

Monosexism and Bisexual Identity Disclosure in the Online Dating Environment

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This thesis is dedicated to my Pa. I love and miss you endlessly...

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### **Statement of Authentication**

The work presented in my thesis is, to the best of my knowledge, original work except when I have acknowledged otherwise. I have not submitted this material to any other degree outside the Master of Research at Western Sydney University.



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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the role of internalised monosexism on the formation of positive bisexual identification and subsequent disclosure decisions. While much of the research on sexual identity has focused on disclosure outcomes, little research has focused on this in relation to bisexual identity, particularly in the context of online relationship formation. This thesis applies social identity theory to bisexual identity to produce a model that predicts the disclosure of bisexual status to potential romantic partners on Tinder and more generally. The model is tested by means of an experimental design ( $n = 107$ ), in which participants in the experimental condition ( $n = 51$ ) are asked to challenge monosexist ideology as a method of social change to see its effect on internalised monosexism, bisexual identity, and subsequent disclosure decisions. Results demonstrate that, while the experimental manipulation was unsuccessful, internalised monosexism was present at low levels in the sample and was a significant predictor of positive bisexual identity and disclosure. These results also point to the importance of distinguishing negative from positive aspects of bisexual identity, as the relationship between internalised monosexism and disclosure was more strongly mediated by negative identity than it was positive identity. This thesis concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study in relation to the unsuccessful manipulation of internalised monosexism, the use of social identity theory for explaining bisexual identity and identity-related outcomes, and also argues that future research may seek to identify other methods for bisexual people to achieve positive identification in the form of collective action.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The overall aim of this thesis is to build upon existing knowledge about bisexual women in relation to the disclosure of their bisexual status as well as the role of *monosexism* - the belief that one is, and can only ever be, heterosexual or homosexual (Roberts, Horne, & Hoyt, 2015) - in relation to positive bisexual identification and such disclosure. Although non-heterosexual identity disclosure has received much empirical and theoretical attention and is often conceptualized as final point to a positive sexual identity (e.g., Cass, 1979), such conceptualisations may not be applicable to bisexual people. Bisexual people have reported that they often have to reinforce or re-disclose their sexual identity, even to their romantic partners, due to dichotomous categorizations of sexuality grounded in monosexism (DeCapua, 2017). Furthermore, bisexual people also face problems in that their sexual identity is often assumed based on the gender of their current partner (Dyar, Feinstein, & London, 2014; Ross, Dobinson, & Eady, 2010; Weiss, 2003) and they are consequently and incorrectly placed into heterosexual or homosexual categories, thus leaving the bisexual aspect of their identity overlooked and ignored. That being said, it is not surprising that bisexual people are also faced with ongoing sexual identity uncertainty even after they self-identify as bisexual (Weinberg, Williams, & Pryor, 1994).

As monosexism has been found to impact bisexual identity outcomes, including the bolstering of negative bisexual identification (Dyar, Feinstein, & London, 2014), where bisexual people feel negative about themselves in the context of being bisexual, and *internalised monosexism* (Dyar, Feinstein, & Shick, & Davilla, 2017), where bisexual people unintentionally

accept the belief that bisexuality is not a real orientation or identity (Ross et al., 2010), it is important to look at the effects this also has on positive bisexual identification as well as subsequent disclosure by bisexual women. This effect is of especial importance in relation to bisexual women who, historically, have been told that they are in denial about their “true” sexuality when disclosing their bisexual identities (Rodriguez Rust, 2000), as they threaten society’s straight-gay binary and explore areas that those who endorse this dichotomy feel discomforted by (Shokeid, 2011). As previous research has shown that identification and disidentification are related concepts that are not polar opposites and can be expressed simultaneously (Becker & Tausch, 2014), then bisexual identity may also have related yet separate concepts such as positive identity and negative identity – and these may play a role in these women’s decisions to disclose bisexuality to potential romantic and sexual partners.

While the study of disclosure by bisexual women has received an increased amount of empirical attention, it has received less so in the context of relationship formation. Given that stereotypes of female bisexuality are redolent with negative connotations, such as unfaithfulness (Eliason, 2001; Klesse, 2011; McLean, 2004; Zivony & Lobel, 2014), promiscuity (Dyar, Feinstein, & London, 2015; Fahs, 2009; Flanders et al., 2016; Klesse, 2011; Lanutti & Denes, 2012) and sometimes even exotic allure (Yost & Thomas, 2012), some people have reported that they are less willing to date a bisexual woman than they are women of other sexual identification categories (Mohr & Rochlen, 1999). If this is the case, and bisexual women do internalize monosexism and feel negative about their bisexuality, they may be less likely to disclose their bisexual status when forming romantic or sexual relationships.

Accordingly, this thesis examines the relationship between internalised monosexism and identification to see whether these two dimensions of identity are able to predict disclosure by

women who seek to form relationships with men and women. Such relationships are examined in the context of the online dating environment through Tinder, a social dating application where individuals can seek potential romantic and sexual partners in the world around them (Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2015; Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2012). As the online environment plays a large role in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer (LGBTIQ) relationship formation, Tinder is an important contextual aspect to consider predictions of the disclosure of bisexual identity, given its potential to sustain monosexist environments, as discussed in this thesis.

To develop a clear understanding of the role internalised monosexism in both the development and maintenance of a positive bisexual identity and subsequent disclosure decisions, it is important to approach this potential relationship with both theoretical and methodological clarity. Traditional models of non-heterosexual identity approach disclosure as an outcome of an individual process of successful identity development, and the contextual aspects of identity development, such as the current social reality of the individual are overlooked. Without consideration of the social environment in forming positive identification, a comprehensive understanding of disclosure outcomes cannot be achieved beyond theory and assumption. As such, this thesis contains the following.

Chapter two begins with a review of bisexual identity using a social identity approach. Such approach was adopted due to its group-based, contextual focus on identity and identity-related outcomes. Once a comprehensive theoretical foundation was established, the relevance of social identity to bisexual identity and disclosure was examined. As mentioned above, the contextual aspects are important to take into account in order to understand the relation of the social world in identity development and disclosure. The application of the social identity

approach to bisexual identity allows for such consideration and can be used to make predictions about group-based behaviour in relation to the social environment. Accordingly, the review takes into account the role of monosexism and internalised monosexism in the strategies bisexual people can engage in to form a positive bisexual identity. The review discusses that disclosure cannot be removed from the group context and that it may be plausible, that by engaging in social identity strategies aimed at social change in the form of social competition, bisexual women can maximise positive bisexual identification and minimise negative identification as a bisexual woman. By conceptualising positive bisexual identification as driven by group-based processes and social context, the review concludes that disclosure can be predictable, understandable, and explainable and suggests the need for a model predicting bisexual identity disclosure in regard to the monosexist, social context.

Chapter three contains an empirical study that tests a model examining the relationship of internalised monosexism and identity in predicting bisexual identity disclosure by women using Tinder. The chapter begins with an empirical review of the literature and breaks down the components that lead to the hypothesised model of disclosure. The model is then tested by means of a between-groups experimental design, where participants in the experimental group are asked to challenge monosexist ideology before completing measures of internalised monosexism. Following this, the relationships between internalised monosexism, identity, and disclosure were statistically examined to see if disclosure could be predicted. This deductive approach was deemed a plausible methodology due to the ability to make sound predictions of group-based behaviour and generalise the data to a broader population of bisexual women.

Chapter four concludes the thesis by combining the conclusions made in the review with the study's findings and discussing the related issues. Limitations of the theory in regard to the study results are discussed, and future research directions in the domain are provided.

It is hoped that the current research will provide researchers with an understanding of the role that social factors, in the form of monosexism have in bisexual identity and related outcomes, such as disclosure. In light of the role of dating applications within contemporary relationship formation, the current research may shed light on the way that monosexist ideologies may be conveyed into both their architecture, and the people that use them. Accordingly, it is hoped that this project can act as a foundation for understanding the ways that dating-applications, specifically Tinder, can act to support a positive bisexual identity and in turn, promoted willingness to disclose this status before bisexual women begin to form relationships with people who dismiss bisexuality as a legitimate identity. As the American Human Rights Campaign (2016) argues, disclosing bisexual identity will allow bisexual people to live a fuller, more open life. If this study can positively contribute to disclosure decisions by bisexual women by predicting the contexts in which bisexual disclosure may occur, a greater awareness and acceptance of bisexual identity in both academic and social domains may become apparent.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BISEXUAL IDENTITY: A SOCIAL IDENTITY APPROACH

The study of bisexual identity has received an increased amount of attention in the academic literature surrounding sexual identities, yet still holds a weak position in society in relation to heterosexual and homosexual identities (Brewster & Moradi, 2010). This weakness is due to the way that bisexuality, as a sexual identity, is often illegitimised and ignored by the broader society (Gray & Desmairas, 2014). To contribute to understandings of bisexuality as a legitimate sexual identity, this chapter seeks to integrate the study of bisexual identity and its outcomes to the broader study of social identity in the same way that has been done for other marginalised identities. The following review examines the relationships between beliefs about the illegitimacy of bisexuality on bisexual identity and related outcomes using a social identity approach (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Such approach was chosen due to its group-based, contextual focus on identity that allows for a consideration of the social world in making predictions about group-based behaviour in terms of identity and identity related outcomes (Reicher, 2004). The following therefore examines the relevance of social identity to bisexual identity and disclosure by taking into account the role of monosexist ideology in the strategies that people may engage in to achieve positive identification and potentially disclose their bisexual status in relation to the online dating environment.

The examination of sexual identity comprises conflicting theories, perspectives, definitions, and research methodologies. For example, the most widely cited models of sexual identity development are stage sequential models known as the Cass identity model (Cass, 1979) and Troiden's (1989) model of homosexual identity formation. While these models are useful for

explaining some aspects of lesbian and gay identity development, these models also have in common a heavy individualist focus on identity and therefore encompass an ignorance of the critical differences between personal and social identity in the development of the self (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). Furthermore, these models also encompass a series of conceptual stages that an individual must meet in a linear fashion to achieve a positive sexual identity. The problem with this linearity is that each of the stages produce movement into the next, and bisexuality is conceptualised as one of these catalytic stages instead of a final point of identity development (Rust, 2000). Such conceptualisations of sexual identity are ultimately monosexist as they reinforce dichotomous categorizations of sexuality by implying that bisexual identity is not a final stage of identity and is instead a pathway to a positive lesbian or gay identity.

To address the issues associated with the individualist nature of the previous models, McCarn and Fassinger (1996) proposed a dual model of sexual minority identity development encompassing a consideration of both individual sexual identity processes and group membership processes. McCarn and Fassinger (1996) also note that the stages in their model are not always linear and individuals may go through stages at varying moments. However, as Cox and Gallois (1996) argue in their social identity approach to homosexual identity formation, stage models of identity development have been useful in counteracting the pathological conceptions of homosexuality, yet they are also limited by their focus on individual factors instead of larger social factors. Although McCarn and Fassinger (1996) included identification with a certain group as part of their model, Cox and Gallois (1996) also argue that while it is important to examine individuals within certain groups, it is equally important to examine the effect of the group on the individual. Given Cox and Gallois' (1996) argument and that McCarn and Fassinger's (1996) model does also not apply to bisexuality, it is important to look at how



self-categorization as a bisexual person, and social comparison between those who are and are not bisexual, may affect identity and identity-related behaviour.

These conflicting ideas about sexual identity development indicate, that while some individuals may follow the specific paths outlined in such models, there are also a wide variety of other paths to positive sexual identity available. The adoption of a more social psychological approach to bisexual identity may be therefore be able to account for the differences in identity development theories and research findings, such as the acknowledgment of the effects of group membership (Cox & Gallois, 1996). The social identity approach, for example, offers an epistemological shift from an individualist understanding of identity to a more collective, group-based focus in order to explore, explain, and predict group behaviour. For bisexual people, such approach may help to predict dimensions of bisexual identity and consequent phenomena, like identity disclosure. As previous research has shown, by disclosing their sexual identities, bisexual people are able to live a fuller, more authentic lifestyle as an individual (Riggle et al., 2014). Despite this added authenticity, the disclosure of bisexual identity accompanies negative consequences such as risk for discrimination, negative affect, and victimisation (Huebner & Davis, 2005; Riggle et al., 2014; Waldo, 1999). However, if a bisexual person were to disclose their sexual identity, not only as an individual with same and other sex attractions, but as a member of the bisexual social group, this could potentially double as both authenticity and a strategy aimed at legitimising and stabilising bisexuality as a sexual identity. Accordingly, the social identity approach, comprising the complementary but distinct social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987), may be applicable for understanding and predicting dimensions of bisexual identity and related phenomena, such as that of identity disclosure.

## **The Social Identity Approach**

The social identity approach was developed as a way of understanding and explaining intergroup relations, but also explains how individual psychology can be influenced by group membership. The development of the social identity approach involved an epistemological shift away from traditional understandings of identity to a more non-reductionist, group-level understanding of identity and its related phenomena (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). As such, one of the key components of the social identity approach is the idea that both psychology and behaviour are heavily structured by the social world, including our membership to certain groups that we internalise as part of our self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty 1994; Stevens et al., 2017). With this understanding, the social identity perspective allows for the recognition of individuals as capable of defining themselves and behaving, not merely as individual entities, but as members of specific social groups and categories.

While our membership to specific social groups and categories are central to our meaning and understanding of our sense of self, it is also important to note their existence beyond the individual psyche and as subject to social, historical, and cultural forces (Reicher, 2004). To understand or assess any kind of intergroup relations and human actions, the social identity approach posits that the social context must be taken into account; as intergroup relations are constructed not on the basis of inherent human characteristics, but on the basis of constantly changing social structures and legitimised status inequalities (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994). By understanding our actions as grounded in the social context, we can consider the effects of the social world, including the ideological and structural features that comprise it (Reicher, 2004), in forming and transforming our identities and subsequent identity-related behaviours. Such effects can be considered through the lens of the social identity approach.

## **Self-Categorization, Social Comparison, and Social Identity**

Social identity theory focuses on the way the social world influences our self-concept and in turn, our positive self-esteem. The two processes that underlie social identity theory are self-categorization and social comparison. Individuals use categorization to order their social world by grouping people into a manner that makes sense to them (Krane & Barber, 2003). Such groupings are reflective of and dependent on social, cultural, and historical contexts and allow us to notice the differences between people, and thus predict others' behaviour with greater success (Cox & Gallois, 1996; Reicher, 2004). Once these categories have been established, individuals will then categorise themselves and accordingly assign themselves a social identity (Hogg & Abrams, 1990). This social identity is the part of an individual's self-concept that stems from their group membership, as well as the emotional significance attached to this membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Such group membership and social identity plays a crucial role in not only defining who we are but provides meaning for the way that we navigate our social world (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In the same way that our personal identity sets us apart from others (the 'me' part of our self-concept), our social identity defines our uniqueness as group members (the 'we' part of our self-concept) (Reicher, 2004). Importantly then, the process of self-categorization is more than just an act of self-labelling, but involves over time, an adoption of prototypical behaviours, characteristics, and values associated with this group membership and social identity (Cox & Gallois, 1996).

The social identity approach's key premise is that people strive for a positive self-concept, and that one means of attaining and maintaining this self-concept is through the positive evaluation of their group membership. This striving for positive distinction is usually achieved through social comparison; where group members become motivated to think and act in ways

that positively distinguish their social identity from a relevant outgroup and provide us with a positive sense of self-esteem (Hornsey, 2008; Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004). While our personal self-esteem is derived from comparisons between ourselves and other individuals, our social self-esteem is derived from comparing social groups we belong to with other relevant outgroups (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). According to Paez et al. (1998), individuals from marginalised groups will usually emphasise their group membership over their personal identity, especially when their social identity is under threat. For bisexual people then, society's continued questioning of bisexual legitimacy may be a precursor to an emphasis of group membership rather than their personal identities. By understanding bisexual identity as a social identity, instead of only a personal identity, we can begin to understand the ways in which bisexual people can work with their group membership to build positivity toward their self-concept and self-esteem within their particular social reality.

### **The Status of Social Identity in Sexual Identity Research**

Despite the important role that the social identity perspective plays in our understanding, explanation, and prediction of group-based based behaviour, bisexual people have gone virtually unnoticed in the social identity literature to date. The closest researchers have come to examining the likely role of social identity in understanding bisexual identity and related outcomes is in similar work involving the role of social identity in explaining other sexual identities. Accordingly, as this past work has operationalised lesbian and gay identities as social identities (e.g., Cox & Gallois, 1996; Krane & Barber, 2003), it is not implausible to suggest that bisexual identity too functions as a social identity.

Few researchers to date have used the social identity perspective to examine sexual identity and identity related behaviour. Those that have, have adopted such a perspective based

on its attention to the social processes involved in identity development, as opposed to the individualist epistemology that previous work on sexual identity development is grounded in. For instance, Cox and Gallois (1996) critically examined existing models of homosexual identity development from a social identity perspective and argued that the shift toward a more social psychological approach is important in understanding identity and related behaviour. The authors argue that, to attain a positive homosexual identity, categorization and comparison processes are of fundamental importance. While previous models of homosexual identity development also focus on self-categorization in achieving positive homosexual identities, a social identity approach allows us to go beyond this cognitive process and incorporate the social environment explicitly into our understandings of identity development and related outcomes. Cox and Gallois (1996) argue, that because our identification with our social group has a fundamental influence on our behaviour, it is paramount that an examination of the influence of group membership on the individual receives as much attention as does research on the individual in groups; that is, it is important to examine how self-categorization and social comparison affect identity and behaviour; as identity should not be studied only in terms of the individual, as it is also a matter of society (Cox & Gallois, 1996).

Research by Krane and Barber (2003) employs a social identity approach in their examination of the role of lesbian women's experiences in sport. The authors chose the social identity approach due to the way that it could incorporate the current social context to enhance understandings and provide a framework for examinations of lesbian women's experiences as marginalised individuals in the sporting world. Krane and Barber (2003) (following Hurtado et al. 1994) argue, that because social identities are derivative of the knowledge that people have about their group's collective history, the invisibility of lesbian women in sport may be a

confounding variable in forming a positive and cohesive identity as a lesbian woman. They also argue that this same confound may affect self-categorization and social comparison processes as a lesbian woman in the sporting context, as the lack of visibility also provides a lack of similar others to identify with. Such invisibility may also lead lesbian women to stay silent about their identities, thus sustaining the status hierarchy in sport, with the dominant heterosexual outgroup on top. As such, Krane and Barber (2003) argue that due to the way the social identity perspective can help to explain and predict self-enhancement strategies, including the pursuit of positive social identity by individuals in marginalised groups, it can also help to provide a framework for understanding the reasons why lesbian women may conceal their identity in their current social context, and why the status differences between lesbian women and heterosexual people are rarely challenged.

While the above theoretical work has shown that the social identity perspective can be usefully integrated into studies of lesbian and gay sexual identity, there has been to date, little work in this domain in regard to bisexual people. One exception, however, is an empirical study by Flanders (2016), who based on the social identity perspective's argument, that through the process of categorization individuals start to perceive their group members as similar and start to adopt the characteristics of their group, manipulated bisexual prototypicality by telling participants that they either were, or were not, typical bisexuals. Flanders (2016) argued that group identification for members of marginalised groups can help to combat negative mental health outcomes associated with such membership, and that by seeing oneself as a prototypical group member, one should have a higher sense of self-esteem, belongingness, identity centrality, and greater wellbeing. Accordingly, Flanders also predicted that those who felt as though they were less similar to their bisexual peers would have higher identity uncertainty, less social

belonging, and higher levels of negative affect. However, the results of Flanders' (2016) experiment demonstrated that those who were told they were not prototypical bisexuals actually reported marginally higher levels of identity certainty and centrality.

The findings by Flanders (2016) indicate that whether one feels as though they are a typical bisexual may not seem to impact how they incorporate their centrality and certainty of their bisexuality into their own sense of self. However, as other empirical research has shown that in the case of identity threat, individuals are likely to adopt strategies to protect and reinforce their social identities (e.g., White, Stackhouse, & Argo, 2018), the results of Flanders (2016) experiment may also indicate that, perhaps the manipulation of low prototypicality instead lead participants to react in a way that protects and reinforces their identity as a bisexual person. Nevertheless, the results of the study led Flanders (2016) to conclude that SIT and SCT may not be flexible enough to explain identity processes for bisexual people.

### **How the Social Identity Approach Can Help Us to Understand Bisexual Identity**

The results of the study by Flanders (2016) bring into question whether bisexual identities are qualitatively different from other social identities. While many researchers have theorised models of non-heterosexual identity development, which as discussed above, usually “end” in the integration of one’s sexual identity into their overall identity and the disclosure of it, such models differ from those specific to bisexual identity, in which the “end” offers continued uncertainty about one’s sexual identity (Bradford, 2004; McLean, 2007), even after disclosure. Although previous models of non-heterosexual identity development provide insight into bisexual identity and related outcomes, they fail to take into account the unique experiences specific to bisexual people, namely due to the prejudice they experience based on the questioned legitimacy of bisexuality as a sexual identity.

As discussed above, social identity is the part of an individual's self-concept that stems from their membership to a particular meaningful social group. For bisexual people then, their social identity is the aspect of their identity that stems from their bisexual group membership. To acquire a sense of belonging to a meaningful social group and consequently define and create one's place in society, processes of social and self-categorization need to occur (Tajfel, 1974). However, the problem with categorization for bisexual people is that sexuality is often described in a binary manner; this means that people are subsequently divided into distinctively heterosexual or homosexual groups (Diamond., 2008; Friedman et al., 2014; Roberts, Horne & Hoyt, 2015) and the complexity of sexuality is overlooked. While such categorization can have a negative impact on bisexual individuals, whose self-concepts do not fit entirely into this dichotomous structure, these categorizations of sexuality seem to fit into the generally agreed upon categorizations of aspects of society (i.e., male and female, young and old) and thus provide a point of social comparison for individuals who do identify as bisexual (Gray & Desmarais, 2014; McLean, 2001; Obradors-Campos, 2011). As Gray and Desmarais (2014) argue, this does not mean to suggest that society entirely accepts homosexuality, but that the dichotomy is the most generally agreed upon classification of sexuality. Based on these categorizations, people's perceptions of belonging to a specific social category can usually account for the differences between them and those who are not part of that category. Yet, if the legitimacy of bisexuality as a "real" category of sexuality is questioned by those who endorse dichotomous categorizations of sexuality, then self-categorization and secure positive social identification as a bisexual person can become problematic.



### **Social Categorization and Monosexism: The Threat to Bisexual Identity**

Social categorization allows for an understanding of the social world through the identification of individuals and their characteristics and the consequent placement of them into representative groups based on these characteristics (Krane & Barber, 2003). Self-categorization then follows this process, by placing the self into the most appropriate of these groups (Cox & Gallois, 1996). From here, people take the knowledge of their group and its history and construct a social identity. However, as Krane and Barber (2003) argue about the invisibility of lesbian women in sport as a variable that may impact identification as a lesbian woman, the same situation can be applied to bisexual people. Bi-invisibility is the lack of acknowledgement of the evidence that bisexuality exists, and this makes self-categorization and identity formation for bisexual people more difficult (Krane & Barber, 2003; Oswalt, 2009). If bisexuality is invisible, or non-existent as some may argue, bisexual people cannot simply adopt the norms of their social group as SIT would predict, because these norms are unclear and perhaps unknown.

The invisibility of bisexual experience in societal categorizations of sexuality forms the basis of bisexual oppression (Obradors-Campos, 2011). This is a unique kind of oppression in comparison to that experienced by those with monosexual identities in that the legitimacy of the sexual identity in discussion is denied. This invisibility and oppression is grounded in essentialist beliefs about sexuality based on monosexist ideology; the belief that people are, and can only ever be, heterosexual or homosexual (Klesse, 2011; Roberts, Horne, & Hoyt, 2015; Ross, Dobinson, & Eady, 2010). As Rodriguez Rust (2000) notes, because bisexual people are attracted to more than one gender, they experience prejudice based on people's beliefs that bisexuality is not a legitimate orientation or identity and are faced with questions about their "true" attractions. This means that bisexual people are consequently faced with negative attitudes

and are perceived as not only confused or indecisive (Flanders et al., 2016; Zivony & Lobel, 2014;), but also untrustworthy partners (Eliason, 2001; McLean, 2004; Zivony & Lobel, 2014), promiscuous (Dyar, Feinstein, & London, 2015; Fahs, 2009; Flanders et al., 2016; Lanutti & Denes, 2012), and sex-obsessed (Brewster & Moradi, 2010; Dyar, Feinstein, & London, 2014; Zivony & Lobel, 2014).

Indeed, previous empirical research in the domain highlights the unique role that beliefs about bisexuality, grounded in monosexist ideology, have on the everyday lives of bisexual people as individuals and as group members. For instance, Dyar, Lytle, London, and Levy (2017) found that, due to the perceived instability of bisexuality as a legitimate sexual identity, people believed bisexual people were more likely to change sexual orientation categories depending on the gender of their future partner, and that it is likely that bisexual women would “turn” heterosexual eventually. As such, it is not surprising that in earlier research, Dyar et al. (2015) also found, that based on other people’s assumption of their orientation as lesbian rather than bisexual, bisexual women showed more uncertainty in their sexual identity than lesbian women. Dyar et al. (2015) accordingly argued that this may also lead bisexual women to also question their validity of their bisexual identity.

As previous research has demonstrated, monosexist experiences are linked to greater sexual identity uncertainty and internalised monosexism (Dyar et al., 2017), which is when bisexual people unintentionally accept the belief that bisexuality is not a real orientation or identity (Ross et al., 2010). Internalised monosexism has also been shown to be associated with identity uncertainty and has detrimental effects on the formation of a positive and secure bisexual identification (Paul, Mohr, Smith, & Ross, 2014). Given such perceptions about the lower status of bisexual people in comparison to their monosexual counterparts, it is likely, according to SIT,

that bisexual people will engage two kinds of strategies to protect and validate their identities and build their status, known as social mobility and social change. Indeed, previous research has shown this effect in various domains (e.g., White & Argo, 2009; White et al., 2012), yet not in the case of bisexuality. For bisexual people, the strategies they engage in to restore their positive identity can occur at both an individual or group level; yet the strategy they choose will be dependent upon their perceptions of the current social climate, including their perceptions about the permeability of group boundaries, and the security of the status relations between people who are and are not bisexual.

### **The Conflict Between Sexual Fluidity, Permeability and Identity Legitimacy.**

The first strategy for protecting one's identity, known as *social mobility*, is driven by individual-level processes and is when people disassociate themselves from the group they "belong to" as a method aimed at protecting one's personal identity over their social identity (Haslam, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to SIT, group membership associated with low status rankings, as well as the belief that group boundaries are permeable, should make it more likely for individuals to mobilise psychologically toward higher status groups (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Further, as Krane and Barber (2003) note, when individuals consider their sexual orientation as part of their personal identity, they will engage in strategies to hide their sexual identity related behaviour from dominant outgroups by means of self-protection. Accordingly, these individuals may be considered as "closeted" and will not give any indication of their sexual orientation (Krane & Barber, 2003). For bisexual people, whether or not they believe that group boundaries are permeable is likely to depend on their own definitions and conceptualisations about sexuality. That is, differences in how bisexual people define and

conceptualise their own sexual identity could provide an indication of whether they believe it is possible to move into a higher status group.

Previous research has shown that bisexual people define their sexuality in different ways. Bisexuality is difficult to define; and although generally defined as behaviour, attraction, and desire for men and women, Rust (2001) found that bisexual people typically refused to embrace a universal definition of bisexuality at all. In a study by Flanders, LeBreton, Robinson, Bian, and Caravaca-Morera (2017), bisexual participants categorised their identity by attraction; mostly arguing that bisexuality involves at least two of the following: emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to more than one gender. Interestingly, however, pansexual participants did not report attraction as a necessary aspect of bisexual identity. Some participants in Flanders et al.'s (2017) study also spoke about their bisexuality as fluid, something that is not static, and is constantly changing. As Flanders et al. (2017) concluded, participants' use of fluidity signified an understanding of sexuality as a spectrum with various possibilities, as opposed to discrete categories. This understanding of sexuality as lacking discrete categories, while useful for those who choose not to apply socially constructed labels to describe and categorise themselves, may also indicate if, for bisexual people, social mobility is a plausible option for positively distinguishing their bisexual identity.

Based on the above findings by Flanders et al. (2017), it is possible that bisexual people who argue that their bisexuality is fluid and non-categorical are more likely to believe that groups are permeable than those who do not think this way about bisexuality. For instance, those who conceptualise their bisexuality as performance, or context driven, rather than an important part of their self that stems from their membership to the bisexual group, are likely to think that people can move into higher status groups, either physically, or symbolically. Additionally, for

bisexual people, whose sexuality is usually assumed on the basis of the gender of their current partner (Ross et al., 2010; Weiss, 2003), if they believe sexuality is non-categorical and fluid, these assumptions may stand uncorrected and mobility is, at least symbolically, achieved.

Members of marginalised groups, who believe that groups are permeable, can use social mobility strategies and enter the dominant outgroup by engaging in tactics such as *passing*, which is when individuals attempt to separate their lives into two, in this case bisexual and not bisexual, and hope that the two do not coincide (Cox & Gallois, 1996). Many studies in the academic literature have revealed the ways in which bisexual people may conceal their bisexual identity by passing (e.g., Fuller, Chang, & Rubin, 2009; Lingel, 2009; Maliepaard, 2017). In one study, passing emphasized the deliberate conformity to heteronormative understandings of gender and sexuality to manage identity beyond explicit disclosure (or nondisclosure) of one's sexual orientation (Fuller et al., 2009). However, whether they believe that sexuality is fluid with no discrete categories and consequently believe that groups are permeable or not, bisexual people are also often accused of passing as members of the heterosexual higher status group to gain the privileges associated with such status; or accused of dishonesty when passing as members of the lesbian and gay communities (McLean, 2007). Fuller et al.'s (2009) participants also described unintentional passing as a result of others' assumptions of gender expression. It is therefore important to recognise that bisexual people may not be *trying* to pass as members of relevant, higher status outgroups; but instead, due to societal expectations of sexuality and gender, are simply and perhaps unintentionally, fulfilling the categories of sexual identity bestowed upon them.

While mobility is usually perceived as a strategy for achieving higher status as an individual, for bisexual people, it may instead be less of a strategy and more of an insistent

requirement demanded by society. For example, when there is a lack of respect for one's bisexual identification, bisexual people perceive an added pressure to conform to the sexual orientation binary (Dyar, Feinstein, Schick, & Davilla, 2017; Hequembourg & Brallier, 2009; Ross et al., 2010). While perceptions of group permeability usually invite social mobility to occur as a strategy for improving one's status and achieving positive identification, for bisexual people there may be a conflict between the concepts of sexual fluidity, group permeability and identity legitimacy which complicates the strive for positive distinctiveness.

Permeability, for bisexual people, is imposed as a feature of social reality that delegitimises bisexual identity. Usually permeability, involving disadvantaged members passing as members of a dominant social group, is a strategy that one may choose to employ to achieve positive personal identity (Krane & Barber, 2003). However, in this case, permeability is actually demanded of bisexual people by some monosexual status groups. It is therefore, advantageous for the people of the higher status group if social mobility occurs, as the status quo is not disrupted (Krane & Barber, 2003; Wright, 2001). To some degree then, social mobility places bisexuality in a predicament as it sustains the belief that the higher status group is deserving of such status, and may reinforce negative identity, instead of the positive identity it intended to support. If permeability is real, then for bisexual people, it is not just a choice to achieve a higher status position but is demanded as a required response to social reality and maintains the status quo of inequalities between groups. In a practical sense, this means that while successful mobility can allow one to gain access to the status and opportunities of a higher status outgroup, such as heterosexual or homosexual groups, and allows them to avoid unequal treatment based on their sexual identity, mobility also reinforces the monosexist demand to "pick a side" in regard to one's attractions and may lead bisexual people to feel like imposters.

### **Social Change: Maximising Positive Identity and Minimising Negative Identity**

In considering the conflict between sexual fluidity, permeability, and identity legitimacy associated with individual-level strategies of social mobility mentioned above, bisexual people who do not believe that groups are permeable, and believe that they belong to the appropriate social category of sexuality, may instead choose to engage in group-level, social change strategies aimed at altering the current status structure and improving the social status of their group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In doing so, this would mean that bisexual people can feel positive about being bisexual and would not have to undergo social mobility strategies such as passing to protect their identity. The kind of social change strategies that individuals engage in depends on their perceptions of cognitive alternatives to the status quo in terms of status relations (Cox & Gallois, 1996; Reicher, 2004). Such strategies include *social creativity*, where group members seek to establish the value of their group by either choosing a new group to compare themselves to, revaluing the stigmatised dimensions of their group, or emphasising the positive qualities of their group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979); and *social competition*, which is where group members aim to change the un-equal status relations between groups altogether (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

If the differences in status positions between those who are and those who are not bisexual are based on dichotomous categorizations of sexuality that overlook and ignore bisexuality as a legitimate sexual orientation and identity, then for bisexual people, one method of disrupting this status hierarchy may through the legitimisation of their own identity, which may occur by simply identifying and announcing one's membership to the category of bisexuality. Krane and Barber (2003) assert in their use of the social identity perspective to understand lesbian experiences in sport, that disclosure and openness regarding one's sexual

identity is actually a form of social competition because it means that the topic of one's sexual identity is being discussed in a context where such identity is considered taboo. However, for bisexual people, disclosure may be complicated by one's identification as a bisexual person. Given the relatively low status position of bisexual people in comparison to lesbian, gay and heterosexual people, bisexual people may face added stress when choosing to disclose their bisexual identities. Therefore, it would seem plausible that, to disclose, one would already need to feel positive about themselves in the context of identifying as bisexual. However, positivity about being bisexual may be complicated by internalised monosexism.

As Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue, people usually belong to multiple social groups that form an important part of their identity. However, there are some group memberships that are problematic, uncomfortable, and even painful to be part of and we may try to downplay or distance ourselves from these groups and the associated identity (Becker & Tausch, 2014). Such process is called *disidentification* and is a psychological phenomenon that occurs when people are unhappy with their current group membership and psychologically distance themselves from it (Becker & Tausch, 2014). Becker and Tausch (2014) distinguish between identification and disidentification and note that the two are different concepts and can occur simultaneously. They argue that an absence of identification does not equate to greater disidentification and that the two have different predictors and outcomes. Based on this, as well as predictions made by social identity theory, for bisexual people this may mean that the suppression of bisexuality in society in terms of monosexist ideology, even if internalised, may have different outcomes on achieving a positive bisexual identity.

As mentioned above, internalised monosexism has been shown to have a negative impact on positive identification as a bisexual person. However, given that Becker and Tausch's (2014)



research demonstrated that identification and disidentification are separate, and also Watson, Clarke, and Tellegen's (1988) demonstration that positive and negative affect are two independent dimensions of emotionality, it is not implausible to suggest that internalised monosexism also bolsters negative identification as a bisexual person. Indeed, previous research in the bisexuality domain shows that internalised monosexism is related to sexual identity uncertainty (Dyar, Feinstein, et al., 2017) and the internalisation of negativity toward bisexuality (Paul, Smith, Mohr, & Ross, 2014; Vencill, Carlson, Lantaffi, & Miner, 2018). However, little is known about how internalised monosexism relates to both positive and negative identification when examined in a way that can demonstrate potential simultaneous effects. If greater internalised monosexism is associated with higher levels of negative identity and lower levels of positive identity, then it is worth investigating if less internalised monosexism is associated with higher levels of positive identity and less negative identity. To achieve low level internalised monosexism may require an engagement in social change strategies, such as that of social competition.

Given the differences in predictors and outcomes for negative and positive identification, it is not implausible to suggest that bisexual people may attempt to change the status quo by minimising negative identification and maximising positive identification as a bisexual person through social competition. As Cox and Gallois (1996) note, in order for social competition to occur, an individual must be able to foresee the opportunity for new cognitive alternatives to the status quo. If the status hierarchy of sexual identity places bisexual identity in a low status position simply on the basis of dichotomous categories of sexuality, then one-way bisexual people may maximise their positive group membership through social competition is by challenging these dominant understandings of sexuality. Given that internalised monosexism is

an internal threat to positive bisexual identity, grounded in externalised prejudice in the form of monosexism, it may be the case that by actively challenging monosexist understandings of sexuality that delegitimise bisexuality, bisexual people will obtain lower levels of internalised monosexism and will feel more positive about being bisexual. Indeed, as Branscombe et al. (1999) argued, group identification should increase in response to perceived prejudice toward one's group, and as a consequence, should counterbalance the negative effects of perceiving pervasive prejudice on self-esteem. Such predictions have been supported in previous research in different domains (Branscombe et al., 1999; Garstka, Schmitt, & Branscombe, & Hummert, 2004; Schmitt et al., 2003; Schmitt et al., 2002). Indeed, while research on identity threat demonstrates that individuals will protect themselves by avoiding a certain identity when it is threatened (White & Argo, 2009; White, Argo, & Sengupta, 2012), perhaps through social mobility strategies mentioned above, research in the area also indicates that sometimes individuals will employ behaviours that allow them to symbolically reinforce their connection with their threatened identity (White et al., 2012). If engaging in social change strategies involving challenging monosexism can potentially predict lower levels of internalised monosexism and subsequent positive dimensions of bisexual identity, it may be the case that this may then lead to positive identity outcomes such as disclosure.

### **Using Social Identity Theory to Predict Bisexual Identity Disclosure**

Social identity theory provides a framework by which we can attempt to explain and predict bisexual experiences while accounting for the current context. While the disclosure and outness of bisexual identity is one of the most examined aspects in the bisexuality literature to date, it has barely been examined in the context of the dating environment. Thus, the contextual aspect of social identity theory is particularly attractive to the study of bisexual identity

disclosure to potential romantic and sexual partners as it considers the varied contexts in which bisexual people may choose to disclose their identities. Such contexts may be driven by monosexist ideology and consequently create problems for bisexual people who are seeking to form new relationships. If the “goal” of dating is to find someone special, by not disclosing, one would be concealing a genuine aspect of themselves and potentially depriving themselves and their potential partners. Consequently, one would also be forming relationships on a deceptive basis. Furthermore, by not disclosing, bisexual identity remains a hidden aspect of the both the self, and the group membership. However, by disclosing, one is also risking increased attraction by some members of certain groups based on problematic, stereotypical views of exotic allure and promiscuity (Yost & Thomas, 2012).

In the broader dating context, for members of other sexual orientation categories, disclosure is not always necessary. As mentioned earlier, people usually assume someone’s sexual orientation and identity based on the gender of their current partner or person they are pursuing romantically and sexually. For bisexual people, however, who belong to a concealable social category with no clear group boundary, disclosure is something that some may argue *needs* to be done. This disclosure imperative, as McLean (2007) suggests, may not contain the “feel good” aspect of coming out as non-heterosexual, and may therefore not be appropriate for bisexual women and men. Accordingly, as mentioned above, it may be the case that bisexual people may need to already feel positive about their identity in order to consider disclosure.

Unlike visible minorities, sexual minority group members struggle with the decision of whether or not to display or disclose their sexual identities (Fuller et al., 2009). Indeed, previous research has found that bisexual people are less likely to disclose their sexual identity than their gay and lesbian counterparts and often practice “selective disclosure” when coming out as

bisexual (McLean, 2007; Mclean, 2008). Consequently, for bisexual people, finding an opportunity to assert a bisexual identity, or correct inappropriate assumptions about sexual identity can be a challenge in both heterosexual and queer contexts, thus complicating the disclosure and identity management process (Tabatabai, 2015). As such, it is important to determine the contexts in which bisexual people may be likely to disclose their bisexual status, especially to the people they are romantically or sexually interested in.

### **Disclosure in the (Digital) Dating Environment**

As previous research has shown, people's monosexist attitudes toward bisexuality create difficulties for bisexual people as they begin to form romantic and sexual relationships. For instance, lesbian and gay men who happened to question the legitimacy of bisexuality were less likely than others to date a bisexual person (Mohr and Rochlen, 1999) and heterosexual men have reported negative attitudes about the stability of bisexuality as a legitimate identity and were less tolerant with bisexuality, which predicted an increased insecurity about forming a relationship with a bisexual partner (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014). Further, research by DeCapua (2017) also found that many bisexual women believed that their sexuality could be a breaking point in their relationship once they disclosed their bisexual status. As such, for bisexual women seeking to form romantic or sexual relationships with men and women who are able to accept their sexual identities, it is important to identify the contexts in which this can be achieved. In 2018, the disclosure of bisexual identity may be increasingly likely to take place in online environments, such as those provided by Tinder; a social dating application where individuals can seek potential romantic and sexual partners in the world around them (Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2015; Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2012).

The online world is an environment that makes it easy for people to disclose identity-related information due to anonymity (Suler, 2004). As the social identity model of deindividuation (SIDE: Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995) argued, anonymity does not in so much make people act differently, however it does allow free expression in the face of the policing of hostile environments. As such, involvement with a particular group, as well as anonymity, may affect the operation of the self-concept and the presentation of its expression (Reicher et al., 1995). Therefore, the online environment may be easier for bisexual people to disclose their bisexual status, especially since social networking sites have had a major effect on relationship formation, particularly for members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer (LGBTIQ) communities; with over sixty percent of same-sex couples first meeting online (Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2012).

Online communities enable their LGBTIQ users to interact in a context in which perceived heteronormativity may be less salient (McKenna & Bargh, 1998). However, while these communities are consequently perceived as a relatively safe environment for LGBTIQ individuals to share feelings about their sexual orientations and disclose their sexual identities (Baams, Jonas, Utz, Bos, & Van Der Vuurst, 2011), the disclosure of sexual identity is complicated by the affordances of SNSs (Duguay, 2014). This is made evident in the case of Tinder. Tinder's search function does not allow individuals to refine their pool of potential partners to a particular sexual identity – that is, (until recently) searches could only be refined to traditional gender identities: men, women, or men and women. While Tinder recognizes bisexuality by affording women and men the ability to search for both women and men seeking to form relationships with women, bisexual women are still faced with the decision regarding the

disclosure of their bisexual identity – something she is potentially less likely to do in the face of monosexism.

Some studies have examined Facebook as a context in which LGBTIQ individuals disclose their sexual identity on their profiles (e.g., Chester et al., 2016; Duguay, 2014). These findings showed that participants' sexual identity disclosure decisions were shaped by the way they believed their sexuality would be interpreted in their specific social conditions and also the way that the SNSs' architecture is used for identity expression. For example, sexual identity disclosure decisions may be based on expected reactions by the audience receiving the information, especially in contexts where the discloser's sexuality is less accepted or understood, as well as whether the design of the social media platform allows for, and is appropriate for, that specific kind of disclosure. However, given that Facebook is perceived to be about maintaining contact with people who are already situated within one's social context (Duguay, 2014), these results may not generalise to a platform designed for extending social connections through meeting new potential romantic and/or sexual partners (David & Cambre, 2016), such as Tinder.

Studies on Grindr, an app aimed at men who wish to meet men (e.g., Birnholtz, Fitzpatrick, Handel, & Brubaker, 2014), have focused on the use of digital dating technologies for gay and bisexual men to disclose their sexual identities. Results showed that participants were hesitant to disclose information about themselves that might make them seem unattractive to potential partners, and that disclosing information about their casual sexual behaviour might put them at risk of being identified by someone they know in a nearby area. However, given that Grindr is made explicitly for men seeking to meet other men, the findings, may not be applicable to the sexual identity disclosures of women seeking romantic and/or sexual relationships with men and women in a context where acceptance of bisexuality may vary.

In fact, research into the way in which bisexual women disclose their bisexual status using any kind of digital technologies is scarce. One exception though, is a recent qualitative study by Pond (2017), who using in-depth interview methods, established that for bisexual women using Tinder, the easiest way to disclose their bisexual identity was through the use of emojis (mostly in the form of two women, and a man and a woman holding hands), which indicated multiple gendered attractions. Participants believed that this code usually went unnoticed by the heterosexual community and was a method of using queer language in a heteronormative environment. Such results indicate that these implicit disclosure techniques may be due to experiences with, and the internalisation of monosexism. However, whether such disclosure techniques were due to such factors, or something different, needs further investigation.

### **Conclusion - Where to Next?**

Given that the key premise of social identity theory is that people strive for a positive self-concept, and that one means of attaining and maintaining this self-concept is through the positive evaluation of their group membership, it is important to recognise the ways in which bisexual people can positively evaluate their membership to the bisexual group. While social mobility strategies allow individuals to positively reinforce their personal identity, they are also demanded by society as a way of maintaining the current status quo. Consequently, the status quo remains unchanged and bisexuality is still delegitimised as a sexual identity. This suggests that, in order to change the current status quo and positively evaluate one's self in relation to their bisexual group membership, bisexual people may undergo group-level social change strategies such as social competition, in which they are able to maximise positive identification as a bisexual person and minimise negative identification as a bisexual person. If bisexual people

can attempt to alter current status relations by rejecting or challenging monosexist essentialist beliefs about sexuality, social identity theory would predict that positive evaluation of one's membership to a certain group would prevail. Accordingly, given social identity theory's ability to predict and explain behaviour based on social identity and group membership, identity-related outcomes such as disclosure may be predicted on the basis of such positive identification. However, such outcomes may also be complicated in the context of relationship formation, especially in the online dating environment, which may be particularly likely to sustain monosexism.

Based on the above argument, the following chapter hypothesises and tests a model for predicting bisexual disclosure by women using Tinder. It is proposed that after challenging monosexist ideology, bisexual women will display lower levels of internalised monosexism and strengthen positive identification with their bisexual group membership. Consequently, it is hypothesised that such identification will predict a greater likeliness to disclose to potential partners on Tinder, and more generally.



**CHAPTER THREE**  
**TESTING A MODEL OF BISEXUAL IDENTITY DISCLOSURE**  
**BY WOMEN USING TINDER**

Abstract

Persons who are attracted to men and women face a choice as to whether to identify themselves to potential partners as bisexual. That choice may be constrained by monosexism — antipathy towards bisexuals extending to a disbelief in the existence of bisexuality — and the internalisation of such monosexism, as well as an unwillingness to endorse a positive bisexual identity. In an online experiment, the effects of challenging monosexist ideology on disclosure decisions in women ( $n = 107$ ) were investigated. Although the experimental manipulation of monosexism was unsuccessful, perhaps because internalised monosexism was very low in the sample, the results showed that, (a) internalised monosexism predicted decisions to disclose bisexuality to potential romantic and sexual partners; (b) those effects were more plausibly mediated by negative aspects of bisexual identity impact than they were by positive aspects; and (c) similar effects were found for self-reported online and offline disclosure. Although internalised monosexism was present at low levels in the sample it was a significant predictor and the results point to the importance of distinguishing negative from positive aspects of bisexual identity.

### Testing a model of Bisexual Identity Disclosure by Women Using Tinder.

Willingness to disclose an identity has been often conceptualised as a milestone toward the formation of a positive sexual identity (e.g., Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1979), whereby people come to accept and express their sexual identity. Many people may feel they never need to disclose their sexual identity, as it is usually assumed based on the gender of their current or previous partner (Dyar, Feinstein, & London, 2014; Ross, Dobinson, & Eady, 2010). However, bisexual and other non-monosexual identified individuals often have the option to either conceal their sexual identity from their potential romantic and sexual partners, and instead label themselves as “straight” or “gay” depending on gender of this person (Balsam & Mohr, 2007; Mohr, Jackson, & Sheets, 2017). Bisexual people may also be faced with the decision to disclose their sexual identity in contexts where the very existence of that sexual identity is called into question; that is, they may do so in the face of monosexism: a type of prejudice based on the idea that one is, and can only ever be, heterosexual or homosexual (Klesse, 2011; Roberts, Horne, & Hoyt, 2015; Ross, Dobinson, & Eady, 2010).

Some researchers have conceptualised monosexism as a form of prejudice, analogous to heterosexism (e.g., Ross, Dobinson, & Eady, 2010), which is grounded in persistent but unfounded beliefs (Neison, 1990, p. 25). According to Herek (1990), heterosexism operates by invisibilising homosexuality, and when it fails to do so, by “trivialising, repressing, or stigmatising it” (p. 316). However, the key aspect of monosexism that sets it apart from heterosexism is the disbelief in the legitimacy of the sexual identity in discussion. Whereas, in the case of monosexism, the very existence of bisexuality is denied (Horowitz, Newcomb & Newcomb, 1999); and this has been argued to be a form of oppression based on essentialist perceptions of sexual orientation and identity as exclusively occurring between members of same

or different genders (Klesse, 2011; Roberts et al., 2015; Ross et al., 2010). Intriguingly, even though the existence of bisexuality is doubted by some, when it is accepted as existing, bisexuality is also tainted with negative stereotypes as a sexual identity (McLean, 2008). McLean (2008) argues that bisexuals are often perceived as both sexually adventurous and depraved, promiscuous, kinky, non-monogamous, and as needing to be in relationships with men and women simultaneously in order to fulfil their sexuality. These understandings of bisexuality based on sexual behaviour alone may not only create problems for bisexual people's self-esteem, but also assist in delegitimising bisexuality as a sexual identity.

Roberts et al. (2015) summarise monosexism as the idea that bisexuality is illegitimate, that it occurs in an experimental phase, that bisexual people are confused, or that bisexual people are being dishonest about their "real" orientations, attractions, and identities (Roberts et al., 2015). Thus, monosexism is of especial importance in relation to bisexual women, as they face a unique challenge in that a validly self-ascribed label may position them as promiscuous, insincere, and confused; but also, as potentially alluring. For instance, Yost and Thomas (2012) found that, partially due to the male eroticisation of female same-sex sexuality, heterosexual men were more accepting of female bisexuality than others. Bisexual women experience different forms of social marginalisation that do not affect heterosexual men and women, gay men, lesbian women, and bisexual men (DeCapua, 2017; Hayfield, Clarke, & Halliwell, 2014) when they identify their sexuality. This problem is compounded by the possibility that monosexism is an ideology that may be internalised, and in doing so may impact on bisexual identity.

Tajfel (1974) defines social identity as referring to that part of an individual's self-concept that stems from their membership of a particular meaningful social group. However, if the legitimacy and stability of bisexuality as a "real" social group is denied by those who endorse

monosexist beliefs, then those who identify as bisexual may internalise monosexism; which is when bisexual people unconsciously accept messages regarding the legitimacy of bisexuality and are consequently faced with issues regarding their self-esteem and identity (Brewster & Moradi, 2010; Dyar et al., 2014; Ross et al., 2010). Monosexism, especially when internalised, poses some significant challenges for bisexual women and that extends to the issue of whether those people can and should label themselves as bisexuals, including to sexual and romantic partners. The extent to which bisexual women can and do disclose their sexuality is likely to depend on the degree to which they have a positive and secure bisexual identity, as discussed below

### **Bisexual Identity: Positive and Negative Aspects**

Polarized, monosexist understandings of sexuality, that both invisibilise and illegitimise bisexuality, can complicate an individual's acceptance of their simultaneous same-and-other-gender sexual attractions. Indeed, previous research in the domain has highlighted the unique and precarious role that monosexism has on bisexual people's mental health and identity. For instance, monosexism and related pressures to fit into established categories of sexual identity were shown to be associated with higher levels of internalised identity illegitimacy (Dyar, Feinstein, & Shick, & Davilla, 2017), and also led some bisexual people to report feeling as if they were required to continually justify and explain their bisexuality (Ross et al., 2010). Given the unique experiences specific to bisexual people, some researchers argue that it is likely that they will encounter unique challenges that affect their ability to sustain a positive bisexual identity. Positive bisexual identity here refers to feeling good about oneself in the context of identifying as bisexual (Riggle et al., 2014). As such, it is not surprising that in a qualitative study by Rostosky et al. (2010), the positive aspects of being bisexual were associated with self-acceptance. However, if one is

unable to accept their bisexuality as a legitimate sexual identity, this may lead to a decline in positive identification as a bisexual person.

While previous empirical research provides some evidence of the debilitating effects of internalising negative beliefs on related positive identification dimensions, such as that of identity affirmation and identity centrality (e.g., Mohr & Kendra, 2011; Paul, Mohr, Smith, & Ross, 2014; Vencill, Carson, Iantaffi, & Miner, 2018), researchers have not treated the effect of internalising beliefs about the illegitimacy of one's own identity on such processes in much detail. While Paul, Mohr, Smith, and Ross (2014) did find a negative association between identity affirmation and beliefs about the illegitimacy of bisexuality held by bisexual people, most of the constructs used in their measure were negative identity constructs, thus there is limited evidence about relationships involving positive bisexual identity. Accordingly, there is a need to explore internalised monosexism effects with measures of both positive and negative bisexual identification.

If internalised prejudices such as monosexism have the ability to suppress positive identity dimensions, it is not implausible to suggest that they also bolster negative identity dimensions. Indeed, as previous research has distinguished between positive and negative affect (Reich, Zautra, & David, 2003; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), Becker and Tausch (2014) also provide evidence for a distinction between identification and *disidentification*: a psychological phenomenon that occurs when individuals belong to groups they may not want to belong to (p. 295). It is therefore not surprising to see, that in their revision and extension of an existing lesbian and gay identity scale to include bisexual identity (LGIS: Mohr & Fassinger, 2000), Mohr and Kendra (2011) found identity affirmation and internalised negativity about one's sexuality to be highly related, but distinct concepts. These findings suggest that positive

feelings about one's bisexuality are not always in polar opposition to negative feelings, and that they are related concepts that can occur simultaneously.

Previous empirical research on the effects of internalising monosexism on negative dimensions of bisexual identification is more prevalent than that on the effects on positive dimensions of identification; yet the area of research still needs further empirical attention. Based on previous research, it is clear that internalised beliefs about the illegitimacy of bisexuality have been shown to have direct positive effects on negative dimensions of bisexual identification, such as: sexual identity uncertainty (Dyar, Feinstein, & Shick, 2017) and internalised binegativity (Paul, Smith, Mohr, & Ross, 2014; Vencill, Carlson, Lantaffi, & Miner, 2018). However, most research has focused on the effects of internalising negative attitudes about bisexuality, rather than internalising beliefs about the illegitimacy of bisexuality. As such, little remains known about the effects of internalised monosexism on positive and negative bisexual identity dimensions, in combination, and what such effects can do to identity-related outcomes, such as that of disclosing bisexuality to a potential romantic and/or sexual partner.

### **Disclosure as a Consequence of Internalised Monosexism and Bisexual Identity**

Previous research has shown that the disclosure of bisexual identification is associated with positive, beneficial outcomes, such as increased psychological and physical wellbeing including increased self-esteem and decreased distress, diminished risky behaviour, increased psychological adjustment, social support and the facilitation of interpersonal relations (e.g., Corrigan & Matthews, 2003; Eliason & Schope, 2001; Riggle et al., 2017;); while non-disclosure has been associated with an overall, poorer mental health (e.g., Riggle et al., 2017; Schrimshaw et al., 2013). However, the associated benefits of the disclosure of sexual identity do not explain

why bisexual people have been shown to be less “out” than their lesbian and gay counterparts (Balsam & Mohr, 2007; Herek, Norton, Allen, & Sims, 2010; Morris et al., 2001).

Unwillingness to disclose may be an outcome of the impact of internalised monosexism on bisexual identity processes. While disclosure has been shown to be positively associated with positive dimensions such as identity centrality (Dyar et al., 2014) and identity affirmation (Paul et al., 2014), previous empirical research on disclosure and outness has too shown that internalised monosexism and negative bisexual identity dimensions may also suppress disclosure decisions. For instance, bisexual people’s beliefs about the illegitimacy of bisexuality have been shown to be negatively associated with outness (Paul et al., 2014), and disclosure has also been shown to be suppressed by negative dimensions of bisexual identification, such as identity uncertainty (Dyar et al., 2014). In the case of identity threat, such as that of internalised monosexism, individuals often use certain coping strategies to achieve a coherent identity; in which, they may choose to adopt other social identities (Koc & Vignoles, 2016). As Weiss (2003) notes, bisexual people are subject to discrimination from both the heterosexual and homosexual communities, and such discrimination leads some to hide their bisexual identity and position themselves as gay or straight based on the gender of their current romantic or sexual partner. It may be the case that internalised monosexism may not only affect the positive and negative dimensions of bisexual identity, but that this effect in turn, may play a large role in people’s decision to disclose their bisexual identity. Accordingly, if one is insecure or feeling negative about their “real” identity, the context in which they may disclose this identity may be limited.

Substantial theoretical and empirical progress has been made in determining the contexts in which bisexual people may be likely to disclose or conceal their identity to others. However, it

is surprising that little research has yet to examine such disclosure in the context of relationship formation. This is especially important considering the individuals whom bisexual people may seek to form romantic and sexual relationships with may come from social groups where monosexist attitudes are endorsed. For example, research has shown that lesbian women and gay men who happened to question the legitimacy of bisexuality as a legitimate sexual orientation were less willing than others to date a bisexual person (Mohr & Rochlen, 1999). Similarly, research by Armstrong and Reissing (2014) examined attitudes toward dating bisexual people and found that heterosexual men, despite previous findings on their eroticisation of female same-sex sexuality, also reported negative attitudes about the stability of bisexuality as a legitimate sexual identity and were less tolerant with bisexuality; which predicted an increased insecurity about forming a relationship with a bisexual partner. Research by DeCapua (2017) also found that many bisexual women believed that their sexuality could be a breaking point in their relationship once they disclosed their bisexual status. As such, for bisexual women seeking to form romantic or sexual relationships with men and women who are able to accept their sexual identities, it is important to identify the contexts in which this can be achieved. In 2018, the disclosure of bisexual identity may be increasingly likely to take place in online environments, such as those provided by Tinder; a social dating application where individuals can seek potential romantic and sexual partners in the world around them (Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2015; Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2012).

While online communities enable their Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer (LGBTIQ) users to interact in a context where perceived heteronormativity is less salient (McKenna & Bargh, 1998) and as a relatively safe space for them to share their feelings about their sexual orientations and disclose their sexual identities (Baams, Jonas, Utz, Bos, &



Van Der Vuurst, 2011), disclosure of sexual identity is also complicated by the affordances of social networking sites (Duguay, 2014). This is made evident in the case of Tinder. Tinder's search function does not allow individuals to refine their pool of potential partners to a particular sexual identity – that is, (until recently) searches could only be refined to traditional gender identities: men, women, or men and women. While Tinder affords women and men the ability to search for both women and men seeking to form relationships with women, users are still faced with the decision regarding the disclosure of their bisexual identity – something they are potentially less likely to do in the face of monosexism.

Studies on Facebook (Chester et al., 2016; Duguay, 2014) and Grindr (Birnholtz, Fitzpatrick, Handel, & Brubaker, 2014) have shown that sexual identity disclosure decisions are shaped by the way participants believed their sexuality would be interpreted in their specific social conditions (Chester et al., 2016; Duguay, 2014), fear of being considered unattractive to potential partners (Birnholtz et al., 2014), and also the way that the SNSs' architecture is used for identity expression (Duguay, 2014). Such results demonstrate that sexual identity disclosure decisions may be based on expected reactions by the audience receiving the information, especially in contexts where the discloser's sexuality is less accepted or understood, as well as whether the design of the social media platform allows for, and is appropriate for, that specific kind of disclosure. In relation to Tinder, Pond (2017) found that, for bisexual women, the easiest way to disclose their bisexual identity was through the use of emojis that participants believed indicated their multiple gendered attractions and went relatively unnoticed by the heterosexual users of the dating application. Such implicit disclosure techniques may be due to experiences with, and the internalisation of monosexism.

## **The Current Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the possible role of internalised monosexism in relation to bisexual identity, and whether this effect on bisexual identity in turn, predicts disclosure decisions by bisexual women to potential romantic partners. Although there are widespread claims about the prevalence and effects of internalised monosexism, there are no existing tests of those claims in regard to disclosure. To advance consideration of this matter, we propose to test a straightforward model of the effects of internalised monosexism on disclosure through positive and negative bisexual disclosure.

It is hypothesised, that internalised monosexism will be negatively related to disclosure of bisexual identity, and that this relationship will be separately mediated by positive and negative aspects of bisexual identity through two different pathways. That is, internalised monosexism will reduce bisexual disclosure by inhibiting positive aspects of bisexual identity and facilitating negative aspects of bisexual identity.

This model was tested in an online experiment, where internalised monosexism was challenged through an experimental manipulation.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited through participant driven recruitment methods (Tinder, Reddit, email, and word of mouth),  $n = 38$ , Qualtrics panels (an online survey recruitment service,  $n = 54$ , and from a first-year psychology participation pool in partial completion of course requirements,  $n = 35$ . Potential participants were people who (a) identify as a woman, (b) be emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to men and women, (c) living in Australia, (d) aged between 18-30, (e) be using, or have used, dating application *Tinder*. Participants were

provided with a link to the anonymous Qualtrics survey where, after consenting to participate, they underwent a self-report pre-test screening to ensure they fit the participation criteria.

An a priori power analysis was conducted using G\*Power 3.1. and indicated, with alpha = .05 (one tailed) and power = 0.80, that a sample size of 102 bisexual women (51 in each condition) would be required to detect a medium effect size of  $d = .5$  for a between-groups comparison. Following this, participants who met the criteria were invited to participate in an anonymous online study regarding bisexual identity disclosure. An initial sample of 127 women was collected but analyses were restricted to participants who fully completed the study. A total of 20 participants were excluded for reasons such as incompleteness of the manipulation task ( $n = 5$ ), misunderstanding the manipulation task ( $n = 7$ ), irrelevant response to the manipulation task ( $n = 5$ ), and incoherent responses to the manipulation task ( $n = 3$ ). The remaining cases were retained for analysis, surpassing the number of participants required to have acceptable power ( $n = 107$ ; 51 in the experimental condition, 56 in the control condition).

The design of the project required specific participation criteria discussed below related to age, location, properties of attraction, and gender identity – to which all participants conformed to. The final sample of participants had a mean age of 23.27,  $SD = 3.64$ . All participants identified as women as per participation criteria, but 3 participants reported non-binary genders; all were living in Australia during the time of the study; and all reported having romantic, emotional and/or sexual attraction to men and women (See Table 1 for grouped and ungrouped frequencies). While a large portion of the sample did identify as bisexual ( $n = 78$ ), it is important to note that participation in a study advertised to women who are attracted to men and women may indeed, for some, indicate bisexuality as a chosen identity label, for others it may indicate their categorization of behaviour or attraction instead. Some participants chose

different, multiple, or no labels to describe themselves. As such, the label is used as an umbrella term to categorise participants' reported romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attractions to more than one gender.

Table 1.  
*Frequencies*

	<i>n (%)</i>		
	Experimental	Control	Total
<b>Sexual Identity (multiple response)</b>			
Bisexual	36 (70.6)	42 (75.0)	78 (72.9)
Lesbian	3 (5.9)	6 (10.7)	9 (8.4)
Gay	4 (7.8)	6 (10.7)	10 (9.3)
Straight	9 (17.6)	6 (10.7)	15 (14.0)
Queer	10 (19.6)	11 (19.6)	21 (19.6)
Pansexual	13 (25.5)	10 (17.9)	23 (21.5)
Asexual	2 (3.9)	1 (1.8)	3 (2.8)
Transgender	1 (2.0)	1 (1.8)	2 (1.9)
Non-binary	2 (3.9)	4 (7.1)	6 (5.6)
Does not use labels	8 (15.7)	9 (16.1)	17 (15.9)
Other	2 (3.9)	1 (1.8)	3 (2.8)
<b>Reasons for using Tinder (multi-response)</b>			
For finding romantic partners	37 (72.55)	36 (64.29)	73 (68.22)
For finding sexual partners	29 (56.86)	29 (52.79)	58 (54.21)
For finding friends	16 (31.37)	24 (42.86)	40 (37.38)
Other	1 (1.96)	5 (8.93)	6 (5.61)
<b>Time spent using Tinder</b>			
Less than a month	2 (3.9)	11 (19.6)	13 (12.1)
A month	5 (9.8)	4 (7.1)	9 (8.4)
Between 1-3 months	17 (33.3)	16 (28.6)	33 (30.8)
Between 3-6 months	5 (9.8)	5 (8.9)	10 (9.3)
Between 6-12 months	4 (7.8)	10 (17.9)	14 (13.1)
Between 1-2 years	8 (15.7)	5 (8.9)	13 (12.1)
More than 2 years	10 (19.6)	5 (8.9)	15 (14.0)
<b>Religiousness</b>			
Are religious	2 (3.9)	10 (17.9)	12 (11.2)
Are somewhat religious	13 (25.5)	11 (19.6)	24 (22.4)
Are not religious	33 (64.7)	34 (60.7)	67 (62.6)
Prefer not to say	3 (5.9)	1(1.8)	4 (3.7)

*Note.* Values labelled multi-response do not equal 100.

## Design

The study had a two cell between-subjects design in which participants were randomly assigned to an experimental condition where they were asked to challenge a statement reflecting

monosexist ideology before completing the remainder of the study or to a control condition where they completed the same task in relation to a statement unrelated to monosexism. The study also included exploratory elements due to the understudied nature of bisexual identity disclosure in the context of relationship formation. Following the experimental treatment, participants completed measures of internalised monosexism, which also acted as a manipulation check; dimensions of bisexual identity, which were derived from the LGBIS (Mohr & Kendra, 2011); general anti-bisexual related experiences, derived from the ABES (Brewster & Moradi, 2010); and intentions to disclose bisexuality on Tinder and more generally. Participants also completed demographic information.

### **Procedure**

Participants in the experimental condition were then asked to challenge monosexist ideology by means of the “three things” procedure developed by Haslam, Oakes, Reynolds, and Turner (1999). Participants in this condition were provided with, and asked to challenge a monosexist statement:

Some people believe that people are, and can only ever be, heterosexual or homosexual.

Provide three reasons as to why you think this may not be true.

Participants in the control condition also completed the same task in relation to an irrelevant statement:

Some people believe that people spend too much time looking at their phones. Provide

three reasons as to why you think this may not be true.

All participants were then asked to indicate their responses to the four-item manipulation check of internalised monosexism before completing the measures of bisexual identity (Mohr & Kendra, 2011), perceived anti-bisexual experiences (Brewster & Moradi, 2010), and disclosure intentions. Participants were also asked to complete questions related to general demographic information (e.g., current age, age of bisexual realisation, preferred sexual identity labels, relationship status, level of education, working status) as well as Tinder (number of men and women matched with, reasons for using Tinder, and time spent using Tinder). Following the end of the study, those in the control group were also presented with the opportunity to challenge monosexism. This decision was made to ensure all participants had the same experience (even if in a different order). All participants were then provided with links to depression and Australian LGBTIQ community support services to deliver help to those who may have been emotionally impacted by any section of the study.

## **Measures**

### **Internalised monosexism.**

A novel measure of internalised monosexism based on the Roberts et al. (2015) definition of monosexism's attributes were generated for this study (p. 555; see Appendix A). The items measured beliefs about the illegitimacy of bisexuality (e.g., bisexuality is not a real sexual identity), beliefs that bisexuality occurs in a state of confusion (e.g., bisexual people are confused about their sexuality), beliefs that bisexuality is just an experimental phase (e.g., bisexual people are experimenting with their sexuality), and beliefs that bisexual people are being dishonest about their true sexuality (e.g., bisexual people are lying about their sexuality).

Participants were asked to indicate their response to the items on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) Likert-type scale. Overall scores for this measure were averaged across

items to provide an overall score with a possible range of 1 (indicating lower levels) through to 7 (indicating higher levels) ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

### **Bisexual identity.**

To measure dimensions of bisexual identification, 27 items adapted from Mohr and Kendra's (2011) Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale (LGBIS) were used and adapted to pertain to bisexual women only (see Appendix B). The LGBIS is a revised version of the *Lesbian and Gay Identity Scale* (LGIS: Mohr & Fassinger, 2000), adjusted for the inclusion of bisexual identities and less stigmatising language. The decision to use LGBIS was based on Mohr and Kendra's (2011) acknowledgement of the multidimensional nature of sexual identities, as opposed to the stage-sequential nature featured in much quantitative research. All participants were required to indicate their response to questions on a 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly) Likert-type scale. Items were modified to pertain to bisexual women only and related to eight subscales that assess various dimensions of LGB identity.

The eight subscales included in the LGBIS are as follows: acceptance concerns – e.g., "I think a lot about how my sexual orientation affects the way people see me" ( $\alpha = .687$ ); concealment motivation – e.g., "my sexual orientation is a very personal and private matter" ( $\alpha = .778$ ); identity uncertainty – e.g., "I can't decide whether I am bisexual or lesbian" ( $\alpha = .754$ ); internalised binegativity – e.g., "I believe that it is unfair that I am attracted to both men and women" ( $\alpha = .888$ ); difficult process – e.g., "admitting to myself that I am bisexual has been a very painful process" ( $\alpha = .806$ ); identity superiority – e.g., "I feel that bisexual people are superior to heterosexual or homosexual people" ( $\alpha = .852$ ); identity affirmation – e.g., "I am proud to be part of the bisexual community" ( $\alpha = .860$ ); and identity centrality – e.g., "to understand who I am as a person, you have to know that I am bisexual" ( $\alpha = .888$ ). As shown, all



subscales demonstrated sufficient internal consistency reliability ( $\alpha > .750$ ), except for the *acceptance concerns* subscale ( $\alpha = .687$ ). Given that this figure constitutes moderate reliability (Hinton, Brownlow, McMurray & Cozens, 2014, p. 356), the subscale was retained for analysis.

As noted above, it is important to measure positive and negative aspects of identity as independent, as the two are not in opposition. For this reason, the eight subscales were grouped into separate measures of positive and negative bisexual identification, discussed below.

### **Perceived anti-bisexual experiences.**

To measure perceived anti-bisexual experiences, the 17-item Anti-Bisexual Experiences Scale (ABES; Brewster & Moradi, 2010) was used (see Appendix C). Although the scale is often presented twice (once each for anti-bisexual experiences from heterosexual (H) and lesbian/gay (LG) communities), differentiating perceived antibisexual experiences from different outgroups is beyond the scope of this study. Accordingly, the scale was presented once only as a general measure of perceived anti-bisexual experiences. The ABES has three subscales that measure sexual orientation instability – e.g., people have acted as though my bisexuality is only a sexual curiosity, not a stable orientation ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $\alpha = .937$ ); sexual irresponsibility – e.g., people have treated me as though I am obsessed with sex because I am bisexual ( $M = 3.28$ ,  $\alpha = .851$ ); and interpersonal hostility – e.g., others have treated me negatively because I am bisexual ( $M = 2.96$ ,  $\alpha = .941$ ).

The sexual orientation instability subscale of the ABES contains 8 items that are also reflective of Roberts et al.'s (2015) four-part definition of monosexism mentioned above (e.g., People have addressed my bisexuality as if it means that I am simply confused about my sexual orientation). Therefore, this subscale of the ABES is used to measure past experiences with monosexism. The other two subscales (sexual irresponsibility, interpersonal hostility) were

retained in order to investigate potential relationships between such concepts, bisexual identity, and its subsequent disclosure. Scores on each subscale were averaged to form a complete measure of the respective experience, and all subscales were also combined to create an overall measure of anti-bisexual experiences.

### **Disclosure.**

While there are measures available concerning sexual minority outness (e.g., Mohr & Fassinger, 2000) and workplace disclosure (e.g., Driscoll, Kelley, & Fassinger, 1996), as well as general and self-disclosure (e.g., Wheelless, 1978), there are currently no available scales measuring sexual identity disclosure in the context of relationship formation. Accordingly, this study generated new items to measure participants' bisexual identity disclosure intentions. Participants were asked to indicate their responses to 4-items on 1 (extremely unlikely) to 7 (extremely likely) Likert-type scales (see Appendix D). Items include disclosure to potential partners (e.g., how likely would you be to tell potential female partners that you are also attracted to men?; How likely would you be to tell potential male partners that you are also attracted to women?) as well as Tinder related disclosure intentions including profile disclosure (e.g., how likely are you to make it clear in your Tinder profile that you are attracted to both men and women?) and disclosure to Tinder matches (e.g., how likely are you to discuss your bisexuality with your Tinder matches?). All items were also combined to create one measure of overall, general disclosure intentions ( $M = 5.06$ ,  $\alpha = .870$ ), as well as a measure for the Tinder specific disclosure intentions alone ( $M = 4.69$ ,  $\alpha = .838$ ). Unfortunately, due to an error in programming, past bisexual identity disclosure to romantic and sexual partners was not measured in this study.

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

A manipulation check was performed on the measure of internalised monosexism. A *t*-test revealed there was no statistically significant difference in the level of internalised monosexism reported by participants between conditions,  $t(105) = 0.758, p = .450, d = .15$  (see Table 2 for means). This indicated that the manipulation was unsuccessful, and Table 2 indicates there were no other differences between the experimental and control conditions (except for the number of past male partners, which was interpreted as a Type 1 error). Internalised monosexism was subsequently treated as a measured variable for the remainder of the study.

Correlations indicated that, within the current study, the subscales identity affirmation and identity centrality can be treated as positive dimensions of bisexual identity; while subscales acceptance concerns, difficult process, concealment motivation, identity uncertainty, and internalised binegativity are treated as measurements of the negative dimensions of bisexual identity (see Table 3 for correlations). The identity superiority subscale was excluded from these two measures due to its non-significant relationship with other variables.

Bivariate correlations are shown in Table 4.

Table 2.  
*Sample Descriptives, Independent Samples t Tests, and Cohen's d for Effect Sizes by Condition Experienced.*

Characteristic	Experimental (n = 51)	Control (n = 56)	Total (n = 107)	<i>T</i>	<i>d</i>
<b>Demographics (M [SD])</b>					
Age	23.59 (3.69)	22.98 (3.59)	23.27 (3.64)	.857	.17
Age of bisexual realisation	14.35 (3.98)	15.89 (4.69)	15.16 (4.41)	-1.822	.35
Number of Previous Male partners	11.33 (11.98)	7.04 (10.82)	9.08 (11.54)	1.940*	.38
Number of Previous Female partners	6.29 (11.68)	4.30 (2.29)	5.25 (9.33)	1.076	.24
Number of Male Tinder matches	89.63 (138.18)	61.70 (106.01)	75.01 (122.62)	1.179	.23
Number of Female Tinder matches	78.10 (124.82)	42.45 (73.36)	59.44 (102.28)	1.779	.35
<b>Bisexual Identity (M [SD])</b>					
Positive Bisexual Identity	4.54 (1.36)	4.67 (1.23)	4.61 (1.29)	-.543	.10
Negative Bisexual Identity	3.31 (1.17)	3.31 (1.16)	3.31 (1.16)	.011	0
Acceptance Concerns	3.85 (1.49)	3.92 (1.44)	3.89 (1.46)	-.258	.05
Concealment Motivation	3.97 (1.68)	3.96 (1.53)	3.97 (1.59)	.031	.01
Identity Uncertainty	2.54 (1.36)	2.57 (1.24)	2.56 (1.30)	-.091	.02
Internalised Binegativity	2.39 (1.49)	2.43 (1.68)	2.41 (1.59)	-.118	.03
Difficult Process	3.78 (1.67)	3.64 (1.83)	3.71 (1.74)	.398	.08
Identity Superiority	2.26 (1.47)	2.02 (1.28)	2.13 (1.37)	.917	.17
Identity Affirmation	5.10 (1.55)	5.02 (1.47)	5.06 (1.50)	.277	.05
Identity Centrality	3.98 (1.43)	4.33 (1.45)	4.16 (1.44)	-1.262	.24
<b>Internalised Monosexism (M [SD])</b>	1.95 (1.22)	1.76 (1.33)	1.85 (1.27)	.758	.15
<b>Anti-Bisexual Experiences (M [SD])</b>					
Total	3.44 (1.37)	3.55 (1.57)	3.50 (1.47)	.712	.07
Sexual Orientation Instability	4.06 (1.50)	4.44 (1.82)	4.26 (1.68)	.234	.23
Sexual Irresponsibility	3.35 (1.63)	3.22 (1.75)	3.28 (1.69)	.684	.08
Interpersonal Hostility	2.92 (1.59)	2.99 (1.84)	2.96 (1.72)	.848	.04
<b>Disclosure Intentions (M [SD])</b>					
Total	5.11 (1.56)	5.01 (1.79)	5.05 (1.68)	.303	.06
To potential female partners	5.69 (1.52)	5.63 (1.86)	5.65 (1.70)	.185	.04
To potential male partners	5.31 (1.85)	5.20 (2.03)	5.25 (1.94)	.311	.06
To disclose on Tinder profile	4.71 (2.12)	4.48 (2.22)	4.59 (2.17)	.532	.11
To discuss bisexuality with Tinder matches	4.73 (2.09)	4.73 (2.08)	4.73 (2.08)	-.016	0

*Note.*  $p < .05^*$ .

Table 3.  
Correlations of LGBIS Constructs to form Positive and Negative Bisexual Identity Measures

Identity Construct	Identity Superiority	Identity Affirmation	Identity Centrality	Acceptance Concerns	Difficult Process	Concealment Motivation	Identity Uncertainty	Internalised Binegativity
Identity Superiority	-							
Identity Affirmation	-.195*	-						
Identity Centrality	.223*	.524**	-					
Acceptance Concerns	.180	-.109	.069	-				
Difficult Process	.255**	-.134	.075	.545**	-			
Concealment Motivation	-.097	-.377**	-.317**	.476**	.474**	-		
Identity Uncertainty	.234*	-.476**	-.152	.408**	.369**	.431**	-	
Internalised Binegativity	-.097	-.622**	-.197*	.344**	.406**	.490**	.680**	-

Note.  $p < .05^*$ .  $p < .01^{**}$ .  $p < .001^{***}$ .

Table 4.  
Summary of Intercorrelations for Scores on the LGBIS-POS, LGBIS-NEG, IM, ABES-TOT, ABES-SOI, and D.

Measure	LGBIS-POS	LGBIS-NEG	IM	ABES	ABES-SOI	D	TD
1. LGBIS-POS	-						
2. LGBIS-NEG	-.337***	-					
3. IM	-.319***	.470***	-				
4. ABES	-.004	.259**	.119	-			
5. ABES-SOI	.039	.256**	.020	.844***	-		
6. D	.436***	-.484***	-.206*	-.138	-.071	-	
7. TD	.419***	-.449***	-.145	-.131	-.055	.938***	-

Note.  $p < .05^*$ ,  $p < .01^{**}$ ,  $p < .001^{***}$ . LGBIS-POS = positive bisexual identity; LGBIS-NEG = negative bisexual identity; IM = internalised monosexism; ABES = anti-bisexual experiences scale; ABES-SOI = anti-bisexual experiences: sexual orientation instability subscale; D = disclosure; TD = Tinder Disclosure.

### Mediation of Bisexual Identity

Hayes (2013) PROCESS version 3 SPSS macro was used to examine the hypothesised

relationship that internalised monosexism impacts disclosure intentions through the mediating role of positive and negative bisexual identity dimensions. To estimate the 95% confidence intervals, a 5,000-sample bootstrap procedure was used. The overall mediation model is depicted in Figure 1.

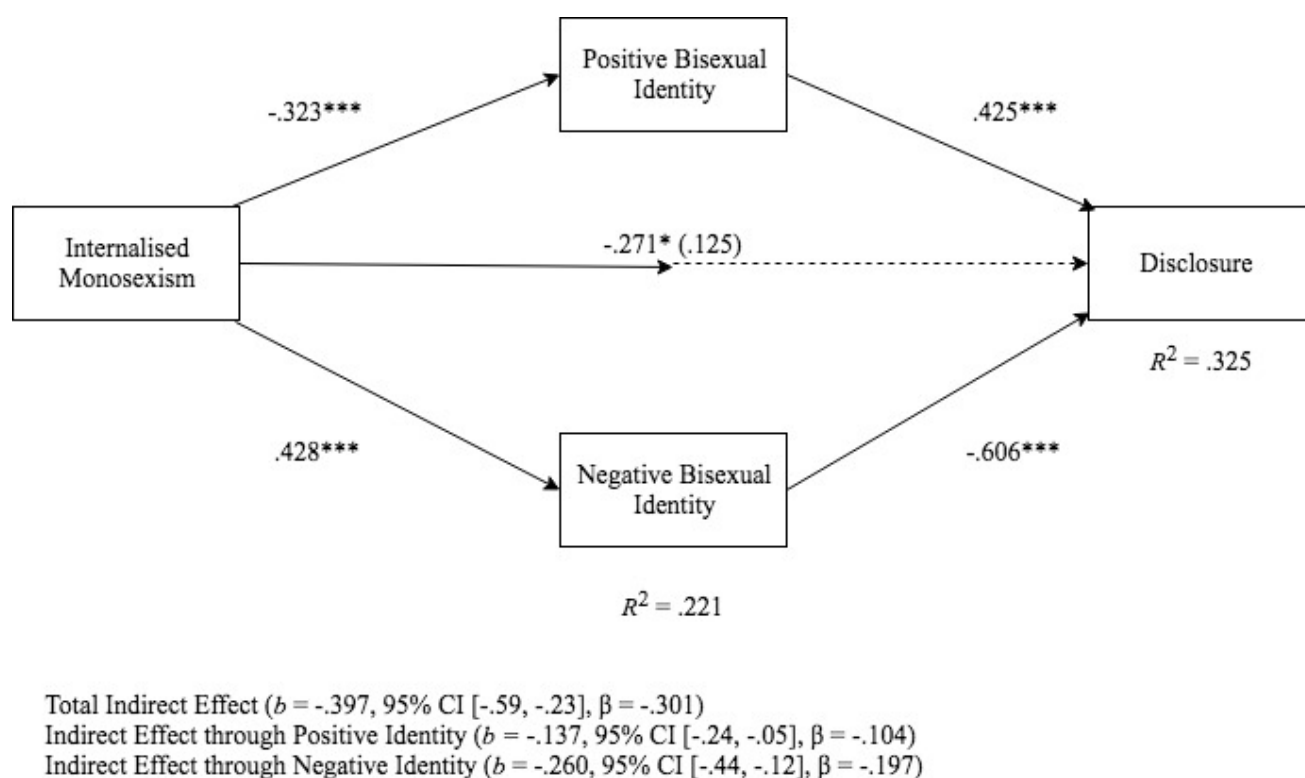


Figure 1. Path model of direct and indirect associations between internalised monosexism and disclosure intentions as mediated by positive and negative bisexual identity. Values are reflective of standardised regression coefficients. Direct path is shown in parentheses.

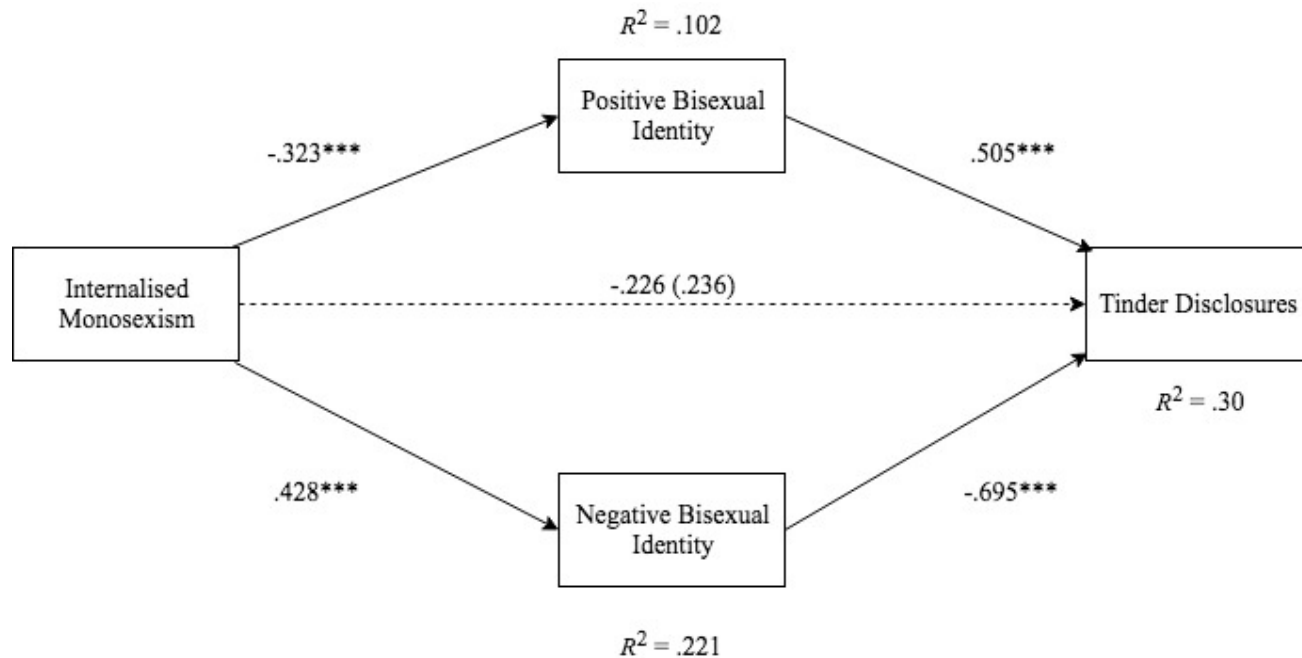
As depicted in Figure 1, internalised monosexism had a significant negative direct effect on positive bisexual identity, a significant positive direct effect on negative bisexual identity, and a significant negative total effect on disclosure. Results also showed a significant positive direct link between positive bisexual identity and disclosure, and a significant negative direct link between negative bisexual identity and disclosure. As hypothesised, the direct effect of internalised monosexism on disclosure intentions was no longer significant when taking into account bisexual identity dimensions. These results demonstrate that the combination of internalised monosexism, positive bisexual identity, and negative bisexual identity are significant

predictors and account for approximately 32.5% of the variation in bisexual disclosure intentions.

Also depicted in Figure 1, results demonstrated two significant indirect effects of internalised monosexism on disclosure intentions through positive bisexual identity ( $b = -.137$ , 95% CI [-.24, -.05],  $\beta = -.104$ ) and a significant, and slightly stronger, indirect effect through negative bisexual identity ( $b = -.260$ , 95% CI [-.44, -.12],  $\beta = -.197$ ). A total indirect effect was also significant; where internalised monosexism could predict disclosure intentions through both positive and negative bisexual identity ( $b = -.397$ , 95% CI [-.59, -.23],  $\beta = -.301$ ). The significance of the indirect links indicates the mediation of the relationship between internalised monosexism and disclosure through positive and negative dimensions of bisexual identity and indicate support for the hypothesis.

To see whether the same model applies to disclosure specifically on Tinder, a second mediation model was tested with the two Tinder related disclosure variables set as the criterion instead (see Figure 2). The mediation analysis indicated that the total direct effect of internalised monosexism on Tinder related disclosures was not significant. As the predictor and mediator variables were not altered for this analysis, predictor-mediator associations are the same as the above model. Results showed a significant positive direct link between positive bisexual identity and Tinder related disclosure intentions, and a significant negative direct link between negative bisexual identity and Tinder disclosures. The direct effect of internalised monosexism on Tinder disclosure intentions was not statistically significant. These results demonstrate that the combination of internalised monosexism, positive bisexual identity, and negative bisexual identity are significant predictors and account for approximately 30% of the variation in Tinder related disclosure intentions for bisexual women.





Total Indirect Effect ( $b = -.461$ , 95% CI [-.67, -.27],  $\beta = -.298$ )  
 Indirect Effect through Positive Identity ( $b = -.163$ , 95% CI [-.29, -.05],  $\beta = -.105$ )  
 Indirect Effect through Negative Identity ( $b = -.297$ , 95% CI [-.51, -.14],  $\beta = -.192$ )

Figure 2. Path model of direct and indirect associations between internalised monosexism and Tinder specific disclosure intentions through the mediating effects of positive and negative bisexual identity. Values are reflective of unstandardised regression coefficients. Direct path is shown in parentheses.

The results showed a significant indirect effect between internalised monosexism and predictions of Tinder specific disclosure through positive bisexual identity ( $b = -.163$ , 95% CI [-.29, -.05],  $\beta = -.105$ ), and a significant negative indirect effect between internalised monosexism and predictions of disclosure through negative identity ( $b = -.297$ , 95% CI [-.51, -.14],  $\beta = -.192$ ). A negative total indirect effect was also significant; ( $b = -.461$  95% CI [-.67, -.27],  $\beta = -.298$ ). The significance of the indirect links indicates the mediation of the relationship between internalised monosexism and Tinder disclosure through positive and negative dimensions of bisexual identity and indicates that the hypothesised model is also relevant to

Tinder specific disclosures.

### **Exploratory Analyses**

Finally, hierarchical regression analyses were performed to see whether demographic variables added to the prediction of disclosure intentions alongside the variables in the models. Disclosure intentions were set as the criterion, and step one included internalised monosexism and the positive and negative bisexual identity dimensions. In step two, adding demographic variables did not significantly add to predicting disclosure  $F(7, 91) = 2.091, p = .052$ , (see Table 5).

Table 5.  
*Hierarchical Regression Analysis with Demographics Added to Mediation Model*

Variables	Step 1	Step 2
Internalised Monosexism	.071	.028
Positive Bisexual Identity	.287**	.272**
Negative Bisexual Identity	-.450***	-.361***
Past Male Partners		.010
Past Female Partners		.097
Male Tinder Matches		-.149
Female Tinder Matches		-.069
Age		.174
Religiosity		-.091
Age of Bisexual Realisation		-.006
$R^2$	.339	.430
$R^2$ change		.092

Note.  $p < .05^*$ ,  $p < .01^{**}$ ,  $p < .001^{***}$ . Coefficients reflect standardized values. Degrees of freedom and  $R^2$  vary from Figure 1 due to missing data on the religiosity variable.

### Discussion

The results showed that for bisexual women, measured internalised monosexism may impact disclosure through the mediating roles of positive and negative bisexual identity. Although there were relationships involving measured internalised monosexism, the experimental manipulation had no effect. There are two key reasons as to why the manipulation may have been unsuccessful.

First, there may have been a floor effect. The participants in this sample expressed extremely low levels of internalised monosexism that were close to the scale minimum. Therefore, any difference between the experimental and control groups was difficult to detect. This floor effect might reflect a rejection of monosexism. According to Tajfel (1974), social

identity is an “intervening causal mechanism in situations of social change” (p. 76), that when salient, transfers self-related constructs to a collective level. As such, if the superiority of dominant outgroups is perceived as illegitimate, and such dominance is perceived to be subject to change, members of subordinated groups may move to reject such “consensual inferiority” by challenging social hierarchy and redefining their position in those areas that define such inferiority (Reicher, 2004, p. 931). To redefine their position, however, depends on their collective ability to break down the barriers that prevent access to superior conditions (Reicher, 2004); which in this case is monosexism. It may be the case that, bisexual women in this sample have attempted to redefine perceptions about the legitimacy of bisexuality, which has led to lower internalised monosexism scores in the pursuit for a more positive definition of bisexual identity.

Thus, the reason the experimental manipulation may not have worked is that internalised monosexism may not exist or exist at a low level. Given the lack of empirical work on this concept, this is not implausible to suggest. However, if internalised monosexism does not exist, or is not present, it would have no predictive power; yet the support for the mediation model consistent with the predictions made in the hypothesis demonstrate that this is not the case. Internalised monosexism was shown to have direct and indirect links to disclosure intentions and can therefore be assumed to exist and impact bisexual women. The mediation model in support for the hypothesis indicated that dimensions of bisexuality mediated the association between internalised monosexism and disclosure intentions. On a practical level, this suggests that bisexual women who assert the existence and legitimacy of bisexuality will have a more positive, and less negative, bisexual identification; and such identification should lead to a likeliness to disclose their bisexuality to a potential romantic partner, whether it be on Tinder, or more

generally.

Secondly, even if monosexism is present in the sample it may be the case that the experimental manipulation may not have been powerful enough to produce a significant difference between groups. As in the study by Haslam et al. (1999), the experimental manipulation may have instead affected the content of the participant's in-group stereotypes. In this study, the participants in the experimental condition were asked to challenge the idea that people can only ever be heterosexual or homosexual, yet the participants within both the experimental and control groups had above average scores of identity centrality and identity affirmation. It may therefore be the case, that by participating in a study advertised to bisexual women, participants own social identity as a bisexual woman was salient, and they were therefore more likely to describe bisexuality in a way that led to more positive ingroup-stereotypes and thus lower internalised monosexism scores.

The patterns of correlations among the variables of interest in this study were consistent expectations and past findings. Internalised monosexism was related to positive and negative bisexual identity dimensions, and also to disclosure intentions. The correlations ranged between small and medium in size; suggesting that previous claims made about the effect of internalised monosexism on bisexual identity and identity outcomes may be accurate, and supporting previous research findings (e.g., Dyar et al., 2017; Paul et al., 2014). The lack of relationship between perceived experiences with sexual orientation instability and internalised monosexism is also a notable finding, given that Brewster et al. (2013) also found that anti-bisexual prejudices were also not associated with internalised biphobia. This indicates that, although the internalisation of anti-bisexual prejudice exists and is present, it is not related to previous experiences with anti-bisexual prejudices. For this study internalised monosexism exists, is

present, and is not related to previous experiences with monosexist ideology.

In terms of the direct links between internalised monosexism and positive and negative bisexual identification, and identification's link to disclosure, the results demonstrated that internalised monosexism is a stronger predictor of negative bisexual identity, than it is a negative of positive identity. These findings suggest that bisexual women are negatively impacted more by stronger threats to their identity, than they are positively impacted by minimal threat to their identity. Similarly, the direct link between identity dimensions and disclosure intentions to potential romantic and sexual partners demonstrated that negative bisexual identity showed a stronger negative association with disclosure intentions to potential romantic partners than did positive bisexual identity's positive association. These findings mesh to previous work on the differences between disidentification and identification

Sometimes people may disidentify from groups that are stigmatized or discriminated against (Branscombe, Fernandez, Gomez, & Cronin, 2011). As explained by Becker and Tausch (2014), disidentification is not the polar opposite of identification; and as such, the absence of identification does not equal more disidentification. This idea was supported by their research, where disidentification was shown to predict negative behavioural intentions better than identification did, and identification was shown to predict positive behavioural intentions better than disidentification did. Interestingly, disidentification was also shown to predict behavioural intentions such as identity concealment. While it has been argued that disclosure and concealment are also not polar opposites (e.g., Schrimshaw et al., 2013) these results were somewhat replicated in the current study, where negative identification as a bisexual woman was a stronger negative predictor of disclosure intentions than was positive identification a positive predictor. That is, bisexual women in this sample were less likely to disclose when negative

bisexual identity was the predictor than they were more likely to disclose when positive bisexual identity was the predictor. Given that negative identity dimensions relate to negative evaluations of one's self in relation to their sexual identity, and such evaluations are linked to the internalisation of monosexist ideologies, results suggest that internalised monosexism acts as a strong discentive for disclosure.

In regard to Tinder related disclosure intentions, results were consistent with those found for more general relationship formation disclosures. Interestingly, however, both positive and negative identity dimensions were stronger predictors of disclosure in relationship formation using Tinder, yet the differences were not extraordinary. These findings are consistent with previous research on offline and online disclosures and indicate that online self-disclosures may be administered by similar rules to disclosures in interpersonal face-to-face communication (Orben & Dunbar, 2017). In an applied context, the results of the Tinder specific disclosure model suggest that for bisexual women who are using Tinder, disclosure to potential partners should undergo the same process as it would for disclosure in an offline context.

Tests of mediation provided empirical support for the effect of internalised monosexism on bisexual identity and subsequent disclosure decisions. Results demonstrated that internalised monosexism does predict disclosure intentions, and this effect is mediated by both positive and negative bisexual identity. All indirect effects of internalised monosexism on disclosure intentions were negative, yet the effect through negative identity was stronger than that through positive identity. However, hints of suppression were indicated within the Tinder specific mediation.

### **Limitations, Future Research Directions, and Conclusion**

The present study focused on the role of internalised monosexism on bisexual identity

dimensions and subsequent disclosure intentions on Tinder, and more generally. The study was one of the first to examine bisexual identity disclosure for those using digital dating technologies to pursue romantic or sexual relationships and the findings indicate that bisexual identity disclosure to romantic and sexual partners may be limited by societal expectations, such as that of monosexism and its subsequent internalisation, as well as mediated by positive and negative dimensions of bisexual identification. In a possible world where autonomous self-expression is not limited, it would be expected that positive identification would predict disclosure intentions, and negative identification would play no role in this outcome. However, in a world where disclosure intentions may be limited by societal expectations that lead to oppressive attitudes and the internalisation of such, results show that negative identification is more strongly associated with disclosure intentions than positive identification is, and such identification does predict an unlikelihood to disclose. These findings were shown to be consistent across online and offline contexts and indicate that the same processes may occur for bisexuals who seek to form relationships through Tinder and those who seek to form relationships through interpersonal, face-to-face communication.

Although the study empirically validated the existence and impact of internalised monosexism on bisexual identity and subsequent disclosure intentions, the method for reducing its presence was unsuccessful. Future research should seek to explore methods for reducing internalised monosexism to see if this has the same impact on positive and negative identity as depicted in the mediation models. If this is the case, intentions to disclose bisexual identity should also be increased; and given that previous research has shown outness to be directly associated with psychological wellbeing (Brewster et al., 2013), such findings may extend the mediation model identified in the current study.



Despite the practical implications of the current study, where predictors of disclosure were identified, important research limitations should be considered. First, the study sought participants whose ages were restricted to a range of 18-30. This decision was made based on the age population of Tinder users, where most users were aged between 16-34. Due to the restricted age range, results may not be generalisable to those who are aged outside this range. Further, despite the strengths of internet snowballing, where access to a larger group of potential participants is more available, the participant criteria may have been too specific and therefore limited the inclusion of potential participants from other, location, class background, ethnic, and religious social categories.

All participants in the study were emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to men and women, and although referred to as bisexual, did not always identify as such. This meant that the core focus on sexual identity was grounded in sexual orientation, not identity. Further, sexual identity labels were presented to participants as a multiple-response item to account for fluidity – however, this prevented ability to examine the results according to participants' chosen identity label. Future research should seek to examine whether the model applies to those who a) although describe bisexual attractions, may not take on bisexual identification; and b) those who chose multiple labels, to see if multiple social identities alter such findings.

While the study showed internalised monosexism to be a significant predictor of bisexual identity dimensions and subsequent disclosure intentions, no other predictors were considered. Demographic variables were entered into regression to see whether these altered the model in any way, but future research could examine whether variables other than internalised monosexism may be more suited for predicting the same outcomes. Such outcomes are important to continue investigating, as Australian health promotion foundation Beyond Blue (2016) notes,

bisexual people have been shown to have even higher rates of depression or depressive symptoms than their homosexual counterparts. Future research could further investigate the role of Tinder in such processes and could seek to examine particular strategies for making disclosure easier for bisexual women on Tinder.

Although bisexual identity disclosure has been previously explored, this study is one of the first to focus on disclosure in the context of romantic relationship formation, especially with a consideration of digital dating technologies, despite their potential to sustain monosexist environments. Although results require follow up research, the study adds to the small amount of research regarding internalised monosexism and makes important contributions to understandings of its' impact on bisexual identity and disclosure intentions.

The study's research findings have practical and theoretical implications. Practically, these findings identify contexts where positive identification plays a smaller role in disclosure predictions than negative identification does and indicates that working to reduce negative identity rather than working to increase positive identity may have increased positive outcomes. Theoretically, the findings suggest that positive ingroup identification is less affected by prejudiced ideology than negative ingroup identification is, and such effects may deter positive ingroup behavioural outcomes from occurring. By understanding such implications, researchers may be now better equipped to identify circumstances where positive identity does not result in positive outcomes as much as negative identity does.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CONCLUDING DISCUSSION**

The aim of the current research was to identify the way in which bisexual identity disclosure could become more predictable in light of the role that monosexism and internalised monosexism has on achieving a positive bisexual identity. Such relationships were considered in the context of relationship formation, particularly in regard to Tinder. To accomplish this aim, this research was conducted through the lens of the social identity approach, in which the consideration of one's involvement with the bisexual social group, as well as the current social climate, could be taken into account in order to predict positive identity and related outcomes, that being disclosure. Using such an approach, chapter two concluded that the role of internalised monosexism may predict positive identification as a bisexual person if bisexual people were to engage in social change strategies to disrupt the social status hierarchy and consequently maximise their positive bisexual identity and minimize their negative bisexual identity. Given the previously found associations between positive identity and disclosure, the review ended with an urge to investigate this relationship with disclosure, to see if the relationship between internalised monosexism and bisexual identity can predict such disclosure.

Chapter three followed on from this proposed model and consisted of a review of the empirical research in order to frame and build foundations for the above hypothesized relationship. The experiment involved a between-subjects design including an intervention, based on Chapter two's identification of social competition strategies, that asked participants in the experimental group to challenge monosexist ideology. While it was hypothesized that such intervention would lead to lower levels of internalised monosexism, this outcome was not

achieved and plausible reasons for this are discussed in Chapter three. However, the relationships hypothesized in the model were supported through mediation analyses and indicated that the negative relationship between internalised monosexism and disclosure is mediated by positive and negative bisexual identity. Interestingly, this relationship was stronger through negative bisexual identity and indicated that high levels of internalised monosexism have a stronger effect on negative identity and lack of disclosure than do low levels of internalised monosexism on positive identity and willingness to disclose. Results also showed that this relationship was the same across general relationship formation contexts and Tinder-specific relationship formation contexts; thus, indicating that the same processes may apply when considering disclosing one's bisexual status in the face of monosexist ideology.

While the current research sheds light on the way that we can apply the social identity approach to account for the factors that impact the prediction of bisexual identity disclosure in the context of relationship formation, this does not go without limitations. As the social identity approach focuses on identity in relation to one's self-assigned social categories, it seemed plausible that such an approach would be applicable in understanding, explaining, and predicting bisexual identity and identity related outcomes such as disclosure. While the approach could take into account the role of societal and internalised monosexism in such processes, including the application of social identity strategies aimed at achieving positive identification, not all strategies could be cohesively integrated into this specific domain. For example, one particular group-level strategy aimed at social change and mentioned, but not thoroughly discussed, in Chapter two is *social creativity*; where group members seek to establish the value of their group by either choosing a new group to compare themselves to, revaluing the stigmatised dimensions of their group, or emphasising the positive qualities of their group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

However, to apply such social creativity strategies in achieving positive bisexual identity was a difficult and perplexing task.

As Hinkle, Taylor, Fox-Cardomone, and Ely (1998) argue, social creativity that focuses on new comparison dimensions is a strong and robust phenomenon. Yet, if the main differences between those who are and are not bisexual are based on social categorizations of sexuality that delegitimise and overlook bisexual identity, social creativity strategies are difficult to achieve. That is, such strategies requiring new comparison dimensions seem implausible when the only substantial comparative difference between the groups is based on attractions and identification that are not considered legitimate. Future research could seek to establish social creativity strategies that may allow for the formation of a positive bisexual identity, as such strategies, alongside those tested in the study in the form of social competition, may help to further predict disclosure decisions by women forming relationships with men and women.

The second limitation for this project, also discussed in Chapter three is that while the core of the project was focused on bisexual identity, recruitment strategies allowed for participation based on attraction. Accordingly, the core focus on sexual identity in this project was actually grounded in sexual orientation, not identity. This meant that the variation in self-applied identity labels may influence the predictions made in the model of identity. While participants did supply their self-identified label, these were coded in a way that made it impractical to analyse any association between the chosen label and disclosure decisions. Future research should seek to explore whether such label makes any difference in disclosure predictions based on positive or negative identification with their sexual identity social group.

Given the important research finding that, due to monosexism, negative bisexual identification predicts less likeliness to disclose than positive identification predicts a likeliness

to disclose, future research should also seek to examine contexts where this may be applicable. This may involve the addition of a concealment variable, in order to treat disclosure as less of a continuum, but more so as distinct but related variables in the same way identity was treated. Such investigation would be useful for identifying the contexts in which positive identification and disclosure is more likely to occur. Similarly, future research should also look to extend the current model and identify other variables that may increase decisions of disclosure by bisexual women forming relationships. This may involve the implementation of social creativity strategies mentioned above, or a rectifying of social competition strategies due to the current study's unsuccessful effect of challenging monosexism in lowering internalised monosexism levels. Such research would also benefit from an extension of the effects of disclosure after these variables have been considered. While disclosure has received empirical attention, little of this has focused on relationship formation. Considering the effects of disclosure as a result of internalised monosexism on the relationship would be worthy of discussion. This would indicate whether disclosure does contain the "feel good", authentic life aspect in relationship formation that previous research has shown it to have in a general context.

Lastly, as internalised monosexism was quite low across the whole sample yet monosexism was present, it seems that there may be a productive place to stand for bisexual people and their allies to overcome monosexism and disrupt the sexual identity status hierarchy through collective action. The strategies for bisexual people to overcome monosexism may be analogous to the strategies Radke, Hornsey, and Barlow (2016) suggested for women to overcome the barriers associated with group-membership for engaging in feminist collective action aimed at curbing sexism. Based on Radke et al.'s (2016) work, such strategies may include encouraging a diverse bisexual identity and removing the associated stigma attached to bisexuality; assisting

bisexual people in identifying the presence of monosexism and its negative consequences; drawing on intergroup-emotions such as anger to encourage collective action; and reducing essentialist arguments in regard to sexuality and gender. Alternatively, drawing on work by McGarty, Bliuc, Thomas, and Bongiorno (2009), the formation of opinion-based groups for engaging in collective action, instead of groups based on sexual identity alone, may be useful for bisexual people who seek to change societal understandings of sexuality. Future research examining the effects of monosexism on bisexual identity and identity-related outcomes may seek to employ these strategies to see if their effects on disrupting the status hierarchy and subsequently increasing positive bisexual identification can be achieved.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### Internalised Monosexism Measure

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements by selecting an option from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

1. Bisexuality is not a real sexual identity
2. Bisexual people are confused about their sexuality
3. Bisexual people are experimenting with their sexuality
4. Bisexual people are lying about their true sexuality

**APPENDIX B**

## Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Identity Scale

For each of the following questions, please mark the response that best indicates your current experience as a bisexual woman. Please be as honest as possible. Indicate how you really feel now, not how you think you should feel. There is no need to think too much about any one question. Answer each question according to your initial reaction and then move on to the next.

1. I prefer to keep my same-sex romantic relationships rather private
2. If it were possible I would choose to be straight
3. I'm not totally sure what my sexual orientation is
4. I keep careful control over who knows about my same-sex romantic relationships
5. I often wonder whether others judge me for my sexual orientation
6. I am glad to be a bisexual person
7. I look down on heterosexuals
8. I keep changing my mind about my sexual orientation
9. I can't feel comfortable knowing that others judge me negatively for my sexual orientation
10. I feel that bisexual people are superior to heterosexuals
11. My sexual orientation is a significant part of who I am
12. Admitting to myself that I am bisexual has been a very painful process
13. I am proud to be part of the bisexual community
14. I cannot decide whether I am bisexual or lesbian
15. My sexual orientation is a central part of my identity
16. I think a lot about how my sexual orientation affects the way people see me
17. Admitting to myself that I am bisexual has been a very slow process
18. Straight people have boring lives compared to bisexual people
19. My sexual orientation is a very personal and private matter
20. I wish I were heterosexual
21. To understand who I am as a person, you have to know that I am bisexual
22. I get very confused when I try to figure out my sexual orientation
23. I have felt comfortable with my sexual identity just about from the start
24. Being a bisexual person is a very important aspect of my life
25. I believe being bisexual is an important part of me
26. I am proud to be bisexual
27. I believe it is unfair that I am attracted to both sexes



## APPENDIX C

### Anti-Bisexual Experiences Scale

Please think about your past experiences as you indicate your responses to the following statements by choosing an option from 1 (this has NEVER happened to you) to 7 (this has happened to you ALMOST ALL OF THE TIME (more than 70% of the time)).

1. People have addressed my bisexuality as if it means that I am simply confused about my sexual orientation
2. People have acted as if my sexual orientation is just a transition to a gay/lesbian orientation
3. People have acted as if my bisexuality is only a sexual curiosity, not a stable sexual orientation
4. Others have pressured me to fit into a binary system of sexual orientation (i.e., either gay or straight)
5. People have not taken my sexual orientation seriously because I am bisexual
6. When I have disclosed my sexual orientation to others, they have continued to assume that I am really heterosexual or gay/lesbian
7. When my relationships haven't fit people's opinions about whether I am really heterosexual or lesbian/gay, they have discounted my relationships as "experimentation"
8. People have denied that I am really bisexual when I tell them about my sexual orientation
9. People have treated me as if I am obsessed with sex because I am bisexual
10. People have treated me as if I am likely to have an STD/HIV because I identify as bisexual
11. People have assumed that I will cheat in a relationship because I am bisexual
12. People have stereotyped me as having many sexual partners without emotional commitments
13. I have been alienated because I am bisexual
14. People have not wanted to be my friend because I identify as bisexual
15. Others have treated me negatively because I am bisexual
16. I have been excluded from social networks because I am bisexual
17. Others have acted uncomfortable around me because of my bisexuality

**APPENDIX D**

## Disclosure Measure

Please answer the following questions on a scale of 1 (extremely unlikely) to 7 (extremely likely)

1. How likely are you to tell future female partners that you are also attracted to men?
2. How likely are you to tell future male partners that you are also attracted to women?
3. How likely are you to make it clear in your Tinder profile that you are attracted to both men and women?
4. How likely are you to discuss your attractions to both men and women with your Tinder matches?