



# Non-binary Living in a Binary World: The Unlabeled Experience



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## Introduction & Hypotheses

### Introduction

- Both popular media and social science research suggest that gender/sexual identities and roles that have dominated western society are being challenged (Budgeon, 2014)
- Heteronormative assumptions and the gender binary are rapidly evolving to capture experiences that reflect greater diversity (Diamond, 2005; Nagoshi et al., 2012), including those that extend beyond labels
- How this increased flexibility affects well-being, however, is not yet understood
- The current study seeks to advance our understanding of this diversity among gender, sexual and romantic minorities (GSRM) by answering the following questions:

**Question 1:** With regard to gender identity and sexual orientation, what are the experiences of unlabeled individuals in their communities? Why do unlabeled individuals choose to be unlabeled?

**Question 2:** Is unlabeled status associated with minority stress and well-being?

## Method

### Participants

- Participants were recruited from a range of sources (students, LGBTQ organization, and social media targeting GSRMs)
- Mean age: 19.24 years ( $SD = 1.49$ )
  - Primarily White (82%), Hispanic (5%), Asian-American (4%), African-American (2%), Native American (1%), Pacific Islander (1%), Other (5%)



Poster Available Online

[tinyurl.com/APS2015genderPRISM](http://tinyurl.com/APS2015genderPRISM)

## Method

### Procedure & Measures

- As a part of a larger battery of measures, participants completed the following scales:

#### Extended Satisfaction with Life Scale (ESWLS; Alfonso, Allison, Rader and Gorman, 1996)

50 items (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*)  
 o e.g., "I am satisfied with my life."

#### 8 Subscales

- General ( $\alpha = .92$ )
- Social Life ( $\alpha = .97$ )
- Physical Appearance ( $\alpha = .93$ )
- Sex Life ( $\alpha = .97$ )
- Self ( $\alpha = .94$ )
- Family ( $\alpha = .97$ )
- Relationship - Present ( $\alpha = .95$ )
- Relationship - Past ( $\alpha = .96$ )

#### Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (KSOG; Klein, 1978)

Assessed current sexual orientation (0 = *Heterosexual Only* to 6=*Homosexual Only*)  
 o e.g., "How do you label or identify yourself?"

#### Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ; Balsam, 2013)

50-items (0 = *Did not happen/NA* to 5 = *It happened, and it bothered me extremely*)

- e.g., "Hiding part of your life from other people"

#### 9 Subscales

- Gender Expression ( $\alpha = .84$ )
- Parenting ( $\alpha = .61$ )
- Vigilance ( $\alpha = .78$ )
- Discrimination/Harassment ( $\alpha = .76$ )
- Vicarious ( $\alpha = .80$ )
- Family of Origin ( $\alpha = .78$ )
- HIV/AIDS ( $\alpha = .76$ )
- Victimization ( $\alpha = .87$ )
- Isolation ( $\alpha = .72$ )

## Results

Fig. 1. Gender identity and unlabeled pronoun usage of participants (N = 915)

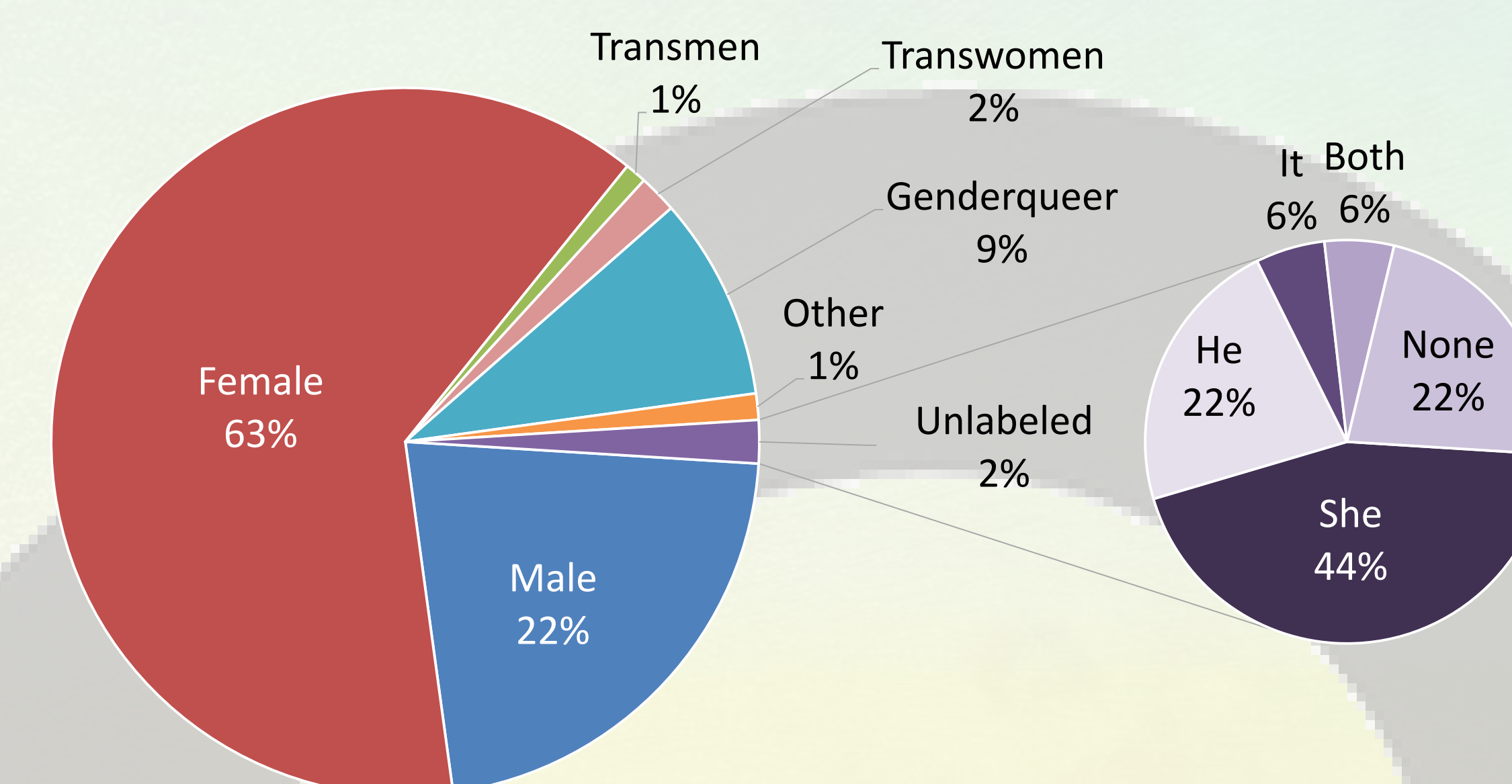


Table 1  
Gender Identity and Life Satisfaction

	Men		Women		Trans		Other		Unlabeled		F
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
General	24.64 <sup>a</sup>	7.16	24.57 <sup>a</sup>	6.46	15.92 <sup>b</sup>	8.73	20.01 <sup>ab</sup>	8.48	16.24 <sup>b</sup>	6.33	15.71**
Family	24.40 <sup>a</sup>	9.39	24.79 <sup>a</sup>	8.62	20.08 <sup>ab</sup>	7.90	18.32 <sup>ab</sup>	9.13	17.24 <sup>b</sup>	7.50	10.50**
Social Life	23.36 <sup>a</sup>	7.77	22.57 <sup>ab</sup>	7.64	20.92 <sup>ab</sup>	7.30	19.60 <sup>ab</sup>	8.12	16.94 <sup>b</sup>	8.93	4.83**

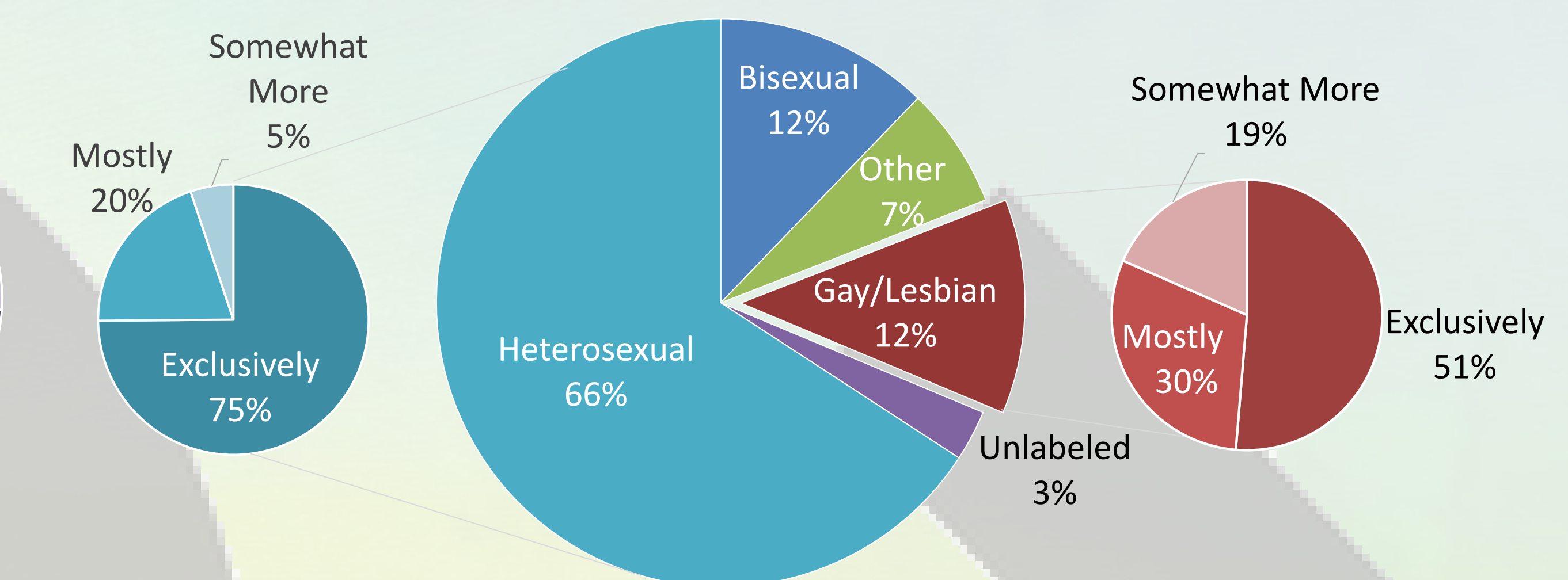
Note. Within rows, means which do not share superscripts differ according to Scheffe post-hoc tests. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .001$ .

- The majority (82%) of participants who reported an "unlabeled" gender identity were assigned female at birth and reported being gendered in public as "she" (65%) or both "s/he equally" (18%)
- In general, "unlabeled" participants reported lower overall and family life satisfaction compared to cisgendered, and lower social life satisfaction compared to men (see Table 1)
- "Unlabeled" were similar to other GSRMs on reported levels of minority stress and all other ESWLS subscales
- Explaining their "unlabeled" status, participants described their primary identification as human, expressed discomfort with gender-based assumptions and rejected constrictions of the gender binary

## Conclusion

- This study represents one of the first attempts to understand the experience of those who describe themselves as "unlabeled" and how they compare to other GSRMs on measures of well-being and minority stress
- Although a range of explanations for eschewing labels existed among a small number of participants, lower life satisfaction suggests that this may be an at-risk population meriting further study

Fig. 2. Sexual identity of participants (N = 623)



- All but one of the participants who reported an "unlabeled" sexual orientation indicated that their birth sex was female and none identified as male
- "Unlabeled" participants reported lower overall life satisfaction than did straight and gay/lesbian participants and lower family life satisfaction in comparison to straight participants (see Table 2)
- There were no differences between "unlabeled" and other GSRM participants on reported minority stress and all other ESWLS scales

Table 2  
Sexual Orientation and Life Satisfaction

	Straight		Bisexual		Gay/Lesbian		Other		Unlabeled		F
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
General	25.20 <sup>a</sup>	6.29	20.79 <sup>ab</sup>	7.35	22.68 <sup>a</sup>	8.51	21.58 <sup>ab</sup>	7.37	17.76 <sup>b</sup>	7.29	12.85**
Family	25.93 <sup>a</sup>	8.25	20.47 <sup>ab</sup>	8.75	20.11 <sup>b</sup>	9.53	19.70 <sup>b</sup>	9.04	17.65 <sup>b</sup>	9.66	17.33**

Note. Within rows, means which do not share superscripts differ according to Scheffe post-hoc tests. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .001$ .