

UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER

An exploration of the tensions experienced by bisexual men in long-term,
monogamous, mixed-orientation relationships, whose bisexuality is known to
their partners: Implications for counselling

Michael Neath

A dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
the University of Chester for the degree of
Master of Arts in Clinical Counselling

October 2019

Abstract

This research explores the tensions encountered by bisexual men who are in a long-term monogamous relationship with someone who does not identify as bisexual, in the circumstance of their bisexuality being known to their partner. It was anticipated that tensions and partner anxieties would arise from preconceptions of bisexual men, as described in the literature.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six bisexual men. The interview transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The analysis uncovered three main themes: formative experiences; fear and longing; and the relationship.

Within these themes, the participants revealed how formative experiences have left them aware that a part of them which they experience as fundamental may be met with rejection, stigma, denial, incomprehension, and misconceptions. The second theme revealed how the tension between the desire to be known and live authentically on the one hand, and the desire to be safe from rejection and stigma on the other, creates situations of living with partial disclosure, vigilance and caution, and inauthenticity. In the third theme, romantic relationships were shown to bring opportunities for being known and accepted; the possibility of rejection; further restrictions to living authentically; and the onus of answering to partner anxieties. Additionally, an incongruence was observed between participants' averred feelings about their relationships and implicit feelings about the terms of their acceptance.

The implications of the findings for counselling are considered from a person-centred perspective.

Key words:

Bisexuality; bisexual men; relationships; bi-negativity; person-centred; counselling; psychotherapy.

Declaration

This work is original and has not been submitted previously in support of any qualification or course.

Signed: 

Date: 23/9/19

Michael Neath

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the participants for their generosity and honesty in contributing to this research.

My thanks also go to my dissertation supervisor, Professor Peter Gubi, for his wise words, expertise, and a sense of calm when I needed them most. I am indebted, too, to my tutors, Anne Le'Surf, Dr Rita Mintz, Tracey Clare, and Dr Valda Swinton.

And to my wife, Carla, and our beautiful children – thank you for bearing with me and providing invaluable love and support.

Contents

Abstract.....	i
Declaration.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
0 Introduction.....	1
0.1 Context of the research.....	1
0.2 Aim of the research.....	4
0.3 Positioning statement.....	5
0.4 Structure of the dissertation.....	7
1 Literature Review.....	8
1.1 Literature search.....	8
1.2 Introduction.....	9
1.3 Definitions and conceptualisations of bisexuality.....	9
1.4 The prevalence of bisexuality.....	11
1.5 Bisexual erasure and invisibility.....	13
1.5.1 Cultural erasure.....	14
1.5.2 Academic invisibility and erasure.....	14
1.6 Attitudes to bisexual men.....	16
1.6.1 The character and prevalence of bi-negativity.....	16
1.6.2 Double discrimination.....	17

1.6.3	The causes of bi-negativity	18
1.6.4	Changing attitudes	19
1.7	Identity development of bisexual men	19
1.8	Bisexual men’s relationships	22
1.8.1	Attitudes towards bisexual men as romantic partners	22
1.8.2	Bisexual men’s attitudes to monogamy	24
1.8.3	Bisexual men’s experiences of monogamous relationships	25
1.8.3.1	Disclosure of bisexuality to romantic partners	25
1.8.3.2	Identity loss in relationships	27
1.8.4	Factors contributing to successful mixed-orientation relationships	28
1.9	Mental health findings for bisexual men	29
1.9.1	The mental health discrepancy	29
1.9.2	Minority stress	30
1.9.2.1	Proximal stressors	31
1.9.2.2	Distal stressors	32
1.9.2.3	Identity	33
1.10	Counselling bisexual men	34
1.10.1	Stability and legitimacy	35
1.10.2	Awareness of bisexual issues	36
1.10.3	Disclosure	38

1.10.4	Practitioner self-disclosure	38
1.11	Summary	39
2	Research Choices	40
2.1	Overview	40
2.2	Recruitment of participants	40
2.3	Ethical considerations	41
2.4	Interviews.....	42
2.5	Data analysis.....	42
2.6	Trustworthiness and validity	44
2.7	Summary	45
3	Research Findings	46
3.1	Overview	46
3.2	The participants.....	46
3.3	Superordinate theme 1: Formative experiences	47
3.3.1	Subordinate theme 1.1: Incomprehension and dismissal	47
3.3.2	Subordinate theme 1.2: Pressures	48
3.4	Superordinate theme 2: Fear and longing	49
3.4.1	Subordinate theme 2.1: Significance of bisexuality	49
3.4.2	Subordinate theme 2.2: Authenticity versus safety	50
3.4.2.1	Sub-subordinate theme 2.2.1: Chris.....	50

3.4.2.2	Sub-subordinate theme 2.2.2: David.....	51
3.4.2.3	Sub-subordinate theme 2.2.3: Robert.....	52
3.4.2.4	Sub-subordinate theme 2.2.4: Steve.....	53
3.4.2.5	Sub-subordinate theme 2.2.5: Neil.....	53
3.4.2.6	Sub-subordinate theme 2.2.6: Daniel.....	54
3.5	Superordinate theme 3: The relationship.....	54
3.5.1	Subordinate theme 3.1: Rejection.....	54
3.5.2	Subordinate theme 3.2: Disclosure.....	55
3.5.3	Subordinate theme 3.3: Partner attitudes.....	57
3.5.4	Subordinate theme 3.4: Anxiety and reassurance.....	59
3.5.5	Subordinate theme 3.5: Monogamy.....	62
3.5.5.1	Sub-subordinate theme 3.5.1: Motivations.....	62
3.5.5.2	Sub-subordinate theme 3.5.2: Bisexuality and monogamy.....	64
3.6	Summary.....	65
4	Discussion.....	66
4.1	Formative experiences.....	66
4.2	The relationship.....	67
4.2.1	Disclosure to partner.....	68
4.2.2	Relationship work and incongruence.....	69
4.2.3	Monogamy.....	70

4.3	Authenticity.....	71
4.4	Summary	72
5	Conclusion	73
5.1	Limitations and future research.....	73
5.2	Implications for counselling	74
5.3	Reflective statement	76
	References	77
	Appendix 1: Research advert	102
	Appendix 2: Participant information letter	103
	Appendix 3: Participant consent form	106
	Appendix 4: Using Twitter for recruitment.....	107
	Appendix 5: Illustrations of the method.....	108

Introduction

0.1 Context of the research

There is a tendency in Western societies to regard human sexuality in dichotomous terms of heterosexuality and homosexuality (Eisner, 2013; Yoshino, 2000), despite the existence of bisexuals in greater numbers than gay men and lesbians combined (Gates, 2011). Because of this tendency to *monosexism*¹, bisexuals as a group are subject to a social and academic erasure not experienced by heterosexuals or homosexuals (Eisner, 2013; Kaestle & Ivory, 2012; Monro et al., 2017; Yoshino, 2000).

Due to this erasure, there is a lack of awareness of bisexuality and a lack of visible role models. Consequently, complications arise in the development of a sexual identity (Brown, 2002; Weinberg et al., 1994). Further difficulties come from trying to make sense of coexisting same-sex and other-sex attractions from within the monosexist, dichotomous framework which excludes it (Eisner, 2013; Macalister, 2003). Hence, two models of bisexual identity development label the first developmental stages 'Confusion' and 'Finding and applying the label' (Brown, 2002; Weinberg et al., 1994).

Also prominent in the literature is *bi-negativity* – a term which encompasses the common negative attitudes and responses to bisexuals (Dodge et al., 2016; Ochs, 2005; Zivony & Lobel, 2014). Bi-negativity contrasts with homophobia in possibly unexpected ways: it has been found to come from both heterosexual and homosexual populations (de Bruin & Arndt, 2010; Mohr & Rochlen, 1999; Mulick & Wright, 2002; Ochs, 1996), with heterosexual populations

¹ Monosexism is defined as “the privileging of sexual attraction to one sex or gender” (Roberts, Horne, & Hoyt, 2015, p.554)

holding more intensely negative attitudes towards bisexual men than towards gay men (Helms & Waters, 2016).

The components of bi-negativity have been found to be consistent. Under the prevailing monosexist view, bisexuality is often seen as an expression of confusion or the denial of homosexuality, rather than a valid sexuality (Brewster & Moradi, 2010; Callis, 2013; Dodge et al., 2016; Eliason, 2000; Zivony & Lobel, 2014). Bisexuals are also often viewed as hypersexual and incapable of fidelity, and are therefore seen as less desirable candidates for romantic relationships (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014; Mohr & Rochlen, 1999). Cultural representations promulgate these preconceptions (Bryant, 2000; Pitt, 2006), adding to those factors which discourage many who experience bisexual attraction from identifying as bisexual (Callis, 2013; Ochs, 2007).

Such prejudice and discrimination may contribute to the mental health of bisexuals (Meyer, 2003; Taylor, 2018), which has consistently been found to be worse than that of heterosexuals or homosexuals (Becker et al., 2014; Bostwick et al., 2010; Brennan et al., 2010). For example, Office for National Statistics data show bisexuals scoring lower than any other group for happiness and life satisfaction and highest for anxiety (*Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people say they experience a lower quality of life*, 2017). They have also been found to have the highest instances of suicidal ideation (Brennan et al., 2010) and of lifetime mood and anxiety disorders (Bostwick et al., 2010) when compared to heterosexuals and homosexuals.

Despite the prevalent belief that bisexuals are not inclined to monogamy (Dodge et al., 2016; Knous, 2006), research shows that bisexuals often choose exclusive relationships (Anderson et al., 2015; Edser & Shea, 2002; Hayfield et al., 2018). However, because bisexuals are more likely to be in a relationship with someone who doesn't identify as bisexual, and given the

high prevalence of bi-negativity noted above, intrapersonal and interpersonal tensions can result within relationships on the basis of these beliefs (Hayfield et al., 2018; Vencill et al., 2018; Vencill & Wiljamaa, 2016).

In several significant ways, the experiences of bisexual men and women differ. Firstly, bisexual men are viewed more negatively than bisexual women (Eliason, 2000; Helms & Waters, 2016; Herek, 2002; Mulick & Wright, 2002; Yost & Thomas, 2012). Secondly, the attitudes of potential heterosexual partners differ towards them: heterosexual women have expressed greater negativity and insecurity than heterosexual men towards dating bisexuals (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014; Callis, 2013; Gleason et al., 2019). Thirdly, bisexual men have been said to have an additional burden resulting from the conflict between prevailing male gender roles and the same-sex attraction they experience (Brown, 2002; Potoczniak, 2007).

The anxiety around relationships with bisexual men appears primarily to be related to the perceived instability of bisexuality and anticipated infidelity (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014; Callis, 2013; Feinstein, Dyar, et al., 2016; Yost & Thomas, 2012). Bisexual men are most subject to the view that their sexuality is unstable and heterosexual women have expressed concerns regarding bisexual partners losing sexual attraction to them (Feinstein, Dyar, et al., 2016; Yost & Thomas, 2012). While heterosexual men may have a tendency to eroticise the supposed hypersexuality of bisexual women (Callis, 2013; Israel & Mohr, 2004; Li, Dobinson, Scheim, & Ross, 2013), heterosexual women considering bisexual male partners have expressed the anxiety of infidelity (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014).

Because of these disparities, this study focuses on bisexual men only, a group that has been neglected in the studies of masculinity, sexuality and gender (Elder et al., 2015; Parent & Bradstreet, 2017).

0.2 Aim of the research

The research question is: *'What are the tensions experienced by bisexual² men in long-term, monogamous, mixed-orientation relationships, whose bisexuality is known to their partner?'*

The rationale for this research lies, firstly, in the high mental health needs of this client group (Brennan et al., 2010; Brewster & Moradi, 2010; Ross et al., 2014). Secondly, it is called for by practitioners' common lack of awareness of bisexuals' experiences, challenges, and relationship tensions (Feinstein & Dyar, 2017; Li et al., 2013). And thirdly, that their needs and challenges are often mistakenly assumed to be equivalent to those of gay men and lesbians (Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2013; Diamond, 2006; Kaestle & Ivory, 2012; Worthen, 2013).

Relationships can be the spheres in which these forces collide, and so may have provided the impetus for bisexual clients to seek therapeutic help (Niki, 2018; Vencill et al., 2018). Romantic relationships, unarguably, constitute a significant component of people's lives. Misconceptions of bisexuality and lack of awareness have been shown to reduce practitioners' ability to work with this client group (Mohr et al., 2001).

Therefore, the aim of this research is:

- *to help the counsellor or psychotherapist to extend their appreciation of the realms of experience of bisexual men in their relationships, informing the practitioner's understanding of the phenomenology of a component of their client group.*

² 'Bisexual' denotes 'bisexually identifying' for the purpose of conducting this study.

Importantly, I wanted participants to be in situations where the implications of their bisexuality had had time to develop and emerge. Similarly, I felt that the degree of commitment of each person in the relationship was likely to be consequential to their feelings on the matter. For these reasons, 'long-term' relationships are considered (three years or more). I believe that the inclusion of both situations of monogamy *and* polyamory would involve too many additional factors, precluding a coherent and meaningful study.

0.3 Positioning statement

My own bisexuality has become relevant in the personal development aspect of the MA, and this has caused me to think more broadly about what it means to be bisexual in my time and place. Further, I have wondered whether counselling and psychotherapy³ sufficiently provide for bisexual clients, if, indeed, there is much recognition of them at all.

Reflecting on my own experience, I found that, despite having had many friends in LGB communities⁴, I could remember having known very few people who called themselves bisexual. And although it is now seemingly obligatory in the formulations 'LGB' and 'LGBT', I wasn't sure how much I felt the 'B' really counted for. I remembered once feeling that we were a minority within a minority; on reflection, bisexuality seemed an inexplicable absence. My consequent exploration of the relevant literature has been enlightening, revealing a surprising amount that reflects my own experience.

³ The terms *counselling* and *psychotherapy*, and *counsellor* and *psychotherapist*, will be used interchangeably.

⁴ By use of this term, I am referring to social and organisational contexts established by and for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people.

This positioning statement gives an account of my personal experience relative to the research and my reasons from choosing this subject. It is included for two reasons. Firstly, it has facilitated greater reflexivity in my engagement with the work, which is essential to good qualitative research (McLeod, 2015). Reflexivity has been described as an awareness of one's own "feelings, hopes, assumptions, biases... applied, through acknowledgement and management of the impact of the researcher on the research" (Kasket, 2015, p.37). It involves the researcher taking "account of his or her personal and subjective involvement" in the research, and "the capacity... to reflect on his or her experience" (McLeod, 2015, p.97). Furthermore, it is required for proper analysis of data under the chosen methodology (see Chapter Three). Secondly, knowing the researcher's relationship to the subject helps the reader assess the interpretation of the data (McLeod, 2015; Smith et al., 2009).

I am a bisexual man in my mid-40s. I have been married for nine years to a woman who doesn't identify as bisexual, and we have three children. My academic studies to become a counsellor have involved a component of personal development and I have, in the process, discovered that the meaning of my bisexuality seems to have changed over time. Whereas, in my teens and twenties, I regarded my bisexuality with an unalloyed pride, marriage and family have indirectly brought to bear the fear of social stigma and the uncertainty associated with bisexuality. My wife has experienced the concerns about bisexuality that are often reported (see section 1.8.1). The recasting of my sexuality as a cause of distress and a secret introduced a subtle shame I would never have anticipated.

On this course of study, rewarding conversations with two bisexual classmates have provided fascinating, illuminating instances of similarity and difference of experience. Hence, in this

study, I don't seek to provide affirmation of my own singular story, but proceed from those encounters in a spirit of open investigation and reflexivity.

0.4 Structure of the dissertation

This introduction has set out the need for and aims of this study, the definition of bisexuality for the purposes of this research, information about the researcher, and a note on terminological choices.

Chapter One details the literature on the lives, mental health and relationships of bisexual men felt to be relevant to the research. Chapter Two addresses the research choices made. Chapter Three is a presentation of the findings. Chapter Four provides a discussion of the findings in comparison to the literature. Chapter Five concludes the dissertation.

1 Literature Review

1.1 Literature search

Using the terms listed below, the following databases were searched:

PsycARTICLES

PsycBOOKS

PsycINFO

MEDLINE

First search:

1. Bisexual* OR “sexual minority” OR nonheterosexual

AND

2. “mental health” OR counsel* OR psychother* OR discrimination OR “minority stress” OR erasure OR bi-erasure OR invisibility OR bi-invisibility OR disclos* OR conceal* OR community OR fluid* OR attitudes OR develop* OR identity OR development OR violence

Second search:

1. Bisexual AND men NOT gay

AND

2. “mental health” OR counsel* OR psychother* OR discrimination OR “minority stress” OR erasure OR bi-erasure OR invisibility OR bi-invisibility OR disclos* OR conceal* OR community OR fluid* OR attitudes OR develop* OR identity OR development OR violence

Third search

1. internal*
AND

AND

2. bi-negativity OR binegativity OR biphobia OR homophobia

Additional searches

The following terms were also used individually:

Heterosexism, monosexism, bi-negativity, binegativity, biphobia, self-stigma

1.2 Introduction

Beginning with a brief discussion of definitions and conceptualisations of bisexuality, this literature review will examine the recovered literature addressing the lives of bisexual men with respect to their identities, experiences of prejudice, mental health, and relationships. Finally, the literature regarding the counselling of bisexual men will be examined.

1.3 Definitions and conceptualisations of bisexuality

Bisexuality has been called “the most controversial and least understood of sexual orientations” (Rullo et al., 2015). Eadie (1999) wrote of the possibilities of the word:

“When I refer to bisexuality I am... gesturing towards a range of sexual-political phenomena: self-identifying bisexual people; people experiencing both same-sex and opposite-sex desires or practices who choose positively to identify as lesbian, gay or straight; people who have non-bisexual identities which struggle to contain outlawed bisexual feelings; people who desire both men and women, for whom the term ‘bisexual’ is anachronistic or culturally inappropriate. Those parameters in themselves mark some of the issues of definitional incoherence.” (p.1449)

Recognition of its complexities has raised the question of “whether we can even speak of bisexuality as a single phenomenon” (Fairington, 2008, p.268) and for bisexually identifying writer and activist, Shiri Eisner (2013), to write, “let me be the first to say this: I have no idea what bisexuality means” (p.13).

An extended discussion of the complexities of bisexuality as a construct are precluded by the limited space of this dissertation. However, the following selected aspects of that discourse are included, being relevant to the later themes of this literature review.

The term bisexual has passed through many hands. In its earliest usage, it referred to the intersex state of organisms. Later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it was used in the field of human sexuality to refer to sexual attractions to both sexes (Bowes-Catton & Hayfield, 2015), and was seen by early theorists, such as Freud and Ellis, to represent an unresolved psychosexual development (Ellis, 1927; Freud, 1983). Following the removal of homosexuality from the American Psychological Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1973, and in the context of civil rights movements for Black and gay/lesbian people, bisexual activists came to have something to say on the matter (Fox, 2003; Klein, 1993). So too have researchers, for whom a definition is requisite (Fox, 2003; Savin-Williams, 2008). Two themes have emerged from the literature: how to define bisexuality and how to conceive of it.

Three 'axes' are typically referenced when considering a definition and how to decide who is and who isn't bisexual for the purposes of research: self-identification, sexual attraction, and sexual behaviour (Taylor, 2018; Yoshino, 2000). For the purposes of research, Savin-Williams and Cohen (2018) wrote, "studies should match their research questions with the appropriate dimension of sexual or romantic domain (identity, attraction, behavior)" (p.199). These definitions have been variously applied to the question of prevalence, producing disparate results (LeVay & Baldwin, 2012).

There is also a specific conceptual variation in the way bisexuality has been defined. Rust (2002) argued that it was only emergence of the notions of heterosexuality and

homosexuality in the 19th century that made bisexuality, as the coexistence of both, conceivable. However, because the monosexual⁵ forms are seen as dichotomous, bisexuality was “therefore, simultaneously conceivable and inconceivable” (p.181). By this ‘dualistic’ view, bisexuality is not a distinct orientation, but a hybrid of heterosexuality and homosexuality, and bisexuals are “therefore not holistically bisexual but dualistically half heterosexual and half homosexual” (Rust, 2003, p.475). Hence, the bisexual in a monogamous relationship is seen as striving to suppress one of two urges. The alternative is to view bisexuality holistically, as “a desire that does not limit itself to the eroticization of one gender” (Klesse, 2011, p.230).

The term ‘bisexual’ has been criticised for implicit gender binarism, and so other terms (such as ‘pansexual’ and ‘omnisexual’) have been coined (Niki, 2018). However, it remains the umbrella term for those sexual orientations involving an attraction to more than one gender or sex, in both research and activism (Eisner, 2013; Maliepaard, 2018).

1.4 The prevalence of bisexuality

The following presents some research conclusions for the prevalence of bisexuality (Table 1).

Table 1: A sample of diverse prevalence estimates for bisexuality

Study	Population	Percentage bisexual
Epstein, McKinney, Fox and Garcia (2012)	Adult, US	92%
Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin (1948)	Adult, US	15%
Gates (2011)	Adult, US	1.8%
Office for National Statistics (<i>Sexual orientation, UK, 2017</i>)	Adult, UK	0.9%

⁵ Monosexuality is defined as “sexual attraction focused on only one gender: heterosexuality and homosexuality” (van Lisdonk & Keuzenkamp, 2017, p.218).

One reason for the range of these figures is the observed discrepancies between self-identification – the preferred method for national surveys (Aspinall, 2009; Dharma & Bauer, 2017; Savin-Williams & Cohen, 2018) – sexual behaviour, and sexual attraction. As Epstein, McKinney, Fox, and Garcia’s (2012) data from a survey of 17,785 participants shows, individuals with identical sexual-orientation scores may choose to identify in different ways (see Figure 1).

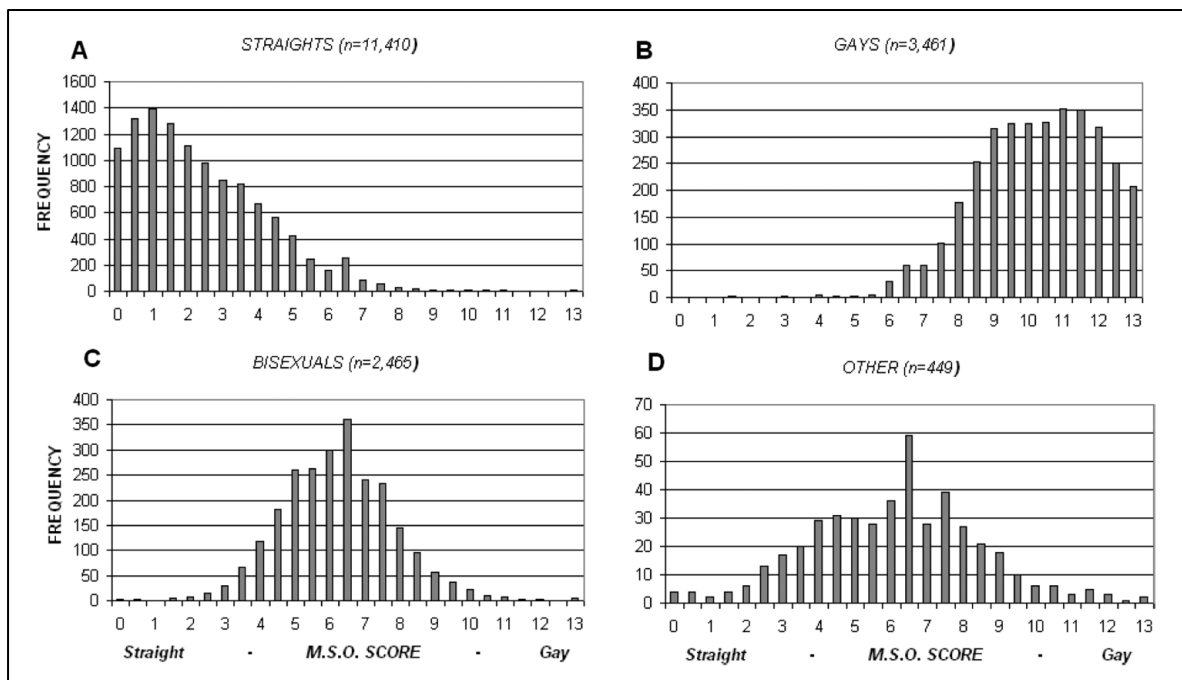


Figure 1: Mean sexual orientation (MSO) scores by self-identified sexual orientation. (Epstein, McKinney, Fox, & Garcia, 2012)

Savin-Williams and Cohen (2018) wrote that ‘mostly heterosexual’ and ‘mostly homosexual’ respondents are likely to respond to surveys with the respective monosexual category – behaviour which “masks their bisexuality” (p.197). This is supported by the finding that among those with bisexual attraction, it is those equally attracted to men and women, a minority of around a third, who are more likely to identify as bisexual (Anderson & McCormack, 2016). The stigmatisation of bisexuality is said to discourage bisexual

identification (Baldwin et al., 2015; Barker et al., 2012; Ochs, 2007), and others eschew the term for implying gender binarism (Harper & Swanson, 2019; Niki, 2018).

Hence, estimates vary widely, according to which dimensions of sexual orientation are considered. Anderson and McCormack (2016), in their assessment of the question of prevalence, concluded that “[it] seems safe to say that a minimum of 1.8% identify as bisexual, but that many, many more find themselves attracted to both sexes, and sometimes engage in same-sex behaviors” (p.44).

1.5 Bisexual erasure and invisibility

On the basis that the bisexual population is generally found to be at least as great as the homosexual population (Gates, 2011; Rust, 2002), bisexuals and bisexuality have been said to be underrepresented, both culturally and academically (Yoshino, 2000). This phenomenon is referred to as bisexual erasure and is accounted for by the theorised process of bisexual erasure (Eisner, 2013; Yoshino, 2000). Eisner (2013) defined bisexual erasure as:

“the widespread social phenomenon of erasing bisexuality from any discussion in which it is relevant or is otherwise invoked.... [It] means, among other things, a lack of representations, lack of communities, lack of awareness, lack of speech, and lack of acknowledgement.” (pp.66-67)

Yoshino (2000) wrote of the existence of an ‘epistemic contract of bisexual erasure’, a product of the vested interests of heterosexuals and homosexuals that suppresses the existence of bisexuality. These groups, he argued, encounter bisexuality as threatening to their sexual orientations, to the social primacy of sex and gender, and the norms of monogamy. The process of erasure is enacted in two ways: the denial of bisexuality as a legitimate orientation, and individual erasure, occurring on a case-by-case basis.

Another explanation, advanced by Macalister (2003), is that bisexuality contravenes cognitive schema, making it difficult for individuals to accommodate its ambiguity. There is, he wrote, a consequent discomfort that makes the monosexual orientations preferable. Whether it is for either of these reasons, or for some other, observations of bisexual erasure have been made in both the cultural and the academic spheres.

1.5.1 Cultural erasure

A review of scripted US television programmes for the year 2018-19 (*Where we are on TV 2018-2019*, 2018) found that only 7.6% of recurring LGBTQ characters were bisexual men. Additionally, a tendency has been identified in television series, such that a character's new relationship involving a change of partner gender occasions a change of *monosexual* orientation (Barker et al., 2008). Hence, the possibility of bisexuality is denied representation, and erasure is enacted according to Eisner's (2013) definition.

Erasure has been cited in the popular habit of dichotomously identifying prominent figures as homosexual despite contrary evidence, for example, Freddie Mercury, Virginia Woolf and Oscar Wilde (Eisner, 2013; Garber, 1995). Similarly, in the media, explicit disclosures of bisexual attraction or behaviour have led to being referred to as gay, as in the cases of swimmer, Tom Daly, and MP, Simon Hughes (Hughes, 2006; Jones, 2010; Kavanagh, 2006; Magrath et al., 2017).

1.5.2 Academic invisibility and erasure

Until the mid-1980s, serious consideration of bisexuality in research was dissuaded by the prevailing view that it was an illegitimate or immature orientation (Klesse, 2011; Rust, 2002).

The conflation of bisexuality with homosexuality (in 'LGB', 'non-heterosexual' or 'sexual minorities' categories) has been said to have erased it academically as a distinct orientation (Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2013; Fairington, 2008; Worthen, 2013), obscuring the unique experiences of bisexuals (Fox, 1993; Mereish et al., 2017; Vencill et al., 2018; Worthen, 2013). Pallotta-Chiarolli and Martin (2009) called this 'exclusion by inclusion'. A striking example can apparently be seen in Hernandez, Schwenke, and Wilson's (2011) 20-year review of MOM research. The authors remarked on the absence of a "single theory that accounts for why gay, bisexual, and lesbian people choose heterosexual [other-sex] spouses" (p.316). Enumerating possible reasons, the authors omitted consideration of bisexuals' other-sex attraction. Here, when bisexuals have explicitly been included, their defining characteristic seems to have been lost sight of.

Monro, Hines, and Osborne's (2017) review of 45 years of sexualities literature revealed "marginalisation, under-representation and invisibility... in relation to both bisexual experience and identity" (p.663). Barker (2007) reviewed 22 contemporary undergraduate psychology textbooks covering core topics. Around half of those dealing with sexual orientation failed to mention bisexuality and research presented on genetic, hormonal and brain differences referred only to homosexual and heterosexual subjects. Barker wrote that the omission of index entries for bisexuality from all but three of the books could be taken as an "implied [antibisexual] statement to students" (p.122).

1.6 Attitudes to bisexual men

1.6.1 The character and prevalence of bi-negativity

Bisexual men have been found to be subject to a prevalent, specific and consistent set of prejudices, referred to as bi-negativity (Vencill et al., 2018). Its implications for identity development, mental health and relationships will be considered later in this chapter.

While all non-heterosexuals are stigmatised by heterosexism (Herek, 2004; Herek et al., 2009; Israel & Mohr, 2004), bisexuals are said to face a consistent and prevalent set of negative characterisations. Bisexuals are seen as sexually compulsive and indiscriminate, confused, and incapable of monogamy (Dodge et al., 2016; Eliason, 2000; Herek, 2002; Mohr & Rochlen, 1999; Zivony & Lobel, 2014).

Additionally, bisexuality's existence and its validity as a sexual orientation are often challenged (Brewster & Moradi, 2010; Eliason, 2000; Mohr & Rochlen, 1999). It is seen as unstable, awaiting a monosexual resolution (Burke & LaFrance, 2015; Fox, 1993). Consequently, Anderson and McCormack wrote, bisexual men have frequently been told that they are, in fact, gay by an "overwhelmingly homophobic and monosexist culture" (2016, p.4).

Two large-scale studies of attitudes towards bisexuals have been conducted in the USA (Dodge et al., 2016; Herek, 2002). The first, Herek (2002), reported extremely negative views among heterosexuals. Asked to rate groups, including sexual orientation, ethnic, racial, political and religious, respondents put bisexuals lowest except for 'injecting drug users'. Bisexual men in particular are viewed significantly more negatively than other sexual minorities (Eliason, 2000; Helms & Waters, 2016).

Improvements in attitudes were reported in the later study (Dodge et al., 2016), though the traditional preconceptions were seen to persist. The authors were encouraged by both the

propensity to answer 'neither agree nor disagree', and that the results weren't "more... explicitly negative" (p.12). However, given the nature of the statements presented, the implications of ambivalence might not be so encouraging. With the statements that people should be afraid to have sex with bisexual men because of HIV/STD risk, 73% reported no disagreement; that bisexual men are incapable of fidelity, 59% reported no disagreement; that bisexual men are sexually indiscriminate, 59.5% reported no disagreement; that bisexual men are confused, 68% had no disagreement.

1.6.2 Double discrimination

Early research on attitudes towards sexual minorities assumed that bisexuals would only suffer homophobia (Eliason, 2000). However, it has been recognised that bisexuals encounter discrimination from both heterosexuals *and* homosexuals (de Bruin & Arndt, 2010; Mohr & Rochlen, 1999; Mulick & Wright, 2002; Ross et al., 2010). This has been called *double discrimination* (Ochs, 1996).

Though, gay men's and lesbians' attitudes towards bisexuals have been found to be more positive than heterosexuals' (Dodge et al., 2016), one study found that 32% wouldn't date a bisexual person and 25% wouldn't consider having a bisexual person as a best friend (Mohr & Rochlen, 1999). Discrimination from LGBT communities has also been a theme in qualitative research (Callis, 2013; McLean, 2001, 2008; Weinberg et al., 1994; Welzer-Lang, 2008).

1.6.3 The causes of bi-negativity

It has been said that “bisexuals make people uncomfortable” (Ochs, 2005, p.201) by challenging the established order and upsetting “the dichotomies in a polarised world” (Weiss, 2003, p.34), and many of the explanations for bi-negativity are predicated on a sense of threat. Bisexuality blurs the distinction on which the mutually exclusive, mutually confirmatory monosexual identities depend (Germon, 2008; Ochs, 1996), hence threatening the heterosexual privilege (Yoshino, 2000) and the social advances secured by gay men and lesbians (Israel & Mohr, 2004) which depend on those identities. Its associations with polyamory and adultery threaten the norm of monogamy (Welzer-Lang, 2008; Yoshino, 2000). Additionally, bisexuals have been seen as traitors to the gay movement, and their perceived ability to move between heterosexual and homosexual worlds and access to heterosexual privilege have brought resentment (Klein, 1993; Niki, 2018; Ochs, 2005; Rust, 2002; Weiss, 2003).

However, some contrasting observations are pertinent. Although considering bisexuals to be confused has been called a misconception (Eliason, 2000), confusion is recognised as a stage of bisexual identity development (Brown, 2002; Eisner, 2013; Weinberg et al., 1994). A distinction could be achieved in attitudinal studies by asking whether bisexuals are *necessarily* confused. Similarly, Armstrong and Reissing (2014) commented that the secrecy often resorted to for the avoidance of stigma (Balsam & Mohr, 2007; Hequembourg & Brallier, 2009) may, in part, explain the view that they are untrustworthy.

Scepticism towards bisexuality among gay men and lesbians may arise from their own transitional use of bisexual identification (Mohr & Rochlen, 1999; Moreira et al., 2015; Ochs, 1996), so they may expect the same of others (Fox, 1993). Additionally, social pressure can

cause bisexuals to allow assumptions of their monosexuality or even to assume a monosexual identity (Balsam & Mohr, 2007; Ochs, 1996). Observing such behaviour may further encourage scepticism (Israel, 2018).

1.6.4 Changing attitudes

Research suggests an improving picture for bisexual men in their experiences of prejudice and discrimination (Anderson, 2008; Anderson & McCormack, 2016; Dahlgreen & Shakespeare, 2015; McCormack et al., 2014; Ripley et al., 2011; White et al., 2018). A study of bisexuals' feelings of acceptance in the LGBT community suggested the "positive results may reflect historical changes in the stigmatization of bisexuality" (Price, Gesselman, & Garcia, 2019, p.15). However, it remained that 30.8% felt rejected by the community, suggesting almost a third of bisexual men may still be unable to benefit from a resource linked to emotional well-being (Cooke & Melchert, 2019).

Though diminished, the old prejudices continue to appear in the research (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014; Burke & LaFrance, 2015; Dickerson-Amaya & Coston, 2019; Gleason et al., 2019; Roberts et al., 2015; Souto Pereira et al., 2017). Furthermore, they remain relevant to understanding bisexual men's experiences as the formative context of older cohorts (McCormack et al., 2014) and the potential current context of those with older social and familial peer groups.

1.7 Identity development of bisexual men

After the removal of homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, models of homosexual identity development began to emerge (Cass, 1979;

Troiden, 1979). However, from the perspective of bisexual inclusion, Cass's model has been seen as either failing to account for bisexuality at all (Langdridge, 2008) or viewing it as a transitional phase on the way to homosexuality (Fox, 2003; Potoczniak, 2007). Additionally, Smiley (1997) contended that significance placed on coming out may be "peripheral or even detrimental to the psychological well-being of bisexual men" (p.375), being hazardous to existing relationships.

The first bisexual-specific model of development was theorised by Weinberg, Williams, and Pryor (1994), following research conducted in San Francisco in the late 1980s. The model comprises four stages: *Initial confusion*; *Finding and applying the label*; *Settling into the identity*; and *Continuing uncertainty*. The first stage represents accounts of periods of "considerable confusion, doubt, and struggle" (p.27) which had often lasted years. This was apparently due to the prevailing monosexist conceptual framework which, in the participants' minds, hadn't permitted the coexistence of same- and other-sex attractions. Also, principally for the men, same-sex attraction had prompted an inwardly directed homophobic response, engendering denial.

Movement to *Finding and applying the label* often occurred after simply learning of the concept of bisexuality, dispelling the dichotomy. Anxiety over same-sex feelings often persisted. Enjoyment of sexual activity with both men and women encouraged adoption of a bisexual identity and *Settling into the identity* was marked by a "more complete transition in self-labelling" (p.31) and increased self-acceptance. Often, there had been years of bisexual attraction and behaviour before participants identified as bisexual.

Finally, *Continued uncertainty* was a representation of the confusion reported by the bisexually identifying participants. Of the men, a quarter expressed current confusion related

to their sexual orientation. Difficulty in maintaining a bisexual identity in the face of challenges to its validity, from society in general and especially from the LG community, was cited. Additionally, the lack of bisexual role-models, community and public recognition were felt to be undermining. However, this stage was also conceptualised to accommodate a confusion inferred by the authors from participants' envisaging becoming *behaviourally* heterosexual or homosexual, in the context of a monogamous relationship. This may be a misinterpretation caused by the use of the same descriptors for behaviour and identity. The nature of this final stage means that bisexual identity wasn't theorised by the authors as having a concrete resolution, as for homosexuals in corresponding theories (Cass, 1979, 1984; Troiden, 1979).

Brown (2002) expanded on this model by differentiating for male and female experience. Accordingly, the threat to masculinity arising from the same-sex attraction is considered for men. Men are also said to be more likely to keep sexual experiences and social identities separate, creating great confusion and delaying an integrated identity. Brown retitled the final stage *Identity maintenance*, in response to Weinberg, Williams, and Pryor's (1994) own data, since 75% of participants had maintained their bisexual identity over the four years of the study.

Other perspectives include Potoczniak's (2007) reflections on the intersections of bisexual identity with various US minority ethnic identities, which, sadly, space doesn't permit here. Dworkin (2001) considered that bisexual identity should be envisaged as involving 'fluidity', allowing for fluctuation over time. If fluidity were considered in this context, it could, in the minds of those experiencing as well as observing, reduce the need for ideas of confusion in the latter stages of bisexual identity development theory.

1.8 Bisexual men's relationships

Excluding relationships with other bisexuals (which are beyond the scope of this research), bisexual men's romantic and sexual partners will mostly be drawn from the populations of heterosexual women and gay men (Vencill et al., 2018). Research suggests that around 80% of bisexual men's relationships are with women (Herek et al., 2010; Pew, 2013; Weinberg et al., 1994).

Klesse (2011) wrote that bisexuals' relationships were no more prone to difficulty than anyone else's, but that "some issues are more specific to bisexual lives" (p.229) and that "dualistic and heteronormative conceptualizations of sexuality inevitably leave traces and marks in the realm of the intrapsychic and the interpersonal" (p.228). This section examines those unique experiences, as represented in the literature.

1.8.1 Attitudes towards bisexual men as romantic partners

Given that bisexual men can be seen as morally intolerable, confused, unreliable, and hypersexual (Callis, 2013; Dodge et al., 2016; Mohr & Rochlen, 1999), the research findings that bisexuals are often seen as poor candidates for romantic and sexual relationships is possibly unsurprising (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014; Callis, 2013; Eliason, 2000; Feinstein, Dyar, et al., 2016; Gleason et al., 2019; Mohr & Rochlen, 1999). Eliason (2000), for example, found that 52% of a student sample felt they were 'very unlikely' to have a relationship with a bisexual person, and a further 25% 'somewhat unlikely'.

Even when bisexual stereotypes aren't overtly endorsed, prejudicial views of bisexual men as potential partners emerge (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014; Souto Pereira et al., 2017). Attitudes

towards dating bisexual men or engaging in relationships with them show evidence of mistrust and anxiety (Feinstein et al., 2014). Heterosexual women have foreseen high anxiety attending relationships with bisexual men, due to the perceived risks of their infidelity with another man, becoming homosexual, or carrying disease (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014; Callis, 2013; Souto Pereira et al., 2017).

Gleason, Vencill, and Sprankle (2019) presented fictitious dating profiles to participants to measure sexual and romantic attraction; willingness to date or have sex with; and perceived masculinity/femininity. Profiles, with pictures, were randomly assigned a bisexual, homosexual or heterosexual identity. Heterosexual women reported less sexual and romantic attraction to the 'bisexual' men than to the 'heterosexual' men, were less willing to have sex with or date them, and perceived them to be less masculine. Homosexual men, by contrast, reported no significant difference in any category or response to men of any orientation.

Feinstein, Dyar, Bhatia, Latack, and Davila (2014) found that gay men had a lesser inclination to relationships with bisexual men than to sexual activity, possibly a more reliable finding than that of Gleason, Vencill, and Sprankle (2019). The latter's authors cited a difference in age between their gay male participants (mean age 40) and targets (19 to 31) in reference to their unexpected outcome of parity for relationship and sexual willingness.

These attitudes may be prospective in nature, but they inform an understanding of the experiences of bisexual men attempting to enter relationships, and of the responses to those who disclose when in an established relationship.

1.8.2 Bisexual men's attitudes to monogamy

Rust (2003) found that bisexual respondents were half as likely as homosexuals to be in a monogamous relationship and that only 15.4% of male bisexual participants wanted a "lifetime committed monogamous relationship" (p.484). However, while participants were categorised by sexual identity, the inclusion criteria meant that *all* the participants had experienced attraction to, or had romantic or sexual involvement with, men and women. Also, recruitment was carried out within LGB communities and social groups and partners have been said to encourage bisexuals to identify monosexually (Niki, 2018; Ochs, 1996). Therefore, the finding that gay- and lesbian-identifying respondents were more likely to be in a relationship has an alternative interpretation: that bisexuals may tend to identify as lesbian or gay when in a monogamous same-sex relationship.

This alternative interpretation would be supported, for example, by Weinberg, Williams, and Pryor's (1994) finding that 42.2% of bisexual male respondents envisaged defining themselves as either gay or straight in the context of a future relationship.

A study which may offer more reliable findings is a survey of 5,988 bisexual, heterosexual, and homosexual adults, which found that bisexual men viewed monogamy as more of a sacrifice than any other group and less 'life enhancing' than did heterosexual or homosexual men (Mark et al., 2014). Despite this, 78.4% of the bisexual men in the study were engaged, married, or dating a single partner, which the authors took as evidence of bisexual men's preference for monogamy. However, data is not presented confirming that respondents were asked whether they intended their engagements or marriages to be monogamous, possibly suggesting an assumption of monogamy by the authors.

More explicitly, Weinberg, Williams, and Pryor (1994) reported that 85% of their bisexual male respondents could envisage foregoing sex with one gender for the sake of a close, monogamous relationship. Similarly, in Buxton's (2000) sample of 56 bisexual husbands of women, only 11% reported that a desire for same-sex activity or relationships negatively affected their marriage. Edser and Shea (2002) interviewed 20 bisexual men married to women, asking them their reasons for marriage and monogamy. They found the men were "overwhelmingly internally motivated" (p.25) having "married their partners overwhelmingly because they loved them" (p.28), rather than in response to social pressures.

1.8.3 Bisexual men's experiences of monogamous relationships

The attitudes towards bisexual men are often reflected in their accounts of relationship experience. In research, bisexuals have repeatedly reported rejection by prospective partners because of their sexual identity (Anderson et al., 2015; Callis, 2013; Li et al., 2013; McLean, 2008). In one study of 20 bisexual men, half said the greatest obstacle to starting a relationship was the perception that their sexuality made them incapable of monogamy (Elder et al., 2015).

1.8.3.1 Disclosure of bisexuality to romantic partners

Disclosure is a particular problem for bisexual men, recurring in each new relationship as a potential source of anxiety (Li et al., 2013). Many may not recognise their bisexuality until they are already in a committed relationship, and disclosure may precipitate a crisis (Buxton, 2000; Goetstouwers, 2006). Research suggests bisexuals anticipate rejection (Beach et al., 2018), and are often reluctant to disclose even to their own families (Scherrer et al., 2015).

In comparisons of bisexual, heterosexual and homosexual men and women, bisexual men have been found least likely to disclose to family members and friends (Barringer et al., 2017; Price et al., 2019).

Consequently, there may be an unwelcome period of concealment while the partner's likely response is assessed (Li et al., 2013). Fox (1993) found that among 349 bisexual men, the predominant reason for nondisclosure was the fear of losing their partner. Disclosure was encouraged by the desire to be accepted wholly, to integrate their sexual identity into their lives, and to enhance the intimacy of close relationships. Similarly, Maliepaard (2018) found participants wished to be open in their relationships and to be fully known. The deeply personal nature of these motivations may suggest the significance of disclosure to bisexual men.

Two recent studies reflect the disclosure habits of bisexual men. Barringer, Sumerau, and Gay (2017) found that despite bisexual participants generally reporting a sense of improved cultural acceptance for sexual minorities, they weren't encouraged to disclose more freely. The authors concluded that "mainstream recognition of bisexuality has likely not yet reached a point where it enters the decision-making processes of bisexual people" (p.329). A cohort study found that younger bisexual men disclosed earlier in their relationships and reported fewer problems with rejection than has been reflected in earlier literature (Anderson et al., 2015). However, participants had been recruited by calling audibly for bisexual men on busy street corners. The confidence to respond publicly may imply less experience of discrimination, creating bias. While the in-study cohort comparisons may remain valid, cross-study comparisons seem less reliable.

After disclosure or discovery, bisexual men have reported experiencing their partner's increased jealousy and fear of infidelity (Li et al., 2013). Buxton (2000, 2005) wrote that wives' concerns, post disclosure, have several recurring themes. Wives of bisexual men can feel sexually inadequate in meeting their partner's imagined needs; deceived and short changed; confused and fearful that the relationship may end; and fearful of others' reactions. These disclosure responses stay "front stage for about a year" (Buxton, 2005, p.55). Due to the invisibility of bisexuality and, by extension, mixed-orientation relationships, these couples are unsupported, their "unique issues [being] minimized or ignored" (Buxton, 2011, p.539). Additionally, bisexual partners have been said to engage in a process of downplaying tensions to minimise the appearance of bi-negativity in their partners – a "type of relationship work... which may constitute a form of oppression unique to bisexual people" (Hayfield et al., 2018, p.231).

1.8.3.2 Identity loss in relationships

McClellan (2006) wrote, "[to] be truly invisible is to be a bisexual person in a relationship" (p.246). The monosexist tendency is for sexuality to be assumed from partner gender, and bisexuals may have their identity openly challenged on that basis (Feinstein & Dyar, 2017). Since bisexuality is frequently viewed as transitional, others may assume that the 'phase' is over when a commitment is made, and express this to the individual (McClellan, 2006; Niki, 2018). External challenges may be harder to sustain if confusion and doubt are encountered, as theorised in bisexual identity development (Brown, 2002; Potoczniak, 2007; Weinberg et al., 1994).

The use of 'gay', 'lesbian' or 'straight', to represent same- and other-sex relationships imposes an erasure of identity on bisexuals (Anderson & McCormack, 2016; Crofford, 2018; Davids & Lundquist, 2018; Hayfield et al., 2018). Although a 'bisexual relationship' has been defined as "any relationship in which at least one of the parties is bisexual" (McClellan, 2006, p.246), it is contrary to prevailing linguistic habits (Yoshino, 2000). Bisexuals themselves have reported finding little meaning in the phrase, leaving them with only mono-normative terms to describe their relationships (Hayfield et al., 2018).

Bisexuals may resist this erasure and seek to maintain their identities. However, this can be interpreted as a lack of commitment, or difficulty forswearing sexual engagement with the gender not represented by their partner, with tensions resulting (Niki, 2018). A study comparing minority stress in lesbians and gay men with bisexuals found an association between relationship and anxiety only for bisexuals, leading the authors to ascribe the link to identity erasure (Feinstein, Latack, et al., 2016).

1.8.4 Factors contributing to successful mixed-orientation relationships

Little was uncovered in the literature search related to what contributes to a successful monogamous relationship for bisexual men. Niki (2018) suggested a willingness for open communication between partners would be beneficial. This was echoed by Buxton (2000), who asked couples comprising a bisexual man and a heterosexual woman what had been the three most helpful strategies for maintaining their relationship. In frequency order, highest to lowest, the husbands cited: communication, honesty, peer support, reassurance of wife, mutual respect, and love and empathy. The wives cited: communication, counselling/therapy, honesty, peer support, reading, talking time, and flexibility. This

flexibility was the willingness to reconsider their preconceptions of bisexuality. Wolf (cited in Fox, 1993) found that early disclosure, open communication, and a continuing sexual relationship were significant factors.

1.9 Mental health findings for bisexual men

1.9.1 The mental health discrepancy

Research into the emotional wellbeing of sexual minorities has repeatedly found that, in comparison to heterosexuals and homosexuals, bisexuals report poorer mental health, and higher instances of mood and anxiety disorders, suicidal ideation and substance use (Becker et al., 2014; Bostwick et al., 2010; Brennan et al., 2010; Conron et al., 2010; Jorm et al., 2002; La Roi et al., 2019; Meyer et al., 2008; Ross et al., 2014; Vencill et al., 2018). The broad consensus for the disparity (see Taylor, 2018) was supported by a meta-analysis of 52 studies (Ross et al., 2018).

Dissenting voices have alleged a pathologisation of bisexual men (Anderson & McCormack, 2016; Klesse, 2011; Savin-Williams et al., 2010; Savin-Williams & Cohen, 2018). Anderson and McCormack (2016) cited a history of sampling from within a “unique counter-culture” (p.xv), with a politicized conception of its own minority status, creating a negative bias unrepresentative of bisexual men.

Savin-Williams, Cohen, Joyner, and Rieger (2010) asserted that the correct comparison group for gay and bisexual men was heterosexual women, not men. When correctly compared, they wrote, the prevalence of depression for non-heterosexual men is not “remarkable nor even unexpected” (p.1215). Meyer (2010) asserted the comparison of disorders had been selective, and further questions logically arise. Firstly, ingroup disparities between bisexual

and gay men were ignored (being conflated as ‘non-heterosexuals’). Secondly, if bisexual men are depathologised by this move, where does that leave bisexual women? Since there is no apparent comparison group for bisexual women that removes the discrepancy, the legitimacy of this move for bisexual men might arguably be questioned.

1.9.2 Minority stress

Meyer’s (2003) minority stress model (see Figure 2) has been the foremost theoretical framework employed in examining the bisexual mental health disparity (Feinstein & Dyar, 2017). It models the way *minority stress*, the “excess stress to which individuals from stigmatized social categories are exposed” (Meyer, 2003, p.675), produces negative health outcomes. The component *minority stressors* are categorised as *proximal* and *distal*.

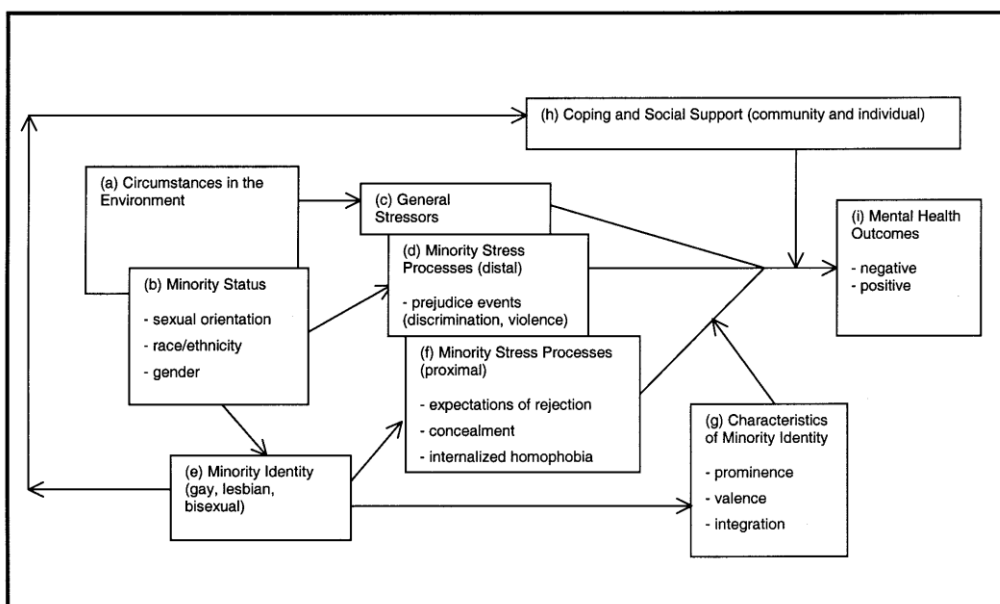


Figure 2: Minority stress processes in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations (Meyer, 2003)

Considering the stressors in turn, and the role of identity in the model, we will see that research findings imply a number of disadvantages for bisexual men.

1.9.2.1 Proximal stressors

The proximal stressors are subjective and related to the individual's sense of identity.

1.9.2.1.1 Expectations of rejection

Research has shown that bisexuals believe others hold predominantly neutral-to-negative preconceptions of them (Beach et al., 2018) and that bisexual men anticipate being discriminated against as potential romantic and sexual partners (Elder et al., 2015). Bisexuals have described the discrimination in their ongoing experience of the LGB community (Callis, 2013; McLean, 2001, 2008). Anticipating discrimination has been linked to depression (Paul et al., 2014).

1.9.2.1.2 Concealment

Bisexuals are more likely than homosexuals to conceal their sexual orientation from close family and friends, and this tendency is more pronounced among men than women (Barringer et al., 2017; Herek et al., 2009). Nondisclosure of bisexuality is resorted to for the avoidance of stigma, socially (Balsam & Mohr, 2007) and within relationships (Ochs, 2005; Schrimshaw et al., 2018). The consequences of concealment have been found to include lower self-esteem (Herek et al., 2009), poorer mental health (Schrimshaw et al., 2013), and substance use (Cortopassi et al., 2017). Instances of concealment have been found to spontaneously provoke anxiety, anger, and fatigue (Mohr et al., 2019).

1.9.2.1.3 Internalised homo/biphobia

Bisexual men are susceptible to the internalisation of both biphobia and the homophobia pertinent to their same-sex attraction and possible behaviour (Ochs, 2005). Herek, Gillis, and Cogan (2009), found higher levels of sexual self-stigma in bisexual men than any other orientation and sex. Associations were found with both higher psychological distress and lower self-esteem.

1.9.2.2 Distal stressors

1.9.2.2.1 Discrimination

Perceived discrimination has been associated with psychological distress (Brewster & Moradi, 2010) and a broad range of mental health issues (Pascoe & Richman, 2009), and discrimination towards bisexuals within the LGB community is a theme in qualitative (Callis, 2013; McLean, 2001, 2008; Weinberg et al., 1994; Welzer-Lang, 2008) and quantitative research (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014; Mohr & Rochlen, 1999). Discrimination has been judged by bisexuals as contributing to poorer mental health (Ross et al., 2010).

1.9.2.2.2 Violence

Findings suggest bisexuals face greater risk than heterosexuals or homosexuals of intimate-partner violence (Turell et al., 2018). Additionally, analysis of a national crime survey (N=18,957), found that proportionately more bisexual than homosexual or heterosexual men had reported sexual or physical violence (Dickerson-Amaya & Coston, 2019).

1.9.2.3 Identity

In the minority stress model, identity is multifaceted and plays multiple roles. An individual's acceptance of a minority sexual identity can allow them to gain the support of sexual-minority peers (Meyer, 2003). However, as we have seen, stigmatisation of bisexuality exists within the LGB community (Feinstein, Latack, et al., 2016; McLean, 2001, 2008; Mohr & Rochlen, 1999) and bisexuals have been found to have less connectedness to community (Kertzner et al., 2009; Pakula et al., 2016).

In the model, sexual identity is theorised as having three moderating dimensions: prominence, valence, and integration (Meyer, 2003). Respectively, these denote the importance to the individual of their sexual identity; the positivity or negativity of their feelings towards it; and its integration with other identities in the individual's self-concept (La Roi et al., 2019).

Investigating these dimensions in bisexuals, La Roi, Meyer, and Frost (2019) found lower valence and integration compared to other sexual minority individuals, and that the valence finding accounted for higher rates of depressive symptoms. Similarly, Kertzner, Meyer, Frost, and Stirratt (2009) found that "the disadvantage in social well-being associated with bisexual identity was fully mediated by levels of community connectedness and identity valence" (p.506). Pakula, Carpiano, Ratner, and Shoveller (2016) concluded that discrimination within LGB communities is a likely reason that bisexuals cannot always derive the benefits of social support experienced by gay and lesbian community members.

A possibly beneficial aspect of concealment was reported by in a study of behaviourally bisexual men, where a habit of varying identity by context was observed (Baldwin et al., 2015). The authors termed this *strategic deployment of identity*, and suggested that it granted

“agency in determining who they were, and/or how they wanted to be understood” (Baldwin et al., 2015, p.2018).

Research on the impact of romantic relationship involvement for sexual minorities has found that while there was no association between relationship involvement and either anxiety or depression for lesbians and gay men, for bisexuals, relationships were associated with an increased likelihood of an anxiety disorder (Feinstein, Latack, et al., 2016).

1.10 Counselling bisexual men

Literature specifically addressing bisexual clients and their issues has been said to be scarce (Alderson, 2004; Hayes & Hagedorn, 2001; Ross et al., 2018). Bisexuals are often subsumed into larger groups (for example, ‘LGB’ and ‘nonheterosexual’) (Moradi et al., 2009; Pallotta-Chiarolli & Martin, 2009) and one example is a meta-analysis commissioned by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, from which guidelines for working with LGBT clients were derived (King, Semlyen, Killaspy, Nazareth, & Osborn, 2007). Excluding the two studies for which data was unobtainable, closer examination reveals that bisexuals accounted for only 90 of the 9,688 participants, or 0.93%. (If *all* participants in the unobtainable studies had been bisexual, the figure would rise only to 1.34%.) While the scarcity of data for trans people was an acknowledged limitation, the underrepresentation of bisexuals went unmentioned. If the authors were, then, oblivious to their omission, this indicates the depth of bisexual erasure. These guidelines were asserted to be applicable to bisexuals, though bisexuals’ experiences are asserted, in the literature, to be distinct from gay men’s and lesbians’ (Fox, 1993; Mereish et al., 2017; Vencill et al., 2018; Worthen, 2013).

Several themes emerge from the available literature regarding therapeutic work with bisexual men. Perhaps the most fundamental of these is the importance of a counsellor's awareness of their own beliefs, biases and preconceptions regarding bisexuality (Brooks & Inman, 2013; Dworkin, 2001; Hayes & Hagedorn, 2001; Rust, 2003; Scherrer, 2013). Brewster and Moradi (2010) wrote that it was "important for practitioners... to acknowledge and critically examine such assumptions and consider more flexible conceptions of sexual orientation and its relation to gender" (p.464). Unexamined stereotypes held by therapists have been found to influence their view of the clinical significance of their clients' bisexuality (Mohr et al., 2001; Page, 2004).

Perhaps with 'pathologizing' preconceptions in mind, Matteson (1996) cautioned against assuming that a bisexual client's concerns will be centred on their sexuality. However, balancing this against Page's (2004) finding that a significant proportion (34%) of male participants had sought help for issues solely or mainly related to their bisexuality, we find support for Dworkin's (2001) clinical advice that "bisexuality must not be either overemphasized or diminished, but definitely explored" (p.674).

Religiosity has been linked with intolerance of bisexuality (Herek, 2002), and the association has been replicated among clinicians (Brooks & Inman, 2013). However, spirituality has been found to have a positive association with counsellor competence with LGB clients (Farmer, 2017).

1.10.1 Stability and legitimacy

The prevalence of non-accepting attitudes among practitioners is suggested by Page's (2004) survey of 217 self-identified bisexuals who had used mental health services in the USA. 15.7%

believed their practitioner held their bisexuality to be part of their illness; 10% reported they had felt unaccepted as bisexual; and 7.4% reported that their conversion to heterosexuality had been attempted. Asked for suggestions for the improvement of services, the most popular was the validation of bisexuality as legitimate and stable. Brooks and Inman (2013) found that practitioners' stability attitudes were significantly related to perceived and actual competency and were concluded to be important for practitioner self-reflection, training and supervision.

Brewster and Moradi (2010), surveying reports of discrimination and prejudice among bisexual respondents, found accusations of sexual instability and sexual irresponsibility were those most commonly faced. The authors concluded that a particular therapeutic value of exploration may be to assist the client in separating their "views and desires regarding their sexual orientations and behaviours from stereotypes about bisexuality" (p.464). The literature suggests that the exploration of experiences of anti-bisexual prejudice and discrimination in all forms can help to reduce or prevent internalisation (Kuyper & Fokkema, 2011; Scherrer, 2013).

1.10.2 Awareness of bisexual issues

An awareness of bisexual issues, such as bi-invisibility and the prejudices comprising bi-negativity, is recommended in the literature (Friedman & Downey, 2010; Hayes & Hagedorn, 2001; Niki, 2018). An awareness of the complexities surrounding identification, for example, might advisedly discourage the assumption that a client describing same- and other-sex attraction wishes to be referred to as bisexual (Richards & Barker, 2013). Similarly, knowing the implications for self-identity of trying to reconcile same- and other-sex attractions, the

practitioner may be equipped to see when the client misattributes anxiety to his bisexuality (Friedman & Downey, 2010).

The cultural invisibility of bisexuality has been linked to depression and anxiety in bisexual individuals (Ross et al., 2018). Niki (2018) wrote that practitioners who lack “an understanding of biphobia and bisexual invisibility [run] the risk of reinforcing a bisexual client’s invisibility” (p.45) in the therapeutic relationship. Counsellors who are aware of bisexual invisibility and the ways in which bisexual identity is challenged in romantic relationships may be better able to assess the impact of these phenomena within that context (Crofford, 2018).

It has been observed that bisexual clients often “lack a supportive network of like-minded individuals” (Hayes & Hagedorn, 2001, p.19). The benefits for bisexuals of greater connection to the LGB community have been asserted elsewhere in the literature (Balsam & Mohr, 2007; Kertzner et al., 2009; Scherrer, 2013) and loneliness has been found to mediate minority stressors to anxiety and depression (Mereish et al., 2017). However, given the potential for the LGB community to be a source of discrimination for bisexual men (Callis, 2013; McLean, 2008; Mulick & Wright, 2002), perhaps the recommendation of increasing bisexual men’s connection to it and disclosing identity within it (Balsam & Mohr, 2007) should be implemented judiciously. It seems probable that only a counsellor with knowledge of bisexual issues would be aware of double discrimination, and, consequently, take an approach consistent with Schrimshaw, Siegel, Downing, and Parsons (2013), who advocated the facilitation of increased self-acceptance before approaching LGB communities. Alternatively, with this knowledge, the practitioner may suggest bisexual-specific or -supportive online communities (Brewster & Moradi, 2010).

1.10.3 Disclosure

The literature suggests that the question of disclosure is likely to be encountered in working with bisexual men (Li et al., 2013). It has been stressed that, whereas influential models of homosexual development have seen 'coming out' as an important step (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1979), replicating clinical encouragement with bisexual men may be harmful to their existing relationships (Smiley, 1997).

The authors of one study of behaviourally bisexual men found that disclosure wasn't linked to mental health, and concluded that "interventions addressing concerns about concealment, emotional support, and internalized homophobia may be more beneficial for increasing the health of bisexual men" (Schrimshaw et al., 2013, p.141). However, as the participants were, by selection, all in relationships with women and secretly having sex with men, 'disclosure' was also therefore simultaneously disclosure of infidelity. The extension to bisexual men and disclosure in general has required ignoring this fact.

Li, Dobinson, Scheim, and Ross (2013) suggested that practitioners might role-play conversations with those considering coming out to their partners, and discuss the possible implications for self and relationship with those choosing not to. For those who have, the authors suggested facilitating couples' discussions, to address such issues as anxieties around faithfulness and stability.

1.10.4 Practitioner self-disclosure

Some authors have written of the value of providing a role model for sexual minority clients by openly presenting as a self-accepting bisexual (Coolhart, 2005; Matteson, 1996). Since the

visibility of positive bisexual representatives has traditionally been scarce, the argument is persuasive. However, it might be argued the absence of a common minority identification would allow the experience of acceptance from the counsellor to be extended, encouraging a belief in the possibility of wider social acceptance. Indeed, Evans and Barker (2010) reported some participants had “found it particularly powerful to engage with a heterosexual counsellor who affirmed their identity” (p.22).

1.11 Summary

Beginning with a discussion of definitions, this chapter has examined the literature relevant to the research. Although there are dissenting voices, there is much evidence for bisexual men being at a disadvantage with regard to their mental health. Simultaneously, the invisibility of bisexuality and common negative preconceptions appear to impact their mental health, identity development, and relationships. These factors may also affect the way they are responded to by counsellors and psychotherapists.

The following chapter will set out the research choices made in conducting this study.

2 Research Choices

2.1 Overview

This chapter describes the recruitment strategies, ethical commitments and undertakings, and method of interview. It concludes with a description of the methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

2.2 Recruitment of participants

To be consistent with IPA, sampling should be purposive: the approach is idiographic, seeking access to specific experience, and so probability methods are not called for (Smith et al., 2009). Given the reported difficulty of recruiting bisexual research participants (Hartman, 2011; Maliepaard, 2017), the research advert (see Appendix 1) was distributed by four separate methods. By these various methods, being mindful of Anderson and McCormack (2016), I hoped to access experience not influenced by containment within a 'subculture'.

Firstly, the advert was circulated among academic and counselling contacts with a request to forward it to potential participants. One response was received by this means, leading to the recruitment of a participant.

Secondly, following Hartman's (2011) recommendations for recruiting bisexual participants, I distributed flyers of the adverts in Birmingham and Manchester, (my two nearest large cities) in both LGBT social venues and in a variety of venues, including bookshops, clothing shops, bars and art galleries, that did not specifically cater for non-heterosexual groups. No responses to the flyers were received.

Thirdly, I sent the advert to bisexual and LGBT support and networking groups. From these efforts, one response was received, leading to recruitment.

Fourthly, I circulated the advert on the social media platform Twitter, said to be a powerful means of research recruitment (Glover, 2016; Slowe, 2017). The method, following Glover (2016), was to ask selected high-profile Twitter users to 'retweet' a post containing the advert which would then be seen by their followers (see Appendix 4). I targeted politicians, journalists, writers, comedians, and mental health and LGBT advocacy groups, aiming for a diversity of social background, education, and political views among the resulting audience. Thirteen men responded, five of whom met the criteria, one later withdrawing before interview.

Hence, recruitment produced six participants.

2.3 Ethical considerations

This research was conducted with reference to the BACP's *Ethical Guidelines for Research in the Counselling Professions* (Mitchels, 2018) and the University of Chester's *Research Governance Handbook* (2018).

Prospective participants were sent an information letter (Appendix 2) and consent form (Appendix 3). After interview, the participants were sent their interview transcript by email, before the cut-off date for withdrawal of consent. As outlined in the information letter, this was to allow participants to check the accuracy of the transcript and to volunteer any further comments. The participants were offered the details of local and online support, paid and free of charge.

Application for approval was made to the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Social and Political Science at the University of Chester. The board granted approval for the research.

2.4 Interviews

The interviews were semi-structured and the questions and were set out in the participants' information letter (Appendix 2). Five interviews were conducted using Skype and lasted about one hour. One participant ('Steve') asked to submit written responses, being unable to ensure sufficient privacy. He agreed to a written exchange so that his material could be developed by further questioning, as in a live interview. As with the interview transcripts, his compiled data were submitted to him.

2.5 Data analysis

The interview transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is a method of qualitative investigation which seeks to "examine and comprehend lived experience" and to do so "on its own terms" (Smith et al., 2009, pp.11–12). It is idiographic and is not concerned with the derivation of general rules aspired to in nomothetic research. The objective of IPA is "detailed, nuanced analyses of *particular* instances of lived experience" (Smith et al., 2009, p.37).

The method acknowledges and welcomes the subjectivity of the researcher, which can bring insight to the analysis. At the same time, however, the 'fore-structures' of the researcher's assumptions and personal experience must be identified and 'bracketed' in a continual process of reflexivity (Smith et al., 2009).

The approach is philosophically underpinned by phenomenology and hermeneutics. It sees humans as sense-making beings, and the endeavour of analysis to be the accessing of the sense people try to make of their lived experience. Taking a *phenomenological attitude* allows the researcher to get closer to the meaning participants attribute to their experience (Smith et al., 2009). To be achieved, it requires the researcher to dispense, as far as possible, with his or her *natural attitude*, the presuppositions, personal experience, and beliefs, that ordinarily colour understanding. This requires self-reflexivity and the practice of 'bracketing' one's own meanings (Smith et al., 2009).

Hermeneutics calls for further reflexivity and requires that the method is iterative. Firstly, there must be repeated movement between the entire text and each component part under analysis, as each continues to inform the meaning of the other. Secondly, the researcher must repeatedly re-examine his or her 'fore-structures' of accepted meaning as they undergo continual alteration by engagement with the data, or are thereby brought to light (Smith et al., 2009).

Flexibility and creativity are encouraged in the undertaking of analysis. It is performed, in the attitudes required by hermeneutics and phenomenology, by a close reading of the data and the identification of emergent themes. At this point, the researcher should attend to everything of interest in the text. Gradually, through the iterative hermeneutic process, these observations will be codified according to meaning and translated into the subordinate themes of the analysis. The researcher should then be selective of the themes, according to the aims of the research.

Stages of the process of analysis are illustrated in Appendix 5.

Once the subordinate themes have been identified and selected, related themes are grouped and a superordinate theme developed for each set. Once a meaningful thematic structure has been achieved, the findings are presented in a narrative form that preserves the rich lived experience of the participants.

2.6 Trustworthiness and validity

Yardley (2015, 2017) identified four core principles for establishing the validity of qualitative research. Firstly, sensitivity must be shown to the data, by not “imposing pre-conceived categories on the data but carefully considering the meanings generated by the participants” (Yardley, 2015, p.295). My training as a counsellor has required from the outset the development of a sensitive and phenomenological approach. This was the attitude with which I conducted both interviewing and analysis of the data.

Secondly, commitment and rigour must be demonstrated. This calls for “personal commitment, whether to attaining methodological skills or theoretical depth, or to engaging extensively and thoughtfully with participants or data” (Yardley, 2015, p.267). I have researched the methodology of IPA to achieve the theoretical understanding necessary to making use of the flexibility of the approach while staying within the bounds that preserve validity.

Thirdly, the research must be presented so that the interpretations can be linked to the data. Therefore, I have undertaken to justify my interpretations and provide sufficient supporting quotes from the data.

Fourthly and finally, the research should have impact and importance. It is hoped that the implications for counselling will indicate the validity of research (see section 5.2).

2.7 Summary

This chapter has set out the research choices made. In the following chapter, the research findings will be presented.

3 Research Findings

3.1 Overview

The rich data is presented in this chapter, within the themes and structure that emerged from the analysis (see Table 2). All names are pseudonyms.

Table 2: Superordinate and subordinate themes of the analysis

Superordinate themes:	1. Formative Experiences	2. Fear and Longing	3. The Relationship
Subordinate themes:	1.1 Incomprehension and dismissal	2.1 Significance of bisexuality	3.1 Rejection
	1.2 Pressures	2.2 Authenticity versus safety	3.2 Disclosure
		2.2.1 Chris	3.3 Partner attitudes
		2.2.2 David	3.4 Anxiety and reassurance
		2.2.3 Robert	3.5 Monogamy
		2.2.4 Steve	3.5.1 Motivations
	2.2.5 Neil	3.5.2 Bisexuality and monogamy	
	2.2.6 Daniel		

3.2 The participants

The following table summarises some contextual participant information.

Participant	Approx. age	Sex of partner	No. of children	Together (years)	Bisexuality known to partner (years)
Chris	46-50	Female	3	14	14
David	51-55	Female	2	21	21
Neil	31-35	Male	0	6	6
Steve	46-50	Female	2	12	6

Participant	Approx. age	Sex of partner	No. of children	Together (years)	Bisexuality known to partner (years)
Daniel	26-30	Male	0	3	3
Robert	46-50	Female	0	7	7

3.3 Superordinate theme 1: Formative experiences

The analysis suggested the following were events experienced as formative by the participants, contributing to their expectations and understandings of the world as it exists in relation to their bisexuality.

3.3.1 Subordinate theme 1.1: Incomprehension and dismissal

Three of the participants described an inability in others to understand bisexuality. As Chris put it, “it can throw a spanner in the works” and they “struggle to get their heads around it”. Neil said, “people really struggle to grapple with, no, you fit in box A or B, and that’s it. And that’s my experience. It’s more a confusion than any type of prejudice, I feel”.

Robert also felt that incomprehension had led people to reject his bisexuality:

“You have to say, well, no, that’s not the case. It’s not straight or gay, you can be bisexual. And it seems to be a little bit fluid as well. And they just don’t get it.”

David had also encountered challenges to both his bisexuality and the existence of bisexuality.

He felt that...

“...there is a strand of the gay community that feels that if you’re bisexual you’re just hedging your bets or, come on, mate, come over, don’t be ridiculous, there’s no such thing.... I remember one guy saying to me at a party, ‘Yeah, but have you ever been truly fucked? ‘Cause once you’ve been fucked, you’ll really know.’”

Neil's experiences of denial from gay men had come as a surprise to him:

“...a lot of the, ‘Well, aren’t you just gay?’ comments are from gay guys. Which I never really expected before. I guess the more I’ve learned about the community, it’s clearer to me now.”

Chris had also experienced the denial of his bisexuality as a young man: “I kept all the time saying I wasn’t gay, ‘cause I still fancied women and they were telling me, ‘Oh no, no, no, you are gay, you just don’t know it yet’”.

Daniel felt that “a lot of gay people [say] that bi people are just gays who are pretending”.

3.3.2 Subordinate theme 1.2: Pressures

Chris had experienced “a lot of pressure from the groups that I was with, you know, ‘You must come out, you must be gay’”. As a result, he would “say I was gay or say I was bi or say I was straight, just to appease the people around me”.

Neil experienced conflicting messages from his mother when he was in his first same-sex relationship. He felt “the external messages to me and to him were quite positive. She was very accommodating and supportive in that way but then there would be random comments every now and again around I was hoping for grandchildren”. He said, “whenever I was with a man then she would feel that there was a black cloud following her”. Consequently, Neil had felt “low and down and then thinking... I shouldn’t be attracted to men and therefore I should be feeling bad”. He came to feel “should I just be doing what they want rather than what I want” and linked this to his entering into a long-term relationship with a woman. Neil had also experienced gay men “pushing [him] to shift identity, just to say, ‘Oh, yeah, I’m gay’”. Steve felt that “not [growing up] in an environment that would accept the expression of same-sex attraction... I must have decided to... push the other side of me into the background”.

3.4 Superordinate theme 2: Fear and longing

This theme contains the data related to the participants' desire, in various ways, for their bisexuality to be better known as a part of themselves. This desire was found to be opposed by the fear of rejection. The first sub-theme, 'Significance of bisexuality', contextualises the second, 'The desire for authenticity'.

3.4.1 Subordinate theme 2.1: Significance of bisexuality

The participants revealed the significance they placed on their bisexuality. David experienced his bisexuality as "very fundamental to who I am". For Neil, not disclosing his bisexuality had been experienced as not "being true to myself". He felt his bisexuality was "a big part of who I am".

Daniel hinted at something ineffable and profound, saying, "I can't quite phrase this properly, it's always just been a truth, if you get what I mean?".

Robert was ambivalent about its importance:

"It just is. This is something that I like. I don't feel it defines me."

Researcher: For someone to truly know you, would they have to know that?

"I believe so, yeah."

Two participants expressed dissatisfaction with the term 'bisexual'. Chris felt that "any form of label... limits you in some way". Steve said, "I've never really identified myself with the word 'bisexual'. It's about being categorised I guess."

However, both Steve and Chris used the term in relation to their sexual orientation ("my bisexuality" (Steve), and "I think they know I'm bi" (Chris)). Furthermore, Chris somewhat romanticised his bisexuality as a "weakness to the aesthetic" and considered it "the way his

mind works". Steve said he volunteered for the research to "stand up and be counted" as a bisexual, possibly suggesting a sense of bisexual identity. Additionally, they had responded to adverts addressed to 'bisexual men' (Appendix 1).

3.4.2 Subordinate theme 2.2: Authenticity versus safety

Five of the participants discussed the tensions that influenced the degree to which they felt able to be known as bisexual. The desire to be authentic and the fear of stigma were experienced as opposing forces. Other circumstantial complications to disclosure were described.

3.4.2.1 Sub-subordinate theme 2.2.1: Chris

Chris recalled an early "fear of being judged, fear of rejection, fear of ridicule, abuse. Fear of attack." He felt that what he "figured out from quite a young age was, it's about certain people, certain groups. Who I can and can't tell.... I suppose it was a form of self-protection. About not being on the end of judgement". He expressed a sense of caution, saying he had learned that "you choose your friends wisely and your groups wisely".

Chris described his current attitude to disclosure in less fearful, more pragmatic, terms:

"There was that decision for me, well, I'm not going to put myself in that position, because it could go pear-shaped or from what you're telling me, you're not going to accept me, or you're going to give me shit anyway, so I'll choose not to tell you."

Regarding the consequences for authenticity, Chris felt, "I'm still authentic, but I'm selectively authentic". He felt these decisions didn't reflect on him: "it's about them, it's not about me".

For Chris, further restrictions came from having a family. He felt that “when you have children, you move into a small-town mentality and you feel you have to mould yourself into that”. Consequently, “in those cliques or those groups, [bisexuality] goes underground”.

3.4.2.2 Sub-subordinate theme 2.2.2: David

David described with excitement and fondness times when he had been accepted as a bisexual man. A friendship with one confidant was experienced as “very beautiful”, and he had “wonderful conversations” with “another person who was just incredibly accepting”.

Of his current situation, he experienced “that feeling where friendships have got very strong and yet there’s actually something about me these people don’t know. And it’s very fundamental to who I am”. David expressed a sense of urgency accompanying his desire to extend his bisexuality freely into his life:

“[It’s] alive in me again, this thing about who knows and who doesn’t know, because I’m 53 and I’m getting to the point of, well, if not now, when? And that’s true in terms of my work, and true of parenting, for god’s sake, you know, fifteen-year old – in three years’ time she’ll be gone.”

In relation to his daughters, David expressed both his desire to be authentic and considerations preventing disclosure. He said, “my current view is, they have enough, ooh, icky, yuck, at the thought of their mum and I being sexual beings”. (The restrictive feeling that to speak of one’s bisexuality is to talk about sex, and not identity or the self, was a sentiment echoed by Neil and Steve.) The use of ‘current’ implied the consolation that time will bring the opportunity to disclose. Another seeming consolation is contained in the experiencing of their implicit knowledge and acceptance:

“They say, “Oh Dad, look at him.” And if I think he’s beautiful, I say, “Yeah, what a gorgeous guy. What a beautiful man.” Say that very naturally and

neither of them have ever done a kind of, “That’s weird.” So in that sense, I’m as myself as I can be.”

As with Steve, below, David felt that consideration for his wife restricted his ability to be more authentic: “it’s a kind of implicit courtesy and etiquette for her benefit” due to his wife “being married to a bisexual man”.

3.4.2.3 Sub-subordinate theme 2.2.3: Robert

Describing his degree of disclosure, Robert said, “I’m not out to parents, I’m not out generally to any work colleagues. There’s a few friends that I’m out to but generally I don’t say anything. It just usually gives people ammunition”. He felt a lesson learned had been “just be fucking cautious whenever you’re talking to somebody”. In social situations, he felt if people knew he was bisexual, “we wouldn’t be here in this pub talking or at this football match”. Similarly, if his parents-in-law knew, they “wouldn’t be so happy about me being with your daughter”.

However, Robert felt his relationship with his wife helped him to cope with this. Of his parents-in-law, he said, “we were having a giggle about it, saying, Jesus Christ, if only your dad knew”. His bisexuality being generally unknown is also seemingly compensated for within the relationship:

“I’m able to discuss it with my wife and we can kind of have banter about it. And that’s enough for me. That is enough for me. To be able to be honest with her. That’s enough. I don’t need to shout it from the rooftops.”

Additionally, he felt no need to “wave a flag and stamp and say I’m bi”. However, satirising greater outness in these terms might be construed, along with the triple use of ‘enough’, as self-dissuasion of any merit in it, which might raise the question of its need.

Robert said that he would disclose his bisexuality on being asked if “I can discuss that without being judged”.

3.4.2.4 Sub-subordinate theme 2.2.4: Steve

Steve conveyed isolation with respect to his bisexuality, saying “My wife’s friend knows but we don’t have much social contact with her. My wife’s sister knows and is okay with it. My parents know and are okay with it although we never really discuss it”. Otherwise, he said, “I’ve never actually had a conversation with anyone about it”, and he felt “unsupported”.

Regarding disclosure, Steve said, “I’ve promised myself though that if anyone genuinely asks me and I feel I’m not betraying my wife’s confidence then I’ll answer honestly”. Despite the commitment implied by ‘promise’, ‘genuinely’ offers a get out, perhaps suggesting anxiety around disclosure. Additionally, disclosure is experienced as potential betrayal of his wife, and is therefore restricted.

Steve said he wasn’t more out because “people don’t discuss their sexual preferences much in everyday life anyway and I’m not different”.

3.4.2.5 Sub-subordinate theme 2.2.5: Neil

Neil was out to friends and colleagues, but related experiencing frustration when he is assumed to be gay because his partner is male. Neil said of the impact, “I definitely spot it.... I recognise it all the time”, and “I feel a bit cross”. He described the ensuing dilemma: “if it’s like a party or an evening meal or whatever, I feel that I’d be saying to make a point, which is odd because there’s lots of things in my life and about me that I would just correct”. He said,

“it’s so hard just to say, well, actually no, I’m bi”. Neil seemed to be averse to being experienced as inappropriately ‘making a point’ in a social situation.

Additionally, in a previous long-term relationship, Neil had apparently experienced difficulty in extricating bisexual identity from sex: “it was never appropriate to say to my at-the-time girlfriend’s parent or family about my sexuality... because I wouldn’t ever say in front of them, ‘Oh, that guy’s really hot’”.

3.4.2.6 Sub-subordinate theme 2.2.6: Daniel

Daniel reported no discomfort with his current level of outness and authenticity. He enjoyed the freedom of having a friendship group comprising “a lot of liberal, queer allies or fellow queer people” and being self-employed. He was concerned, however, that this might constitute an “echo chamber”.

3.5 Superordinate theme 3: The relationship

3.5.1 Subordinate theme 3.1: Rejection

Three of the participants spoke of experiencing attitudes discouraging others from relationships with bisexual men. David felt disclosing his bisexuality to women had changed their attitudes towards him in a way he regretted and which appears to have become familiar: “not quite ‘You’re faghag material,’ but women would say, ‘Oh, it’s so lovely spending time with you because you’re so unthreatening’. Which is that classic thing often that happens”. He experienced their attitudes as “You can’t possibly be a sexual being in relation to women if you’re claiming to be bisexual”.

Neil’s online-dating experiences with gay men included instances he felt were discriminatory:

“a couple of them when I said I’m bi – and we could have been chatting for quite a while – would then just say, oh, I’m not into bi guys, sorry. And that would be the end of the conversation and I’d never speak to them again.”

These experiences added to the impression Neil already had of negative attitudes towards bisexual men: “I always thought before that the biggest issues were with girls dating bi guys”.

Robert had had negative experiences of disclosure to female past partners:

“to be honest with you, there’s two relationships that I’ve had that have been cool about it, the rest have of them, it’s always been kind of problematic. And I would say two of them, it’s probably the reason why we ended.”

Robert showed a despondent familiarity, describing his emotional response as “oh right, okay, this how we’re going to go as well”. He said such experiences had made him feel “pretty bad, if I’m honest with you, it made me feel like, why am I this way? Why is this making my life harder?”.

He described a policy of caution around disclosure:

“there’s been some relationships that you’re in and you know they’re never going to last long, and you just think, well, I don’t need to tell that person this. I’m not sure how they’ll react, so I don’t need to tell this person this information.”

3.5.2 Subordinate theme 3.2: Disclosure

Four of the participants had disclosed their bisexuality to their current partners in the very early stages of their relationships. David had felt it imperative to disclose to his now wife before any intimacy. The experience was clearly difficult and very significant:

“The night came where we got it together.... I was very obviously not progressing it any further. It was very late at night, and she said, “What’s up? What’s up?” and I couldn’t say and I couldn’t say and I couldn’t say. And then we went out, I remember it was a full moon, and we went outside and we were looking at the moon. And she just put her arms around me and she said, “I don’t think there’s anything you could tell me that I would mind or

that would shock me, other perhaps than murder.” So I said, “I don’t want to go any further with you until I tell you that I’m bisexual. I want you to know that I’m bisexual.” And that didn’t deter her in any way.”

Researcher: It sounds like it was very important for you to tell her.

“I’d known pretty much from the minute I saw her that this was going to be serious, at least on my part. And that introduced into me something I’d never encountered before, which was an absolute requirement for honesty. It was like, what would be the point of starting this with a lie or with an omission.”

Neil conveyed a similar sense of anxiety and that disclosure was imperative, saying, “when we first met I thought, right, I’m going to have to get it out in the open”. He added:

“I knew I really liked [him] and I thought, I want to say it to his face, first time I see him, but I don’t want to say it on the app because it might go like how the other ones had gone. And he was the one that I connected with the best by far and it was actually the most meaningful conversations. I’d never really thought about, well, I don’t want to risk it [before].”

Neil found his future fiancé...

“...knew anyway and I was really pleased because I thought, goodness, if I try to create a web of lies, or not even that, not just stating exactly who I was seeing before, then that could have gone really badly.”

Daniel had also wanted to avoid beginning a relationship with an omission regarding his bisexuality and told his partner on “pretty much [the] third date”. However, Daniel did not describe anxiety:

“It’s not something that I felt was weighing me down or anything, it’s just, ‘Oh, by the way, here’s something about me.’ Because otherwise he probably would have just assumed that I was gay. And that would have been something that I would have had to carry around. So it’s much easier just to say it at the outset.”

Robert related his early disclosure to his now wife, with an apparent ease:

“We’d had a great night and we were kind of getting on and I was thinking, yeah, yeah, okay, she seems pretty open minded, I’ll just kind of say it.... And I just kind went, well, actually, I’ve done this [*laughs*]. That’s how it came out.”

However, recalling that Robert had experienced several instances of rejection by women for being bisexual, and noting that he established at the beginning of this account that he had

something to lose, that is, a promising beginning with this woman, the laughter might reveal the anxiety of that moment and his sense of having taken a significant risk. Indeed, he described a policy of only disclosing to potential partners “that I’ve been serious with”.

3.5.3 Subordinate theme 3.3: Partner attitudes

The following excerpts show the participants’ experiences of initial and current responses to their bisexuality. Four described experiences of acceptance.

David recalled disclosure to his partner “didn’t deter her in any way”. He found the reaction...

“...so liberating and so lovely, and one of the things that happened was that she, I think, really felt this sense of, “Well, that’s true about you and you’re choosing me.” And that felt very powerful for her and, I think, very powerful for me as well.”

Of the current situation, David expressed regret at what remains unsaid between them on the subject of his bisexuality:

“‘If everybody we know knew that about me, how would you feel about that?’ I’ve never had that conversation, and that space, or that gap, or that reticence on my part, my sense is that’s matched in her with a kind of, ‘Well, there’s a bit of [David] that I’m never ever going to quite understand or know’. That is what it is. She may choose not to want to go there as well. I’m not absolving myself of blame for not having had that conversation, but I also think in couples, silence is created and wished for in both directions.”

Robert received a positive response from his future wife:

“Initially, she was kind of like, oh, cool, cool. And she was like, thank you for telling me. And then she was like, well, okay, let me have a think about it, and I think she spent less than a day and I got a call from her saying, hey, do you know what, it’s fine. It’s not a problem. That strengthened this relationship a lot, her reaction.”

Robert described the current situation as one of a relaxed openness with appreciation:

“An article [relevant to bisexuality] will come up and she’ll share it with me or I’ll share it with her, and it’s open, it’s nice, it’s frank. Which I think is testament to her, to be honest with you, she’s never made it a problem, do

you know what I mean? She's never shied away from it, she's never given the disgusted look or anything."

Robert described his wife as "very tolerant" and illustrated her support with her question: "Why do [people] need to label [themselves] one way or the other?". However, this might be seen as a 'minimising', as opposed to supportive, response. This comment also provides a stark insight into Robert's experience. It seems that all the individual instances have drawn together to form a single, feared, and independent phenomenon: "the disgusted look".

Neil's account is more nuanced: "he responded to it, like, fine but there's these comments every now and again". He felt that although the "random and out of the blue [comments are]... far less than when we started dating", currently "it seems that at some level, be it an issue or something he just thinks about, I would say that it is still there". Neil's comments appear to represent an unease on his part, a monitoring of his partner's level of acceptance, despite their open communication and his partner's explicit acceptance. Neil further described his fiancé's attitude to his bisexuality:

"It's almost like the flip of what my parents said. With him it's like, well, you're attracted to men and men are sexy, so just be with men [*laughs*]. Yeah, so, it's the reverse of what my parents said, basically."

It's worth noting that he felt the negative messages from his parents were "biphobic", and said they left him feeling "low and down and... thinking I shouldn't be... feeling this way". He related his partner's attitude with apparent levity, but bound it fore and aft with the memory of his parents' harmful behaviour. Despite this, Neil still felt "fortunate [because bisexuality] could be quite a big thing for quite a few people" and said, "he doesn't ever make me feel that I have to hide that part of myself or ever make me feel uncomfortable".

Daniel said of telling his partner, "he was accepting of it but, I guess you'd say, gently surprised. Just sort of, 'Oh, right. Okay'". He felt that his partner saw it "like an attribute I

possess, rather than a thing I am, like having brown hair, or something” and that “there’s nothing really invasive about it to the relationship”.

Because they were friends before they were married, Chris did not have to disclose his bisexuality to his wife. Of its current place in their relationship, he said, “it doesn't come into the equation at all really. Never talk about it”.

Steve said his wife discovered his bisexuality (“I think she had seen a conversation I’d had with someone online”) and was “devastated”. He said, “I think she hates that I’m this way and that it makes her feel insecure”. He added, “She was very upset. We nearly split up over it. Things were really difficult for a long time.

Steve felt...

“...upset that I was causing her pain. Also confused as to how I could have done things differently. Over time I've realised that I should have been more honest earlier on in the relationship. I regret not doing that.”

He also felt “punished for how I am” and said his bisexuality was “always there in the background but not often talked about”. Steve described the compromise of his situation: “we mostly agree to put [it] in a box and not dwell on [it]. I'm ok with that mostly as it's a choice I've made to be with my wife”. He also felt that his wife “can’t help how she feels and we mostly have a great life together”.

3.5.4 Subordinate theme 3.4: Anxiety and reassurance

Four of the participants described partner anxieties related to their bisexuality and five talked about the way they communicated with partners about their bisexuality. Anxieties centred on the ability to be monogamous, the stability of their sexuality, and whether they needed both male and female sexual partners.

Neil felt his partner's anxiety about possible infidelity "in part stems from me being bisexual". Additionally, he felt, "there's that extra dimension of, well, you may shift and no longer be attracted to men full stop". Neil reported that reassuring his partner "make[s] him feel a bit calmer", implying some disquiet.

Neil's demonstrated a commitment to being honest and a patient desire to reassure:

"I say, yeah, I'm still bisexual but, and it's a big but, is that I'm with you and that's it regardless, so if we have difficulties in this relationship broadly, I just name it, I say you know if either of us fell out of love with the other one and that was that then I'd think about at some point a future relationship but the reality is that I love you."

Neil felt the key was "giving that person the time, responding to that person appropriately and helping them to understand how it is from my perspective". He felt the importance of:

"not rushing anything as well, in the sense that it's never been, well, I am so get over it, you need to be okay with it, it's been, well, I am, and it'll come up again and again and again, but each time he's learning more and more about it and then the impact of it is less and less and less."

This suggests that he had been called on to repeat this at intervals over the six years of their relationship.

David recalled an occasion when his wife...

"...got very tearful and she said, 'I wonder whether I can ever be the person who gives you everything you want, and need, sexually.' And she wasn't meaning, 'Am I the only woman?' She was meaning, 'Is there something you could only get and be met from sexual contact with a man, intimacy with a man, that I can never give you? And that that's always going to be there?'"

Referring to this as "the last time she articulated it" suggests David felt this was an undercurrent to their relationship.

David recalled responding to his wife's distress by saying:

"Well, all I can do is tell you that, yes, sometimes, if I'm having a wank I do fantasise that there is man involved as well, or I'm involved with a man and a woman, but that I'm not suppressing, to my conscious knowledge, you

know, I haven't fallen in love with any man since I've been with you. I haven't felt drawn to be sexual with anyone else, male or female."

David's tone is devoid of defensiveness, and demonstrates candour and a willingness to open his internal world to his wife.

Steve's account implied that he had experienced his wife losing trust in him and his commitment to her after discovering his bisexuality: "Things were really difficult for a long time. We're ok now and I think the trust has come back". He also commented, "I've shown her over the last few years I meant what I said about being committed to her. She can see now that I meant that". It would seem from Steve's language that he was expressing a belief in his wife's change of heart, an interpretation reinforced by his apparent bolstering of the assertion with 'she can see now'. No direct communication is referred to, which corresponds with the feeling that his bisexuality is something they "mostly agree to put in a box".

Robert recalled only one discussion with his wife that might be examined for concern, when they "had a conversation at the beginning, she was like, is something that you want to do regularly or something?" Robert's casual phrasing portrays the exchange as an unemotional request for information. With past partners, however, he said that "arguments start off as something small and then you get to what the real reason for the argument is", which he felt to be his bisexuality. Anxieties would include "do you look at other men?" and "I'm never going to be enough".

Robert related the frustrations of his efforts to reassure:

"I would try and reason with them 'cause I kind of understood it, you know, going back 20 years when I first started seeing girls, it really wasn't a known thing. I mean generally people would be just like, well, you're just gay."

Daniel reported positively the benefit of his being...

“...open and honest with my answers and I allow him to ask any question possible. So to that end, we got all that out of the way in the first week or so, and now he’s just perfectly happy with me.”

Hence, Daniel felt that honesty was the best course in responding to his partner’s questions about his bisexuality.

3.5.5 Subordinate theme 3.5: Monogamy

The theme of monogamy arose with five of the participants, without being introduced by the researcher. It came up within accounts of partners’ anxieties and of the misconceptions of others.

3.5.5.1 Sub-subordinate theme 3.5.1: Motivations

Chris stated that “I’m very happy to be monogamous with her, I don’t feel the need to sleep around. I don’t want to sleep around”. Chris felt the value he placed on the relationship outweighed anything to be gained from sex with others:

“All it’s done, being in that long-term relationship, is just confirm to me that I don’t want to be with anyone else. I look around and think, I wouldn’t mind having sex with you, or whatever, but that’s just a lust thing. It’s just looking for excitement, you’re looking to get off, or whatever, kind of thing. Something different, you know. Excitement. But that’s never acted upon because I see it for what it is.”

For Steve, the importance of his relationship had also outweighed any attraction to others. He said, “It’s never happened that I’ve felt such a strong attraction to a person that I’ve considered giving up what I’ve got now”. Additionally, he conveyed a moral aspect to his commitment, saying, “Who you’re attracted to can’t be wrong as it’s not something you can control. What you do about that attraction can be wrong if you’re already committed to someone”.

David recounted his response to his wife's anxieties about his need for same-sex activity, revealing monogamy as fundamental to his idea of a relationship:

"I haven't felt drawn to be sexual with anyone else, male or female. That's not how I view the world and I just don't do that. I'm sexual with you, and that's kind of the end of the conversation for me."

Neil expressed similar motivations, saying:

"I've never cheated on anyone and I never will 'cause my approach is if we fall out of love then I'd leave you and wouldn't ever cheat on you and then be like oh, sorry, I've cheated on you now I'm off. And that's just whoever I'm with, that's just my approach really."

Researcher: It sounds like being monogamous is important to you.

"Yeah, definitely. Definitely. To the point that, and this is something I've really had to work on, I've really struggled to understand people if they're not in a monogamous relationship."

Robert's account of a conversation with his wife also implied an unequivocal position: "she was like, is something that you want to do regularly or something? And I was like, no, no, if I'm with you, I'm with you". However, another comment perhaps suggests something more contractual: "When you're monogamous with somebody, you want to be monogamous with them, or they want you to be monogamous".

For both Chris and David, being a parent was cited as an additional factor in their commitment to monogamy. Chris said, "I don't want to sleep around. I've got kids now as well so it's not really part of it, you know. You grow up, you go to different stages of your life." David felt that parenthood was "the thing I feel most in service to in my life. And I love that. And so, bound up in that is the commitment to this relationship".

3.5.5.2 Sub-subordinate theme 3.5.2: Bisexuality and monogamy

Four of the participants challenged the idea that bisexuality was a challenge to monogamy.

Chris said, “it’s not about the sexuality, it’s just about being with her”. On having been told that, as a bisexual, monogamy would result in unmet needs, he said:

“It’s not about, I need to satisfy a male side of me, or I need to be with a man. It’s about the person I’m with and the person I’ve fallen in love with, and who I choose to have that monogamous relationship with.”

David satirised the notion of separate, gendered sexual drives, saying that any desire he experienced for “more” was not ““Oh God, I really, really want to get it on with Joe down the road’ or whatever”. In fact, David did not experience monogamy as limiting; he felt “our relationship is about, well, how much of this banquet are we both prepared to eat? That, it seems to me, is about her and me, it’s not about me feeling I’ve got to cut off half my sexuality”.

Neil had experienced the suggestion that, as a bisexual man, he was more likely to be unfaithful and found it nonsensical: “I just thought, well, how silly is that, because if you’re a faithful person, you’re a faithful person”.

Steve commented that his bisexuality was accepted by others “so long as it doesn’t hurt my wife” suggesting belief in a conflict between his bisexuality and monogamy in the minds of others. He felt a sense of injustice at the experienced inequality in his marriage and the assumptions made about him:

“It might be easier if my wife was bisexual because it might make things more equal and maybe then she would find it easier to understand that being bisexual doesn’t mean you constantly have to suppress half of your nature. It’s just the same as a heterosexual man making a commitment to a woman; you’re choosing to be with that person and not to be with anyone else. The gender isn’t really relevant.”

3.6 Summary

In this chapter, the themes produced by the analysis have been set out and considered, with a commentary that phenomenologically interprets the data. The following chapter contains the discussion of these findings.

4 Discussion

4.1 Formative experiences

The data suggest that formative experiences have left the participants aware that a part of them which feels fundamental may be met with rejection, stigma, denial, incomprehension, and misconceptions (Chris, David, Neil, Steve, Daniel, Robert). These experiences are reflected in the discrimination represented in the literature (Callis, 2013; Dodge et al., 2016; Helms & Waters, 2016), and in the obstacles they present to benefitting from the support of LGB communities (Pakula et al., 2016; Weinberg et al., 1994). No current LGB community connection was indicated by those in relationships with women. Of those with male partners, while Neil talked of gay friends who he felt exhibited bi-negativity, Daniel spoke of a social sphere comprising gay men, bisexuals, pansexuals, and “a lot of liberal, queer allies or fellow queer people”, in which he had experienced no direct bi-negativity. Daniel was also the youngest participant. If younger cohorts are developing more diverse communities and more diverse understandings of sexuality, it may transpire that older ‘hegemonies’, and the discrimination they have brought, are being unseated.

Chris’s response to bi-negativity was strategic identification. This was experienced as granting the agency described in the literature (Baldwin et al., 2015) and enabling the avoidance of judgement and stigma. However, Chris’s strategic identification may be linked to his ambivalence towards labels: the negative consequences of permitting advantageous assumptions and concealing sexual identity (Herek et al., 2009; Mohr et al., 2019) might be mitigated if the identity is not wholeheartedly endorsed. Recalling bisexual identity development models (Brown, 2002; Weinberg et al., 1994), a question then arises about the consequences for self-acceptance implied by attainment of the third stage (‘Settling into the

identity') seemingly being forestalled by this thinking. By Chris's account, however, it is precisely self-acceptance that has allowed him to situate the responsibility for stigma with those who apportion it, leaving him free to conceal as he sees fit.

The participants had experienced pressure to live as heterosexual men from their families and from society (Steve, Chris, Neil), and homonormative pressure from gay men to identify as gay (Chris, Neil, David). The heterosexist stigmatisation of bisexuality is represented in the literature (Israel & Mohr, 2004) as are monosexist social pressures within LGB communities (Balsam & Mohr, 2007; Callis, 2013; McLean, 2008; Ochs, 1996).

There had been periods of self-stigmatisation and consequent anxiety for several participants (Robert, Neil, Daniel, David), as noted in the literature (Herek et al., 2009; Ochs, 2005).

4.2 The relationship

The data suggests the participants had been faced with the anxieties of their partners, either currently or in the past (David, Neil, Steve, Robert) and they reported responding to concerns and questions, typically, with openness, honesty, and patience, which they felt had been beneficial to their partners (David, Neil, Robert, Daniel). The marked exception, Steve, spoke little with his wife on the subject, their having put it "in a box and not dwell[t]" on it. Steve's was the picture of greatest distress and tension with regard to bisexuality, his wife having been "devastated", hating his bisexuality, and their having come close to splitting up. These experiences chime with the literature in support of early disclosure, open communication, honesty, and taking time, for successful mixed-orientation relationships (Buxton, 2000; Niki, 2018).

For three of the participants, their bisexuality seemed to ‘hang in the air’ between themselves and their partners. In the case of two, this was despite their intentions to be open and honest. Neil felt that, for his partner, “at some level, be it an issue or something he just thinks about, I would say that it is still there”. David referred to a conversation with his wife as being the “last time she articulated it”, suggesting a belief that it also goes unarticulated. He also felt that “silence is created and wished for in both directions”. Steve felt his bisexuality was “always there in the background” of his relationship.

4.2.1 Disclosure to partner

Romantic rejection on the grounds of bisexuality, as in the literature (Anderson et al., 2015; Callis, 2013; Li et al., 2013; McLean, 2008), had been experienced by participants. Neil had experienced rejection by gay men and Robert experienced problems in most of his relationships with women, which they both imputed to their bisexuality. David felt that, after disclosure to heterosexual women, they found him “so unthreatening”, and consequently thought he couldn’t “possibly be a sexual being in relation to women”. These experiences resonate with Gleason, Vencill, and Sprankle’s (2019) finding that heterosexual women see bisexual men as less masculine. They also found women find bisexual men ‘less sexually attractive’; if, as David felt, the men were seen as less sexual, this could arguably produce the same result.

Hence, the participants had an awareness of the potential for romantic rejection and of rejection in general (Chris, David, Neil, Robert). It may be because of this, rather than in spite of it, that disclosure had been made early in most of their current relationships (David, Neil, Daniel, Robert). David described, on realising it was “serious”, an “absolute requirement for

honesty. It was like, what would be the point of starting this with a lie or an omission". His disclosure was attended by difficulty and anxiety. After several rejections from gay men, Neil chose to disclose in person, hoping for a better outcome. He didn't choose to conceal his identity, wanting to avoid a "web of lies" from tainting the relationship.

4.2.2 Relationship work and incongruence

Examples of a form of 'relationship work' that bisexuals are said to perform – the minimisation of a partner's bi-negativity (Hayfield et al., 2018) – appears to be evident in the participants' accounts. Steve felt that his wife "hates" his bisexuality and he felt "punished" by her. However, he added that she couldn't "help it" and, in any case, the situation was his choice. Additionally, he acknowledged "causing her pain", suggesting the acceptance of blame, which stands at odds with his feeling of "being punished for how I am" and the defence of "who you're attracted to can't be wrong". Furthermore, his belief that her trust in him was finally reinstated was supported not by any words of hers, but by the apparent assertion of faith, that "she can see [my commitment] now". Neil seemed to uneasily monitor potential signs of rejection ("random, out of the blue" comments) and felt his partner had expressed a preference for him to be gay. Despite this, he maintained his partner never made him feel he had to "hide that part of myself" or "feel uncomfortable", and that he felt "fortunate". Robert's example of his wife's ostensible supportiveness seemed, instead, to diminish his bisexuality and was dissonant with his own views, a fact he glossed over:

"She says I don't see why people have a problem with it, why do you need to label yourself one way or the other. And I've been having this argument with people for as long as I've felt this way."

Researcher: What do you say in that argument?

"It's not straight or gay, you can be bisexual."

These examples appear to represent what Hayfield, Campbell, and Reed (2018) argued was a “process of protecting their current partners from anticipated accusations of bi-negativity and actively working to present their ongoing relationship as positive” (p.231). Knowledge of the stigma of bisexuality made Neil and Robert feel fortunate and grateful for not being discriminated against or responded to with “disgust” (Robert).

Hence, I argue that Steve’s, Neil’s, and Robert’s accounts evidence an incongruence between their purported feelings about their partners’ attitudes and unacknowledged feelings of discomfort, lying nearer the edge of awareness (Rogers, 1959).

4.2.3 Monogamy

Five of the participants asserted their ability to be monogamous, unprompted by the interviewer, suggesting the reverse was an accusation they had encountered. This preconception is noted in the literature as prevalent (Dodge et al., 2016; Knous, 2006). Participants (Chris, David, Neil, Steve) were internally motivated to be monogamous, citing love and personal preference, in concert with the findings of Edser and Shea (2002). Only one suggested his monogamy might be due to partner expectation, saying, “you want to be monogamous with them, or they want you to be” (Robert). None suggested that being monogamous in the context of their current relationship was a cause of tension within the relationship, in contrast to the implications of Mark, Rosencrantz, and Kerner’s (2014) finding of bisexual men viewing monogamy as a sacrifice more than other groups. The participants’ feelings were more aligned with the findings of Buxton (2000): that only 11% of bisexual husbands of women reported desire for same-sex activity negatively affected their relationships.

The purported incompatibility of bisexuality and monogamy comes from the dualistic conceptualisation of bisexuality as a composite of homosexual and heterosexual drives (Rust, 2003). Explicit renunciations of this view were presented by the participants and a holistic conceptualisation was argued, in which gender/sex were irrelevant (Chris, David, Neil, Steve). Hence, the idea of ‘volitionality’ (Edser & Shea, 2002) was implicitly supported – namely, that bisexuality confers a choice by eliminating gender/sex as a constraint and doesn’t impose a compulsion to ‘have both’ (Chris, David, Neil, Steve). To be clear, while this small study doesn’t draw any statistical conclusions about the prevalence of such attitudes in populations of bisexual men, it does demonstrate that there are bisexual men who experience monogamy as central to their relationships, and who are personally committed to it and internally motivated.

4.3 Authenticity

The significance of questions of authenticity and concealment, and the experience of these existential tensions, unexpectedly, seemed to play a larger role in the participants’ discourse than tensions in their current relationships (with the exception of Steve). While the available quantitative research indicates the negative outcomes of the concealment of identity (Cortopassi et al., 2017; Herek et al., 2009; Mohr et al., 2019; Schrimshaw et al., 2013), the value of qualitative research is to put flesh to the bones. The participants’ data showed that the struggle between authenticity and safety from stigma had visited them all to some degree and at some point in their lives. Daniel had felt “broken” and was “consumed” by anxiety about coming out; Steve had chosen to live a ‘heterosexual life’; Chris became a chameleon;

Robert was vigilant and fearful; Neil had, at one time, felt his bisexuality was contained within a cracking box.

David and Neil placed great importance in their bisexuality and seemed to draw strength and meaning from it. However, to read their accounts, it seems the more significance it is charged with, the more difficulty is encountered when it is contained. Steve reported relative ease with concealment, but his account of his bisexuality in his life seemed unhappy and isolated.

An added complication to disclosure was experienced by the participants, in that talking about bisexuality could be experienced as inappropriately talking about sex (Steve, Neil, David). Experiencing this made it harder to disclose to children, parents, and friends. It seems that while their bisexual identities were meaningful to them, they didn't expect others to attribute similar meaning to them. It may be bisexual invisibility (Yoshino, 2000) which implies that this is not experienced as talking about identity or the self.

Additionally, Neil felt uncomfortable about correcting assumptions that he was gay, a dilemma he faced frequently. Steve and David were also dissuaded from disclosing by anticipated negative social implications for their wives.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the findings and compared them to the literature reviewed in Chapter 1. Many themes of the literature were represented in the data, but the analysis has provided phenomenological insight that, while informative, the quantitative research cannot provide.

The following chapter concludes this dissertation.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Limitations and future research

The racial and class homogeneity of the participants might be identified as a limitation of this study. However, while neither aspect was stipulated in the study's design, the homogeneity of this participant group is conducive to small-scale projects using IPA (Smith et al., 2009). Indeed, to avoid an alternative form of 'exclusion by inclusion' (Pallotta-Chiarolli & Martin, 2009), a study of this size would be more revealing of the experiences of Black bisexual men, for example, if it focused on them exclusively, since IPA involves the selection of themes, in part, according to their frequency. The intersection between bisexuality and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) identities has received little focus (Hayfield et al., 2018), and this would be a useful direction for future research.

This group was not entirely homogenous, and differences were noted in the experiences of Daniel and Neil as compared to Chris, Robert, and David. These subgroups were delineated by both sex of partner (male and female, respectively) and cohort (25-35 and 45-55, respectively). The differences have not been presented or discussed in the findings, but further research could isolate either aspect, or any combination of cohort and same-/other-sex partner.

Other recruitment strategies might have uncovered the more problematic implications of bisexuality in mixed-orientation relationships. For example, a campaign directed towards relationship counsellors and organisations, requesting the posting of adverts in waiting rooms, to achieve a purposely clinical sample.

5.2 Implications for counselling

Proceeding from a person-centred standpoint (Rogers, 1961), the objective of this study has not been to derive techniques for use with bisexual clients. The aim and hope have been that it might reveal something new and unanticipated in the experiences of these men's lives to those who seek to extend in their practice the conditions of prizing, empathy and congruence (Rogers, 2007).

As has been discussed, the anxieties and prejudices surrounding bisexuality are common, deep-seated, and often unconscious (Dodge et al., 2016; Macalister, 2003; Yoshino, 2000; Zivony & Lobel, 2014). Additionally, they are familiar to and anticipated by bisexual people (Beach et al., 2018). 'Minority' clients have been said to be "likely to be highly attuned and sensitive to (dominant group) therapist behaviours and responses" (Lago & Smith, 2010, p.17). The potential consequences of a client's exposure to unexamined therapist preconceptions were considered by Lago and Smith (2010):

"Impediments to the construction of good working relationships in counselling and psychotherapy emanating from practitioners towards their clients (e.g. negative attitudes, pejorative stereotypes, fear, anxiety, etc.) will therefore significantly impact upon the potential for good relationship building and thus satisfactory outcomes for the client." (p.17)

Hence, to congruently prize bisexual clients, the practitioner is likely to benefit from prior reflection on their preconceptions and attitudes.

Additionally, it has been observed that:

"Again and again, studies of marginalised groups show that they do want therapists to know about the specific challenges and issues that they face and, more than that, they do not want to be the ones who have to school them in this." (Cooper, 2010, p.xiii)

This implies that an open and accepting attitude may not be enough, and that it would be advantageous for the practitioner to have an awareness of the possible implications of bisexuality in the lives of their clients.

It is hoped that this study might attune the ear of the phenomenologically committed practitioner to some of the experiences contained within it and to impart an appreciation of a greater range of experience. Arising from this study, the following are questions that counsellors might ask *themselves* when working with bisexual clients, to achieve more empathic engagement:

- How truly content does the client feel with the balance of known-ness and concealment they are describing?
- What feelings lie deeper than the experience of gratitude for being accepted? Is there discomfort at a sense of inequality? If gratitude is expressed, what does that say about how the client feels about his bisexuality?

Though the person-centred approach is non-directive, it is within the remit of person-centred practitioners to highlight incongruence by observing the copresence of two sets of feelings – for example, gratitude for acceptance and an attendant discomfort, as found in this study. Doing so could be therapeutic, facilitating clients to symbolise their feelings more accurately in awareness, moving towards greater congruence, and thereby reducing anxiety (Rogers, 1959).

I hope, therefore, that this study has helped the reader to extend their appreciation of the experiences of this group, and to identify and consider their own preconceptions.

5.3 Reflective statement

Conducting this research has, from the beginning, brought to light many things of which I was only dimly aware. The literature themes of identity development, mental health, and relationships spoke to my own experience, informing my understanding of periods of isolation and depression in my adolescence. The participants' contributions have underlined my personal belief in the importance of open communication in relationships, especially for bisexual men. Hearing experiences of not being fully known, and how uneasy that can sit in the soul, resonated deeply.

In the process of analysis, a point of reflexion for me arose around the theme of monogamy. I had to consider whether any desire for the data to support my own claim to being capable of fidelity was influencing my interpretation. However, I am confident that my analysis represents the participants' feelings, accurately and proportionately. I find it sad to observe that so many of us are doubted.

References

- Alderson, K. G. (2004). A different kind of outing: Training counsellors to work with sexual minority clients. *Canadian Journal of Counselling, 38*(3), 193–210.
- Anderson, E. (2008). “Being masculine is not about who you sleep with. . .”: Heterosexual athletes contesting masculinity and the one-time rule of homosexuality. *Sex Roles, 58*(1/2), 104–115. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-007-9337-7>
- Anderson, E., & McCormack, M. (2016). *The changing dynamics of bisexual men’s lives: Social research perspectives*. Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Anderson, E., Scoats, R., & McCormack, M. (2015). Metropolitan bisexual men’s relationships: Evidence of a cohort effect. *Journal of Bisexuality, 15*(1), 21–39. <https://doi.org/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. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2014.902784>
- Aspinall, P. J. (2009). *Estimating the size and composition of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual population in Britain*. Equality and Human Rights Commission.
- Baldwin, A., Dodge, B., Schick, V., Hubach, R. D., Bowling, J., Malebranche, D., Goncalves, G., Schnarrs, P. W., Reece, M., & Fortenberry, J. D. (2015). Sexual self-identification among behaviorally bisexual men in the midwestern United States. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 44*(7), 2015–2026. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-014-0376-1>

- Balsam, K. F., & Mohr, J. J. (2007). Adaptation to sexual orientation stigma: A comparison of bisexual and lesbian/gay adults. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*(3), 306–319. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.54.3.306>
- Barker, M. (2007). Heteronormativity and the exclusion of bisexuality in psychology. In V. Clarke & E. Peel (Eds.), *Out in psychology* (pp. 95–117). John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470713099.ch6>
- Barker, M., Bowes-Catton, H., Iantaffi, A., Cassidy, A., & Brewer, L. (2008). British bisexuality: A snapshot of bisexual representations and identities in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Bisexuality, 8*(1–2), 141–162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710802143026>
- Barker, M., Richards, C., Jones, R., Bowes-Catton, H., Plowman, T., Yockney, J., & Morgan, M. (2012). *The bisexuality report*. The Open University. <http://www.open.ac.uk/ccig/news/the-bisexuality-report-is-now-available>
- Barringer, M. N., Sumerau, J. E., & Gay, D. A. (2017). Examining differences in identity disclosure between monosexuals and bisexuals. *Sociological Spectrum, 37*(5), 319–333. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02732173.2017.1348276>
- Beach, L., Bartelt, E., Dodge, B., Bostwick, W., Schick, V., Fu, T.-C., Friedman, M. R., & Herbenick, D. (2018). Meta-perceptions of others' attitudes toward bisexual men and women among a nationally representative probability sample. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 48*(1), 191–197. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-018-1347-8>
- Becker, M., Cortina, K. S., Tsai, Y.-M., & Eccles, J. S. (2014). Sexual orientation, psychological well-being, and mental health: A longitudinal analysis from adolescence to young

adulthood. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 1(2), 132–145.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000038>

Bostwick, W., Boyd, C. J., Hughes, T. L., & McCabe, S. E. (2010). Dimensions of sexual orientation and the prevalence of mood and anxiety disorders in the United States.

American Journal of Public Health, 100(3), 468–475.

<https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2008.152942>

Bostwick, W., & Hequembourg, A. L. (2013). Minding the noise: Conducting health research among bisexual populations and beyond. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 60(4), 655–661.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2013.760370>

Bowes-Catton, H., & Hayfield, N. (2015). Bisexuality. In C. Richards & M. J. Barker (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of the psychology of sexuality and gender*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Brennan, D. J., Ross, L. E., Dobinson, C., Veldhuizen, S., & Steele, L. (2010). Men's sexual health orientation and health in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 101(3), 255–258.

Brewster, M. E., & Moradi, B. (2010). Perceived experiences of anti-bisexual prejudice: Instrument development and evaluation. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 57(4), 451–468. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021116>

Brooks, L. M., & Inman, A. G. (2013). Bisexual counseling competence: Investigating the role of attitudes and empathy. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, 7(1), 65–86.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15538605.2013.756366>

- Brown, T. (2002). A proposed model of bisexual identity development that elaborates on experiential differences of women and men. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 2(4), 67–91.
https://doi.org/10.1300/J159v02n04_05
- Bryant, W. M. (2000). Stereotyping bisexual men in film. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 1(2–3), 213–219. https://doi.org/10.1300/J159v01n02_09
- Burke, S. E., & LaFrance, M. (2015). Lay conceptions of sexual minority groups. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 45(3), 635–650. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-015-0655-5>
- Buxton, A. P. (2000). Writing our own script: How bisexual men and their heterosexual wives maintain their marriages after disclosure. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 1(2–3), 155–189.
https://doi.org/10.1300/J159v01n02_06
- Buxton, A. P. (2005). A family matter: When a spouse comes out as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 1(2), 49–70. https://doi.org/10.1300/J461v01n02_04
- Buxton, A. P. (2011). Reflections on bisexuality through the prism of mixed-orientation marriages. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 11(4), 525–544.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2011.620864>
- Callis, A. S. (2013). The black sheep of the pink flock: Labels, stigma, and bisexual identity. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 13(1), 82–105.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2013.755730>
- Cass, V. C. (1979). Homosexuality identity formation: A theoretical model. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 4(3), 219–235. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v04n03_01
- Cass, V. C. (1984). Homosexuality identity formation: Testing a theoretical model. *Journal of Sex Research*, 20(2), 143–167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224498409551214>

- Conron, K. J., Mimiaga, M. J., & Landers, S. J. (2010). A population-based study of sexual orientation identity and gender differences in adult health. *American Journal of Public Health, 100*(10), 1953–1960.
- Cooke, P. J., & Melchert, T. P. (2019). Bisexual well-being: Assessing a model of predictors of psychosocial well-being for bisexual men. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000324>
- Coolhart, D. (2005). Out of the closet and into the therapy room: Therapist self-disclosure of sexual identity. *Guidance & Counseling, 21*(1), 3–13.
- Cooper, M. (2010). Foreword to the second edition. In C. Lago & B. Smith (Eds.), *Anti-discriminatory practice in counselling and psychotherapy* (2nd ed., pp. viii–xiv). SAGE.
- Cortopassi, A. C., Starks, T. J., Parsons, J. T., & Wells, B. E. (2017). Self-concealment, ego depletion, and drug dependence among young sexual minority men who use substances. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, 4*(3), 272–281. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000230>
- Crofford, M. L. (2018). Bisexual inclusive couples therapy: Assessment and treatment with bisexuals in mixed orientation relationships. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 33*(1–2), 233–243. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2017.1412420>
- Dahlgreen, W., & Shakespeare, A.-E. (2015). *1 in 2 young people say they are not 100% heterosexual*. YouGov. <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/lifestyle/articles-reports/2015/08/16/half-young-not-heterosexual>

- Davids, C. M., & Lundquist, G. G. (2018). Relationship themes and structures of bisexual individuals. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 33*(1–2), 6–12.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2017.1412421>
- de Bruin, K., & Arndt, M. (2010). Attitudes toward bisexual men and women in a university context: Relations with race, gender, knowing a bisexual man or woman and sexual orientation. *Journal of Bisexuality, 10*(3), 233–252.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2010.500955>
- Dharma, C., & Bauer, G. R. (2017). Understanding sexual orientation and health in Canada: Who are we capturing and who are we missing using the Statistics Canada sexual orientation question? *Canadian Journal of Public Health, 108*(1), 21–26.
<https://doi.org/10.17269/CJPH.108.5848>
- Diamond, L. M. (2006). What we got wrong about sexual identity development: Unexpected findings from a longitudinal study of young women. In A. M. Omoto & H. S. Kurtzman (Eds.), *Sexual orientation and mental health: Examining identity and development in lesbian, gay, and bisexual people*. (pp. 73–94). American Psychological Association.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/11261-004>
- Dickerson-Amaya, N., & Coston, B. M. (2019). Invisibility is not invincibility: The impact of intimate partner violence on gay, bisexual, and straight men’s mental health. *American Journal of Men’s Health, 13*(3).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1557988319849734>
- Dodge, B., Herbenick, D., Friedman, M. R., Schick, V., Fu, T.-C. (Jane), Bostwick, W., Bartelt, E., Muñoz-Laboy, M., Pletta, D., Reece, M., & Sandfort, T. G. M. (2016). Attitudes toward bisexual men and women among a nationally representative probability

sample of adults in the united states. *PLOS ONE*, 11(10), e0164430.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0164430>

Dworkin, S. H. (2001). Treating the bisexual client. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 57(5), 671–680. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.1036>

Eadie, J. (1999). Extracts from *Activating bisexuality: Towards a bi/sexual politics* (1993). In M. Storr (Ed.), *Bisexuality: A critical reader* (pp. 119–137). Routledge.

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

Eisner, S. (2013). *Bi: Notes for a bisexual revolution*. Seal Press.

Elder, W. B., Morrow, S. L., & Brooks, G. R. (2015). Sexual self-schemas of bisexual men: A qualitative investigation. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 43(7), 970–1007. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000015608242>

Eliason, M. (2000). Bi-negativity: The stigma facing bisexual men. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 1(2–3), 137–154. https://doi.org/10.1300/J159v01n02_05

Ellis, H. (1927). *Studies in the psychology of sex, volume 2: Sexual inversion*. www.amazon.co.uk

Epstein, R., McKinney, P., Fox, S., & Garcia, C. (2012). Support for a fluid-continuum model of sexual orientation: A large-scale internet study. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 59(10), 1356–1381. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2012.724634>

- Evans, M., & Barker, M. (2010). How do you see me? Coming out in counselling. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 38(4), 375–391.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2010.503698>
- Fairyington, S. (2008). Kinsey, bisexuality, and the case against dualism. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 8(3–4), 265–270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710802501876>
- Farmer, L. B. (2017). An examination of counselors' religiosity, spirituality, and lesbian-, gay-, and bisexual-affirmative counselor competence. *The Professional Counselor*, 7(2), 114–128. <https://doi.org/10.15241/lbf.7.2.114>
- Feinstein, B. A., & Dyar, C. (2017). Bisexuality, minority stress, and health. *Current Sexual Health Reports*, 9(1), 42–49. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11930-017-0096-3>
- Feinstein, B. A., Dyar, C., Bhatia, V., Latack, J. A., & Davila, J. (2014). Willingness to engage in romantic and sexual activities with bisexual partners: Gender and sexual orientation differences. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 1(3), 255–262.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000047>
- 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.
<https://doi.org/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.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19359705.2016.1147401>

- Fox, R. C. (1993). *Coming out bisexual: Identity, behavior, and sexual orientation self-disclosure* [California Institute of Integral Studies].
<https://pqdtopen.proquest.com/doc/304116113.html?FMT=AI>
- Fox, R. C. (2003). Bisexual identities. In *Psychological perspectives on lesbian, gay, and bisexual experiences* (2nd ed., pp. 86–129). Columbia University Press.
<http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxIYmtfXzc4NTk5X19BTg2?nobk=y&sid=262f47c2-b87e-43f4-ad53-72acc3d7bac8@sdv-sessmgr05&vid=3&format=EB&rid=1>
- Freud, S. (1983). *On sexuality: Three essays on the theory of sexuality and other works*. Penguin.
- Friedman, R. C., & Downey, J. I. (2010). Psychotherapy of bisexual men. *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis and Dynamic Psychiatry*, 38(1), 181–197.
<https://doi.org/10.1521/jaap.2010.38.1.181>
- Garber, M. B. (1995). *Vice versa: Bisexuality and the eroticism of everyday life*. Hamish Hamilton.
- Gates, G. J. (2011). *How many people are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender?*
<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Gates-How-Many-People-LGBT-Apr-2011.pdf>
- Germon, J. E. (2008). Kinsey and the politics of bisexual authenticity. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 8(3–4), 243–258. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710802501652>

- Gleason, N., Vencill, J. A., & Sprankle, E. (2019). Swipe left on the bi guys: Examining attitudes toward dating and being sexual with bisexual individuals. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2018.1563935>
- Glover, A. (2016). *Recruiting research participants using Twitter*.
<https://researchwhisperer.org/2016/11/15/recruiting-participants-using-twitter/>
- Goetstouwers, L. (2006). Affirmative psychotherapy with bisexual men. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 6(1–2), 27–49. https://doi.org/10.1300/J159v06n01_03
- Harper, A. J., & Swanson, R. (2019). Nonsequential task model of bi/pan/polysexual identity development. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 1–24.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2019.1608614>
- Hartman, J. E. (2011). Finding a needle in a haystack: Methods for sampling in the bisexual community. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 11(1), 64–74.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2011.545306>
- Hayes, B. G., & Hagedorn, W. B. (2001). Working with the bisexual client: How far have we progressed? *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development*, 40(1), 11–20. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2164-490X.2001.tb00098.x>
- Hayfield, N., Campbell, C., & Reed, E. (2018). Misrecognition and managing marginalisation: Bisexual people’s experiences of bisexuality and relationships. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 9(3), 221–236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2018.1470106>
- Helms, J. L., & Waters, A. M. (2016). Attitudes toward bisexual men and women. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 16(4), 454–467. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2016.1242104>

- Hequembourg, A. L., & Brallier, S. A. (2009). An exploration of sexual minority stress across the lines of gender and sexual identity. *Journal of Homosexuality, 56*(3), 273–298.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00918360902728517>
- Herek, G. M. (2002). Heterosexuals' attitudes toward bisexual men and women in the United States. *Journal of Sex Research, 39*(4), 264.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490209552150>
- Herek, G. M. (2004). Beyond “homophobia”: Thinking about sexual prejudice and stigma in the twenty-first century. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 1*(2), 6–24.
<https://doi.org/10.1525/srsp.2004.1.2.6>
- Herek, G. M., Gillis, J. R., & Cogan, J. C. (2009). Internalized stigma among sexual minority adults: Insights from a social psychological perspective. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 56*(1), 32–43. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014672>
- Herek, G. M., Norton, A. T., Allen, T. J., & Sims, C. L. (2010). Demographic, psychological, and social characteristics of self-identified lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults in a US probability sample. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 7*(3), 176–200.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-010-0017-y>
- 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. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2010.00202.x>
- Hughes, S. (2006, January 28). Simon Hughes: In his own words. *The Independent*.
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/simon-hughes-in-his-own-words-5337075.html>

- Israel, T. (2018). Bisexuality: From margin to center. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 5(2), 233–242. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000294>
- Israel, T., & Mohr, J. J. (2004). Attitudes toward bisexual women and men: Current research, future directions. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 4(1–2), 117–134.
https://doi.org/10.1300/J159v04n01_09
- Jones, R. L. (2010). Troubles with bisexuality in health and social care. In R. L. Jones & R. Ward (Eds.), *LGBT issues: Looking beyond categories. Policy and practice in health and social care* (pp. 42–55). Dunedin Academic Press.
<http://oro.open.ac.uk/19086/2/94F87D6C.pdf>
- Jorm, A. F., Korten, A. E., Rodgers, B., Jacomb, P. A., & Christensen, H. (2002). Sexual orientation and mental health: Results from a community survey of young and middle-aged adults. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 180(05), 423–427.
<https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.180.5.423>
- Kaestle, C. E., & Ivory, A. H. (2012). A forgotten sexuality: Content analysis of bisexuality in the medical literature over two decades. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 12(1), 35–48.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2012.645701>
- Kasket, E. (2015). Choosing a research question. In A. Vossler & N. Moller (Eds.), *The counselling and psychotherapy research handbook*. SAGE.
- Kavanagh, T. (2006, January 26). Hughes: I've had gay sex. *The Sun*.
- Kertzner, R. M., Meyer, I. H., Frost, D. M., & Stirratt, M. J. (2009). Social and psychological well-being in lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals: The effects of race, gender, age, and

sexual identity. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 79(4), 500–510.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016848>

Kinsey, A. C., Pomeroy, W. B., & Martin, C. E. (1948). *Sexual behavior in the human male*. W. B. Saunders.

Klein, F. (1993). *The bisexual option*. American Institute of Bisexuality.

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. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2011.571987>

Knous, H. M. (2006). The coming out experience for bisexuals. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 5(4), 37–59. https://doi.org/10.1300/J159v05n04_05

Kuyper, L., & Fokkema, T. (2011). Minority stress and mental health among Dutch LGBs: Examination of differences between sex and sexual orientation. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 58(2), 222–233. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022688>

La Roi, C., Meyer, I. H., & Frost, D. M. (2019). Differences in sexual identity dimensions between bisexual and other sexual minority individuals: Implications for minority stress and mental health. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 89(1), 40–51. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000369>

Lago, C., & Smith, B. (2010). Anti-discriminatory practice revisited. In C. Lago & B. Smith (Eds.), *Anti-discriminatory practice in counselling and psychotherapy* (2nd ed., pp. 13–22). SAGE.

Langdridge, D. (2008). Are you angry or are you heterosexual? A queer critique of lesbian and gay models of identity development. In L. Moon (Ed.), *Feeling queer or queer feelings?* Routledge.

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people say they experience a lower quality of life. (2017). Office for National Statistics.
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/articles/lesbiangayandbisexualpeoplesaytheyexperiencealowerqualityoflife/2017-07-05>

LeVay, S., & Baldwin, J. I. (2012). *Human sexuality* (4th ed.). Sinauer Associates.

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.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19359705.2012.723607>

Macalister, H. E. (2003). In defense of ambiguity: Understanding bisexuality's invisibility through cognitive psychology. *Journal of Bisexuality, 3*(1), 23–32.
https://doi.org/10.1300/J159v03n01_03

Magrath, R., Cleland, J., & Anderson, E. (2017). Bisexual erasure in the British print media: Representation of Tom Daley's coming out. *Journal of Bisexuality, 17*(3), 300–317.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2017.1359130>

Maliepaard, E. (2017). Bisexuality in the Netherlands: Connecting bisexual passing, communities, and identities. *Journal of Bisexuality, 17*(3), 325–348.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2017.1342214>

- Maliepaard, E. (2018). Disclosing bisexuality or coming out? Two different realities for bisexual people in the Netherlands. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 18(2), 145–167.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2018.1452816>
- Mark, K., Rosenkrantz, D., & Kerner, I. (2014). 'Bi'ing into monogamy: Attitudes toward monogamy in a sample of bisexual-identified adults. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 1(3), 263–269.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000051>
- Matteson, D. R. (1996). Counseling and psychotherapy with bisexual and exploring clients. In B. A. Firestein (Ed.), *Bisexuality: The psychology & politics of an invisible minority* (pp. 185–213). SAGE.
- McClellan, D. L. (2006). Bisexual relationships and families. In *Sexual Orientation & Gender Expression in Social Work Practice* (pp. 242–263). Columbia University Press.
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=sih&AN=28725046&site=ehost-live>
- McCormack, M., Anderson, E., & Adams, A. (2014). Cohort effect on the coming out experiences of bisexual men. *Sociology*, 48(6), 1207–1223.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038513518851>
- McLean, K. (2001). Living life in the double closet: Bisexual youth speak out. *Hecate*, 27(1), 109–118.
- McLean, K. (2008). Inside, outside, nowhere: Bisexual men and women in the gay and lesbian community. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 8(1–2), 63–80.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710802143174>

- McLeod, J. (2015). *Doing research in counselling and psychotherapy* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Mereish, E. H., Katz-Wise, S. L., & Woulfe, J. (2017). Bisexual-specific minority stressors, psychological distress, and suicidality in bisexual individuals: The mediating role of loneliness. *Prevention Science, 18*(6), 716–725. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-017-0804-2>
- Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin, 129*(5), 674–697. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.5.674>
- Meyer, I. H. (2010). The right comparisons in testing the minority stress hypothesis: Comment on Savin-Williams, Cohen, Joyner, and Rieger (2010). *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 39*(6), 1217–1219. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-010-9670-8>
- Meyer, I. H., Dietrich, J., & Schwartz, S. (2008). Lifetime prevalence of mental disorders and suicide attempts in diverse lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations. *American Journal of Public Health; Washington, 98*(6), 1004–1006.
- Mitchels, B. (2018). *Ethical guidelines for research in the counselling professions*. British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. <https://www.bacp.co.uk/media/3908/bacp-ethical-guidelines-for-research-in-counselling-professions-feb19.pdf>
- Mohr, J. J., Israel, T., & Sedlacek, W. E. (2001). Counselors' attitudes regarding bisexuality as predictors of counselors' clinical responses: An analogue study of a female bisexual client. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 48*(2), 212–222. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.48.2.212>

- Mohr, J. J., Markell, H. M., King, E. B., Jones, K. P., Peddie, C. I., & Kendra, M. S. (2019). Affective antecedents and consequences of revealing and concealing a lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000399>
- Mohr, J. J., & Rochlen, A. B. (1999). Measuring attitudes regarding bisexuality in lesbian, gay male, and heterosexual populations. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 46(3), 353–369. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.46.3.353>
- Monro, S., Hines, S., & Osborne, A. (2017). Is bisexuality invisible? A review of sexualities scholarship 1970–2015. *The Sociological Review*, 65(4), 663–681.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026117695488>
- Moradi, B., Mohr, J. J., Worthington, R. L., & Fassinger, R. E. (2009). Counseling psychology research on sexual (orientation) minority issues: Conceptual and methodological challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 56(1), 5–22.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014572>
- Moreira, A. D., Halkitis, P. N., & Kapadia, F. (2015). Sexual identity development of a new generation of emerging adult men: The P18 cohort study. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 2(2), 159–167.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000099>
- Mulick, P. S., & Wright, L. W. (2002). Examining the existence of biphobia in the heterosexual and homosexual populations. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 2(4), 45–64.
https://doi.org/10.1300/J159v02n04_03

- Niki, D. (2018). Now you see me, now you don't: Addressing bisexual invisibility in relationship therapy. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 33*(1–2), 45–57.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2017.1419563>
- 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). SAGE.
- Ochs, R. (2005). Biphobia. In R. Ochs & S. E. Rowley (Eds.), *Getting bi: Voices of bisexuals around the world* (pp. 201–205). Bisexual Resource Center.
- Ochs, R. (2007). What's in a name? Why women embrace or resist a bisexual identity. In B. A. Firestein (Ed.), *Becoming visible: Counseling bisexuals across the lifespan* (pp. 72–88). Columbia University Press.
- Page, E. H. (2004). Mental health services experiences of bisexual women and bisexual men: An empirical study. *Journal of Bisexuality, 4*(1–2), 137–160.
https://doi.org/10.1300/J159v04n01_11
- Pakula, B., Carpiano, R. M., Ratner, P. A., & Shoveller, J. A. (2016). Life stress as a mediator and community belonging as a moderator of mood and anxiety disorders and co-occurring disorders with heavy drinking of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual Canadians. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 51*(8), 1181–1192.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-016-1236-1>
- Pallotta-Chiarolli, M., & Martin, E. (2009). "Exclusion by inclusion": Bisexual young people, marginalisation and mental health in relation to substance abuse. In *Theorising social exclusion* (pp. 143–153). Routledge.

- Parent, M. C., & Bradstreet, T. C. (2017). Gay, bisexual, and transgender masculinities. In R. F. Levant & Y. J. Wong (Eds.), *The psychology of men and masculinities*. (2017-05462-010; pp. 289–314). American Psychological Association.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0000023-011>
- Pascoe, E. A., & Richman, L. S. (2009). Perceived discrimination and health: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, *135*(4), 531–554. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016059>
- Paul, R., Smith, N. G., Mohr, J. J., & Ross, L. E. (2014). Measuring dimensions of bisexual identity: Initial development of the Bisexual Identity Inventory. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, *1*(4), 452–460.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000069>
- Pew. (2013). *A survey of LGBT Americans: Attitudes, experiences and values in changing times*. <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/06/13/a-survey-of-lgbt-americans/>
- Pitt, R. N., Jr. (2006). Downlow mountain? De/stigmatizing bisexuality through pitying and pejorative discourses in media. *Journal of Men's Studies: A Scholarly Journal about Men and Masculinities*, *14*(2), 254.
- Potoczniak, D. J. (2007). Development of bisexual men's identities and relationships. In K. J. Bieschke, R. M. Perez, & K. A. DeBord (Eds.), *Handbook of counseling and psychotherapy with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender clients* (2nd ed., pp. 119–145). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/11482-005>
- Price, D. M., Gesselman, A. N., & Garcia, J. R. (2019). Single bisexual men's and women's perceptions of acceptance in the LGBTQ community. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 1–25.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2019.1618645>

- Richards, C., & Barker, M. (2013). *Sexuality & gender for mental health professionals: A practical guide*. SAGE.
- Ripley, M., Anderson, E., McCormack, M., Adams, A., & Pitts, R. (2011). The decreasing significance of stigma in the lives of bisexual men: Keynote address, bisexual research convention, London. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 11(2–3), 195–206.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2011.571985>
- 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. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2015.1111183>
- Rogers, C. R. (1959). A theory of therapy, personality, and interpersonal relationships, as developed in the client-centered framework. In S. Koch (Ed.), *Psychology: A study of a science* (Vol. 3, pp. 184–256). McGraw-Hill.
- Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On becoming a person: A therapists' view of psychotherapy*. Constable & Robinson.
- Rogers, C. R. (2007). The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 44(3), 240–248.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-3204.44.3.240>
- Ross, L. E., Bauer, G. R., MacLeod, M. A., Robinson, M., MacKay, J., & Dobinson, C. (2014). Mental health and substance use among bisexual youth and non-youth in Ontario, Canada. *PLoS ONE*, 9(8), e101604. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0101604>

- Ross, L. E., Dobinson, C., & Eady, A. (2010). Perceived determinants of mental health for bisexual people: A qualitative examination. *American Journal of Public Health, 100*(3), 496–502. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2008.156307>
- Ross, L. E., Salway, T., Tarasoff, L. A., MacKay, J. M., Hawkins, B. W., & Fehr, C. P. (2018). Prevalence of depression and anxiety among bisexual people compared to gay, lesbian, and heterosexual individuals: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Journal of Sex Research, 55*(4–5), 435–456. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2017.1387755>
- Rullo, J. E., Strassberg, D. S., & Miner, M. H. (2015). Gender-specificity in sexual interest in bisexual men and women. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 44*(5), 1449–1457. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-014-0415-y>
- Rust, P. C. (2002). Bisexuality: The state of the union. *Annual Review of Sex Research, 13*(1), 180–240.
- Rust, P. C. (2003). Monogamy and polyamory: Relationship issues for bisexuals. In L. D. Garnets & D. C. Kimmel (Eds.), *Psychological perspectives on lesbian, gay, and bisexual experiences* (2nd ed., pp. 475–496). Columbia University Press. <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzc4NTk5X19BTg2?nobk=y&sid=262f47c2-b87e-43f4-ad53-72acc3d7bac8@sdv-sessmgr05&vid=3&format=EB&rid=1>
- Savin-Williams, R. C. (2008). Then and now: Recruitment, definition, diversity, and positive attributes of same-sex populations. *Developmental Psychology, 44*(1), 135–138. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.44.1.135>

Savin-Williams, R. C., & Cohen, K. M. (2018). Prevalence, mental health, and heterogeneity of bisexual men. *Current Sexual Health Reports, 10*(3), 196–202.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11930-018-0164-3>

Savin-Williams, R. C., Cohen, K. M., Joyner, K., & Rieger, G. (2010). Depressive symptoms among same-sex oriented young men: Importance of reference group. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 39*(6), 1213–1215. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-010-9658-4>

Scherrer, K. (2013). Culturally competent practice with bisexual individuals. *Clinical Social Work Journal, 41*(3), 238–248. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-013-0451-4>

Scherrer, K., Kazyak, E., & Schmitz, R. (2015). Getting “bi” in the family: Bisexual people’s disclosure experiences. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 77*(3), 680–696.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12190>

Schrimshaw, E. W., Downing, M. J., & Cohn, D. J. (2018). Reasons for non-disclosure of sexual orientation among behaviorally bisexual men: Non-disclosure as stigma management. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 47*(1), 219–233.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-016-0762-y>

Schrimshaw, E. W., Siegel, K., Downing, M. J. Jr., & Parsons, J. T. (2013). Disclosure and concealment of sexual orientation and the mental health of non-gay-identified, behaviorally bisexual men. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 81*(1), 141–153. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031272>

Sexual orientation, UK. (2017). Office for National Statistics.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/datasets/sexualidentityuk>

- Slowe, S. (2017). *Using social media: Recruiting research participants via Twitter*.
<https://blogs.kent.ac.uk/osc/2017/11/03/twitter-recruiting-research-participants/>
- Smiley, E. B. (1997). Counseling bisexual clients. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 19*(4), 373–383.
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. SAGE.
- Souto Pereira, S., Becker, S., & Gardiner, G. (2017). Sensitive sexualities: Dichotomised discourse in the erasure of bisexuality. *Psychology & Sexuality, 8*(1–2), 118–131.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2016.1255245>
- Taylor, J. (2018). Bisexual mental health: A call to action. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 39*(1), 83–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01612840.2017.1391904>
- Troiden, R. R. (1979). Becoming homosexual: A model of gay identity acquisition. *Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes, 42*(4), 362–373.
- Turell, S. C., Brown, M., & Herrmann, M. (2018). Disproportionately high: An exploration of intimate partner violence prevalence rates for bisexual people. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 33*(1–2), 113–131.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2017.1347614>
- van Lisdonk, J., & Keuzenkamp, S. (2017). Towards bi-inclusive policies: Suggestions based on research on Dutch same-sex attracted young people. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 14*(2), 206–222. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-016-0241-1>
- Vencill, J. A., Carlson, S., Iantaffi, A., & Miner, M. (2018). Mental health, relationships, and sex: Exploring patterns among bisexual individuals in mixed orientation relationships.

Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 33(1–2), 14–33.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2017.1419570>

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.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11930-016-0081-2>

Weinberg, M. S., Williams, C. J., & Pryor, D. W. (1994). *Dual attraction: Understanding bisexuality*. Oxford University Press.

Weiss, J. T. (2003). GL vs. BT: The archaeology of biphobia and transphobia within the U.S. gay and lesbian community. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 3(3–4), 25–55.

https://doi.org/10.1300/J159v03n03_02

Welzer-Lang, D. (2008). Speaking out loud about bisexuality: Biphobia in the gay and lesbian community. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 8(1–2), 81–95.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710802142259>

Where we are on TV 2018-2019. (2018). GLAAD Media Institute.

http://glaad.org/files/WWAT/WWAT_GLAAD_2018-2019.pdf

White, A. J., Magrath, R., & Thomas, B. (2018). The experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual students and staff at a further education college in south east England. *British Educational Research Journal*, 44(3), 480–495.

Worthen, M. G. F. (2013). An argument for separate analyses of attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual men, bisexual women, MtF and FtM transgender individuals. *Sex Roles*, 68(11–12), 703–723. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-012-0155-1>

- Yardley, L. (2015). Demonstrating validity in qualitative psychology. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (3rd ed., pp. 257–272). SAGE.
- Yardley, L. (2017). Demonstrating the validity of qualitative research. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 12*(3), 295–296. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262624>
- Yoshino, K. (2000). The epistemic contract of bisexual erasure. *Stanford Law Review, 52*(2), 353–461. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229482>
- Yost, M. R., & Thomas, G. D. (2012). Gender and binegativity: Men’s and women’s attitudes toward male and female bisexuals. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 41*(3), 691–702. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-011-9767-8>
- Zivony, A., & Lobel, T. (2014). The invisible stereotypes of bisexual men. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 43*(6), 1165–1176. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-014-0263-9>

Appendix 1: Research advert

Bisexual Men Wanted

Are you a bisexual man in a monogamous relationship? Could you spare an hour for a one-to-one conversation for counselling research?

I'm looking at the experiences of bisexual men who are in a long-term monogamous relationship with someone who is not bisexual. I hope to increase counsellors' awareness of the lives and experiences of bisexual men. All contributions will be kept completely anonymous.

You can help with this study if:

- you identify as bisexual and are 21 or over;
- your partner does not identify as bisexual;
- you have been in your current relationship for at least 3 years; and
- your partner has known that you are bisexual for at least 3 years.

To volunteer, or for more information, please email
1622121@chester.ac.uk

This research is overseen by the University of Chester.

Appendix 2: Participant information letter



Participant Information Sheet

An exploration of the tensions experienced by bisexual men in long-term, monogamous, mixed-orientation relationships, whose bisexuality is known to their partners: Implications for counselling

Dear

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research. This information sheet will hopefully explain what is involved, but if you need further clarification, then please do not hesitate to contact me using the contact details below.

What is the purpose of the study?

This research is part of an MA in Clinical Counselling degree that I am undertaking at the University of Chester. I am interested in finding out about the experiences of bisexual men who are in a monogamous relationship with someone who does not identify as bisexual. I will be interviewing several participants to look for themes in their experience. These themes may include: how it feels to live with your partner's response to your bisexuality; how your feelings about your sexuality may have changed since your relationship began; and what you feel your sexuality has brought to the relationship. I would be interested in exploring your views and experience.

What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to take part, we will arrange a time to meet for a single face-to-face interview or to have a SKYPE/FaceTime interview, if that is more convenient. Your written consent will be obtained through the enclosed consent form (you can post or scan and email it to me if the interview is conducted through SKYPE/FaceTime). The interview will be recorded and should last no more than an hour.

The interview will be 'semi-structured' and focused around the following questions:

1. Can you tell me what it was like for you, growing up bisexual?
2. Could you tell me about you and your partner's relationship?



3. When and how did your partner become aware of your bisexuality? (How did they react? How was this for you?)
4. Do you feel there are tensions in your relationship that are related to your sexuality?
5. Has being in a long-term relationship changed how you feel about your sexuality or about yourself?
6. How would you describe your experience of being bisexual and being in a relationship?

Once the interview is complete, the recording will be transcribed to a typed copy. In this transcript, you will be given a false name or a code to protect your anonymity, and any information that could identify you will be removed. The transcript will be emailed to you to check for accuracy and to give you an opportunity to change any of the data. Your final written consent will be obtained, allowing me to begin the process of analysis.

Your right to withdraw without prejudice

You have every right to withdraw from the research at any time, without prejudice, until the 31st of July, 2019.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

If, for any reason, personal issues are stirred for you, I will give you a list of local agencies and therapists, and of online services, so you can seek support, if wanted.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The experience will give you an opportunity to reflect on your experiences and to share your thoughts.

What if something goes wrong?

I will do everything within my ability to ensure your safety and confidentiality. However, if you are not happy with any aspect of the research process, please raise it with me. If you are still not happy, you may raise it with my Research Supervisor, Revd Professor Peter Gubi, at the University of Chester:

<https://www1.chester.ac.uk/departments/social-and-political-science/staff/peter-gubi>.



If anything needs to be taken further, you may then raise it with the Dean of Faculty, Professor David Balsamo (email: d.balsamo@chester.ac.uk).

In the unlikely event that a participant is harmed by taking part in the research, there are no special compensation arrangements.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential, and how will my data be stored?

The fact that you are taking part in the research, and everything that you share, will remain confidential. In the unlikely event that Child Protection issues are raised, I may have to alert Social Services or Police, but otherwise, what you share will form part of the data which will be anonymised by use of a pseudonym or code. The data will be stored securely in locked premises and kept encrypted on a password protected computer. Only I, and my Research Supervisor, will have access to the data. The data will be destroyed (shredded and deleted) after five years, in keeping with the Data Protection Act.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The completed research will be stored (paper and electronic copy) at the University of Chester, and may be available for other students to read in the future. The dissertation will also be publicly available on the Chester University Repository, an electronic academic resource.

Findings and themes from the research may contribute to future publications or be shared at conferences, where it may extend my colleagues' appreciation of the experiences of bisexual people. In all events, your anonymity will be maintained.

Who may I contact for further information?

I, the researcher, am: **Michael Neath**

My email address is: 1622121@chester.ac.uk

Thank you for your interest in this research.

Appendix 3: Participant consent form



University of
Chester

Consent Form

An exploration of the tensions experienced by bisexual men in long-term, monogamous, mixed-orientation relationships, whose bisexuality is known to their partner: Implications for counselling

Name of Researcher: **Michael Neath**

Please initial box

1. I have read and understood the participant information sheet and have had the chance to ask questions.
2. I agree to the research conversation being audio recorded.
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time before the dissertation has begun to be written-up, without giving any reason.
4. I agree to take part in this study.
5. I understand that the data will be written up as part of a dissertation and I will not be identifiable in the dissertation.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

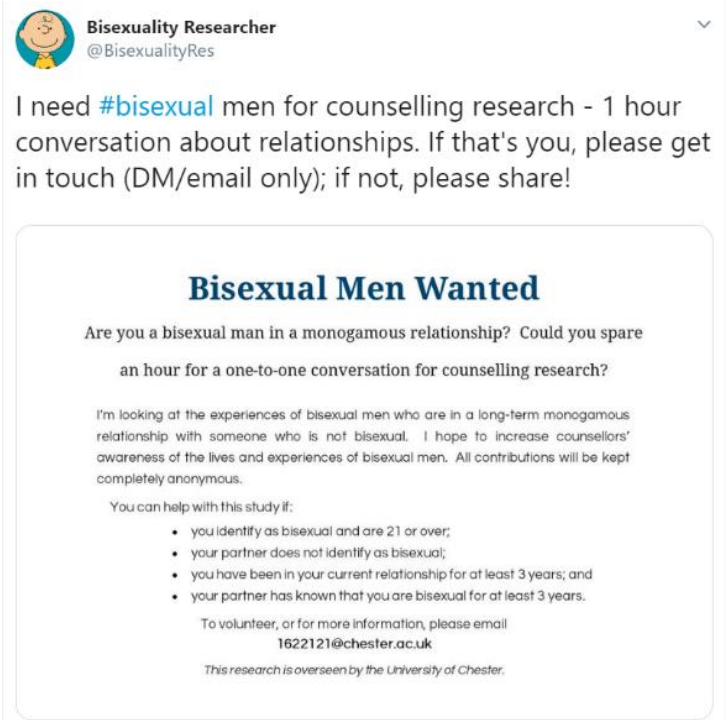
Michael Neath
Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix 4: Using Twitter for recruitment

1. A primary 'tweet' was posted, requesting readers to volunteer and/or share. The research advert was included.



Bisexuality Researcher @BisexualityRes

I need #bisexual men for counselling research - 1 hour conversation about relationships. If that's you, please get in touch (DM/email only); if not, please share!

Bisexual Men Wanted

Are you a bisexual man in a monogamous relationship? Could you spare an hour for a one-to-one conversation for counselling research?

I'm looking at the experiences of bisexual men who are in a long-term monogamous relationship with someone who is not bisexual. I hope to increase counsellors' awareness of the lives and experiences of bisexual men. All contributions will be kept completely anonymous.

You can help with this study if:

- you identify as bisexual and are 21 or over;
- your partner does not identify as bisexual;
- you have been in your current relationship for at least 3 years; and
- your partner has known that you are bisexual for at least 3 years.

To volunteer, or for more information, please email
1622121@chester.ac.uk

This research is overseen by the University of Chester.



Bisexuality Researcher @BisexualityRes · Jul 19

Please RT to support my counselling research into bisexual men's relationships #lgbtq #mentalhealth @HClaytonWright @alxndrleon @TheAurad3 @gray @OwenJones84

Bisexuality Researcher @BisexualityRes · Jul 5

I need #bisexual men for counselling research - 1 hour conversation about relationships. If that's you, please get in touch (DM/email only); if not, please share!

Bisexual Men Wanted

Are you a bisexual man in a monogamous relationship? Could you spare an hour for a one-to-one conversation for counselling research?

I'm looking at the experiences of bisexual men who are in a long-term monogamous relationship with someone who is not bisexual. I hope to increase counsellors' awareness of the lives and experiences of bisexual men. All contributions will be kept completely anonymous.

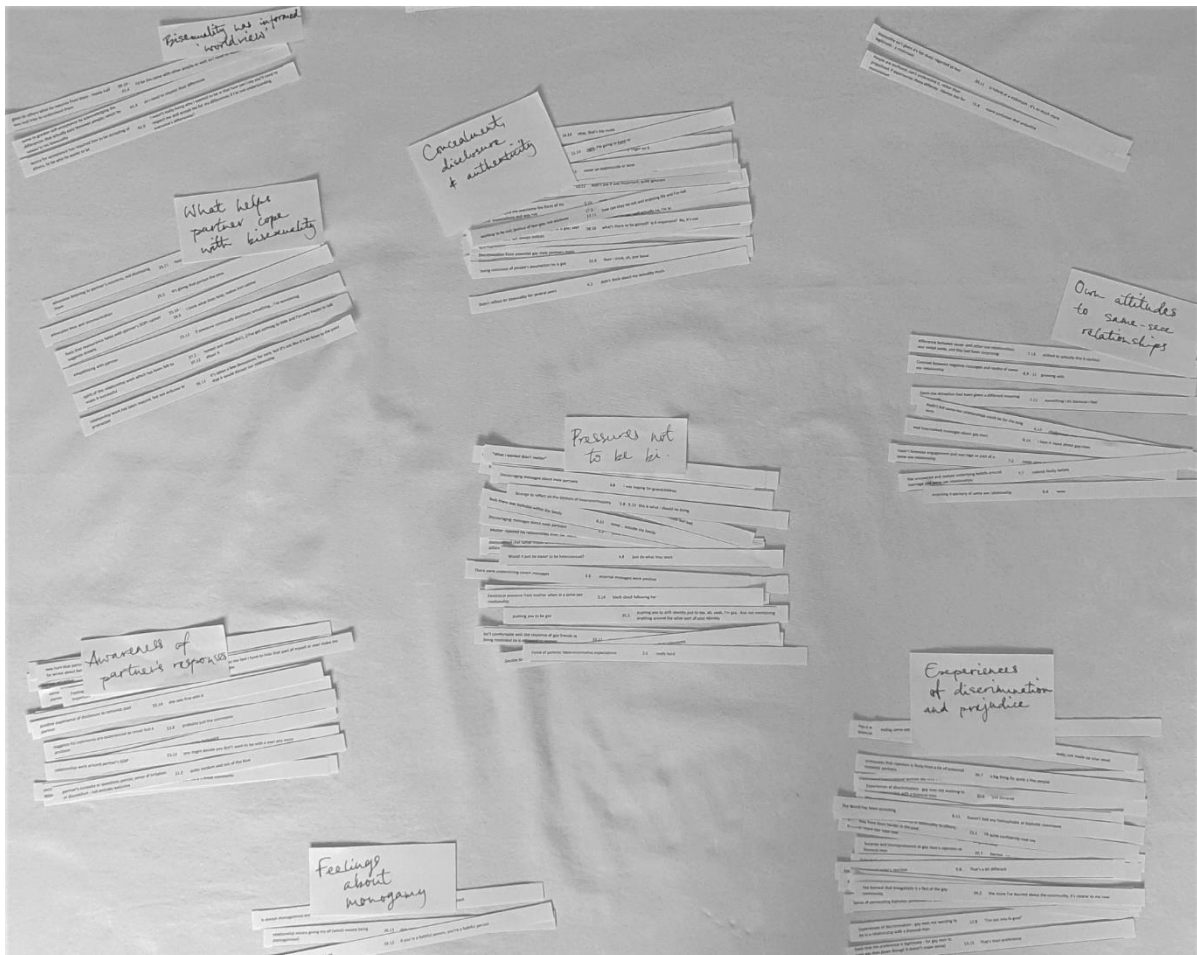
You can help with this study if:

- you identify as bisexual and are 21 or over;
- your partner does not identify as bisexual;
- you have been in your current relationship for at least 3 years; and
- your partner has known that you are bisexual for at least 3 years.

2. The primary tweet was targeted at Twitter users who had high numbers of followers and who were felt likely to 're-tweet'. On re-tweeting, the primary tweet would become visible to their followers.

Appendix 5: Illustrations of the method

1. Grouping selected quotes from one participant, attempting to identify subordinate themes:



2. Using Excel pivot tables to organise emerging themes into subordinate themes:

Row Labels
AUTHENTICITY
I don't say because they would reject me
My level of disclosure is fine
FEELING SAFE
Feeling safe
HOSTILE WORLD
Allowing vulnerability in younger self
Arguing against misconceptions
Assessing environment for safety
Attempting to rebalance bi-negative view of the world
Bisexuality doesn't have social acceptance
Caution and secrecy
Climate of fear
Conveying danger
Feeling discriminated against
Futility of the bisexual's position
Identifying with the enemy
Isolation from those who know him more fully
Language of warfare
Layers of concealment
Learning caution from disappointment
Monosexism
Response to experience of discrimination
The world hasn't changed yet
Undesired consequences of disclosure; being transformed
Unquestionable necessity of concealment
Working with the enemy
MONOGAMY
External motivation
Imposition
Internal motivation
Partner's expectations
RELATIONSHIP
Acceptance should be available
Appreciative of being accepted by partner
Being accepted by partner
Combatting preconceptions (Rship work)
Context of romantic rejection
Disclosure to partner
Reason for disclosure to partner
Sanctuary
Self-stigmatisation
SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF BISEXUALITY
Centrality
Confusion and exploration
Fluidity
I guess I'm bisexual
I was but I didn't know it