LGBTQIA Representation in College Media

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By

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Abstract

This study and project looks at LGBTQIA representation in college media and how there can be more and better. The purpose is to improve LGBTQIA representation college media outlets. The study includes three interviews with experts as well as a review of literature.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

**Statement of the Problem**

The topic that I will be addressing in my paper is LGBTQIA representation in college media. There are many problems surrounding the representation of LGBTQIA people in college media, just as there are many problems surrounding their depiction in the media in general. One of these problems is the general lack of representation of LGBTQIA people and issues in college media. Another problem is unfair or one-sided representation of LGBTQIA people and issues. Biegel describes a person’s right to be ‘out’ which I relate to a person’s right to not only be out, but to be fairly and proportionately represented in the media:

“The right to be out is clearly central, and it matters greatly. Without such a right, an LGBT identity retains a secretive and shameful veneer, and LGBT persons continue to be viewed as second-class citizens, with an integral aspect of their personhood relegated to the isolation of the closet and all that this isolation portends (2010).”

Without being properly and fairly represented many LGBTQIA people are driven to be more secretive, and are seen by the public as an “other” and therefore a “second-class citizen.”

**Background of the Problem**

From my research, I have not found any studies or papers written about LGBTQIA representation in college media. However, research has been done on the effects of misrepresentation and lack of representation of LGBTQIA
individuals in the general media. It has also shown positive impacts of positive and fair representation. The exact ideas and points can be used in relation to college media.

Cavalcante describes the complexities that LGTBTQIA representation in television, which can be applied to all types of media: “Yet, while homosexuality can act as a textual selling point, the exact nature of gay representation depends upon its location within the diverse and fragmented television landscape. Subscription-based premium cable channels such as Showtime and HBO have the freedom to portray complex, immodest, and sexually driven LGBT characters. In fact, this is what defines their brand as viewers turn to this media fare for culturally provocative images absent from “basic” television packages…. Network television, alternatively, is governed by another set of rules concerning aesthetics and taste. Because homosexuality still remains a site of considerable cultural anxiety, it can undermine prevailing network TV industry strategy and praxis, which aims to attract a mainstream gaze and avoid alienating potential viewers (2015).”

This quote exemplifies a main issue in LGBTQIA representation. This issue is that representation can often be misguided, stereotyped and unfair. All forms of media, including college media, must strike a fair and balanced form of representation for all marginalized groups including the LGTBTQIA community.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to look at different colleges and their methods of representation or lack thereof of the LGTBTQIA community and LGTBTQIA
issues. This study will highlight how college media differs in their representations of LGBTQIA people.

This will be studied by looking at a selection of college’s different media outlets. Representation will be analyzed on its neutrality, fairness, or on its complete lack of representation. The study will also include interviews with scholars in the field of gender studies to speak in these issues.

Setting for the Study
The setting for the study will be centered at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. Cal Poly SLO is an interesting epicenter for this study because of its notoriety for lack of diversity and the most recent campus climate survey stating 58% of LGBTQ students experienced “exclusionary conduct.” The study will also look at colleges that are more diverse, less diverse, and vary geographically.

Research Questions
The purpose of these research questions is to take a critical look at LGBTQIA representation on college campuses using Cal Poly SLO as a framework.

1. Why is LGBTQIA representation important in college media?
2. How does LGBTQIA representation affects college campus climate?
3. How can college media integrate more LGBTQIA representation?
4. What are some aspects that college media should take from the general media and aspects that they shouldn’t take from?
5. How does Cal Poly’s LGBTQIA representation differ from other campuses that you know of?

6. How does lack of LGBTQIA representation affect LGBTQIA students?

7. How does college media reinforce a gender binary?

**Definition of Terms**

The definition of these terms is to help the reader better understand these concepts in regard to my paper and study.

**Sex:** Biologically based on physical characteristics such as sex organs or hormones (Healey, 2014, p. 1).

**Gender:** Internal sense of identity (Healey, 2014, p. 1).

**Gender Binary:** Gender as being only male or female. The gender binary is socially constructed (Healey, 2014, p. 1).

**LGBTQIA:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual

**Gaystreaming:** A stream of LGBT media such as Logo (Ng, 2008).

**Frames:** Frames back up an argument and can influence how the audience sees the situation (Rodriguez and Blumell, 2014).
Organization of Study

Chapter one will give an overview of my paper and study as well as lay out my research questions and define terms. Chapter two reviews some key literature used in my study. Chapter three is about the methodology I used. Chapter four will evaluate my results. Chapter five will provide an overview.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

The review of literature focuses on topics that directly deal with LGBTQIA representation in college media. These topics are how the media forms and perpetuates ideas and stereotypes, the importance and impact of representation.

The Media and Forming and Perpetuating Ideas and Stereotypes
The media plays a large role in reinforcing the idea that gender is binary and the idea that “gender” and “sex” are the same thing (Healey, 2014, p. 1). According to Healey (2014, p. 2), “upbringing, culture, peers, schools, community, …and religion,” also play roles in constructing our ideas about gender and sexuality. College media incorporates many of these institutions that Healey acknowledges. Healey (2014, p. 25) calls on the media to make two changes in order to portray LGBT people fairly that can also be applied to college media:

• “Give an objective and balanced picture of LGBT people and their rights and concerns.

• Include the voice of LGBT people and groups in newspaper, TV and radio coverage.”

Mucciaroni (2008, p. 4) looks at the history of LGBT coverage from 1985-2004: “To see how the gay rights agenda has changed, we can look at patterns of media coverage of gay rights issues. 9 Table 1.1 shows the relative shares of newspaper coverage devoted to six gay rights issues from 1985 to 2004. The
media in recent years has paid much greater attention to family-related issues, especially marriage. Military and marketplace discrimination, which dominated the agenda in earlier periods, have declined in prominence since the early to mid-1990s. Marriage and adoption accounted for a small fraction of the total coverage of gay rights issues until the late 1990s, when coverage of marriage started to rise sharply. During 2000 to 2004, the majority of articles written about gay rights issues covered marriage and adoption (overwhelmingly the former). The issues that receive the most attention today are less similar to one another than those in the past: The top two issues on the agenda in earlier periods—the military ban and civil rights—shared a concern with building tolerance and protecting employment opportunities for gays. The issue atop the agenda today—marriage—involves an entirely different set of claims about gay partners and families than the second most salient issue—the military ban.”

This quote gives insight into the evolving state of media representation.

Ng (2008, p. 273) explores the LGBT television channel, Logo and how even though they are a specifically LGBT entertainment channel that they still perpetuate stereotypes. Ng discusses LGBT characters being portrayed in a way that is comfortable and accepted to Americans which perpetuates stereotypes: “Furthermore, as Cohen (2003) chronicled, in post-World War II America, activities in the realm of consumption became articulated as a primary form of public participation, tying consumerism to gendered, raced, and classed identities in discourses around patriotism and nation-building. Aslinger (2009) noted that during the time of its launch, Logo trotted out stereotypes of gays as affluent and
brand-loyal consumers, and this remains true; former Logo executive Kristin Frank’s comments that the network’s audience “indexes higher in income, indexes higher in education, indexes higher in discretionary spending, indexes higher in loyalty” (personal communication, July 31, 2009) were typical of other interviewees. Hence, the ways that gaystreaming reinforces the trope of the good gay (especially male) consumer also enmeshes certain LGBT subjects more closely with dominant forms of national identity.”

This shows that even in an outlet made specifically for LGBT representation, oppressive stereotypes are still present because of our society’s ideals.

**Importance and Impact of Representation**

In a study of the television show *Glee*, Marwick, Gray, and Annany (2014, p. 643), the show had two primary impacts on those they studied:

“First, it functioned as a signifier of support for LGBT issues (e.g., manifested in a family member’s willingness to watch the show and discuss it, or a queer affiliation on a Facebook profile). Second, Glee functioned as a “sexual script,” a guideline for appropriate sexual behavior and encounters (Gagnon and Simon 1973). Watchers use Glee to interpret their own life experiences and imagine how they might articulate queer desires and acceptance of them.”

Viewers criticized the show for perpetuating some LGBT stereotypes, but this study shows the positive effects of representation and possible benefits of incorporating these ideas into college media (Marwick, Gray, Annany, 2014).
Mucciaroni (2008, p. 2) acknowledges that “portrayals of gays in popular cultures and the mass media are more numerous, positive, and varied” and while they have “improved the political climate for gay rights, but they are no substitute for the recognition, rights and benefits that the gay rights movement can secure only through the public policy process.” While this passage refers to U.S. public policy, the same could be said about policies on college campuses, and also how public policy affects college students.

Rodriguez and Blumell (2014, p. 343) discuss how until the 1990’s, LGBT people were framed in the news as being “social problems” or “deviants.” These tropes are “frames” used to influence an audience in a certain direction (Rodriquez and Blumell, 2014, p. 345). Blumell and Rodriguez use the idea of “frames” to show how same-sex marriage is portrayed in the media. Those against same-sex marriage use frames such as “morality”: “The morality frame is traditionally used by conservatives, religious activists, and traditionalists (Mucciaroni, 2011). Opponents of same-sex marriage use the morality frame to highlight the negative consequences for society if gays and lesbians were allowed to marry, call attention to government behavior, the immorality of same-sex marriage, and the influence same-sex marriage would have on family and children (Adams, 2013; Baunach, 2011). Other frames that fall under the morality category are sexual preference, homosexuals prey on children, homosexuality is teachable/contagious, it goes against the Bible and God, judicial activism, not needed/special rights, and children need mom and dad (Adams, 2013; McFarland, 2011).”
On the other side of this, the supportive of same-sex marriage frame is the “tolerance” frame (Rodriguez and Blumell, 2014, p. 346)”

“In terms of equality, Baunach (2011) states that the equality or tolerance frame, used by same-sex marriage supporters, equates same-sex marriage and same-sex unions to heterosexual marriage and paints a portrait of equal rights. The equal rights frame emphasizes the lack of access to fundamental rights and legal securities accompanying marriage to same-sex couples (DeLaet & Caufield, 2008). Other equality frames that can be found in the literature includes frames that equate how the loss of minority rights will lead to the loss of everyone’s rights, frames that involve the separation of church and state, egalitarianism, civil rights, acceptance, responsibility, queer culture, equating gay rights to racism, tolerance, and personal privacy (Brewer, 2003; Hull, 2001; Jowett & Peel, 2010; Kenix, 2008; McFarland, 2011; Smith, 2007).”

Rodriguez and Blumell’s discussion of frames is important to my study because frames are used in most media outlets, and this does not exclude college media.

**Definition of Terms**

**Sex:** Biologically based on physical characteristics such as sex organs or hormones (Healey, 2014, p. 1).

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Frames: Frames back up an argument and can influence how the audience sees the situation (Rodriguez and Blumell, 2014).
Chapter 3

Methodology

In this chapter, I will discuss the ways in which I will collect data, collections and presentations of data and delimitations.

Data Sources

For this data, I will interview three experts in fields related to my study. All three interviewees work at a university in fields that relate to sexuality and representation. The questionnaire will be derived from my original research questions to enhance the study. These interviews will allow for professional insight into my study.

Participants

One interviewee will be Appy Frykenberg, the Director of the Pride Center at Cal Poly. Frykenberg is an expert in the field of working with the LGBTQIA community on a college campus. Another interviewee will be Dr. Jane Lehr, the Director of the Women and Gender Studies Department at Cal Poly. Dr. Lehr is also a Professor who works closely with students and is currently working to create a Queer Studies Minor. The last interviewee will be Robin Parent, who works in the office of Inclusivity and Diversity at Cal Poly. She works with professors to develop diverse course material and is also a professor.
Interview Design
Here are the questions asked in my interviews:

1. Why is LGBTQIA representation important in college media?
2. How does LGBTQIA representation affect college campus climate?
3. How can college media integrate more LGBTQIA representation?
4. What are some aspects that college media should take from the
genre media and aspects that they shouldn’t take from?
5. How does Cal Poly’s LGBTQIA representation differ from other
campuses that you know of?
6. How does lack of LGBTQIA representation affect LGBTQIA students?
7. How does college media reinforce a gender binary?

Data Collection
My interviews serve as data collection. They serve as data collections
because I am interviewing experts in the field. The interviews will last about 45
minutes. I will use my questions and ask follow up questions if need be.

Data Presentation
I will record each interview with a recorder. For the most accurate
presentation of data, I will transcribe the interviews verbatim. I will also take
notes during the interview to provide any context. The presentation of my data
will be objective.
**Limitations**

There were limitations on my study based on my current situations. One limitation is only being able to interview professionals at Cal Poly due to the fact that I cannot travel. I have no budget for this, so no money could be put into it. I also only had 10 weeks, which put a time limit on my situation. Another limitation is that my interviews mostly reflect personal opinion on the part of the interviewee.

**Delimitations**

While there were limitations, I still had many options and opportunities. I was able to interview a wide range of professionals. My research could be done freely online.
Chapter 4
Data Analysis

This chapter will look at the respondents that I interviewed, and will give a summary of their responses to the questions. These responses will be in quotes or paraphrased. I will compare the responses to the literature as well.

Descriptions of Expert Respondents in Their Fields

Inclusivity and Diversity.

Robin Parent is the Inclusive Excellence Specialist at the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology at Cal Poly. Parent also teaches Women’s and Gender Studies courses at Cal Poly. Parent helps professors create a more diverse and inclusive curriculum. Parent taught English at Utah State University for 14 years prior to coming to Cal Poly.

Intersectionality.

Dr. Jane Lehr is the chair of the Women’s and Gender Studies Department at Cal Poly. Lehr is also an Associate Professor in Ethnic Studies. Lehr is the Director of the Humanities and Science, Technology & Society Minors Programs and Faculty Director of the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority and Underrepresented Student Participation (LSAMP) in STEM Program. Lehr went to Virgina Tech for graduate school for Science & Technology Studies and Women’s Studies.
APPY FRYKENBERG is the Coordinator of the Pride Center at Cal Poly. Appy was the Assistant Program Coordinator at the Queer Resource Center of The Claremont Colleges before coming to Cal Poly. Appy studied literature and queer theory at Claremont Graduate University.

LGBTQIA Communities.

LGBTQIA Representation in College Media Questionnaire

Each expert was asked questions about LGBTQIA representations in the media, including strengths, weaknesses, and how to improve it.

1. Why do you think LGBTQIA representation is important in college media?

   Question #1 was asked to gain general insight on why LGBTQIA representation in college media is important and a topic that should be studied and improved.

   • Robin Parent: Being able to, as a campus, provide all the different, or as many of the different identities on campus outwardly helps create a more inclusive space. That goes not just for LGBTQIA communities but also other diversities such as race, ethnicity, gender, and class. We have to represent it through the activities and the things that the community creates on campus that supports and provides safe spaces and comfortable spaces” (Appendix A).

   • Jane Lehr: “It’s important to be looking at the media and I think particularly on college campuses because of the power of the media
the media can also part of social change efforts and transformation. And in some cases, the same for example something like Mustang News, might be involved simultaneously in both reifying stereotypes and bias but also in doing work to intervene in that and trouble that (Appendix B).

2. How do you think LGBTQIA representation affects college campus climate?

Question #2 was designed to point out how media representation can make a change on college campus in the lives of LGBTQIA students and campus community.

- Robin Parent: “I think it has the potential to effect it greatly because ideally if you have a great supportive environment and thriving students and they’re producing media for the campus and outreach then you will be able to recruit and retain more of those students but that does mean that your campus climate has to be hospitable” (Appendix A).

- Jane Lehr: “So If we think about news reporting and we think about the possibility for integrating questions related to preferred pronouns and preferred honorific titles, Ms., Dr., Mr., etc., if the news media takes up questions like that for all of its interviewees and then uses that information as if it’s normal. So rather than making a production about it at every news story, just take seriously and as legitimate, people’s requests around their preferred personal pronouns, around their preferred honorifics. Does the verb work to make that work? If the individual is singular but they prefer a pronoun like they. And does it without a crisis, even if it doesn’t entirely
conform at the moment to AP guidelines, modeling that as something we need to always be thinking about rather than something we need to be thinking about in special instances I think can do a lot of work to increase reflection and awareness on campus and to directly improve campus climate by saying we are responsive to how people wish to be represented and how people are what their identities are” (Appendix B).

- Appy Frykenberg: “I think accuracy could help in terms of just spreading education and the more correct the information is, the less those misunderstandings happen. The less invisible my students feel. In terms of other kinds of reporting, I often say there is not one LGBTQ community, there are many different ones and misnomers around any targeted group when they’re being objectified, they get made homogenous. And if reporting touched on individual or individual group lives, and didn’t do things like say ‘this is all of them” (Appendix C).

3. How do you think college media can integrate more LGBTQIA representation?

This question was designed to take advice from experts in the field of inclusivity to get an honest opinion of what can be done to improve representation.

- Robin Parent: “I think being more representative of all of the different sorts of clubs, support systems, options, ways to engage, on campus provides a narrative for people to be able to follow. I think representing students in the media in ways that highlight that support, and I think we
will start to see more in the future, we often see the representations of relationships on college campuses’ and they’re almost always male/female straight, heterosexual, relationships. Maybe we’ll start to see that change in the way media is portraying things” (Appendix A).

• Jane Lehr: “One of the ways in which something like college media can demonstrate commitment and also allow for self representation and again normalizing the idea the there are LGBTQIA+ communities on campus would be a regular column. However, I think it would be really important that that column not always be written by the same person because even within communities, there are many diverse communities under the umbrella or acronym of LGBTQIA+ or whatever terminology people are using. So it would be critical I think for college media to not act as if there is one voice or one perspective but are there ways that different voices, and in some cases voices with disagreement, could be showcased as part of a regular feature” (Appendix B).

• Appy Frykenberg: “People don’t understand different needs for queer communities and so it translates into this sort of ‘we want to share this story but we’re not sure in what ways to be culturally sensitive so we’ll just assert our need and desire to share the story.’ Or we’ll share the story but in ways that sort of expose misunderstandings or reinforce misunderstandings like the trans and drag one that I mentioned. Other ways I’ve seen queer concerns and issues addressed on this campus
are often in thinking of queer issues as problem or outside issues. As though queer people were a special interest group that bring things up to upset a norm. I often find media represented that way or it’s the opposite where you have a group full of queer victims of some kind” (Appendix C).

4. What do you think are some aspects that college media should take from the general media and maybe aspects that they shouldn’t take from?

Question #4 was designed to compare college media to general media and look at areas to draw improvements from and at areas that should be avoided.

• Robin Parent: “Well, I think that college media representation needs to reflect the community and I think that for example, Cal Poly has a very strong, thriving, LGBTQIA community and there are a number of students that gravitate and feel supported by those resources, and those resources should be represented in the media to all students” (Appendix A).

• Appy Frykenberg: “What should be included is the queer voices speaking for themselves not just people talking about gays or the LGBTQ community but actually looking at the people who are targeted themselves. You see that happen where communities or families or loved ones get to speak for themselves and then the ones where they’re not. There’s a difference in the reporting there, there’s a
difference in the compassion provided and what gets highlighted in those moments and you don’t always want to scrutinize someone who has been directly targeted” (Appendix C).

5. How does Cal Poly’s LGBTQIA representation differ from other campuses that you know of?

Question #5 was designed to get insight on the other campuses that the experts are familiar with and their impressions on how their representation of LGBTQIA communities measures up to Cal Poly’s.

• Robin Parent: “The LGBTQIA community [at Utah State University] is small, smaller than Cal Poly, and far fewer out people, from my position. From my time there, and of course this could be blinded in a way that I group in the area and so I saw oppression in different ways. I felt that the campus community was more open and accepting but in a way of “let’s just not talk about it.” I’m not sure that it was better, it just might have come across as less violent in some ways but I think that in a lot of cases that can be more oppressive than actually having tough dialogues and really troubling the status quo because it was like “let’s just go on and you do your think and I’ll do my thing” (Appendix A).

• Jane Lehr: “, I feel like I’m not sure I know because if I’m learning about news stories at other universities it tends to be from Twitter or Facebook rather than doing an analysis of individual university papers, I’m very curated in that sense. I don’t actually have a good
sense of that answer. What I do think though is that there have been, this is the end of my ninth year at Cal Poly, and I think there have been changes overtime and I really respect the students, faculty and stuff involved in Mustang News because I think, there is engagement around these questions and engagement and reflection and a desire to do more or better” (Appendix B).

- Appy Frykenberg: “‘There’s was much more generally affirming [at Claremont Colleges]. There’s more embeddedness in the knowledge. We had a really robust ally program, so a lot of people had their facts down. That being said, I think the commitment to news on that campus was its own weird thing. We ran into similar issues in that news reporter who wants to come into a confidential event and report in the middle of event and we’d be like ‘no you can’t, please don’t do that, like don’t come and observe people. So we still ran into that kind of thing” (Appendix C).

6. How do you think lack of LGBTQIA representation effects LGBTQIA students?

Question #6 was designed to look at possibly detrimental effects of lack of LGBTQIA representations in college media.

- Jane Lehr: “I think that being invisible, being not seen, not being newsworthy is actually a very explicit communication that you are not a normal part of the Cal Poly community. You are not who we think of when we think of Cal Poly students. So you are not who we
think when we think of Cal Poly faculty and Cal Poly staff. And so absence is as detrimental, sometimes more detrimental, I’m not sure, then negative news coverage” (Appendix B).

- Appy Frykenberg: “I once took a course where talked a lot about how you can tell what’s most unacceptable on a campus, or in a place, or in a culture, by where the silences are. What people are unwilling to or unable to talk about. I very strongly feel that when not represented and not regularly represented sends a clear message that either LGBTQ folks are not important or that its something so culturally taboo in it’s own way that its something that people are avoiding. So in terms of inclusion and how students feel on campus, which is my primary concern, I tend to think it effects queer students by reaffirming any suspicions or fears they might have that they are not welcome” (Appendix C).

7. How do you think college media reinforces a gender binary?

Question #7 was designed to look critically at how college media reinforces a gender binary.

- Jane Lehr: “I think one of the ways we see a gender binary reinforced in college media is through these he/she assumption practices. I think there are different ways college media contributes, I’m thinking about various Mustang News commentators that I have read and interviews I’ve read in the news coverage stories and I think often our students
who are covered, who are included, bring assumptions about gender binaries in and think not just that there are “two sexes” or “two genders” but to bring in assumptions about what those two gender identities are” (Appendix B).

- Appy Frykenberg: “Well, trans glam, like I said, is a huge one. Like somehow to be transgender in the national awareness, is to be fully transitioned. I think just highlighting gender queer folks or folks who are in between or folks who have gone through every process and transition that you can and gender conforming surgery but don’t look like they were sculpted by 8 physical trainers” (Appendix C).

**LGBTQIA Representation in College Media Research Questions**

These research questions were designed to critically analyze LGBTQIA representation in the media and attempt to improve representation of LGBTQIA communities.

**Question #1: Why is LGBTQIA representation important in college media?**

- “With the population of colleges and universities becoming more ethnically, racially, culturally and economically diverse, college newspapers not only protect their credibility by being diverse, but also serve as role models and public conscience for the student body” (Wickham, 2004, p. 104).

- “Historically, LGBT characters have been either absent from mainstream media or portrayed as villains or victims. This absence is referred to by
Gerbner and Gross (1976) as “symbolic annihilation” and reflects the subordination of sexual minorities. As Gross (1991, 406) writes, ‘Those who are the bottom of the various power hierarchies will be kept in their places in part through their relative invisibility’” (Marwick, Alice and Gray, Mary and Ananny, Mike, 2014, p. 629).

Question #2: How can LGBTQIA representation affect college campus climate?

• “Another recurring scenario in these pages, one which is likely to be even more important now that attention is shifting in many places from the courtroom to the classroom, is the reliance on gay and lesbian and transgender persons as resources. As referenced throughout Part II, programs and initiatives that seek to improve school climate and to provide an equal level of support for all students can benefit greatly from the active participation of LGBTs on individual campuses. Across the country, there has been a growing shift in perspective: school officials no longer see out students and out educators as problems that have to be dealt with but instead regard them as valuable resources who can play important leadership roles at local school sites” (Biegel, 2010, p. 202).

Question #3: How can college media integrate more LGBTQIA representation?
• “A written commitment to diversity in reporting provides a standard for writers to follow. If a standard is implemented early in the education of a journalist, a commitment to diversity has an increased chance of becoming part of the journalist's mantra that already includes fairness, balance and accuracy” (Wickham, 20014, p. 107).

• “Give an objective and balanced picture of LGBT people and their rights concerns. Include the voice of LGBT people and groups in newspaper, TV and radio coverage” (Healey, 2014, p. 25).

Question #4: What are some aspects that college media should take from the general media and aspects that they shouldn’t take from?

• “Throughout most of the twentieth century’s media representations, the social anxiety surrounding queerness has been displaced directly onto queer bodies and subjectivities. Within this symbolic economy, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) characters function as repositories of shame, danger, perversity, psychopathology, helplessness, and anti-sociality (Gross 2001; Russo 1987; Weiss 1992). Seidman (2002, 129) identifies these characterizations as “polluted,” for they set up a binary that associates heterosexuality with purity and homosexuality with impurity. However, as LGBTQ narratives and characters have increasingly migrated to the core of television and popular culture—specifically since the 1990s (Becker 2006; Walters 2001)—they are characterized less by pollution and more by discourses of normalization. Normalization
attenuates the potential “risk” queer presence may pose to a dominant social order by de-emphasizing or erasing difference, while asserting sameness to an idealized white, middle class, heterosexual norm (Duggan 2003; Richardson 2005; Warner 1999). As a result, normalized LGBT representations routinely offer domestic and depoliticized images of “the self-regulating homosexual subject who chooses stable co-habiting relationships” (Richardson 2005, 522). Many scholars have investigated the cultural assumptions and political implications of this normalized queer figure, arguing it disciplines and limits queer subjectivity and radical possibility in media texts (see Avila-Saavedra 2009; Battles and Hilton-Morrow 2002; Doran 2013; Dow 2001; Fejes 2000; Seidman 2002; Sloop 2000). However, these studies overwhelmingly focus a critical lens onto LGBTQ characters alone. This delimited scope implies that the cultural work of normalization can be fully exhaustive and contained solely within LGBT figures. These studies also suggest that cultural normalization uniformly reproduces homogenizing, repressive media discourses that eradicate any trace of queerness” (Cavalcante, 2015, p. 455-456).

Question #6: How does lack of LGBTQIA representation affect LGBTQIA students?

This quote does not directly answer the question but reflects negativity towards LGBTQIA groups on campuses and the effect on LGBTQIA students.
• “The majority of LGBTQ students frequently hear homophobic remarks and other types of biased language at school (GLSEN & Harris Interactive, 2008; Phoenix et al., 2006). In light of these experiences, some choose to skip school to avoid negative experiences that threaten their sense of safety (Kosciw & Diaz, 2006)” (Walton, 2014, p. 43).

Question #7: In what ways does media reinforce a gender binary?

• “Importantly, the Araujo case also presented, in microcosm, a dynamic that I argue is also taking place on a larger cultural scale—the discursive "fixing" of gender nonconformity in news and popular culture, and the related, emergent hegemony in media in recent years of "wrong body discourse" (WBD) as an overarching explanation for gender challenges. (WBD is an account of gender nonconformity that sees it as the (accidental, biological) result of an individuals' brain or psyche being misaligned with their anatomy, so that an individual may identify as being one gender while living in the body of the "other," thus being in the "wrong body"). In the Araujo case, for example, journalists responded to Araujo's gender fluidity at first by marginalization, but then by quickly (re)containing hir gender within conventional categories, mobilizing WBD, and asserting that s/he was "really" (and always) a girl. Few if any voices in this discourse spoke to the possibility of Araujo's (or anyone's) gender fluidity as permanent or "real" in itself” (Barker-Plummer, 2013, p. 2).
• “Gender is actually taught to us from the moment we are born. Gender expectations and messages bombard us constantly. Upbringing, culture, peers, schools, community, media, and religion are some of the many influences that shape our understanding of this core aspect of self” (Healey, 2014, p. 2)

**LGBTQIA Representation in College Media Data**

There is not much information available about LGBTQIA representation in college media, which made the interviews with experts in the field important. The expert respondents included Robin Parent, the Inclusive Excellence Specialist at the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology at Cal Poly and a Women’s and Gender Studies Professor at Cal Poly, Dr. Jane Lehr, the chair of the Women’s and Gender Studies Department at Cal Poly and an Associate Professor in Ethnic Studies, and Appy Frykenberg, the Coordinator of the Pride Center at Cal Poly. Each respondent was asked the same questions. The following tables present the respondent’s answers.

**Question #1: Why is LGBTQIA representation important in college media?**

This question is simple, but important to see what the respondents had to say. There is also not much written on this topic so a very general question was important to gain insight. The literature states that one reason representation in college media is important are to build credibility and set an example for the campus (Wickham, 2004). Another reason is the importance of inclusion of historically silenced groups (Marwick, Alice and Gray, Mary and Ananny, Mike, 2014).
Table 1 gives a summary of why the expert respondents think that LGBTQIA representation in college media is important. Frykenberg is not included in the table because I forgot to ask them the question. Both Parent and Lehr touched on points that are related to creating a more inclusive and respectful campus.

Table 1

*Importance of LGBTQIA Representation in College Media*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Representation is important…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robin Parent</td>
<td>Create an inclusive space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Lehr</td>
<td>Social change efforts, reifying stereotypes and bias</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question #2: How can LGBTQIA representation affect college campus climate?**

This question was proposed to gain insight on how LGBTQIA representation can have a direct effect on the climate of the campus and the positive effects representation and inclusion can have. The literature states that inclusion of LGBTQIA communities can have a positive and direct effect on campus climate (Biegel, 2010).

In Table 2, each respondent gives a different answer but each answer relates to each other. While Parent says that it will create a supportive
environment, Frykenberg and Lehr provide answers that will create a supportive environment.

Table 2

*The Effect of LGBTQIA Representation in College Media on Campus Climate*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>The effect on campus climate…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robin Parent</td>
<td>Creating a supportive environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Lehr</td>
<td>Increase awareness and reflection, correctly represent identities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appy Frykenberg</td>
<td>Accuracy, spreading education, not reporting homogenously</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question #3: How can college media integrate more LGBTQIA representation?**

This question was asked to the experts in order to get an honest idea of what could be done to integrate more and better LGBTQIA representation into college media. The goal was for college media outlets to see these answers and use them to better their publications. The literature states that guidelines should be followed on representation and diversity for publications (Wickham, 20014). The respondent’s answers could help create guidelines.

Each respondent took a different approach to this answer. Parent suggested highlighted resources and ways for students to engage. Lehr suggested directly hearing from the students. Frykenberg suggested getting rid of misunderstandings and swayed representations. Each answer provided
important insight on how to improve and integrate more and better representation.

Table 3

*Integrating More LGBTQIA Representation in College Media*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>How to integrate…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robin Parent</td>
<td>Show resources and ways to engage, highlight support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Lehr</td>
<td>Self representation, regular columns by a diverse group of students, highlight different voices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appy Frykenberg</td>
<td>Don’t reinforce misunderstandings or victimize</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question #4: What are some aspects that college media should take from the general media and aspects that they shouldn’t take from?**

The point of this question was to bring to attention the fact that college media creators are in the process learning. This is not meant as an excuse for poor coverage and representation. It also not to say that general media representation is better or worse than college media representation. The question is meant for college students creating media to look critically at general media representation and learn from its successes and failures. The literature discusses poor representation in the form of “anxious displacement” as a pitfall to avoid (Cavalcante, 2015).

Jane Lehr is not included in this table because I forgot to ask Lehr the question. Parent and Frykenberg had separate answers that relate to each other.

By honestly reflecting communities and allowing people to speak on their own behalf, reporting will be more honest and well rounded.
Table 4

*Aspects from General Media that College Media Should or Avoid or Not Avoid*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Aspects to integrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robin Parent</td>
<td>Reflect community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appy Frykenberg</td>
<td>Allow queer voices to speak for themselves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question #5: How does Cal Poly’s LGBTQIA representation differ from other campuses that you know of?**

This question was designed to draw from the unique perspectives and careers of each respondent to critically compare college media.

Each respondent had a unique answer of course as his or her experiences were different. Lehr had a difficult time comparing because of a change in times but acknowledged Cal Poly’s growth. Parent acknowledged that while it seems that Utah State University was more accepting, part of that was due to not addressing issues at all. Frykenberg said that Claremont had better representation and reporting but still ran into issues.

Table 5

*Cal Poly LGBTQIA Representation as Compared to Other Colleges*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Question #6: How does lack of LGBTQIA representation affect LGBTQIA students?

This question was designed to look at the possible effects on LGBTQIA students when there is a lack of representation in college media. This is to highlight the detrimental effects this could have. The literature states that many students feel unsafe to come to school when negative comments are made (Walton, 2014).

Robin Parent is not included in this because I did not ask her the question. Both Lehr and Frykenberg highlighted the idea that lack of representation shows LGBTQIA students that they are not welcome or part of the community, and that is detrimental to LGBTQIA students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Affect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robin Parent</td>
<td>Utah State University, Utah was more conservative; seemingly more accepting by not discussing issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Lehr</td>
<td>Virginia Tech, Difficult to answer because of a change in times, but has seen Cal Poly grow in the past 9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appy Frykenberg</td>
<td>Claremont College, Claremont had more facts and better representation but still had issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6

Affect of Lack of Representation in College Media on LGBTQIA Students
Jane Lehr: Showing students they are not welcome or a part of the community; detrimental

Appy Frykenberg: Sends message that LGBTQIA people are not important and that the media doesn't want to acknowledge them; reaffirms LGBTQIA student fears that they aren't welcome

Question #7: In what ways does media reinforces a gender binary?

This question was created to look at the way that media purposefully or not purposefully reinforces a gender binary and look at the effect it has at colleges. The literature states that media constantly reaffirms the gender binary (Healey, 2014).

I did not ask Parent this question. Lehr and Frykenberg both had answers that could be directly taken and used by media outlets to begin to stop reinforcing the gender binary in the media.

Table 7

The Ways that Media Reinforces a Gender Binary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>The ways that reinforce…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane Lehr</td>
<td>He/she assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appy Frykenberg</td>
<td>“Trans glam”; only highlighting certain transgender people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5
Discussion and Recommendations

Summary
This study was done due to a need for more and better representation of LGBTQIA people in the media, as well as college media. It was inspired by Cal Poly’s poor campus climate surrounding LGBTQIA people and how the media can play a role in improving campus climate through representation.

To get information from experts for the study, a list of research questions was used for interviews:

8. Why is LGBTQIA representation important in college media?
9. How does LGBTQIA representation affects college campus climate?
10. How can college media integrate more LGBTQIA representation?
11. What are some aspects that college media should take from the general media and aspects that they shouldn’t take from?
12. How does Cal Poly’s LGBTQIA representation differ from other campuses that you know of?
13. How does lack of LGBTQIA representation affect LGBTQIA students?
14. How does college media reinforces a gender binary?

Each respondent gave unique and interesting answers that related, yet all different from each other.
**Discussion**

Looking at the respondent answers as well as the literature can make conclusions.

**Question #1: Why is LGBTQIA representation important in college media?**

Both respondents discussed the importance of creating a space that accepting and inclusive. Lehr elaborated that representation is important in defying stereotypes and biases as well as working toward social change.

The literature touches on giving proper representation and not making communities invisible (Marwick, Alice and Gray, Mary and Ananny, Mike, 2014). The literature also discusses the media as creating an example for the student body (Wickham, 2004).

Overall, LGBTQIA representation in college media is important because it works to create a space that should be inclusive. Aspects of an inclusive space include fair and equitable representation that does not perpetuate stereotypes.

**Question #2: How can LGBTQIA representation affect college campus climate?**

Creating an inclusive and supportive environment was again a theme in the respondent answers. The respondents answered that accuracy and increased awareness and reflection were factors that would improve campus climate.

The literature highlights support as an important part of affecting campus climate as well as active participation (Biegel, 2010).
Overall, more and better LGBTQIA representation can help to improve resources, create a more inclusive and accepting community, create accurate information and increase awareness around LGBTQIA issues.

**Question #3: How can college media integrate more LGBTQIA representation?**

The respondents replied in various ways. Some ways that college media can integrate more LGBTQIA representation are showing more resources and options for students to engage, allowing LGBTQIA people and communities to speak for themselves, getting facts accurate and avoiding victimizing LGBTQIA people and communities.

The literature states the importance of fair and balanced coverage (Healey, 2014). The literature also discusses that guides should be in place for better representation (Wickham, 2014).

Overall, colleges can integrate more LGBTQIA representation by giving fair and accurate coverage, showing all resources for students to get involved in, letting LGBTQIA people speak for themselves, ensuring that all facts in stories are true and fair and by not victimizing communities.

**Question #4: What are some aspects that college media should take from the general media and aspects that they shouldn’t take from?**
The respondents discussed the importance of allowing LGBTQIA people to speak for themselves as well as truly and fairly reflecting LGBTQIA communities.

The literature points out pitfalls in representing LGBTQIA people and communities that are harmful, including stereotypes " (Cavalcante, 2015).

Overall, college media can avoid stereotypes and wrong facts or biases. College media should allow LGBTQIA people to speak for themselves and give them fair coverage.

**Question #5: How does Cal Poly’s LGBTQIA representation differ from other campuses that you know of?**

Respondents had a different answer based on their experiences. Parent taught at Utah State University, which seemed more accepting but in reality was because they were ignoring issues. Lehr could not speak to this but acknowledged the improvements Mustang News has made. Frykenberg stated that Claremont was much more progressive and accepting but still had it’s issues.

Overall, Cal Poly media can be sure to fully and fairly address all issues, keep making progress in terms of reporting on LGBTQIA people, and work to be more progressive.

**Question #6: How does lack of LGBTQIA representation affect LGBTQIA students?**
The respondents pointed out the detrimental effects that lack of representation has. The respondents said that lack of representation would show students that they are not welcome on campus. It also shows them that they are not important or worthy of representation. To avoid detrimental effects as pointed out in the literature such as avoiding school, colleges can be sure to give LGBTQIA people and communities fair coverage and show they are welcome on campus and worthy (Walton, 2014).

**Question #7: In what ways does media reinforces a gender binary?**

The respondents said that the media reinforces a gender binary by assuming he/she pronouns and only reporting or highlighting certain transgender people that fit into society’s idea of “male” and “female.”

The literature states that the media conforms to the gender binary by the way they report on transgender and gender queer people (Healey, 2014).

College media outlets can actively work against reinforcing the gender binary by asking people what their preferred pronouns are and not assume and highlight all people equally regardless of identity whether they fit into societal expectations or not.

**Recommendations for Practice**

The study has been completed the data has been analyzed about LGBTQIA representation in college media. Any sort of college media can use this information or media in general, including freelance writers.
Get Facts Correct

Getting facts correct is always important in journalism, but is especially important when representing people. This relates to Frykenberg’s statement about the “drag fashion show” and “trans fashion show” being mixed up by Mustang News and the effect it had on students and the misinformation is spread.

As Lehr said, getting pronouns correct is important as part of the accurate facts and spreading information.

For better representation and correct facts, Healey states “Give an objective and balanced picture of LGBT people and their rights concerns. Include the voice of LGBT people and groups in newspaper, TV and radio coverage” (2014).

Allow LGBTQIA People to Have Their Own Voices and Speak on Their Own Behalf

Lehr suggested columns written by diverse LGBTQIA people. Lehr said, It would be critical I think for college media to not act as if there is one voice or one perspective but are there ways that different voices, and in some cases voices with disagreement, could be showcased as part of a regular feature.”

Frykenberg also highlighted the important of letting LGBTQIA people speak for themselves for fair and accurate coverage.
Overall, for truly fair and accurate coverage communities must have their own voice, and only speak for themselves.

**Study Conclusion**

In conclusion LGBTQIA representation in college media is pertinent to reporters, colleges, LGBTQIA communities, and all students, faculty, and staff. LGBTQIA representation should be chronicled and look at its progression as years go on.

This study can be applied to media outlets (at colleges or not), to freelance writers, and to anyone at any media outlet. This study can serve as an educational to any person who finds representation important or who wished to be a writer and represent marginalized groups fairly and accurately.
References


Appendix A

Interview Transcripts: Robin Parent

The following interview was conducted to get an expert opinion on inclusivity and diversity in terms of LGBTQIA representation in university media.

Interviewer: Alexis McCoy-Caso

Respondent: Women’s and Gender Studies Professor and Inclusive Excellence Specialist in the Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology at Cal Poly (Robin Parent)

Date of interview: 5/19/2016

Interview Transcription:

Alexis McCoy-Caso: “Why do you think LGBTQIA representation is important specifically in college media?”

Robin Parent: “I think that college media is one of the first and the only ways people outside of the campus community can see what the population and the
community is inside. So if you think of the campus as its own microcosm of a community and is always recruiting people because you want more students, that’s how it works, and you want students to feel comfortable on campus and be able to find people that they affiliate with, that they see themselves there because they see others that are similar to them. Being able to, as a campus, provide all the different, or as many of the different identities on campus outwardly helps create a more inclusive space. That goes not just for LGBTQIA communities but also other diversities such as race, ethnicity, gender, and class. We have to represent it through the activities and the things that the community creates on campus that supports and provides safe spaces and comfortable spaces.”

AM: “How do you think LGBTQIA representation affects college campus climate?”

RP: “I think it has the potential to effect it greatly because ideally if you have a great supportive environment and thriving students and they’re producing media for the campus and outreach then you will be able to recruit and retain more of those students but that does mean that your campus climate has to be hospitable. I think sometimes campus media portrays inaccurate depictions of what the campus climate looks like and, I have not analyzed Cal Poly’s media but I know in the diversity field there has been a recent examination of campus media and that they notice that often schools will represent their campus as more diverse than the campus actually is and I would just hazard in assumption that Cal Poly probably does this. That is almost sort of like, obviously it’s not illegal, but in some ways it’s a false representation and so you get students to come to campus and find that reality isn’t what was portrayed in the pictures and then they feel like leaving and that they don’t belong and they struggle and we see attrition in those populations, most often populations that don’t fall within Cal Poly’s norm of a predominantly white institution, science based, so we see that the people outside of that bubble tend to fall off. However I do think that it has the benefit of helping to change it if you have a support system in place because that can help create a more diverse community because you’re bringing more diverse people in.”

AM: “How do you think college media can integrate more LGBTQIA representation?”

RP: “I think being more representative of all of the different sorts of clubs, support systems, options, ways to engage, on campus provides a narrative for people to be able to follow. I think representing students in the media in ways that highlight that support, and I think we will start to see more in the future, we often see the representations of relationships on college campuses’ and they’re almost always male/female straight, heterosexual, relationships. Maybe we’ll start to see that change in the way media is portraying things. I think also the media, in outreach; can provide information for those seeking. So maybe, and I’m not sure exactly,
but maybe the way that the Pride Center might outreach to particular students, the way that Admissions may reach out to different high schools that have LGBTQIA communities and clubs, and being able to outreach specifically. Arranging ways to engage and ensure that those messages are sent to the populations instead of just “hey come to Cal Poly, here’s a picture of our diverse community,” but specifically oriented outreach programs.”

AM: “We already kind of touched on this but maybe a little more, what about in the classrooms, how do you think that representation is important?”

RP: “I think that depends on the class clearly. In the courses that I teach, Women’s and Gender Studies, we talk about the LGBTQIA community. Even though I’m teaching Global Perspectives of women, I’m really interested in global perspectives of gender and that includes a more broad examinations of groups that marginalized globally and I think that there a lot of places where representation could be made better. I also think that there in the job that I do that raising awareness and talking to faculty about being inclusive that my goal is that they create safer and more welcoming places in the classroom for all of their students which would also include being respectful, open, and communicable about LGBTQIA issues that may come up, or even not issues, there are some faculty that just don’t feel comfortable even talking to a person that is outwardly and openly gay or lesbian or transgender. One of things that I find is that a student I had last year that identified as a different gender and a different name. but PolyLearn refuses to let you change your name, you have to go with the name that comes through the registration office, even though you can change your name in the portal to be whatever it is that you want it to be, you don’t have that option in PolyLearn. So I would go through my PolyLearn roll and I would call out the names and I would get to this name and there’s this sort of weird pause and never in a million years would I want to make a student feel uncomfortable because I had no idea, so there was no way to alert me that this student would prefer to be called something else and that I called them by the name that was on the roster. So there are things that the university could do to erase some of those barriers that cause identity trauma to our LGBTQIA community for sure.”

AM: “What would you say would be a first step or two in integrating more representation?”

RP: “Well, I think that what media that I do see about the LGBTQIA community on campus is often episodic. For instance, it’s Pride Month, so let’s talk about Pride Month. There are these very episodic sorts of things that are calling attention to certain issues, which is great but there are a lot of other everyday types of experiences that could be represented that don’t often get drawn upon. So when you look at the everyday sorts of representation what you end up seeing is a very normalized population view and you only see these other things when there’s an event happening. So I think one of the first ways is being able to represent the everyday life of somebody, to tell that person’s story, and that story
might be including their position in the statement. I know there’s probably a lot of people that would disagree with me but you know for example if somebody wins an award in agricultural science and they’re talking about the award and you ask them in the interview, and they say “I identify as 'A' and I find this to be difficult receiving this award,” the likelihood hat that first sentence would actually get published is I would say, probably slim. That would be something that would be cut because they would be concerned the audience would react adversely to that. And you would probably get a lot of comments if you did include it and feedback that would say, “why did we need to know this?” Well, you needed to know because that student chose to share it, that’s part of their identity. It’s about valuing the beliefs and what students from LGBTQIA communities or other communities want to share. In feminist studies we call that their positionality, their standpoint, it’s where they come from. It’s an important part of their identity that we shouldn’t exclude, it should be included if they want it to be included."

AM: “So if we’re looking at like, media representation in general, not just college media representation, what do you think are some aspects that college media should take from and maybe aspects that they shouldn’t take from? Ones that will improve representation and ones that will make it worse.”

RP: “Well, I think that college media representation needs to reflect the community and I think that for example, Cal Poly has a very strong, thriving, LGBTQIA community and there are a number of students that gravitate and feel supported by those resources, and those resources should be represented in the media to all students. But I think that it is also, in this point in our campus climate, very important for students to realize that there’s a lot of hard work. It’s not impossibly but they shouldn’t feel tricked that they came to a campus because they expected it to be super open and accepting. I think our campus is going through some growing pains, and we’ve seen a lot of agitation surrounding diversity issues, not just LGBTQIA. I think that agitation is good because it shows that there is movement. If there weren’t any agitation it would just be status quo and it would be a subculture and not an equal culture. So we’re starting to see some movement and I think that college media needs to constantly be revised and rethought and I think it needs to go through a vetting process that has eyes on it from many different communities. So instead of someone just being like, “that’s the way it should look,” and I actually have no idea what sort of vetting process the university does. Yesterday I heard about the “Dick and Jane” video that was put up and very quickly taken down that was – did you see it by any chance?”

AM: “I saw it, but I didn’t watch it.”

RP: “It actually ended up portraying a very strong, leadership, white male and ended up portraying a ditsy female, Jane, and Jane couldn’t get it together and Dick is trying to help her out in really sort of 1950’s style sexism and totally inappropriate. Somebody had to have approved this and said “sure we’re going
to put it up on the web,” and I think that’s problematic, that somebody wasn’t like you “you know maybe somebody else should take a look at this and if I don’t know the answer then someone else should. The fact that they were able to put it up and to publish it and then the feedback from that was about how awful and horrible and how do we help the students understand that what they produced from this is inappropriate because we’re a learning institution. How do we talk to these students and say "what you did was represent a gender binary that is not that Cal Poly supports.” So I think in the same way that we need to be able to put out media that not only shows the aspirations of our campus climate and community but also an underlying reality in sense of change. I have no idea how you do that but that’s what I think.”

AM: “Definitely. Correct me if I’m wrong but didn’t you work at a university in Utah? Do you have any examples of how LGBTQIA representation differed from there and here and kind of a quick overview of what that campus was like compared to Cal Poly diversity wise. “

RP: “It’s really interesting. Well Utah State is a Carnegie Land Grant institution, so it’s a research one institution. It has a population of over 30,000 students, so it’s bigger than Cal Poly. Its whiter than Cal Poly interestingly enough, and it’s a religious dominant institution so lots of latter day saint Mormons go there to state school, like how Californians go to state schools. Its just their pool of what they’re drawing from is skewed religiously and ethnically. But because it’s a graduate level institution as well, there’s a larger majority of Master’s and PhD students from internationally. So the international population was much greater than at Cal Poly. So in some ways that provides a very interesting dynamic and because they’re graduate students, their credibility and weight in the institution is a little bit higher so I think that I interacted and saw them, when you look at the populations, in a way that was maybe more powerful in a particular way. I was also really involved with starting a multicultural sorority on our campus called Theta Nu Zi, and unlike a Latina sorority or an African/Black sorority they were/are multicultural so they are open to everybody and everybody and one of their tenants is the multiculturalism and the sisterhood. That was another way that I saw the breaking down of some stereotypes and some barriers from a multicultural perspective. The LGBTQIA community is small, smaller than Cal Poly, and far fewer out people, from my position. From my time there, and of course this could be blinded in a way that I group in the area and so I saw oppression in different ways. I felt that the campus community was more open and accepting but in a way of “let’s just not talk about it.” I’m not sure that it was better, it just might have come across as less violent in some ways but I think that in a lot of cases that can be more oppressive than actually having tough dialogues and really troubling the status quo because it was like “let’s just go on and you do your think and I’ll do my thing.” One of the things that I did work on was a grant from the Office of Violence Prevention Against Women when I was there with the Title IX Director and the Director of the Women’s Center and we put together a series of informational videos that we were able to insert into
courses that all freshman and transfer students would see and we had students create the scripts and then I worked to find actors to portray them and to find actors that were representative of the groups that we were looking for. It was on dating violence and so we did a female dominant dating scenario, a male dominant dating scenario, a stalking scenario and a LGBTQ couple scenario. The students all wrote the scripts, and you would view the video and there was a positive outcome a negative outcome, so it was like choose your own ending and each one provided campus resources. I thought that that was pretty progressive for Utah state to even be engaging in dating scenarios that clearly happen on campus but the majority of the population doesn't really want to notice or see. So in that way I felt that that was progressive and something that haven't yet come across here but I know it probably happens, I just haven't been engaged in the sorts of conversations. Utah can be a really interesting space. I also went to undergrad at the university of Georgia and I moved from Utah to Georgia and that for me was a culture shock in that there was no one that I knew that was outwardly gay or lesbian, certainly I didn't know anyone at that point, early 90's, transgender was something that wasn't even talked about in the media. For me it was also an introduction to what racism really was. In my community there was one black family in my high school and we had some Latinos and some Indian students but they were mostly connected to the university so it was a really different sort of environment. So I think that when I went to Georgia, I thought it was, for the LGBTQ community, much more open because I met people who were outwardly, “this is who I am, this is my identity.” Part of that was that I had never experienced it.”

AM: “What was your position at Utah State University?”

RP: “I was a lecturer in the English Department for 12 years and then while I was doing my PhD in the College of Education, I taught some multicultural literature course and I supervised student teachers out in the field and I taught Women's and Gender Studies courses.”
Appendix B

Interview Transcripts: Jane Lehr

The following interview was conducted to get an expert opinion on inclusivity and diversity in terms of LGBTQIA representation in university media.

Interviewer: Alexis McCoy-Caso

Respondent: Chair of Women's & Gender Studies Department and Associate Professor in Ethnic Studies at Cal Poly (Dr. Jane Lehr)

Date of interview: 5/21/2016

Interview Transcription:

Alexis McCoy-Caso: “Why is LGBTQIA representation important in media, but specifically in media at colleges?”

Jane Lehr: “So that’s a great question. I think as a faculty member in Ethnic Studies and Women’s and Gender Studies, we pay a significant amount of
attention to media and to other representational practices. We do that both to see what is included and represented in the media and what the impact of these representations are and we also do that to look at what is missing and absent because what is missing and absent also has impact. So when I'm thinking about looking at the media, a lot of what we might be analyzing can be described as a secret education or a hidden curriculum so if we think about how bias is produced, the media and its messaging plays a large role in the miseducation we have about many different groups including LGBTQIA+ communities. And then also it's important to be looking at the media and I think particularly on college campuses because of the power of the media the media can also part of social change efforts and transformation. And in some cases, the same for example something like Mustang News, might be involved simultaneously in both reifying stereotypes and bias but also in doing work to intervene in that and trouble that."

AM: “How do you think improved LGBTQIA representation in college media would effect college campus climate?”

JL: “In terms of the sort of positive impacts, I think if take a specific example. So if we think about news reporting and we think about the possibility for integrating questions related to preferred pronouns and preferred honorific titles, Ms., Dr., Mr., etc., if the news media takes up questions like that for all of its interviewees and then uses that information as if it’s normal. So rather than making a production about it at every news story, just take seriously and as legitimate, people’s requests around their preferred personal pronouns, around their preferred honorifics. Does the verb work to make that work? If the individual is singular but they prefer a pronoun like they. And does it without a crisis, even if it doesn’t entirely conform at the moment to AP guidelines, modeling that as something we need to always be thinking about rather than something we need to be thinking about in special instances I think can do a lot of work to increase reflection and awareness on campus and to directly improve campus climate by saying we are responsive to how people wish to be represented and how people are what their identities are. So I think that’s one way in which the media at college campuses can play a specific role because it’s, in terms of our readership, I know people read the Mustang News from across the world, but it’s really about our community, it’s shaping our community, it’s representing our community, it’s creating our community and it can be a place for doing that social justice work that hopefully at some point will be so normal to think about preferred personal pronouns that we forget it was once a major social justice campaign.”

AM: “How do you think university media or college media can integrate more LGBTQIA representation?”

JL: “I think the Mustang News for example has integrated regular columnists from a variety of different student perspectives and so I think one of the ways in
which something like college media can demonstrate commitment and also allow for self representation and again normalizing the idea there are LGBTQIA+ communities on campus would be a regular column. However, I think it would be really important that that column not always be written by the same person because even within communities, there are many diverse communities under the umbrella or acronym of LGBTQIA+ or whatever terminology people are using. So it would be critical I think for college media to not act as if there is one voice or one perspective but are there ways that different voices, and in some cases voices with disagreement, could be showcased as part of a regular feature. So I think that’s one thing. I think that also doing a review of what types of events get covered and seeing what are the total events and news stories happening related to various populations for example here at Cal Poly and then doing an analysis of how much of the coverage in terms of the reporting focuses on specific populations and seeing one if its proportionate and then also potentially the college media can play a role in amplifying the voices and experiences of groups that are underrepresented at Cal Poly so that the media can be in place to center the experiences of students from groups that are underrepresented.”

AM: “So you kind of answered this questions a little bit, but current LGBTQIA representation on Cal Poly’s campus differing from any universities you know if or are familiar with, like how does it compare would you say?”

JL: “So that’s a good question, I feel like I’m not sure I know because if I’m learning about news stories at other universities it tends to be from Twitter or Facebook rather than doing an analysis of individual university papers, I’m very curated in that sense. I don’t actually have a good sense of that answer. What I do think though is that there have been, this is the end of my ninth year at Cal Poly, and I think there have been changes overtime and I really respect the students, faculty and stuff involved in Mustang News because I think, there is engagement around these questions and engagement and reflection and a desire to do more or better. I think that that desire is evident as I think about the changes in coverage changes in tone. I talked about this earlier, to go back to an earlier question, about what can the media do particularly on college campuses, I think one of the big challenges that college media like the Mustang News needs to wrestle with is around how to represent not only the voices of people within communities like the LGBTQIA+ community but also how the voices and experiences of students for example who I may identify as homophobic or transphobic, how should those student voices be represented. One of the things I think there has been a lot of discussion about within broader media coverage is that some media tries to quote unquote tell both sides of the story and they give both sides 50/50 coverage even if one side is much smaller. And I would say on our campus they’re very explicitly transphobic, homophobic. I would say that community and those students and perspectives are here but they are not 50% of our student population and do not deserve 50% of news coverage and so I think one of the important things that college media can do is really explore this concept of balance and balance doesn’t really mean this sort of Fox News
version of balanced is this 50/50 split, it doesn’t mean that. And of course I should note that I think Fox News does not even achieve 50/50 but I think it would inappropriate for the Mustang News to not acknowledge and include those perspectives that I find as a Women’s and Gender Studies/Ethnic Studies scholar to be contributing to oppression but that those voices don’t need to amplified because it’s not a majority of students on our campus. I think that’s a very powerful question and the type of analysis that the Mustang News should be engaged in. So you know Cal Poly, we house peer institutions and we identify peer institutions so we can assess ourselves and in some cases we identify aspirational peer institutions and I think that I really like the idea of the Mustang News doing this type of benchmarking or this type of peer institution comparison in addition to doing on campus analysis about representation. So if it’s not already a regular part of what’s happening I think it should be. I mean I know the Mustang News is award winning and very well respected but I’m not sure this type of content benchmarking happens.”

AM: “So conversely, how do you think lack of LGBTQIA representation effects students, LGBTQIA students and then students who do not identify as that.”

JL: “Well I mean I think, so one of the big initiatives that I am involved in right now is the proposal for a Queer Studies Minor for 2017-19 and that was motivated by many different factors, one is that’s where the field is in terms of thinking about Women’s and Gender Studies, in terms of thinking about areas like Queer Ethnic Studies. But one of the other big factors was talking with students who did not see themselves in the curriculum at all and did not see the big questions and the big challenges that they were wrestling with. Including out personal identity definition level but really focused on big organizational and structural questions related to sexuality, related to gender, gender identities, etc. And so part of our motivation to change the curriculum was to increase visibility, increase representation as a response to the identified needs, the expressed needs of the LGBTQIA+ student population. So I think that being invisible, being not seen, not being newsworthy is actually a very explicit communication that you are not a normal part of the Cal Poly community. You are not who we think of when we think of Cal Poly students. So you are not who we think when we think of Cal Poly faculty and Cal Poly staff. And so absence is as detrimental, sometimes more detrimental, I’m not sure, then negative news coverage. But I think as we’ve been working on the Queer Studies Minor, and engaged in lots of discussions with people, it’s also become really important to us, as a Women’s and Gender Studies Department that when we think about curriculum it’s not just for students who identify within the LGBTQIA+ communities but all of our students because we’re all continuing to learn about who and how we should be in the world and what type of work we want to do and where we’re at in creating a more just an equitable Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo community, nation, world, etc. And so I think it’s so important that all students be up to date around what is happening, what are the issues. In Ethnic Studies we talk about this concept of color blind racism and it’s the idea that some people adopt color blindness as a
strategy for equity but that strategy actually reifies racism because it means we’re not looking to see where racism exists so it means we’re not acting, we’re not attending, we’re assuming it doesn’t and I think a type of blindness to LGBTQIA+ communities allows the campus to assume everything is alright. That these challenges, these needs have been resolved. Its so important that we do not think that because it is inaccurate and it is also harmful. So I think that the coverage is so important for all of us."

AM: “How do you think college media reinforces a gender binary?”

JL: “I mean I think 1. I talked about pronouns earlier, and I think one of the ways we see a gender binary reinforced in college media is through these he/she assumption practices. I think there are different ways college media contributes, I’m thinking about various Mustang News commentators that I have read and interviews I’ve read in the news coverage stories and I think often our students who are covered, who are included, bring assumptions about gender binaries in and think not just that there are “two sexes” or “two genders” but also bring in assumptions about what those two gender identities are. And I think there are some parts of the Mustang News that have reinforced the idea that femininity is soft and cuddly and masculinity is all about action and rationality. And yet there are other parts of Mustang News where that is drawn directly into question. I think one of the things that I’m curious about is if you’re interviewing someone who has that belief, what is the role of the news media, I mean you’re covering the people. Should it become sort of standard practice in a sense to put ‘while the people featured in this story make assumptions about the gender binary, these views do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mustang News’ or the Mustang News has taken the position that the gender binary does not exist or that gender is more complicated. I think that would be, maybe it is a warning label or a disclosure label. In one of the classes that I teach, Gender, Race, Culture, Science and Technology, we look at proposals for how medical researchers and scientists should publish about race because when you publish about racial differences that are connected to medicine and biology, even if you don’t intend to, often biological determinist thinking emerges and there have been proposals made that there should be warning labels like that with scientific peer reviewed papers that race is not biological, findings in this paper should not be interpreted that way. And I don’t know if these organizations have taken that up, probably not a warning label per se but I have seen news organizations through editorials, through changes in policy in terms of programs for example, do that work.”
Appendix C

Interview Transcripts: Appy Frykenberg

The following interview was conducted to get an expert opinion on inclusivity and diversity in terms of LGBTQIA representation in university media.

Interviewer: Alexis McCoy-Caso

Respondent: Coordinator of the Pride Center (Appy Frykenberg)

Date of interview: 5/25/2016

Interview Transcription:

Alexis McCoy-Caso: “How does lack of LGBTQIA representation in the media specifically college media but also just in general, effect the LGBTQIA community?”
Appy Frykenberg: “Well, lack of representation is an interesting thing, I once took a course where talked a lot about how you can tell what’s most unacceptable on a campus, or in a place, or in a culture, by where the silences are. What people are unwilling to or unable to talk about. I very strongly feel that when not represented and not regularly represented sends a clear message that either LGBTQ folks are not important or that its something so culturally taboo in it’s own way that its something that people are avoiding. So in terms of inclusion and how students feel on campus, which is my primary concern, I tend to think it effects queer students by reaffirming any suspicions or fears they might have that they are not welcome. Unfortunately when you’re marginalized or targeted on a regular basis, if you don’t get any other messages around that then there become a level where you – they say it in the five phases of oppression- one aspect of oppression is violence, not just violence but the fact that you can expect it. You get to a place where you expect it. So if there’s absence of voices and support, the only thing there is is a cultural expectance of violence. So one job I think is really important on every campus is to actively and openly share acceptance so that queer students are getting messages that they’re welcome because they’re getting messages everyday in tiny ways that they are not.”

AM: “So where do you think that media can improve representation?”

AF: “On this campus or in general?”

AM: “First on this campus, and then in general.”

AF: “Okay, I think LGBTQ concerns get posed as problems and then reactions and there’s a reactionary aspect. On this campus there’s been misnomers, just really simple mistakes that actually lead to misunderstandings around identity. a big one is that for something like the trans fashion show, they’ll show pictures of the drag show. That’s sending a message about what it means to be trans, it’s incorrect and really damaging and upsetting to trans folks. In many ways it’s kind of a simple mistake and in other ways it shows a sort of glaring misunderstanding about a whole community on campus. And one where I think it actually caused tensions between folks who do drag and folks who are trans. As opposed to then being like, why doesn’t campus understand that? So trans folks, as a result, felt even more invisible. Even though there was an article about the event that’s coming up, and it’s quite a positive article. But that tiny little piece that alters it makes it clear how deeply misunderstood trans individuals are here. It’s interesting because then there’s sensitivities as well on any campus I’ve ever been on is news is all about sharing the info you have. Unfortunately in LGBTQ communities, a big part of my job is maintaining confidentiality of those things. I’m not always sure how that can be improved except that when news organizations contact things like my center, I’d love for there to be more understanding around why confidentiality is important to the people participating. We had a Mustang News person contact us about filming a portion of Queer
Prom. He himself identified as gay and was like ‘I get it’ and I was like ‘but you’re not getting it because you should know as a gay person that not every person going to Queer Prom with their date wants to be seen as gay.’ So having to explain those things over and over again – I think sometimes it’s a misunderstanding piece. People don’t understand different needs for queer communities and so it translates into this sort of ‘we want to share this story but we’re not sure in what ways to be culturally sensitive so we’ll just assert our need and desire to share the story.’ Or we’ll share the story but in ways that sort of expose misunderstandings or reinforce misunderstandings like the trans and drag one that I mentioned. Other ways I’ve seen queer concerns and issues addressed on this campus are often in thinking of queer issues as problem or outside issues. As though queer people were a special interest group that bring things up to upset a norm. I often find media represented that way or it’s the opposite where you have a group full of queer victims of some kind. I experiences that a lot on my old campus, it was a much more progressive campus, it was a small liberal arts college and it was always in response to some incident and you’re always hearing stories about hurt queer people. There’s a depth of queer experience or contribution that doesn’t always get highlighted. So those would be some.”

AM: “Can I ask what was your university?”

AF: “I was at the Claremont Colleges before I was here.”

AM: “What was your position there?”

AF: “I was Assistant Coordinator at the Queer Resource Center.”

AM: “Nice. So you said it was more liberal?”

AF: “Very progressive.”

AM: “How would you compare, if you can, if not that’s okay, possibly their representation of LGBTQIA people in their media versus Cal Poly?”

AF: “There’s was much more generally affirming. There’s more embeddedness in the knowledge. We had a really robust ally program, so a lot of people had their facts down. That being said, I think the commitment to news on that campus was its own weird thing. We ran into similar issues in that news reporter who wants to come into a confidential event and report in the middle of event and we’d be like ‘no you can’t, please don’t do that, like don’t come and observe people. So we still ran into that kind of thing. It was such an activist campus that it actually sometimes depending on who was the reporter, they let their lack of objectivity, for lack of a better way of putting it, not that you’re ever objective, but I remember reading an article about a critique that got leveled against the QRC by a group of students and they represented each student as though they were two separate
and completely different students when in fact they were dating. You know, things like that. I think that’s just doing news reporting as a student with friends that are students and trying to convey one specific kind of agenda. There was more political contention on my old campus and our Pomona college newspaper was not afraid of getting involved, which is interesting. But it was definitely more with. If you think about it, even if they were one-sided, there was an embeddedness with queer folks there, there was a reason why they were reporting around it, and the reason why they chose that issue to cover, and that had to do with how activism takes place on campus and who was getting served more than other people. They were concerned about the intersectional lens of the center, which is a totally different thing and very much embedded in what we were already talking about as opposed to looking from the outside."

AM: “How do you think improved LGBTQIA representation in college media would improve campus climate?”

AF: “Well, certainly from a completely just educational perspective, if LGBTQIAP folks were represented in ways that honor their culture or were just accurate, then that’s a learning opportunity for other people understand that difference instead of merging the drag show and the trans fashion show together, there could be a little blurb that’s like ‘this is really different from the drag show,’ and then somebody reads it and is like ‘oh, the trans fashion show is really different from the drag show’ so they don’t come to the trans fashion show yelling ‘you go, queen.’ You know what I mean? Which happened. And it is what it is, but it’s a misunderstanding that is very easily solved with accurate information. And I think accuracy could help in terms of just spreading education and the more correct the information is, the less those misunderstandings happen. The less invisible my students feel. In terms of other kinds of reporting, I often say there is not one LGBTQ community, there’s many different ones and misconceptions around any targeted group when they’re being objectified, they get made homogenous. And if reporting touched on individual or individual group lives, and didn’t do things like say ‘this is all of them’ you know what I mean? If there wasn’t one person hailed as a representative but that person got to be the representative of the group they were representing, not all of us. I think awareness of that would give my students an opportunity to see different representations, to understand themselves as members of different groups and not always try to force cohesion. Or when they’re coming out to themselves and exploring their identity, not feeling like they have to be that queer you saw in the newspaper. They can be any kind they want to be. So I think media plays a really interesting role modeling and when media only focuses on the negative then it’s hard not to get caught up with that. With the ‘gosh I feel victimized on this campus.’ Where there’s a lot of really cool queer work being done regularly. And by lots of different people in lots of different ways, not just by the one guy who happens to be really visible today who now speaks for all queer people everywhere he goes. I don’t know, I think when respect is paid to communities, it’s felt. Media is a very visible way of being
respectful or not. So it sets a tone that other people follow whether or not they know they are.”

AM: “So what examples do you think Mustang News for example or any college newspaper, what do you think they should take from general media representation not just on college campuses, of LGBTQIAP representation and maybe examples that they should not take?”

AF: “So you want to know what kind of media representations are more or less helpful?”

AM: “Yes, and then ones that are widely used that maybe we see around a lot but are definitely not helpful.”

AF: “Right. I'm trying to think of good tangible examples. I mean I think it's important to name and highlight when things are happening on campus, I'm not saying that representation that occurs to and when queer students are targeted, it’s important to have that. What should be included is the queer voices speaking for themselves not just people talking about gays or the LGBTQ community but actually looking at the people who are targeted themselves. You see that happen where communities or families or loved ones get to speak for themselves and then the ones where they're not. There’s a difference in the reporting there, there’s a difference in the compassion provided and what gets highlighted in those moments and you don’t always want to scrutinize someone who has been directly targeted. But even accessing their communities, I see a lot of newspapers that ignore it. Let’s see, other good examples. Its funny, I always go to like GLAD because they always do the anti-defamation league, again things that are accurate. Things that know the difference between trans and people doing drag. Things that are willing to provide a little bit of education around it so that people have an understanding of the kind of identities you’re talking about. Things that accurate, not calling someone a trans man if they identify as gender queer. Not calling someone bisexual if they identify as pan, even if it means writing a little paragraph where you describe what pan is first. Just allowing that to be the case. So yes, accuracy. I’m trying to think of good examples I’ve seen. It’s fun, I don’t mind the puff pieces on our events, but its nice, its nice to highlight the different kinds of work that you’ve done. Lets see, examples not as helpful. I think the big ones that are really noticeable are when people ask really invasive questions. Other ones, when people are made to represent their entire community. They speak about the LGBTQ community. I think a lot about nationally, the kind of highlighting of trans glam. Other kinds of respectability politics that are sort of saturated in gay and queer spaces right now. I think queerness is messy, it’s dirty, it does not always fit in. It’s not always dirty, but you know there’s a messiness, there’s an uncomfortableness there, there’s an openness about sexuality, here’s a history of risky behavior as though just to be queer is not risky behavior, it is. It’s taking a risk everyday, particularly if you're openly queer. Most media representations I see avoid folks who are not fully
transitioned.' They avoid masculine women, they avoid differently sized or differently abled bodies. Even the Mustang News coverage of our trans fashion show, I mean I think there were a million pictures of the same pretty, white, girl, do you know what I mean? That's great, we had some other folks that represented trans masculinity that weren't pictured. We had folks that represented different sized bodies that you don't think fit into the mold of what you wanted it to look like. We saw like 18 pictures of her, and that's great, she was pretty, you know, but there were 10 other people in the show.”

AM: “Definitely, you want the full spectrum of everyone there.”

AF: “And not just something that fits in. Not just something that fits our stereotype, or something that fits our desire for what queer bodies and queer people should look like. I don’t know, there’s always so much correctness in media. When you delve into queer histories, they’re not about correctness. Like where was the Mustang News coverage when we got Mr. Leather here last week, you know what I mean? They want queer people to be like everybody else, only the happen to be- like this isn’t important or salient. It’s the heart of neoliberalism is like you can have all your differences as long as you fit in and do everything else the same. You can’t stand out, the reality of the violence you experience doesn’t get to stand out either. Unless it can be celebrated in really specific consumable ways. Not the times when we talk about how HIV still affects our community. When we talk about how meth still effects our community. Like the gay monogamous guy, with the child. As opposed to the person whose had like 600 sexual partners. And that’s a huge part of different kinds of queer communities. Its important to me that we don’t get lost in the environment of assimilation for queers. Highlighting marriage only, highlighting middle class issues only. Not being real about poverty, not being real about homelessness. I just watched Chris Rock do some comedy thing on gay people where he’s like ‘there’s no homeless gays.’ And I was like ‘what is wrong with you?’ It’s a huge factor. LIGLC, you could say the faces of it is a lot of rich, gay men. The fact of the matter is they just opened like 5,000 new beds for homeless queer youth. So the good work is being done. I would love to see a little less respectability politics and a little more over-queerness.”

AM: “In what ways does the media reinforce a gender binary and in what ways can that be undone. Big picture, that is quite the process and such, but to start taking the steps, you know what I mean?”

AF: “Well, trans glam, like I said, is a huge one. Like somehow to be transgender in the national awareness, is to be fully transitioned. I think just highlighting gender queer folks or folks who are in between or folks who have gone through every process and transition that you can and gender conforming surgery but don’t look like they were sculpted by 8 physical trainers. Other things that enforce that gender binary let me think. I would say just femme hating in general. I think most of the gay men you see on TV, if they’re not in a drag setting, are pretty
masculine, and conforming and military ready. With just the right bodies. And you very seldom see the fag, I’ve been called fag so I feel the right to use it. but you don’t see the sissy, you don’t see the really feminine folks unless they’re a characterization or they’re a comedy. I guess highlighting femininity in its existence I think would be nice. I do think any visibility for female masculinity would be nice. To this day, the last time I saw a dyke on TV she was telling of a trans women and I was like ‘really?’ I know that kind of thing happens but can there please be a dyke somewhere else. Oh sorry, Orange is the New Black has some dykes, and one of them is the biggest comedy show. There’s something ridiculous and sexually asexual about dyke representation. I feel that the gender binary is often reinforced by hating the feminine. And that’s like a weird thing to bring out something binary, but it’s not. It’s femininity within a masculine body. Femaleness within a masculine expression. Those things if they were things that people would bother to gaze at for more than one minute outside of a comedic place, I think would probably help break those things down. I think of myself as very masculine but I’m really girly, you know and getting to be both of those things and a whole person and not a sideshow, would be nice.”

AM: “Is there anything you want to add or think is important?”

AF: “Let me see. I guess in general with representation, I think falling into stereotypical representation is my biggest fear. The same way with different people of color, you always hear the same story for a certain group as if there were not gradations and all kinds of different expressions of blackness. I fell with trans folks, the only thing you ever hear about is restrooms and that’s fine, restrooms suck, but I’m so tired of my life being depicted by some kind of gender-neutral bathroom sign. I guess with any marginalized group looking away from
those stereotypes and moving away from quintessential expressions I think would be immensely valuable."