?" [Of course, at first I felt "oh I think there is something wrong, I am not like everybody else." That is when I thought, "what am I, am I gay or not gay?"]

Non-settlement with a sexual identity. A way of dealing or coping with confusion is through non-settling with what the society dictates him. It is presented in the excerpt below:

So yun 'diba, nasabi ko na nga, hindi ko talaga binibigyan yung sarili ko ng end-statement just because I was limited about the idea of gender na binibigay ng society sa akin [So just like what I've said earlier, I did not give myself and end-statement just because I have a limited idea about gender that the society is imposing on me.] (Research Participant 1)

Information about LGBT. The bisexuals in the study gained information about bisexuality in various ways. Generally, they encountered it through their college course and gender subjects.

I never really thought about it all that much, and no one in my family talked about bisexuality so I wasn't even aware that it existed. (Research Participant 3)

Since I was a psych student. Nagkaroon ako ng idea about identity confusion and I tried to apply it (laughter) I focused on myself after that and try to know myself on my own without the influence of a partner. [Since I was a psych student. I have an idea about identity confusion and I tried to apply it (laughter) I focused on myself after that and try to know myself on my own without the influence of a partner.] (Research Participant 4)

So dun ko inalam talaga, nag-aral akong mabuti sa gender courses ko sa college, during those times never kong tinuldukan yung gender and sexual orientation ko, I was a blank slate. [That is the time when I studied hard in my gender courses in college, during those times I never settled with a gender and sexual orientation. I was a blank slate.] (Research Participant 1)

Stage 2: Deconstruction of the Self

This stage is characterized by exploration and experimentation. Participants repressed their bisexuality due to the heterosexist position of the society, resulting in social alienation and difficulty with integrating the self. Thus, having a split persona, a disintegration of the self.

Sexual exploration. The excerpt that follows shows that after a participant experienced the indications of being a bisexual, explorations of sexuality happens to gauge whether he/she is really a bisexual or not. The best transcription that portrays this is represented by research participant 2. It is shown below that she joined an online dating application. She tried her best to focus on males, yet her attraction to females did not wane, not to mention that she felt more excited communicating with the females.

I even joined Tinder na male lang ang tinitignan ko pero parang di ako interested, mas naexcite pa ako magswipe right sa mga girls dun. [I even joined Tinder wherein I only look for males, however, I am not interested, I am more excited swiping right to girls.] (Research Participant 2)

Indication of bisexuality. The excerpt below shows the indication of being bisexual:

I'm still predominantly into guys, but every once in a while, I see girls who really catch my attention. (Research Participant 3)

Realization of bisexuality. These excerpts show the time when they realized that they are bisexuals. Some of the participants realized that they are bisexuals during high school years. On the other hand, some realized it during their childhood years.

I had a crush with a senior when I was a freshman in high school. It was definitely a surprise that I like a girl and not in a way that you idolize them. (Research Participant 4)

Well, I was always attracted to all genders ever since childhood but I think my identity as a bisexual person became more concrete when I started using Tumblr. I started interacting with LGBTQ folks and then found a label for my identity. (Research Participant 5)

Perceived origin of bisexuality. This is the phase when they realized that they are bisexuals, and they have conceived their own perceived origin of

bisexuality. There is no consensus among scientists as to what is the origin of bisexuality. However, bisexuals have perceived origin of their bisexuality. And their beliefs are heavily anchored on the principles of nature and nurture.

Nature. In the excerpts below, some perceived that they are bisexual because there might be a genetic explanation behind it. As for some participants, they did not think much of the origin of their bisexuality but they believed that they were born with it.

I learned na pwede palang maging gender deviant ang tao due to genetics. Meron ngang tomboy akala nila babae sila innate pero di lang pala nagdevelop yung penis nila genetically. Ako din, minsan parang may mga natural features ako na pangfem talaga like man boobs (laughter), height, voice, skin, ganon. [I learned that there is a possibility that genetics may cause gender deviance. There are lesbians that thought they are innately females, though, their penis did just not developed genetically. I have some features that are found among females like man boobs (laughter), height, voice, skin.] (Research Participant 1)

I just knew from the get-go that I wasn't straight and I didn't think much about it. I guess it's right to say that I was born this way. (Research Participant 3)

Nurture. Some participants hated gender-based oppression because some of them experienced it firsthand. With their experiences, they managed to learn to get attracted to people without looking at their gender. On the other hand, some believed that they got influenced by their environment.

I hate gendered oppression kasi and other kinds of discrimination, I was a victim of it din kasi my mom favors my sister and she tends to behave towards me assuming I'm a bad boy, eh hindi naman, gender expectation niya lang. So I hated it and learned not to behave the same towards gender. So I hated gender as a basis of liking other people. I don't assume to like a guys because I expect he's masculine or a

girl because she's feminine. [I hate gendered oppression and other kinds of discrimination. I was a victim of it because my mom favors my sister and she tends to behave towards me assuming I'm a bad boy, though I am not, that is just her gender expectation. So I hated it and learned not to behave the same towards gender. So I hated gender as a basis of liking other people. I don't assume to like a guys because I expect he's masculine or a girl because she's feminine.] (Research Participant 1)

Feel ko na-pressure lang ako sa mga tibo friends ko nun kasi sa all girls ako nag-aaral. [I think I just felt pressured to my lesbian friends because I attended an all-girl school.] (Research Participant 2)

Repression. Some of the participants experienced repressing their bisexuality when they realized that they are bisexuals.

I tried imagining myself with girls and I was so turned on pero agad kong binalewala kasi feel ko wala lang yun parang experiment lang ganun. [I tried imagining myself with girls and I was so turned on, though I immediately disregard it because I think I only feel it because I was just experimenting.] (Research Participant 2)

Social alienation. Feeling of being “unbelonging” with other people, specifically with all-boy groups and typical girly peers in college, are felt by some of the participants:

Medyo nahirapan din akong mag-identify ng kaibigan. “Sino bang babarkadahin ko?” Eh yung mga all-boys group sa college hindi ako maka-relate. Meron din naming mga babae na girly talaga: makeup, boys, usapang regla... (laughter). So hindi nila ako ka-“belong” obviously. It was difficult noh, trying to find a place where you will belong. [I find it quite difficult to identify friends. “Who am I going to be friends with?” I can't relate with the all-boy peer groups in college. There are girls

that act so feminine: makeup, boys, talks about menstruation... (laughter). So, obviously, I don't feel that I “belong” with them. It was difficult to find a place where you will belong.] (Research Participant 1)

Difficulty with integrating the self. Due to the incongruence of sexuality with the society's gender norms, difficulty with integration of personas is felt. The personas are: persona-with-family and persona-with-partner.

Nahirapan akong maging ako. I was a different person then when I was with my family and a different person whenever I'm with my partner. Matagal bago ako naging komportable and found a ground where my two identities complement each other. [I felt difficult being me. I was a different person then when I was with my family and a different person whenever I'm with my partner. I felt comfortable and found a ground where my two identities complement each other after quite a while.] (Research Participant 4)

Stage 3: Revelation of Sexuality to Interpersonal Relationships

After stage 2, the bisexuals try to disclose their bisexuality to other people, mostly significant people in their lives.

Need to disclose one's sexuality. The main drive that makes disclosure a need among bisexuals is the feeling of being accepted.

Yes (I want to disclose myself to other people). I just want to be accepted. I mean, what if I fall in love with a girl and I want to ask her out? Being in the closet sucks. (Research Participant 3)

Selective disclosure. The excerpt below represents most of the participants' experience of selective disclosure. Disclosure of identity is directed to selected number of people only. Mostly, peers and colleagues know that they are bisexuals. But their parents

do not know that they are bisexuals. Moreover, they find it incredibly difficult not to disclose with their parents. They hide their bisexuality from their parents for they believe that they are not going to accept them.

All of my friends, even sa office, they know. Family (parents) lang talaga hindi, but that is because I haven't really introduced them to any of my exes as my girlfriend/boyfriend. They would probably only know na in a relationship ako pag engaged na ako (laughter). [All of my friends, even in the office, they know. My family (parents) are the only ones who doesn't know (that I am bisexual), but that is because I haven't really introduced them to any of my exes as my girlfriend/boyfriend. They would probably only know that I am in a relationship when I am already engaged (laughter).] (Research Participant 4)

It's very hard because there are many factors I have to consider before disclosing my identity to others. Not disclosing to my parents is a big struggle for me because I want them to know but I know that they are not gonna accept it. (Research Participant 5)

Reasons of non-disclosure. Primary reason of non-disclosure was that they did not want to be judged by other people and they felt shy about their sexuality.

Pero feel ko dahil nahihiya ako? At ayaw kong ma-judge. [I think because I feel ashamed? And I don't want to be judged.] (Research Participant 2)

Characteristics of a good confidant. Confiding one's sexuality is not a task that needs to be done without considering anything. The excerpt that follow best describes the characteristics of a good confidant. The confidant must be interested about the uniqueness of the sexuality and not just plain curious, and open-minded to worthwhile conversations.

Wala pa kasi masyado akong nasabihan, kasi hindi naman talaga siya urgent issue na

kailangan i-announce. Minsan lang masasabi ko pag meron talagang interested. Hindi curious ha, pero interested about the uniqueness of my gender. Wala naman masyadong ganung tao, so wala masyadong napagkekwentuhan. I'd love to meet those people, yung very open minded to worthwhile conversations (laughter)... Syempre kasi pinagkakatiwalaan naman kita (researcher). You are a very amazing person. You have a really great mind, that's why I liked you from the very beginning. Even when we're far away na from each other, I know that you have grown better because of that, you are better than that great version of you before, which I really like. [I haven't told many people yet, because it is not really an urgent issue that needs to be announced. I only disclose it at times when there are interested people. (Just to be clear) not curious, but interested about the uniqueness of my gender. There are not really much of that kind of people, hence, I don't disclose to many people. I'd love to meet those people, those who are open-minded to worthwhile conversations (laughter)...Of course, I trust you (researcher). You have a really great mind, that's why I liked you from the very beginning. Even when we're far away from each other, I know that you have grown better because of that, you are better than that great version of you before, which I really like.] (Research Participant 1)

Techniques in disclosing. The data analysis uncovered many ways of disclosing. Most of them can be considered as indirect way of disclosing. One way of disclosing is by utilizing the social media, particularly, Tumblr. On the other hand, another way of disclosing is through jokes then subsequently confiding. Some disclosed through advocacy. Lastly, revelation of sexual identity can also be done by telling a story.

I disclosed myself in a variety of ways. The first was just disclosing it to my old blog. Most of the time people just assume that I'm not straight. (Research Participant 5)

Next na nasabihan ko mga this year lang, and nasabi ko sa kanya yun parang pa-joke lang

nung una hanggang sa nakakapagkwento na ako sa kanya. [The next person that I confided to was just this year, and I disclosed to him in a joking manner until I told him the whole story.] (Research Participant 2)

I just said that I want my thesis to (be) about the LGBTQ because I want the religious people to stop condemning them and I got asked why and I said I'm bisexual. (Research Participant 3)

To my friends, they would usually know kapag nagkekwento ako and they would use the term boyfriend and I would correct them (laughter). Medyo ambush now that I am saying how it is but that's just how it is. [To my friends, they would usually know it when I tell stories and they would use the term boyfriend and I would correct them (laughter). It is like an ambush now that I am saying how it is but that's just how it is.] (Research Participant 4)

Positive emotional quality of the confidants' response to coming out. Every time they disclosed or revealed their sexual identity with someone, it was imperative that there would always be a response to it. Fortunately, the response of the confidants to the participants' revelation was positive. Mostly, support was exhibited through encouragement and acceptance.

I just casually told them that I like this girl that I randomly met and they were very supportive to the point that they encouraged me to let the person know how I feel. (Research Participant 4)

Support system would include my friends... We would talk about anything under the sun and they are very accepting to the point that it is actually normal kahit ano man gender ng kinukwento ko said kanila na tao. People around me also don't intend to judge me but I think that is mainly because halos ka-age ko lang din sila. [Support system would include my friends... We would talk about anything under the sun and they are very accepting to the point that it is actually normal whether what the person

that I am telling them has. People around me also don't tend to judge me but I think that is mainly because we are of the same age group.] (Research Participant 4)

Feelings about disclosing. Some participants felt nervous about disclosing because disclosing is not a certain endeavor. They felt that way because people might not be able to understand them or they might not be able to explain it clearly. Moreover, they felt incredibly positive after disclosing to their peers.

Kaba kaba, kasi baka mali na nag-disclose ako, kasi nga baka yung tao din hindi din maintindihan, or baka hindi ko ma-explain ng maayos. So yun din nagre-reason minsan bakit ayaw ko mag-disclose. [Nervous, because disclosing might be the best option, because the confidant might not understand me, or I might not be able to explain it correctly. So that is the reason why, sometimes, I don't want to disclose.] (Research Participant 1)

Nung nasabi ko yun sa mga friends ko sobrang sarap sa feeling, una parang nabunutan ka ng tinik ganun. Pero mas masarap sa feeling yung di nagbago tingin nila sa akin. They treated me the same way, kung paano nila ako trinato nung bago ko sabihin yun. [When I disclosed to my friends it felt so good, It felt relieving. But the most relieving part is that they did not treat me differently. They treated me the same way, thy way they treated me before I disclosed.] (Research Participant 2)

Problem with coming out. Some encountered a problem with coming out. They found it difficult to express their identity because their ideas deviate from the society's norm.

Tas yun din, related sa mga una kong sinabi, yung nahirapan akong i-express yung sarili ko sa mga tao kasi hindi conventional yung mga ideas ko, lahat kasi syempre ng ideas ko naapektuhan ang gender orientation ko. [Related to what I have said earlier, I find it difficult to express myself to other people

because my ideas are unconventional, of course, all of my ideas are affected by my gender orientation.] (Research Participant 1)

Stage 4: Rationalization of Bisexuality and Reaching Out Towards Other LGBT

After disclosing to other people, they started to rationalize their bisexuality and try to connect with other LGBT to strengthen their moral as bisexuals.

Need for a clear identity. The participants wanted to have a concrete and clear identity.

Wala akong gusto as a bisexual. May mga dreams ako as a human, pero not as a bisexual. What I want siguro about knowing myself better, yung siguro related sa gender ko. Pero di ko pa siya completely achieved kasi nga bata pa ako I'm expecting myself to know better as I grow up. [I don't want anything as a bisexual. I have dreams as a human, but not as a bisexual. What I want is to know myself better, something related to my gender. However, I haven't achieved it because I'm still young. I'm expecting myself to know better as I grow up.] (Research Participant 1)

Concept of acceptance. Their concept of acceptance gauged them if they have accepted themselves as bisexuals or, at least, as non-heterosexuals. They only considered that they have accepted themselves if they did not feel shy if people knew their bisexuality. On the other hand, some participants' concept of acceptance was important for them and they thought that it was considered as a betrayal to themselves if they did not accept their bisexuality.

Not really (fully accepting the self). Coz feel ko mako-consider ko lang na na-accept ko sarili ko if di ako mahihiya na may nakakaalam na ibang tao. [Not really (fully accepting the self). Cause, I feel that I will only accept myself if I a, not ashamed if people would know my sexuality.] (Research Participant 2)

Self-acceptance is incredibly important to me and it would be a betrayal to myself if I don't do that. (Research Participant 3)

Self-acceptance. Some of the participants accept themselves as bisexuals, or at least, as non-heterosexuals.

Yes. I think so. Kase wala na ako doon sa phase na confuse pa rin ako kung tama ba na nagkakagusto ako sa babae... hindi na ako nahihiya if ever people would find out that I am in a relationship with the same sex. I also don't think that it has an impact sa career ko. [Yes. I think so. Because I am not in the phase wherein I am confused whether if it is right that I feel attracted to girls... I don't feel ashamed if ever people would find out that I am in a relationship with the same sex. I also don't think that it has an impact on my career.] (Research Participant 4)

Normalization of bisexuality. Some rationalized their bisexuality because in the first place they were not told that being bisexual is actually wrong. On the other hand, their rationalization of bisexuality was also exhibited through having a mentality that sexual identity should not be the focal point of their life.

I was able to accept myself easily because no one told me that it's wrong to be bisexual. (Research Participant 3)

My gender preference is not the center of my universe. This is a way of thinking that helped me live by "normally" as some people may say. (Research Participant 4)

Connection with LGBT. The participants connected with other LGBT because they wanted to confirm their sexuality, to "find themselves," and to look for "the one."

Yup (I felt the need to connect with other bisexuals), na-feel ko na kailangan ko makakilala ng katulad ko para lang maging sure ako sa kung ano ako. Kung may na-feel ako, nagbabasakali pa ako na mahanap yung "the one" dun. I joined online dating sites solely for lesbians para lang hanapin sarili ko. [Yup (I felt the need to connect with other bisexuals), I felt

that I need to know someone else like me so that I will be able to confirm to myself what really am I. If ever I felt something, I am hopeful that I will be able to find “the one” there. I joined online dating sites solely for lesbians to look for myself.] (Research Participant 2)

Positive emotional quality of LGBT social connection. The participants felt comfortable connecting with LGBT. They felt that they are not alone in the world. They felt ensured that they are not alone in facing the endeavors that they would face as bisexuals.

I felt comfortable because I was with people who felt the same way as me. I felt that I wasn't alone in the world. (Research Participant 5)

Valuation of LGBT pride. The excerpt below shows that valuation of LGBT pride is exhibited through wanting to help remove the stigma attached to bisexuality. It is also presented as fighting for the clarifications of some myths associated with bisexuality.

I really want to help remove the stigma against bisexuals. It is not our fault we're built this way. It's not a phase, it's not just a “girl-crush” or a “boy-crush.” I'm pretty sure straight people don't dream about futures with the same sex. It's also not that we're undecided, or whatever. We just like people, regardless of the physical body. It's not a big deal. (Research Participant 3)

Disregard of heterosexual institution. Some participants' disagreement with the imposition of religious beliefs to bisexuals is an indication of their disregard towards a heterosexual institution which is religion.

I defend the LGBTQ a lot to a lot of people and I try to explain to my family why acceptance is important and that they are not different and we shouldn't impose on them our religious beliefs because that's horrid. (Research Participant 3)

Stage 5: Reconstruction of the Self

After all the experiences, the bisexuals tried to reconstruct themselves through various techniques in dealing with problems that they encountered as bisexuals. They tried to adapt to the heterosexist society that they were living in and they built a stronger self and sense of self.

Technique in dealing with stigma/discrimination. Since LGBT people, bisexuals in particular, are exposed in a society that is discriminating and stigmatizing, they will likely have techniques on how to deal with stigma and discrimination. One of the techniques in dealing with it is through not caring or listening to homophobic people. The technique helped them maintain their perception of LGBT people positive.

I never really listened to homophobic people, and it didn't affect my perception of LGBTQ folks. (Research Participant 5)

There are still people who would give you “the look” whenever they find out that you have a bizarre sexual preference but, you just have to do you and disregard what other people think. (Research Participant 4)

Standing up against gender labels. Some of the participants learned how to disregard labels imposed on people by the society and that is caused by the sexuality related experiences that they have gone through. Another way was through actively interfering with how the environment saw them. Being “unsubmissive” to other people's perception is also considered as a way of standing up against gender labels.

Because of my sexuality struggles, I learned to have a better understanding that labels are just there, it shouldn't matter. (Research Participant 1)

Sobrang may pakealam ako how people would perceive me especially if I am trying to prove myself as a leader sa school or as a member of a social action club. [I am really attentive on how people would perceive me especially if I am trying to prove myself as a leader in school or as a member of a social action club.] (Research Participant 4)

Becoming an advocate for LGBT. Becoming an advocate can be presented through becoming a defender of LGBT. Participants defend LGBT people from people who try to talk ill against them. Moreover, another way of becoming an advocate for LGBT is by helping them become educated about their sexuality and be a support system for them.

A lot of them (adults) are just plain terrible so I ever really talked about it (bisexuality) except when they talk shit about LGBTQ people and I defend them. (Research Participant 3)

Help people learn more about their identity and serve as a support person for others. (Research Participant 5)

Positive regard towards bisexuality. The participants' regard to bisexuality is influenced by various experiences that they have undergone through. Environment influenced some of them to have a positive regard towards her bisexuality.

Yes (I was able to express myself freely). As I have mentioned above, I am lucky enough to be in an environment that is very accepting. Some people get curious whenever they would find out that I am not straight and they would ask questions about my previous relationships but aside from the, I can talk and move around freely naman. (Research Participants 4)

Positive Results of the Experiences

Independence. The participants' experiences made them independent. They believed they cannot change other people's perception and expectations. Hence, they learned not to depend on other people.

I can't do anything to change what people think, to change their expectations, or para ipilit ko yung sarili ko sa kanila. Wala akong magagawa. So I learned to be independent. [I can't do anything to change what people think, to change their expectations, or to force myself to them. There is nothing that I can do regarding those. So I learned to be independent.] (Research Participant 1)

Optimism. The participants' experiences made them have a positive outlook in life. They considered problems as part of life. They were needed to flow or else a person would not be able to live life to the fullest.

Overcoming them (problems)? Not the word for it. It's the process of life. I have to let it flow. It's not something that I should stop from happening. It has to happen, or I haven't lived my life till I die. (Research Participant 1)

Love for oneself. The participants' experiences made them love themselves even more. They believed that the self is the only person that you can focus your attention on. So it is imperative to know that person and love him.

Kasi yan yung natatanging taong matututukan mo ng atensyon, yung sarili mo. So kung mag-fail kang makilala siya, nasaan ka ngayong nabubuhay ka? Pinababayaan mo yung pagkakataong binigay sayo ng diyos. [Because that is that only person that you can focus on absolutely, yourself. So if ever you fail to know that person, where are you now that you're living? You let the chance that God gave you to slip away.] (Research Participant 1)

Discussion

The lived experiences of a bisexual individual, just like that of other people, fall into a continuum. Thus, bisexual people undergo various stages to absolutely identify themselves as bisexuals. The main objective of this study was to create a formation of identity and sexual orientation model. The result of this study is somehow consistent with that of the identity formation model of Cass. Although, there are some differences. Cass's identity formation model has six stages while this research shows that there are five. Moreover, it shows that there is a destruction of the self and reconstruction of the self, while there is none in Cass's identity formation model.

According to Coleman (1985) (as cited in Oliveros, 1999), Stage 1 is also commonly known as pre-coming out. Individuals in this stage are not aware of their non-

heterosexual tendencies and they might not be able to identify what is wrong with it. Furthermore, Stage 2 is also called as the coming out. This is the stage wherein they tell other people about their sexuality and their confidants' reactions are crucial. It might either help or not the confider. Stage 3 is the stage wherein they tend to move toward the homosexual or bisexual identity. On the other hand, stage 4 is the stage where the bisexuals and homosexuals legitimize/rationalize their sexuality. Moreover, connection with other LGBT is characterized on this stage. Stage 5 is characterized by the LGBTs' recognition of the LGBT pride and culture. Devaluation of heterosexual institutions might be observed during this stage. Lastly, stage 6 is the stage wherein they integrate their bisexuality/homosexuality to their identity.

With regard to the identity formation of homosexuals (Cass's identity formation model), there are differences and similarities between Cass's identity formation model and the model that is formulated by this research. These differences and similarities are called points of convergence and divergence. In general, the points of divergence of this model and the Cass's identity formation model are deconstruction and construction of the self. These stages show how an individual deconstructs themselves because of the stigma that they experience and how they reconstruct themselves as stronger, bolder, and independent individuals. On the other hand, the points of convergence of this model and the Cass's identity formation model is that both of them exhibits a process of confusion, coming out, recognition of LGBT culture, and devaluation of heterosexual institutions.

Basically, identity formation is influenced or affected by several factors. Mostly, they are environmental factors. Another factor is the self. The factors either help the identity formation of a bisexual or it might actually be a factor that hinders the bisexuals from going through the stages. According to Oliveros (1999), social factors heavily triggers the bisexuals' decision to come out. Hence, it is obvious that social factors can help or worsen the experience for bisexuals. With regard to the self, it plays a vital role in forming the identity and sexual orientation of a bisexual. For it might also help or not the bisexuals.

Cass (1979) (as cited in Ritter and Terndrup, 2002) argued that, basically, bisexuals during the first stage tend to be disoriented or confused about their sexuality. They feel different from their peers. Moreover, a person in the first stage starts to notice his/her non-heterosexual tendencies, like same-sex attraction (Cass, 1979, as cited in Ritter and Terndrup, 2002). In addition, Erikson, an "ego psychologist", formulated the Psychosocial Stages that are focused on how the sense of self is affected by how children socialize (McLeod, 2013).

According to Erikson's "Psychosocial Stages" (1950, 1963) (as cited in McLeod, 2013), children face different psychosocial crisis in each stage. During adolescence (12–18), they face the crisis between Identity vs Identity or Role Confusion (McLeod, 2013). During this stage, people will be experiencing the desire to "fit in" in a society. Furthermore, McLeod (2013) noted that Identity Confusion is also called as Identity Crisis. Moreover, experimentation with different lifestyles may possibly be used as a way to deal with the confusion. Coercing an identity might cause a sense of negative identity, unhappiness, and rebellion.

The sexual exploration of bisexuals serves as the transition between the first stage and the second stage. The deconstruction of the self begins after the indication of bisexuality and realization of being bisexual. Hence, the process of the formation of sexual orientation (bisexuality) officially starts during the second stage. During the first stage, the individual does not realize that they are bisexuals, they only feel that they are confused about their sexuality or they feel that they are not heterosexuals. During the second stage, they finally have the idea that they might be bisexuals; however, they do not identify or accept themselves as bisexuals.

According to APA (2008), scientists are not really sure whether the cause of bisexuality is solely explained by biological or environmental factors. However, research shows that some biological and environmental factors may contribute to it. Some of the bisexual research participants in this research believed that they were influenced by environmental factors such as peers. Moreover, some also believed in an underlying genetic explanation or they are just plainly born with it.

According to Furnham (2015), repression is defined as the process of pushing unwanted thoughts into the unconscious. Moreover, intense anxiety causes a person to repress thoughts or feelings. "There are two phases that lead a person to repression, in the primary repression phase, an infant learns that some aspects of reality are pleasant, and others are unpleasant; that some are controllable, and others not." (Furnham, 2015, para. 6). The secondary repression happens when a person realizes that some actions that are "influenced" by desires may cause anxiety (Furnham, 2015).

On the other hand, alienation is defined as "the state of feeling estranged or separated from one's milieu, work, products of work, or self" ("Alienation," 2016). Alienation has various concepts. The concept of social alienation that is represented in this study is the social isolation. It is defined as the exclusion from social groups or interpersonal relationships. Thus, a person that experiences repression and social alienation or isolation finds it difficult to integrate his/her self. It is because the person's private identity (bisexual identity) and public identity (identity that is shown to others) do not complement each other.

Bisexuals feel the need to disclose their sexuality because they want to be accepted. However, due to the heterosexist position of the society, some bisexuals are forced to selectively disclose their sexuality. Selective disclosure is operationally defined as the coming out of a person to a selected few chosen based on a number of criteria namely: has interest in the uniqueness of bisexuality and is open-minded worthwhile conversations. More often, parents are not the primary people they think of confiding to. Reasons include following: They fear that the parents will feel loss, shock, guilt, anger, or hurt. Moreover, they also fear that the parents would be unsupportive, be in denial, and will not be accepting of their bisexuality ("Coming Out to Your Parents," n.d.). Bisexuals are less likely to disclose their sexuality to their parents as compared with lesbians and gays ("Chapter 3: The Coming Out Experience," 2013). Coming out or disclosing is often considered as a gradual process. The bisexuals in the present study found it relieving after disclosing to people ("Chapter 3: The Coming Out Experience," 2013).

According to Seltzer (2008), self-acceptance is the unconditional affirmation of the self. Bisexuals at this stage rationalize their bisexuality by accepting their identity as bisexuals. Moreover, they rationalize or normalize their sexuality because they are not told that being bisexual is wrong or because they see bisexuality as innately good. To strengthen their "normalization" of their sexuality, they connect with other LGBT people and, oftentimes, they experience positive emotional quality from other LGBT. However, there are some bisexuals that do not feel the need to connect with other LGBT because they feel independent enough that they do not need the affirmation of other people. Just like with Cass's identity formation model, bisexuals tend to value the LGBT heritage greatly that they tend to ignore heterosexual institutions like religion.

With all the techniques, experiences, and feelings that the participants went through, they felt they have become strong. According to Jones (2012), challenging situations usually happen in groups. Meaning "they are designed to bring discouragement, frustration, and misery" (Jones, 2012, para. 2). However, they also teach people how to seize the moment (Jones, 2012). They tend to become independent. Independent in a sense that they have close interpersonal relationships, but they are not really dependent on them. They can live on their own resources. Moreover, despite the negative experiences, they still perceive positivity in life. They love themselves because they justify that their selves are the only people that they can really know fully and they have to love that "person" unconditionally.

As marginalized individuals, people of sexual minority faces pressure to fit in a box the society has set. The heteronormative and heterosexist environment that we currently live in continues to put pressure on people of sexual minority to conform to a certain identity or sexual orientation that is binary and is deemed to be appropriate and correct. Hence, LGBT persons, specifically bisexuals, encounter an unusual brand of need to actively explore and label one's identity and sexual orientation. Through this research, the formation of identity and sexual orientation of the participants were explored, thus it revealed that they went through several stages. Moreover, they had unique experiences but concurrently grounded with

some commonality hence the identification of the stages.

Other than formulating a model that depicts the participants' experience in understanding their identity and sexual orientation, variables such as the self and other social aspects such as peers and culture were also tackled. To which it shows that, indeed, interactions among variables in our society affect (negatively or positively) a person's quest for a clear identity and sexual orientation. Since everyone has their own unique experiences, these experiences are later interpreted or rationalized by the participants as their own perceived origin of their bisexuality. These experiences are of crucial importance in one's exploration of the self.

The results of this study are unique because it does not only show a detailed process of the formation of identity and sexual orientation but it also highlighted the factors affecting the process itself. Hence, this just ultimately confirms that everyone has their own unique experiences in their quest to understanding oneself due to the intersectionality and interactions of various variables and factors despite the common theme or the stage that they are in.

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