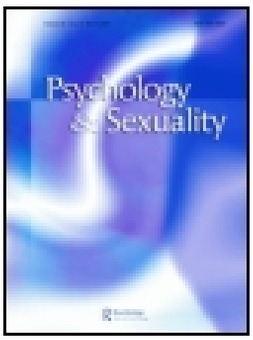

Psychology & Sexuality

ISSN: 1941-9899 (Print) 1941-9902 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rpse20

Misrecognition and managing marginalisation: Bisexual people's experiences of bisexuality and relationships

Nikki Hayfield, Christine Campbell & Elizabeth Reed

To cite this article: Nikki Hayfield, Christine Campbell & Elizabeth Reed (2018): Misrecognition and managing marginalisation: Bisexual people's experiences of bisexuality and relationships, Psychology & Sexuality, DOI: 10.1080/19419899.2018.1470106

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2018.1470106

Accepted author version posted online: 25 Apr 2018.

Publisher: Taylor & Francis

Journal: *Psychology & Sexuality*

DOI: 10.1080/19419899.2018.1470106

Misrecognition and managing marginalisation: Bisexual people's experiences of bisexuality and relationships

Nikki Hayfield, University of the West of England (UWE)

Department of Health and Social Sciences, Frenchay Campus, University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol, BS16 1QY

Christine Campbell, St Mary's University, Twickenham

School of Management and Social Sciences, St Mary's University, Twickenham, TW1 4SX

Elizabeth Reed, Goldsmiths, University of London

Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths, University of London, New Cross, London, SE14 6NW

Corresponding author: Dr Nikki Hayfield, Senior Lecturer in Social Psychology, Department of Health and Social Sciences, Frenchay Campus, University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol, BS16 1QY

Email: Nikki2.Hayfield@uwe.ac.uk Tel: 0117 3282139

Acknowledgements: We would particularly like to thank the bisexual participants who so willingly gave their time to talk to us about their identities and relationships. This research was conducted in collaboration with the community group *BiVisible Bristol* and the charity *OnePlusOne* (http://www.oneplusone.space). It was supported by a University of the West

of England (UWE) research grant (UHSS0072). The authors would like to acknowledge their appreciation of the support of these organisations. We are also grateful for the insightful comments offered by the three anonymous reviewers on an earlier version of this manuscript.

Misrecognition and managing marginalisation: Bisexual people's experiences of bisexuality and relationships

Introduction

In January 2015, the online campaign #StillBisexual (stillbisexual.com) was launched in response to enduring misconceptions around bisexuality. The aim was to dispel two key assumptions: that bisexual identity is temporary and that if a bisexual person commits to a relationship the inevitable result is abandonment of their bisexuality in favour of a heterosexual or gay/lesbian identity. The campaign also highlighted that not all bisexual people "need" to be in relationships with more than one person of more than one gender, to "maintain" their bisexual identity (also see, Gonzalez, Ramirez, & Galupo, 2016). However, minimal academic literature has explored bisexual people's experiences of their relationships. In this paper we report our thematic analysis of qualitative interviews with bisexual people in relationships. Our findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the ways in which bisexual people undertake unique forms of identity and relationship work in order to manage the misrecognition of their sexuality, and the marginalisation of bisexuality, within the context of their relationships. We also highlight how the notion of a bisexual relationship is seemingly unintelligible even to these bisexual participants.

The invisibility/invalidity of bisexuality

The term bisexual erasure was coined to capture the overlooking and dismissal of bisexual identities which render bisexuality invisible or invalid (Ochs, 1996; Yoshino, 2000). One consequence of this invisibility is that psychologists, social scientists, therapists, and those in wider Western culture may have limited understandings of bisexuality (Barker &

Langdridge, 2008; Monro, Hines & Osborne, 2017). Within Western societies, there are reported to be as many bisexual people as lesbians and gay men (Gates, 2011). Indeed, in recent years, the number of people identifying as bisexual or under the "bisexual umbrella" (e.g. using identity labels describing attraction to more than one gender) is increasing (Lapointe, 2017). Therefore, bisexual invisibility cannot be ascribed to a lack of bisexual people (Yoshino, 2000). Instead, the invisibility of bisexuality can be partially explained through dichotomous and binary understandings of sex (male/female) and gender (man/woman) which serve to produce heterosexual and "homosexual" sexualities as the only recognisable options[i] (Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1978). Heteronormativity and mononormativity[ii] also play a role in the invisibility of bisexuality and shore up monogamy as the only valid relationship framework (Barker & Langdridge, 2010; McLean, 2004; Monro et al., 2017; Roberts, Horne & Hoyt, 2015; Zinik, 1985).

Those whose marginalised identities are relatively invisible may be protected from discrimination by being non-identifiable to others (Ochs, 1996; Robinson, 2013). However, bisexual invisibility can result in bisexual identity being experienced as a constant battleground for recognition or validation (Monro, 2015; Robinson, 2013). This is partly because when bisexuality *does* become visible it is often rapidly dismissed through the deployment of stereotypes which serve to marginalise bisexuality and denigrate bisexual people (Klesse, 2011). Research indicates that bisexual people face multiple marginalisation particularly in the form of "double discrimination" (e.g., from both lesbian and gay communities, and the wider heterosexual culture) (Hayfield, Clarke & Halliwell, 2014; Mulick & Wright, 2002; Ochs, 1996). Biphobia, or bisexual marginalisation[iii] includes overt discrimination and wide ranging negative beliefs about bisexuality and bisexual people

(Armstrong & Reissing, 2014). These include that bisexual people are cowardly and confused; 'sitting on the fence' in a temporary or transitionary identity position; and holding onto heterosexual privilege until they eventually "make up their minds" to commit to one or other "valid" identity (e.g., heterosexual or lesbian/gay) (Anderson, Scoats & McCormack, 2015; Armstrong & Reissing, 2014; Klesse, 2011). Bisexual marginalisation is complex and nuanced according to the gender identity/gender presentation of the bisexual person and whether binegativity originates from the heterosexual mainstream or lesbian and gay culture (see, Mulick & Wright, 2002; Ochs, 1996). Feminine bisexual women may be perceived as "really heterosexual", seen to be only performing bisexuality by kissing other women to seek the attention of (heterosexual) men (Diamond, 2005; Wilkinson, 1996). Masculine bisexual men may be perceived as 'really gay' (perhaps because bisexuality threatens heterosexual masculinities), hence their bisexual identity is similarly conceived of as unreal (Alarie & Gaudet, 2013; Armstrong & Reissing, 2014). It is likely that those whose sexuality *and* gender are non-binary also experience unique and specific forms of dismissal and marginalisation (Serano, 2010), particularly if their gender presentation is visibly non-binary (Barker & Iantaffi, 2017).

Negative beliefs about bisexuality and relationships

Many negative representations of bisexuality relate specifically to relationships. Due to their attraction to multiple genders, bisexual people are understood to be hypersexual, sex-crazed, promiscuous, and incapable of committing to a relationship with one person (Hayfield et al., 2014; Klesse, 2011; Vernallis, 1999). In sum, bisexual people may be understood as "undesirable partners" (Anderson et al., 2015, p.21). They have often been perceived as untrustworthy, unfaithful, incapable of monogamy, and risky partners liable to

spread sexually transmitted infections (Eliason, 1997; Feinstein, Dyar, Bhatia & Latack, 2015; Klesse, 2011; Li, Dobinson, Scheim & Ross, 2013). Perhaps unsurprisingly, bisexual people have been reported to have difficulty in finding and maintaining relationships due to these stereotypes (Anderson et al., 2015; Armstrong & Reissing, 2014). Stereotypes of bisexual people may also intersect with negativities around sexual permissiveness and multiple partners which arise from mononormativity and idealised romantic discourses of exclusive dyadic couple relationships (Finn, 2012; McLean, 2004). Those who do not adhere to mononormativity may be characterised as lacking in morals, less intelligent or trustworthy than monogamous people, and undesirable as friends or lovers (Grunt-Mejer & Campbell, 2016). However, research shows that the characteristics of people who engage in consensually non-monogamous relationships are entirely comparable to those who practice monogamy (Rubel & Bogeart, 2015).

Research on bisexual people and relationships

"Mixed-orientation" marriages/relationships

Since the 1980s, some (mainly) counselling research conducted in the United States has focused on disclosure of (bi)sexuality within "mixed orientation" marriages and relationships (MOMS/MORES) (for reviews see Hernandez, Schwenke & Wilson, 2011; Vencill & Wiljamaa, 2016). These studies historically conflated lesbian/bisexual women and gay/bisexual men and therefore overlooked the distinctiveness of bisexuality (Buxton, 2001; 2006). The underlying assumption was that bisexual people "coming out" to their heterosexual partners would constitute the same (or very similar) relationship event as lesbian/gay people "coming out" to their heterosexual partners. This may be attributable to "one-drop" and "conflict" theories of sexuality. In "one-drop" theories any evidence of

same-sex attraction is (mis)taken to denote "homosexuality" and in "conflict" theories, same-sex attraction is (mis)assumed to always entirely eliminate different-sex "responsiveness" (Zinik, 1985, p. 10).

However, some MOM/MORE research partially or entirely focused on bisexuality. While interest was mainly in heterosexual spouses' experiences, a few researchers explored bisexuality, and occasionally bisexual partners' perspectives of their (different-sex) marriages was included (Buxton, 2001; 2004; Edser & Shea, 2002). In the main, researchers tended to assume that a partner coming out as bisexual would represent tragedy, crisis, or conflict. Bisexual people were portrayed as in need of both/simultaneous same-sex and different-sex encounters, hence the likelihood of committed monogamous relationships was challenged or dismissed. This body of literature was often underpinned by a number of problematic assumptions about bisexuality and therefore risked perpetuating bisexual stereotypes (Armstrong & Reisser, 2014). Minimal research beyond MOMS/MOREs has explored bisexual people's monogamous relationships.

Bisexuality and non/monogamies

A burgeoning question within early bisexual communities was whether bisexuals could be monogamous (Anderlini-D'Onofrio, 2004; Vernallis, 1999). The underlying assumption was that an "authentic" bisexual was "non-monogamous *by necessity*" (Klesse, 2005, p. 448 [emphasis in original]; Klesse, 2011). Therefore, it is understandable that bisexual relationships research has focused mainly on documenting the experiences of bisexual people in consensually non-monogamous/polyamorous relationships (e.g., Klesse, 2005; 2006; Moss, 2012). This research has identified that polyamory may be one way in which bisexuality can be behaviourally "lived out". Polyamorous relationship frameworks

potentially offer bisexual people some visibility *as* bisexual (Moss; 2012; Robinson, 2013), even when not currently in multiple relationships (Bradford, 2012). On the other hand, relationships with multiple partners are often as invisible as bisexuality itself, or represented only in negative ways (Moss, 2012; Pallotta-Chiarolli & Lubowitz, 2003). Thus, for those who are consensually non-monogamous, having to refute accusations of an inability to be monogamous may be particularly problematic (Klesse, 2005).

Recent research on bisexual people's relationships

A small body of literature, mainly outside the United Kingdom (U.K.), has specifically focused on bisexual relationships (e.g., Bradford, 2012; Feinstein, Latack, Bhatia, Davila & Eaton, 2016; Gustavson, 2009; Lahti, 2015; Li et al., 2013). Bisexual participants are seemingly aware of notions that they must simultaneously be in relationships with men and women and some have challenged this idea (Bradford, 2004a; Gustavson, 2009; Li et al., 2013). While monogamous relationships may be understood as an easy option due to their social acceptability, monogamous bisexual people have reported feeling that they have had to forego an aspect of their identity (McLean, 2007), and that their bisexuality is invisible (Robinson, 2013). Indeed, the in/visibility of bisexuality within relationships has been highlighted. Some bisexual people feel frustrated that they are assumed to be straight or gay based on their partner's gender (Bradford, 2012; McLean, 2007). Those around them, including partners, have assumed that bisexual people will stop identifying as bisexual once in a relationship (Bradford, 2004b; Lannutti, 2008). Bisexual women have discussed how debates around same-sex marriage erased bisexuality due to the terminology of "lesbian and gay" marriage. Other participants suggested that same-sex marriage affirmed their bisexual identity (Lannutti, 2008). However, some bisexual people have resisted adhering to

traditional heteronormative marriage (and of enduring relationships more broadly, see Lahti, 2015), and found various ways to 'queer' their relationships (Hartman-Linck, 2014; Lannutti, 2008; Lahti, 2015).

Negative cultural portrayals of bisexuality have been reported to affect bisexual people's relationships. This can include bisexual people having difficulty in finding partners willing to be (or stay) with them (Li et al., 2013). Bisexual people's partners have been critical of their partner's bisexuality in ways which directly link to negative conceptualisations of bisexual identities (Gustavson, 2009; Li et al., 2013). Additionally, some bisexual women have felt objectified by their male partners (Li et al., 2013). Bradford (2004b) reported that bisexual people's partners felt that for their partner to continue identifying as bisexual demonstrated a lack of commitment and invalidated the relationship. However, more recent research with U.S. and U.K. participants found that although some partners (mainly heterosexual women) were threatened by their partner's bisexuality, younger bisexual men's partners understood bisexuality as legitimate (Anderson et al., 2015). Further, and somewhat unsurprisingly, bisexual people in Canada reported that when partners were supportive of their bisexuality this had a positive impact on their mental health (Li et al., 2013).

In sum, despite relationships being central in our understandings of sexuality (Gustavson, 2009), the distinctiveness of bisexual relationships has largely been overlooked (Buxton, 2006; Klesse, 2005; Lannutti, 2008; Li et al., 2013). We specifically sought to explore how a range of diverse bisexual participants negotiated their identities and relationships. Researchers have also argued that there is a particular need to explore bisexual people's lived experiences of relationships within the climate of bisexual

discrimination (Feinstein et al., 2015). Therefore, arising from these gaps in the literature, our broad research question was: *How do bisexual people make sense of their bisexuality when they are in partner relationships, within the wider context of bisexual marginalisation?*

Method

Design

Qualitative interviews (16 conducted by E.R.; 4 by N.H.) were chosen as most suited to exploring the under-researched topic of bisexual people's experiences of identity and relationships (Edwards & Holland, 2013). A semi-structured interview schedule was derived from the existing literature and our research interests around bisexuality and relationships. We developed questions which we anticipated would be a starting point for our participants to talk about bisexuality and relationships and organised them into topic areas (Willig, 2001). Initial questions focused on how participants made sense of their bisexual identity (e.g., *what does bisexual mean to you; what are the challenges/best things about being bisexual?*) and how they negotiated whether, to whom, and how to "come out" (e.g., *how did your partner/partners respond to finding out that you are bisexual?*). We then asked about their past and current partners and partner relationships. We included questions about how they had met their partners, and the development of their relationship/relationships (e.g., *how did you meet your current partner/partners; can you tell me about how your relationship/relationships came to be monogamous/non-monogamous; has your bisexuality been important in your relationship/relationships?*). We sought to find out about their day-to-day experiences of bisexuality and being in a relationship/relationships (e.g., *how does/do your relationship/relationships look on a day to day basis*; *does your bisexuality feature in your relationship/relationships; are you open*

about the gender of your partner/s in different places or spaces; in what ways have your partners been supportive of you in terms of your bisexual identity; what is the best thing about your relationship/relationships?). In semi-structured interviews the schedule serves as a tool to encourage participants to talk about what is important to them rather than the questions being rigidly adhered to. We pursued particular issues which came up in individual interviews and reviewed the schedule at various points during data collection.

Recruitment

Snowball and purposive sampling techniques were employed to recruit participants who self-identified as bisexual and were currently in a relationship/relationships (Robinson, 2014). Information sheets and demographic questions were written in English and reviewed by volunteers at *Bivisible Bristol* during a meeting, and their feedback incorporated. Twenty participants were recruited via *Bivisible Bristol*; the researchers' social and online networks; local LGBT+ groups; and through posters displayed in cafes/other venues around Bristol. Initial calls resulted in a sample that was largely women in monogamous relationships with men. To broaden the demographic to include more men, non-binary, and genderqueer participants, recruitment materials were edited and purposively distributed with some (limited) success.

Procedure

Ethical approval was granted by the university Faculty Research Ethics Committee. When participants expressed an interest in participation they were sent an information sheet (which included details of participation, anonymity and confidentiality, data management, withdrawal, and sources of support) and invited to ask questions. Participants

were also provided with information about the researchers, including that two of us identified as bisexual (E.R. and N.H.) and one as queer (E.R.). Some researchers have argued that disclosure of shared identities can potentially be advantageous, particularly in partially reducing researcher/researched boundaries (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015). We also followed guidelines specifically on researching bisexuality (Barker, Yockney, Richards, Jones, Bowes-Catton, & Plowman, 2012). Participants provided informed consent and were asked to create a participant pseudonym to ensure anonymity. Individual face-to-face interviews lasted just over an hour (M=75 minutes) and took place in university rooms or participants' homes, while two were interviewed via visual-feed *Skype*. Researchers have argued that *Skype* interviews provide convenience for participants while still enabling researchers to gather rich in-depth data (Hanna, 2012). Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed orthographically by E.R., when pseudonyms were inserted and identifying information removed.

Participants

In order to take part, participants needed to identify as bisexual, and currently be in a relationship/relationships. All participants completed demographic questions to situate the sample and therefore provide a sense of who took part and who the findings might meaningfully transfer to (Elliott et al., 1999). The question about gender offered participants the option to tick *man, woman, cisgender, transgender, non-binary,* and *in another way (please state)*. In our results we report gender, age, and relationship/s and only include the terms cisgender or transgender when participants ticked these boxes in their response. Participants also responded to an open-ended question about any additional terms they used to define their sexuality. Two thirds reported that they used other terms, most

commonly *queer* and *pansexual*, in addition to bisexual. Participants were mainly women (13) and most were monogamous (14), while the remainder were in relationships which varied in levels of openness, including non-monogamous and polyamorous (6). Other researchers have reported similarly high levels of monogamous bisexual participants in their studies (e.g., Anderson et al., 2015; Bradford, 2012). Monogamous participants were mainly in a different-sex relationship (11 of 14); perhaps not surprising given that a recent U.S. survey indicated that 84% of bisexual people were in different-sex relationships (Pew Research Center, 2013). This tendency has been explained in terms of social acceptability (Robinson, 2013) and statistics; bisexual people are more likely to meet heterosexuals than they are lesbians or gay men (Anderson et al., 2015). None of the participants were in relationships with each other. Only two participants had children and most were White, middle-class, educated to degree level or higher, and employed. A demographic summary is presented in Table 1.

<<Insert Table 1 about here>>

Analytic approach

A critical realist framework was employed with the aim of validating participants' experiences, while also recognising the wider social context within which people's identities and lives are understood to be deeply embedded (Ussher, 1999). Thematic analysis is a flexible method which can be suited to exploring how participants experience and make sense of their lives and identities and was therefore chosen to enable the identification of patterns and themes across the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The six-phase process of thematic analysis involved all authors familiarising themselves with the data by reading the interview transcripts and making notes on their first impressions. We initially did this when

the data was transcribed, and again when the researchers met on several occasions to discuss the analysis. During these research meetings we discussed what stood out in the data on first reading and what else we noticed on closer readings. Data was systematically coded (e.g., every line of interview data was read and coded) using an inductive approach where the starting point was the data rather than specific pre-existing theories or concepts. However, our own personal and academic interests are likely to have given us particular insights into the data based on our knowledge which meant that our analysis was to some extent inevitably deductive. Both semantic codes at the surface of the data and latent codes at a deeper level were identified. We arranged these codes to identify candidate (initial) themes, which were then reviewed, named, and defined with the aid of thematic maps. These maps enabled us to organise the themes in a way which best captured the key stories in the data specifically in relation to these participants' relationships. Preliminary results were presented at three U.K. conferences, before our candidate themes and theme names were further discussed and refined among the research team so that the data analysis could be written-up and finalised.

Analysis

In this analysis, we report two key themes: i) *The case of the disappearing bisexual: Invisible identities and unintelligible bisexual relationships* and ii) *That's not my bisexuality and not my bisexual relationship: Defending self, relationships, and partners against bisexual negativity*. In the first theme, we report two subthemes. In the first *invisible identities,* we discuss how bisexuality was often reported to be invisible and this invisibility was amplified by being in relationships. In the second, *unintelligible bisexual relationships,* we illustrate that while bisexual identity was often invisible the notion of a bisexual relationship was

seemingly so inconceivable that it was unintelligible. In the second theme, we discuss participants' awareness of binegativity, and how these bisexual people positioned themselves, their relationships, and their partners in defence of negative representations of bisexuality.

1. The case of the disappearing bisexual: Invisible identities and unintelligible bisexual relationships

Invisible identities

A dominant theme in the data was that bisexual identity was often invisible but that when participants were in enduring relationships this invisibility was amplified to the extent that their bisexuality seemingly completely disappeared. It was commonly reported that others would be likely to overlook the possibility that anyone could be bisexual:

> I was actually asked a lot "are you a lesbian". I was asked "are you straight". I was never asked "are you bisexual"? I feel sort of invisible (Toni, 28, cis woman, monogamous marriage with a man)

> Only if you were bisexual you might think that someone else could be bisexual, but besides that … I would be surprised if anyone else, [with] me being in a relationship with Elidi, would ever think that I'm bisexual […] it's just that you're with a girl, you're straight, you're with a guy, you're gay. That's the assumption (Andrew, 29, man, monogamous relationship with a woman)

Identities are not only defined by individuals but are also interpreted, made sense of, and named by others (Ochs, 2007). Participants' accounts pointed to the persistence of normative understandings of sexuality as binary and relationships as the primary marker of

sexuality (McLean, 2007). In this data these understandings endured and effectively removed the possibility of *any* recognition of bisexuality once bisexual people were in relationships (Gonzalez et al., 2016). Participants, particularly those in enduring monogamous relationships, reported that their sexuality was commonly misrecognised when others misread their sexuality on the basis of their current partner's gender (Bradford, 2012; McLean, 2007). This was the case even when participant gender did not fit a mononormative binary. AJ commented: 'I'm non-binary, so no relationship that I'm ever in is really an opposite sex relationship in the traditional sense' (27, non-binary, monogamous relationship with a man). For AJ, being in a relationship with a man, in combination with their gender being misread as a woman, generated a 'revolving door of coming out forever and ever and ever, telling people that I'm bi, because I'm in a relationship where I'm perceived to be straight' (27, non-binary, monogamous relationship with a man). In this sense, relationships functioned as signifiers of what were perceived by others to not only be binary sexualities, but also binary genders. Overall, participants' reports of others' binary and monosexual understandings of sexuality dominated these accounts (e.g., Roberts et al., 2015).

Participants also reported that others understood sexuality within a logic where bisexuality could not endure as a stable form of identity particularly when they were in a relationship. Dal's bisexuality was dismissed as temporary when friends made comments such as 'oh it's just a phase, you're going to be gay' (18, man, in an open relationship with a man). Some participants reported that others had previously known that they were bisexual but that their relationship served to undermine any previous recognition of their bisexuality. Clare reported that her family 'just think it's a phase […] my Dad said "but you're not bi now are

you? You're married to Phil"' (32, woman, monogamous marriage to a man). Others' erasure of bisexuality was reported by participants to make them feel that their bisexual identity had disappeared. Rosalina Robbins lamented how friends had concluded '"oh well you count as straight now, sorry, your bisexual past has lapsed"' (25, genderqueer/non-binary, open relationship with a man). Current relationships superseded all other indicators in communicating information about identity and were interpreted by others to mean that the bisexual person had "chosen their side" (Anderson et al., 2015). The inaccuracy of these interpretations and the subsequent misrecognition of their identity meant that participants reported that they felt misunderstood:

> I think that people don't really understand that you can still experience your sexuality and be in, you know, a heterosexual-seeming relationship […] But it's having to be like "no, my sexuality stays the same, no matter who I'm with" (Piper, 19, non-binary, mostly monogamous relationship with a recently identified bisexual man)

> Someone close to me told me "you were with a girl, you were out, you know, you are going in the closet again!" No, I was never in the closet […] "let's start from the beginning; no, I'm not lesbian, I'm not straight. I'm bisexual" […] Even people who know that I've been with a woman assume that now I'm straight! Which is weird. Like "oh you are straight again?". "No, I'm not straight!" […] I wake up every morning being bisexual (Sofia, 23, woman, monogamous relationship with a man)

Sofia's narrative indicates how even when participants repeatedly reaffirmed their bisexual identity and highlighted their past relationships with partners of multiple genders, this was still insufficient for bisexuality to be understood as an ongoing identity position. It is also of

concern that participants were seemingly providing the "evidence" of their bisexuality as though needing to prove that they are 'bisexual "enough"' (Eadie, 1993, p.144). In sum, partner gender continues to override all other information in the interpretation of sexuality which renders bisexuality invisible.

Unintelligible bisexual relationships

Participants' discussions drew attention to how relationships take on their own identity when they are dichotomously designated as either heterosexual or lesbian/gay. Therefore, bisexuality was frequently discounted due to participants being in what was interpreted by others as a heterosexual or lesbian/gay relationship (Bradford, 2012; McLean, 2007). However, the notion of a *bisexual* relationship was unintelligible as it was seemingly not something which could possibly be conceived of, or made sense of, as a possible relationship category. Rose was discussing how "I see too many flame wars [on the Internet] about "oh a straight couple shouldn't be at Pride!". It's like, ok, you don't know that [they are straight]' (Rose, 28, cisgender woman, monogamous marriage with a mostly straight man). Stephanie recounted how she and her bisexual partner 'were known as just "the lesbian couple"' (19, woman, monogamous relationship with a bisexual woman), hence even two bisexual people in a relationship is insufficient for a relationship (or the people in it) to be interpreted *as* bisexual. Similarly, Bo was dating a bisexual man and highlighted that 'it just feels like the whole bi thing almost doesn't exist, it's like we're just straight people doing a straight thing somehow […] I just don't want people assuming that I am straight' (34, woman, monogamous relationship with a bisexual man).

Even these bisexual participants did not seemingly describe their own relationships as bisexual. Muriel recounted reassuring a past partner that her sexuality did not determine

the identity of their relationship: 'He said "I don't want to have a bisexual relationship" […] I said "there is no such thing as bisexual relationship!"… Um…because our relationship was heterosexual!' (Muriel, 40, woman, monogamous relationship with a man). For Amber, working out how to define her and her partner's "relationship identity" was an uncomfortable conundrum:

> People think we're a straight couple. Are we a straight couple? What is our identity as a couple? And then I got like really stressed because I was like "people think I'm straight". I think about it more when I'm in a relationship […] I just want to exist as a bisexual woman (Amber, 29, woman, monogamous engagement with a heterosexual man)

Many participants made clear that they wanted to be recognised *as* bisexual (Gonzalez, Ramirez, & Galupo, 2016), and reported feeling frustrated and isolated by their bisexuality seemingly disappearing within their relationships and "relationship identity". Even though participants frequently reiterated their individual bisexual identity (despite it often being invisible to others) even they did not describe their *relationships* as bisexual. Indeed, the notion of a "bisexual relationship" (and the implications and meanings of such a designation) was seemingly unintelligible to these bisexual participants and those around them. Therefore, participants were left with no way to meaningfully name or identify their relationships beyond the mononormative descriptors of lesbian/gay and heterosexual.

2. That's not my bisexuality and not my bisexual relationship: Defending self, relationships, and partners against bisexual negativity

It was clear that our participants were acutely aware of bisexual stereotypes and their narratives evidenced them distancing themselves, their partners, and their

relationships, from being tainted by binegativity. Aidan had 'never heard of a positive comment about bisexual identity' (21, woman, monogamous relationship with a straight man). Others were fluent in the language of binegativity, as evidenced in recitals of stereotypes relating to bisexual identity and relationships:

> They'll say they'll never date a bisexual girl, or "oh that just means you're gay and you're too scared of saying it", "oh that means you're straight and you just want to experiment", "oh do you mean you're just confused?", "you haven't decided", "but don't all bisexual girls cheat on people", "oh but aren't all bisexual girls sluts?", "oh do you want to have a threesome" (Kate Slater[iv],22, woman, monogamous relationship with a lesbian)

> There's a lot of assumptions made within both the straight and LGBT communities that I am promiscuous, that I am not somebody who has monogamous relationships, and that I'm either gay and in denial about it or straight but, you know, like the attention of making out with a girl for boys to look at […] I find fetishization of my sexuality is something I also find quite irritating (AJ, 27, non-binary, monogamous relationship with a man)

What commonly underpinned these persistently negative notions were dichotomous and highly sexualised understandings of bisexuality. Our research mirrors previous findings that others' understandings of bisexual identity are seemingly informed by negative cultural representations of bisexuality (e.g., Gustavson, 2009; Li et al., 2013). Participants defended against these conceptualisations of bisexuality by distancing themselves from bisexual stereotypes:

> It's like the, inverted commas, "slutty bisexual" [laughs] and that idea that you can't be monogamous if you're bisexual […] "Are you up for a threesome then?" and I'm like "no I'm not". Every time I've come out in long-term relationships, I've been like, "no that's not something I want to do" […] I think that's something that's frustrating and annoying (Piper, 19, non-binary, mostly monogamous relationship with a recently identified bisexual man)

Here, Piper positions their bisexuality as not conforming to dominant cultural representations of bisexual people (Hayfield et al., 2014; Klesse, 2011). Participants repeatedly emphasised that highly sexualised forms of bisexuality did not describe them or their relationships. For Dal, 'people tend to say "oh, so you are a lusty person, do you just like sex?" like "no!" […] "No, I'm into people, that's it"' (18, man, in an open relationship with a man). Perhaps because bisexuality was understood in such negative and hypersexualised ways, a few participants were tentative about discussing bisexuality with their partners. Amber had discussed her past experiences with women but was uncertain of her partner's feelings about her identity:

> I think Alasdair gets it. But then, I think this week when I told him about this interview is the only time I've actually said to him 'I'm bisexual' [Interviewer: Right] I've never actually said it before. And I was worried he was going to be a bit weird about it (Amber, 29, woman, monogamous engagement with a heterosexual man)

Other participants reported that when they had "come out" to partners, they had sometimes had to answer questions and educate them to manage their lack of knowledge and/or misconceptions about bisexuality. For Andrew, when he first told his girlfriend 'she was completely cool about it' but then 'she was asking me lots of questions about it […] just

basically lots of questions about what that implies […] I think she was worried about "is it going to affect our relationship?"' (Andrew, 29, man, monogamous relationship with a woman). While participants sometimes indicated that they did not mind educating their partners, Kitzinger (1990) has argued that to expect non-heterosexual people to educate others about their sexuality is a form of oppression. Perhaps in defence of their efforts to educate their partners being understood as a reflection of them being in an oppressive relationship, participants frequently presented *current* partners in a much more positive light than previous partners. This was despite the potential for reading both past and present partners as having similarly negative understandings of bisexuality. Rosalina Robbins spoke about their ex-partner:

> [He was] always very negative in terms of bisexuality […] "you just want to shag everyone, you're greedy" [..] He saw it as a novelty […] an interesting thing to tell his friends […] he was one of those "wahey, we can have threesomes all the time"

This was in contrast with her current partner. The interviewer asks whether he has a good understanding of what bisexuality means:

> We've almost been together 4 years, so he does <u>now</u> […] he did think that I needed to get my dose of women otherwise I would go astray! […] at the beginning he was like "if in order to stay with me you also need to go sleep with women, that's ok" and it was cute because it was a misconception […] he wasn't as annoying [laughs] (25, genderqueer/non-binary, open relationship with a man)

Similarly, when Clare told a male ex-partner that she was bisexual:

> His first response was "does that mean I'm going to get a threesome?" Because he's a dick. […] a year after we split up, when I started seeing my ex, Rosie, and he found out and he phoned me up, he was like "does that mean I changed you fully lesbian?"

In contrast, she reported that her current partner 'was a bit like, "oh well there's even more people she could cheat on me with!" That was his initial response to it, but that went fairly quickly […] he's just completely accepting of it' (32, woman, monogamous marriage with a man). While we recognise that current partners may indeed be more understanding of participants' bisexuality, it was interesting to note that *past* partners were commonly reported to lack understanding, despite participants repeatedly disregarding this as a factor in the relationship breakdown. Present partners were persistently presented far more positively, even when they too had *initially* misunderstood bisexuality. Hence current partners were positioned as enlightened about bisexuality, whereas past partners had not been. We argue that participants were engaged in a process of protecting their current partners from anticipated accusations of binegativity and actively working to present their ongoing relationship as positive. This highlights a specific type of relationship work which bisexual people are effectively required to engage in and which may constitute a form of oppression unique to bisexual people seeking to establish and maintain relationships.

Participants also defended current partners by positioning them as not at fault for having fears about the relationship. Andrew recounted how he had met up with some male ex-partners who he had met on dating sites: 'I went out with one of them to play squash and afterwards we went for some food and … she [his current girlfriend] just kind of said she was feeling a bit insecure'. He went on to defend her and her concerns:

> But it was a combination of things, that was during the first month, she was like "it just feels like, I don't know how committed you are in this relationship. And also, it just feels like you have, if you want, so many options" […] the thing is … I can understand why, that's why I said straight away how I met them, "we're just friends". And she was fine (Andrew, 29, man, monogamous relationship with a woman).

This defending of selves and partners against binegativity demonstrates how bisexual participants were engaged in both identity and relationship work in order to maintain a positive bisexual identity and relationship.

Participants also engaged in additional relationship work to prevent their partners from becoming "tainted" by their bisexuality. Previous research has identified that women in relationships with men who were previously in relationships with women, presented their male partners as *not* very straight, perhaps to narrate their relationships as non-heteronormative (Tabatabai & Linders, 2011). While this strategy was deployed by some of our participants in mixed-gender relationships, several women emphasised that their male partners were *excessively* straight and masculine. This perhaps served as a strategy to prevent their partners being understood as tainted by the negative stereotypes associated with participants' bisexuality. In response to being asked about her partner's sexuality, Sofia said: 'he's straight. He's *very* straight [emphasis added]' (23, woman, monogamous relationship with a man). Similarly, Michelle attributed her "primary[v]" male partner not having attended a Pride event to his working, but then went on to say 'But I'm not sure he would have felt comfortable because he is *so* straight [emphasis added]' (Michelle, 22, woman, in a relationship with a man, a woman, and another man). In sum, participants

defended themselves and their partners against binegativity. They did so by positioning themselves as outside particular common cultural conceptualisations of bisexuality and by defending current partners' lack of knowledge or misunderstandings as temporary and easily resolved, and (for women in relationships with men) by reasserting the stability of their partner's heteronormative identity.

Discussion and conclusion

It was clear in this data that dichotomous understandings of sexuality dominated these accounts, and participants were frequently understood by others as straight or gay, but never as bisexual. In our analysis, we provide evidence of the invisibility of bisexuality by reporting how already invisible bisexual identities disappear entirely when bisexual people engage in (particularly monogamous) relationships (Robinson, 2013). A key finding was that bisexual people's identities became erased through use of the terms heterosexual or lesbian/gay to describe "relationship identities". Therefore, we add novel findings in identifying that the notion of a "bisexual relationship" was seemingly unintelligible, which added to participants' lack of visibility and was a source of frustration. There is an important distinction here between participants reporting that their bisexuality was invisible (despite their repeatedly claiming and naming bisexual identity) versus bisexual relationships being unintelligible (whereby the notion of a bisexual relationship is denied any possibility of meaningful existence through the lack of being able to conceive of such a concept). The lack of intelligibility of a bisexual relationship was such that even these bisexual participants did not describe their own relationships *as* bisexual (even if the relationship involved more than one bisexual partner). Previous research has indicated that participants' feelings of invisibility within their relationships linked closely with anxiety and depression (Feinstein et

al., 2016; Molino, 2015), hence our findings have implications in terms of bisexual people's health and wellbeing. We recommend that psychologists, social scientists, and other activists and practitioners avoid using *identity* terms to describe relationships (e.g. gay relationship, straight/heterosexual relationship). Instead, there are alternative terms such as "mixed-sexuality" or "same-gender" or "different-gender" which could be more appropriate in order to be recognise the possibility that relationships can include a bisexual person.

Participants were extremely familiar with common cultural stereotypes of bisexuality. Those which dominated in these accounts were of bisexual people as hypersexual, incapable of monogamy or commitment, and "up for threesomes". We add to the literature by identifying how this binegativity manifests and impacts upon how bisexual people experience their relationships. These participants responded to bisexual stereotypes by distancing themselves and their partners from them and thereby defended against themselves, their partners, and their relationships becoming tainted by binegativity. However, this meant ongoing identity and relationship work. To counter misconceptions, our participants took on the task of educating their friends and partners about bisexuality, a scenario which adds additional burden to what are arguably already burdensome bisexual identities. Counsellors and therapists may also lack an understanding of bisexuality (Barker & Langdridge, 2008). In light of this, it is important that psychologists, sociologists, counsellors, therapists, and other professionals become knowledgeable about and validate bisexuality and bisexual relationships.

There were limitations to our research. We aimed to recruit a diverse sample but most participants were relatively young White women in monogamous relationships with

men, hence our findings largely reflect this demographic. However, men and non-binary/genderqueer participants, and those in non-monogamous/polyamorous relationships, had some shared experiences, as evidenced in our analysis. None of our participants reported that they were swingers or that they engaged in threesomes or sex parties and it seems likely that research which included bisexuals who were sexually active in these ways would result in findings which differed from those reported in this paper. We chose to recruit participants who self-identified as bisexual due to our specific focus on bisexual marginalisation. As a result, our results do not represent those who are attracted to or sexually active with people of multiples genders but who do not identify as bisexual. Further research in this area could offer insight into the distinctiveness of their relationship experiences.

Our sample purposively included non-binary/genderqueer participants, although it was beyond the scope of this paper to focus as closely on the distinctiveness of their experiences as would be ideal. However, we have highlighted that these participants' talk of their identities and relationships was particularly nuanced, especially with regard to their experiences of invisibility. Sensitive research around bisexuality and non-binary gender identities is particularly important (Barker, et al., 2012). Additionally, bisexual people in relationships with trans/non-binary/genderqueer people may have unique relationship experiences (Klesse, 2011). Bisexual men also continue to be minimally researched yet are likely to have distinctive experiences of their lives and relationships, not least due to differing perceptions of bisexuality according to gender (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014).

The predominance of White participants is in line with other researchers' samples which have often tended to be predominantly White (e.g. Hartman-Linck, 2014; Mereish,

Katz-Wise and Woulfe, 2017). However, this is problematic, and the lack of bisexual people of colour in research may be a reflection of White privilege and supremacy (Steinhouse, 2002). It is important that future researchers consider the intersections of bisexuality and race/ethnicity because race and racism are likely to intersect with bisexual marginalisation in ways which impact on the lived experiences and identities of people of colour (e.g., Collins, 2004; Steinhouse, 2002). Our sample was also relatively young and older bisexual people may have different insights and experiences of their identities and relationships. Many of our participants identified with multiple identity terms. As young people increasingly affiliate with alternative non-binary identities such as pansexual (Lapointe, 2017), these are rapidly becoming an important area for future researchers to specifically focus on when exploring identity and relationships.

Our research contributes new knowledge about the complexities of how bisexual people maintain and manage their bisexuality in relationships within a context where their identities are misrecognised and marginalised by others. Despite activists, academics, and others affirming the visibility and validity of bisexual identity the invisibility and marginalisation of bisexuality dominated our participants' accounts. It may be that raising awareness of binegativity in educating about bisexuality inadvertently serves to partly disseminate knowledge of negative stereotypes rather than successfully repudiate them. Therefore, further focus on the positive aspects and the diversity of bisexual lives and relationships could add additional nuance to our knowledge which could potentially provide opportunities to further disrupt dominant representations of bisexuality.

References

Alarie, M., & Gaudet, S. (2013). "I don't know if she is bisexual or if she just wants to get attention": Analyzing the various mechanisms through which emerging adults invisibilize bisexuality. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *13*(2), 191-214. DOI: 10.1080/15299716.2013.780004

Anderlini-D'Onofrio, S. (2004). Introduction: Plural loves: Bi and poly utopias for a new millennium. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *4*(3-4), 1-6. DOI: 10.1300/J159v04n03_01

Anderson, E., Scoats, R., & McCormack, M. (2015). Metropolitan bisexual men's relationships: Evidence of a cohort effect. *Journal of Bisexuality, 15*(1), 21-39. DOI: 10.1080/15299716.2014.994055

Armstrong, H. L., & Reissing, E. D. (2014). Attitudes toward casual sex, dating, and committed relationships with bisexual partners. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *14*(2), 236-264. DOI: 10.1080/15299716.2014.902784

Barker, M.J., & Iantaffi, A. (2017) Psychotherapy. In C. Richards, W.P. Bouman, & M.J. Barker (Eds.). *Genderqueer and non-binary genders* (pp.103-124). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Barker, M., & Langdridge, D. (2008). Bisexuality: Working with a silenced sexuality. *Feminism & Psychology*, *18*(3), 389-394. DOI: 10.1177/0959353508092093

Barker, M., & Langdridge, D. (2010). Whatever happened to non-monogamies? Critical reflections on recent research and theory. *Sexualities*, *13*(6), 748-772. DOI: 10.1177/1363460710384645

Barker, M., Yockney, J., Richards, C., Jones, R., Bowes-Catton, H., & Plowman, T. (2012). Guidelines for researching and writing about bisexuality. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *12*(3), 376-392. DOI: 10.1080/15299716.2012.702618

Bradford, M. (2012). Couple therapy with GLB-straight relationships. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, *8*(1), 5-22. DOI: 10.1080/1550428X.2012.641368

Bradford, M. (2004a). The bisexual experience: Living in a dichotomous culture. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *4*(1-2), 7-23. DOI: 10.1300/J159v04n01_02

Bradford, M. (2004b). Bisexual issues in same-sex couple therapy. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, *3*(2-3), 43-52. DOI: 10.1300/J398v03n02_05

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. DOI: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing gender*. New York: Routledge

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge

Buxton, A. P. (2006). Counseling heterosexual spouses of bisexual men and women and bisexual-heterosexual couples: Affirmative approaches. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *6*(1-2), 105-135. DOI: 10.1300/J159v06n01_07

Buxton, A. P. (2004). Works in progress: How mixed-orientation couples maintain their marriages after the wives come out. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *4*(1-2), 57-82. DOI: 10.1300/J159v04n01_06

Buxton, A. P. (2001). Writing our own script: How bisexual men and their heterosexual wives maintain their marriages after disclosure. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *1*(2-3), 155-189. DOI: 10.1300/J159v01n02_06

Callis, A. S. (2009). Playing with Butler and Foucault: Bisexuality and queer theory. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *9*(3-4), 213-233. DOI: 10.1080/15299710903316513

Clarke, V., Ellis, S. J., Peel, E., & Riggs, D. W. (2010). *Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer psychology: An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Collins, J. F. (2004). The intersection of race and bisexuality: A critical overview of the literature and past, present, and future directions of the "borderlands". *Journal of Bisexuality*, *4*(1-2), 99-116. DOI: 10.1300/J159v04n01_08

Diamond, L. M. (2005). 'I'm straight, but I kissed a girl': The trouble with American media representations of female-female sexuality. *Feminism & Psychology*, *15*(1), 104-110. DOI: 10.1177/0959353505049712

Eadie, J. (1993). Activating bisexuality: Towards a bi/sexual politics. In J. Bristow & A.R. Wilson (Eds.). *Activating theory: Lesbian, gay, bisexual politics* (pp.139-170). London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Edser, S. J., & Shea, J. D. (2002). An exploratory investigation of bisexual men in monogamous, heterosexual marriages. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *2*(4), 5-43. DOI: 10.1300/J159v02n04_02

Edwards, R. & Holland, J. (2013). *What is qualitative interviewing*? London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Eliason, M. J. (1997). The prevalence and nature of biphobia in heterosexual undergraduate students. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *26*(3), 317-326. DOI: 10.1023%2FA%3A1024527032040

Elliott, R., Fischer, C. T., & Rennie, D. L. (1999). Evolving guidelines for publication of qualitative research studies in psychology and related fields. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *38*(3), 215-229. DOI: 10.1348/014466599162782

Feinstein, B. A., Dyar, C., Bhatia, V., Latack, J. A., & Davila, J. (2016). Conservative beliefs, attitudes toward bisexuality, and willingness to engage in romantic and sexual activities with a bisexual partner. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *45*(6), 1535-1550. DOI: 10.1007/s10508-015-0642-x

Feinstein, B. A., Latack, J. A., Bhatia, V., Davila, J., & Eaton, N. R. (2016). Romantic relationship involvement as a minority stress buffer in gay/lesbian versus bisexual individuals. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, *20*(3), 237-257. DOI: 10.1080/19359705.2016.1147401

Finn, M. (2012). Monogamous order and the avoidance of chaotic excess. *Psychology & Sexuality*, *3*(2), 123-136. DOI: 10.1080/19419899.2011.551834

Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality. Volume I: An introduction.* New York: Vintage.

Gates, G.J. (2011). *How many people are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender?* The Williams Institute, April 2011. Retrieved December 7, 2017, from http://www2.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute/pdf/How-many-people-are-LGBT-Final.pdf

Gonzalez, K. A., Ramirez, J. L., & Galupo, M. P. "I was and still am": Narratives of Bisexual Marking in the #StillBisexual Campaign. *Sexuality & Culture*, 1-23. DOI: 10.1007/s12119-016-9401-y

Grunt-Mejer, K., & Campbell, C. (2016). Around consensual nonmonogamies: Assessing attitudes toward nonexclusive relationships. *Journal of Sex Research, 53*, 45-53. DOI: 10.1080/00224499.2015.1010193

Gustavson, M. (2009). Bisexuals in relationships: Uncoupling intimacy from gender ontology. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *9*(3-4), 407-429. DOI: 10.1080/15299710903316653

Hanna, P. (2012). Using internet technologies (such as *Skype*) as a research medium: A research note. *Qualitative Research, 12*(2), 239-242. DOI: 10.1177/1468794111426607

Hartman-Linck, J. E. (2014). Keeping bisexuality alive: Maintaining bisexual visibility in monogamous relationships. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *14*(2), 177-193. DOI: 10.1080/15299716.2014.903220

Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Halliwell, E. (2014). Bisexual women's understandings of social marginalisation: "The heterosexuals don't understand us but nor do the lesbians". *Feminism & Psychology*, *24*(3), 352-372. DOI: 10.1177/0959353514539651

Hayfield, N., & Huxley, C. (2015). Insider and outsider perspectives: Reflections on researcher identities in research with lesbian and bisexual women. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *12*(2), 91-106. DOI: 10.1080/14780887.2014.918224

Hernandez, B. C., Schwenke, N. J., & Wilson, C. M. (2011). Spouses in mixed-orientation marriage: A 20-year review of empirical studies. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, *37*(3), 307-318. DOI: 10.1111/j.1752-0606.2010.00202.x

Kitzinger, C. (1990) The token lesbian chapter. In S. Wilkinson (Ed.) *Feminist social psychologies: International perspectives* (pp. 119-144). Open University Press, Buckingham

Klesse, C. (2011). Shady characters, untrustworthy partners, and promiscuous sluts: Creating bisexual intimacies in the face of heteronormativity and biphobia. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *11*(2-3), 227-244. DOI: 10.1080/15299716.2011.571987

Klesse, C. (2006). Polyamory and its 'others': Contesting the terms of non-monogamy. *Sexualities*, *9*(5), 565-583. DOI: 10.1177/1363460706069986

Klesse, C. (2005). Bisexual women, non-monogamy and differentialist anti-promiscuity discourses. *Sexualities*, *8*(4), 445-464. DOI: 10.1177/1363460705056620

Lahti, A. (2015). Similar and equal relationships? Negotiating bisexuality in an enduring relationship. *Feminism & Psychology*, *25*(4), 431-448. DOI: 10.1177/0959353515574786

Lannutti, P. J. (2008). "This is not a lesbian wedding": Examining same-sex marriage and bisexual-lesbian couples. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *7*(3-4), 237-260. DOI: 10.1080/15299710802171316

Lapointe, A. A. (2017). "It's not pans, it's people": Student and teacher perspectives on bisexuality and pansexuality. *Journal of Bisexuality, 17*(1), 88-107. DOI: 10.1080/15299716.2016.1196157

Li, T., Dobinson, C., Scheim, A. I., & Ross, L. E. (2013). Unique issues bisexual people face in intimate relationships: A descriptive exploration of lived experience. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, *17*(1), 21-39. DOI: 10.1080/19359705.2012.723607

McLean, K. (2007). Hiding in the closet? Bisexuals, coming out and the disclosure imperative. *Journal of Sociology*, *43*(2), 151-166. DOI: 10.1177/1440783307076893

McLean, K. (2004). Negotiating (non)monogamy: Bisexuality and intimate relationships. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *4*(1-2), 83-97. DOI: 10.1300/J159v04n01_07

Mereish, E.H., Katz-Wise, S.L., & Woulfe, J. (2017) We're here and we're queer: Sexual orientation and sexual fluidity differences between bisexual and queer women. *Journal of Bisexuality, 17*(1), 125-139, DOI: 10.1080/15299716.2016.1217448

Monro, S. (2015). *Bisexuality: Identity, politics, and theories.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Monro, S., Hines, S., & Osborne, A. (2017). Is bisexuality invisible? A review of sexualities scholarship 1970–2015. *The Sociological Review* (online first) DOI: 10.1177/0038026117695488

Moss, A. R. (2012). Alternative families, alternative lives: Married women doing bisexuality. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, *8*(5), 405-427. DOI: 10.1080/1550428X.2012.729946

Mulick, P. S., & Wright Jr, L. W. (2002). Examining the existence of biphobia in the heterosexual and homosexual populations. *Journal of Bisexuality, 2*(4), 45-64. DOI: 10.1300/J159v02n04_03

Ochs, R. (2007). What's in a name? Why women embrace or resist bisexual identity in B.A. Firestein (Ed.) *Becoming visible: Counseling bisexuals across the lifespan* (pp.72-86). Columbia University Press: Chichester, West Sussex.

Ochs, R. (1996). Biphobia: It goes more than two ways. In B. A. Firestein (Ed.), *Bisexuality: The psychology and politics of an invisible minority* (pp. 217–239). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pew Research Center (2013). *A survey of LGBT Americans: Attitudes, experiences and values in changing times*. Retrieved March 2, 2018, from www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2013/06/SDT_LGBT-Americans_06-2013.pdf

Pallotta-Chiarolli, M., & Lubowitz, S. (2003). Outside belonging: Multi-sexual relationships as border existence. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *3*(1), 53-85. DOI: 10.1300/J159v03n01_05

Pieper, M. and Bauer, R. (2006). *Polyamory and mono-normativity: Results of an empirical study of non-monogamous patterns of intimacy* (unpublished article).

Reinhardt, R. V. (2001/2002). Bisexual women in heterosexual relationships. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *2*(2-3), 163-171. DOI: 10.1300/J159v02n02_11

Roberts, T. S., Horne, S. G., & Hoyt, W. T. (2015). Between a gay and a straight place: Bisexual individuals' experiences with monosexism. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *15*(4), 554-569. DOI: 10.1080/15299716.2015.1111183

Robinson, O.C. (2014). Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 11*(1) 25-41. DOI: 10.1080/14780887.2013.801543

Robinson, M. (2013). Polyamory and monogamy as strategic identities. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *13*(1), 21-38. DOI: 10.1080/15299716.2013.755731

Rubel, A. N., & Bogaert, A. F. (2015). Consensual nonmonogamy: Psychological well-being and relationship quality correlates. *Journal of Sex Research, 52*(9), 961-982. DOI:10.1080/00224499.2014.942722

Serano, J. M. (2010). The case against autogynephilia. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, *12*(3), 176-187. DOI: 10.1080/15532739.2010.514223

Steinhouse, K. (2002). Bisexual women: Considerations of race, social justice and community building. *Journal of Progessive Human Services*, *12*(2), 5-25.

Tabatabai, A., & Linders, A. (2011). Vanishing act: Non-straight identity narratives of women in relationships with women and men. *Qualitative Sociology*, *34*(4), 583-599. DOI: 10.1007/s11133-011-9202-4

Vencill, J. A., & Wiljamaa, S. J. (2016). From MOM to MORE: Emerging research on mixed orientation relationships. *Current Sexual Health Reports*, *8*(3), 206-212. DOI: 10.1007/s11930-016-0081-2

Vernallis, K. (1999). Bisexual monogamy: Twice the temptation but half the fun? *Journal of Social Philosophy*, *30*(3), 347-368. DOI: 10.1111/0047-2786.00022

Wilkinson, S. (1996). Bisexuality “a la mode”. *Women's Studies International Forum, 19*(3), 293-301. DOI: 10.1016/0277-5395(96)00016-7

Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Wosick-Correa, K. (2010). Agreements, rules and agentic fidelity in polyamorous relationships. *Psychology & Sexuality*, *1*(1), 44-61. DOI: 10.1080/19419891003634471

Yoshino, K. (2000). The epistemic contract of bisexual erasure. *Stanford Law Review*, 52(2), 353-461. DOI: 10.2307/1229482

Zinik, G. (1985). Identity conflict or adaptive flexibility? Bisexuality reconsidered. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *11*(1-2), 7-20. DOI: 10.1300/J082v11n01_02

Misrecognition and managing marginalisation: Bisexual people's experiences of bisexuality and relationships

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Demographic	**Details**
Age	Range: 18 – 40 years / Mean: 28
Terms other than bisexual used to describe sexuality	Queer: 9 Pansexual: 7 (+1 maybe) Panromantic: 1 Demisexual (maybe): 1 Homoromantic: 1 Sapiosexual: 1 *None other than bisexual: 7*
Gender	Woman: 13 Man: 4 (1 trans) Genderqueer/non-binary: 3
Relationship	Monogamous: 14 Open/non-monogamous/polyamorous: 6
Race/Ethnicity	White British: 10 White European: 4 White Welsh: 1 White Other: 1 Eurasian: 1 Latino: 1 Multiracial: 1 Singaporean Chinese: 1
Social Class	Middle: 12 Working: 5 Working-middle: 2 Upper-middle: 1
Disabilities	Disabled: 7 (autistic; anxiety/chronic anxiety; blind; chronic fatigue syndrome; chronic migraine; chronic illness; complex PTSD; depression; dyspraxia; dyslexia; fibromyalgia; obsessive compulsive disorder; a genetic muscle disorder; a perceptual processing disorder)
Employment	Full-time: 10 Part-time: 7 Unemployed: 3
Education (highest level)	Degree: 8 Postgraduate degree: 7 A-Level: 4 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE): 1
Student status	Full-time: 4

	Part-time: 4

[i] Despite the potential of bisexuality to disrupt these dichotomies, queer theorists have nonetheless largely overlooked those categories which fall outside these binaries (see, Callis, 2009; Monro, 2015).

[ii] The term "mononormativity" has been used within bisexual communities to describe the common misassumption that attraction is unidirectional (Clarke, Ellis, Peel & Riggs, 2010). It has also more commonly been used to capture how dominant Western understandings of relationships position monogamy as the only natural and normal form of intimate relationship (Pieper & Bauer, 2006).

[iii] The term "biphobia" arose following the concept of "homophobia" and has been defined as an irrational fear which (within a liberal humanistic framework) is often located as the responsibility of an individual, rather than the wider social context being recognised (see Hayfield, Clarke & Halliwell, 2014; Klesse, 2011). For these reasons, "bisexual marginalisation" and "bisexual negativity" are the preferred terms in this paper.

[iv] Participants chose their own pseudonyms and could include a surname if they wished. Kate Slater and Rosalina Robbins were two of three participants who chose to do so.

[v] It is common for consensually non-monogamous/polyamorous relationships to be structured in terms of "primary" and "secondary" partners. However, the notion of a "primary" partner has been critiqued, partly because it implies a hierarchal arrangement whereby one partner is prioritised over others (see, Wosick-Correa, 2010).