A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE: A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION INTO THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF BISEXUAL WOMEN IN MONOGAMOUS RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract

This qualitative research explores the lived experience of nineteen bisexual women from all across the UK who are in monogamous relationships or who are single but desire a future monogamous relationship. The research has three broad aims 1) To explore the lived experience of bisexual women who identify as monogamous. 2) To understand the ways in which women who identify as bisexual and monogamous maintain their identity. 3) To explore the ways in which bisexual women in 'same-gender' and 'different-gender' relationships construct their identity. The research was carried out in three phases with each stage using a different data collection technique. The first stage required participants to keep a written diary for a period of four consecutive weeks, detailing thoughts and events that were related to their sexual identity. In the second stage participants took part in a semi-structured telephone interview. The interview used participants' diary entries as a starting point to explore the research questions. The final stage involved a subset of participants taking part in a photo-assisted telephone interview. Participants in this stage were supplied with disposable cameras and were asked to take up to twelve photographs of places, objects and people who were significant in relation to their sexuality. Five participants completed this stage and took part in a photo-assisted telephone interview where they discussed the photographs they had taken. The research as a whole and the approach to analysing data was underpinned by the hermeneutic phenomenology of Ricoeur. Two different but complementary approaches were taken in the analysis of the data. Firstly, Template Analysis (King, 2004) was used to analyse the data from diaries and telephone interviews. This approach provides an opportunity to explore the data as a whole and identify themes and sub-themes relevant to the research questions. In order to complement this cross-case approach the photo-assisted interviews were analysed using a within-case approach (Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis) developed specifically for this research. Some of the findings support existing research which demonstrated that some bisexuals do experience 'invisibility' and misappropriation in relation to their sexual identity (Monro, 2015; Hayfield, Clarke & Halliwell, 2014; Savin-Williams, 2005; Blackwood, 2000; Angelides, 2001). Other findings point to aspects of bisexual monogamous women's experience that appear to have been neglected by researchers. In particular, the gender of a participant's partner seems to present different challenges in relation to their sexual identity. Participants in different-gender

relationships appear to utilise more strategies related to displaying their same-gender attractions and keeping their bisexuality alive than those in same-gender relationships. Participants in same-gender relationships choose feminine appearance markers that are more likely to signify a heterosexual identity in contrast to participants in different-gender relationships who choose 'traditional' lesbian appearance markers. Women in different-gender relationships articulated a sense of longing or reminiscence for relationships or sex with women. Women in same-gender relationships did not express the same sentiment for sex and relationships with men. Identifying a community which provided support for their bisexual identity was of particular importance to all participants. The LGBT+ community seemed to be important in the early stages of participants' struggles with the development of their sexual identity. However, over time participants experienced various forms of hostility from the LGBT+ community and one of the ways they coped with this was to disengage from it and turn to smaller network of friends.

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Dedications and Acknowledgements

If anyone else is reading this then I have produced something…… *'I can't do it'* is something I have been saying for years in relation to writing this PhD & most people around me believed that I couldn't do it . . . apart from a really ***small ..tiny.. weeny..*** number of people.

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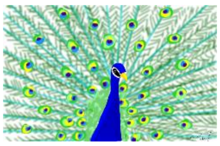
My best friend: Dr Alison Rodriguez 

A loyal & true friend. We are united in hatred & have a shared love of casting spells. Without you in my corner I feel I would have been truly alone ((((hugs)))) ❤

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My children: Kathryn Jayne & Honour Mary  

You are my beautiful girls and I adore you both ***ALWAYS & FOREVER*** x x

My husband: Mark

> I know I could lie but I won't lie to you
> Wherever I go you're the ghost in the room
> I don't even try looking for something new
> Cause' wherever I go I'll be looking for you
> *One Republic*

The quote above says it all dear…. Order us both a curry

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Prologue

I switch on the television to Alan Carr’s Chatty Man. He is interviewing Eddie Izzard. My ears prick up when I hear Alan Carr say something along the lines of *‘society is more tolerant of sexuality now – apart from the bi-now gay-later bisexuals’*. I felt the undercurrent of what he really meant was that no-one believes in such a thing as bisexuality or, indeed, bisexuals. It struck me as rather poignant that, in amongst this one minute discussion about how society is more accepting of non-normative sexualities and gender expressions, Alan would finish the interview with a derogatory comment about bisexuals.

1.1 Plato’s musing

According to Plato and Greek mythology, there were three different types of human beings; female, male, and a third type which was understood to be a combination of them both. Each spherical person had four legs, four arms, and two faces on one neck. The story goes, that the Greek God, Zeus, split them in two so as to minimise any potential threat they could exert upon the Gods. Zeus then called upon the God of healing, Apollo to sew them up. However, Zeus noted that they were struggling to function as they spent all their energy attempting to be reunited with their cut off other halves so much so, that they became unproductive. To rectify this problem Zeus positioned their genitals to the front so they could both be bodily reunited, as well as go about their daily business. Plato reasons that the pursuit of love is an aspiration to be whole again. To be whole again requires us to find and meet that one person who will give us unity and make our lives complete. Plato reasons that, *'When a person meets the half that is his very own, whatever his orientation, whether it's to young men or not, then something wonderful happens: the two are struck from their senses by love, by a sense of belonging to one another, and by desire, and they don't want to be separated from one another, not even for a moment'* (Reeve, 2006, p. 49). The belief that one will find a 'soul-mate' partner and stay with this person 'till death do them part' is a concept Emens (2004) refers to as 'supermonogamy' (p. 291). This is when one stays with one partner, monogamously, for the whole of their adult life (I discuss this in more depth later on in this thesis).

Robinson, (1997) agrees that the fact women go from one monogamous relationship to the next monogamous relationship in some ways is conceptualised as a failure to find the 'one'. This belief is no doubt reified by contemporary Disneyesque concepts of the soul mate and one true love (Wolkomir, 2015; Northrup, Schwartz, & Witte, 2013). However, Plato fails to consider those who claim attractions to people of the same and different-gender. In addition he does not recount those who wish to live out relationships with more than one person (Emens, 2004).

1.2 Bisexual Definition

It has proved difficult to find a cohesive, inclusive, and conceptual definition of bisexuality, or indeed determine who might qualify for the identity label of 'bisexual'. This is largely because of the contested ways in which attraction to people of the same and different-gender are understood (Toft, 2010). The modern understanding of the term 'bisexual' has undergone a number of re-conceptualisations over the years (Macalister, 2003). Originally, it was understood to allude to the field of anatomy and physiology and referred to life that was sexually undifferentiated (Chun & Singh, 2010). Understanding then shifted to describe forms of masculinity and femininity (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1990). MacDowall (2009) discusses how the AIDS and HIV crisis of the 1980s further impacted on the meaning of the term, distinguishing it from between being understood as an identity position to a sexual behaviour or practice. I am mindful of the bisexual activist Robyn Ochs (2011), and what I believe to be her encapsulating personal definition of bisexual to be: *'I call myself bisexual because I acknowledge that I have in myself the potential to be attracted – romantically and/or sexually – to people of more than one sex and/or gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree'.* This definition acknowledges that individuals do not have to have engaged in any kind of sexual and/or physical act with people of the same and different-gender in order to identify with the category of bisexual. Given the current research calls for self-identified, bisexual, monogamous women only, I was therefore mindful of previous research which suggests that women who identify as bisexual tend to identify with the sexuality later in life than say, lesbians (Diamond, 2008a). Consequentially, I made tentative assumptions that, in the current research, any participants' I recruited would have previous intimate relationship experiences. Thus, by virtue of the fact I was interested in monogamy, I perceived some participants' to have perhaps made previous or current monogamous commitments to their partners and/or be married.

I have utilised Ochs (2011) definition as the one which makes more sense to me personally. I feel her description fits in more comfortably with my perception of the women who opted to assist me with this research. The pursuit of an inclusive 'catch-all' definition of bisexuality is considered by some to be much too problematic to create due to the lack of consensus related to who can be classed as bisexual (see, table 2.1 for a list of bisexual types) (Toft, 2010; Deschamps, 2008). However it is my contention that without the quest for such a definition, questions such as 'who is a bisexual' and 'what is bisexuality' will remain fragmented. In addition, bisexuality may continue to run the risk of remaining an afterthought in people's minds because the stereotypes clearly demonstrate that the identity is misunderstood (Deschamps, 2008a; Diamond, 2005; Vrangalva & Savin-Williams, 2012; Barker, 2007). Whilst it is clear that bisexuals have in common their attractions to people of the same and different-gender, the ways in which they conceptualise and experience their bisexuality remains varied and is generally idiosyncratic. Having said that, the endeavour of a workable, relatable, and inclusive definition can only serve to strengthen and support the category of bisexual. Opting for a more flexible and fluid approach to the understanding of labels and definitions such as the work queer theorists carry out, (Butler, 1990; Halperin, 2009) is helpful in understanding the complexity of human behaviour and desire. As intimated, there exists a myriad of ways in which individuals choose to label their sexual attractions to others and the diversity of human experience demonstrates the complexity of categories in and of themselves. However, the marginalisation of bisexual people in society is a direct result of the unstable ways in which bisexuality is conceptualised. For example; they must have had concurrent same and different-gender sexual experiences or they are unlikely to be religious, or monogamous. Attempts to better understand the lived experiences of bisexual people will no doubt contribute towards a more holistic picture of bisexuality and positively support those who identify with this sexual identity

1.2.1 What is a bisexual?

Bisexual identity has been historically under-researched in comparison to gay and lesbian studies (Klein, 1993; Barker, 2007) and in effect, bisexuals have been traditionally assumed to not exist (Macalister, 2003). Over the past three decades however, academic interest in bisexuality and bisexual identity specifically has grown, with more and more researchers exploring the lives of bisexual identifying individuals (Weinberg, Williams, & Pryor, 1994; Diamond, 2008a; Diamond, 2008b; Hemmings, 1997; Callis, 2014; Rodriguez-Rust, 2002; Fox, 2000; Barker, Richards, Jones, Bowes-Catton, Yockney, & Morgan, 2012). Research that has looked at women specifically has shown that in comparison to men, female sexuality has a greater degree of fluidity (Baumeister, 2000; Rich, 1980; Diamond, 2008a). Women have been shown to be more likely to transition from heterosexual to lesbian and visa-versa (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1995). That being said, the assumed plasticity of female sexuality has resulted in an almost *laissez-faire* approach towards women who engage in sexual intimacies with people of the same and different-gender (Fahs, 2009). This attitude is largely adopted because the practice or behaviour of having relationships with people of the same and different-gender is perceived as lacking authenticity, and is considered to be performed specifically for attention, or directly for the male gaze (Ponterotto, 2016; Mulvey, 1975). Men who are attracted to people of the same and different-gender are judged quite differently to women, in that their sexuality is more likely to be considered homosexual (Davis, 1991). The conceptualisation that bisexuality is a valid and legitimate stand-alone sexual orientation and identity has, in the main, remained somewhat ambiguous, and has persistently been de-legitimised and misunderstood by the binary giants of homosexuality and heterosexuality (Yoshino, 2000; Macalister, 2003; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994). One of the accusations levelled at bisexual women in particular is the belief that they are unable to remain sexually faithful and monogamous to their partners and, as such, are more oriented towards polyamorous styles of relationships (Klesse, 2011; Moss, 2012). Lay beliefs in respect of this issue assume that occupying a bisexual identity is incompatible with a monogamous dyadic relationship (Rieger, Chivers, & Bailey, 2005). Whilst some research has investigated bisexual individuals in a variety of relationship constellations (Diamond, 2008a; Moss, 2012; Chmielewski & Yost, 2013; Barker & Langdridge, 2010), limited studies have focused specifically on bisexual women in monogamous relationships (see Hartman, (2013) and Hartman-Linck, (2014)).

1.3 Research aims

The current research has three broad aims:

1) To explore the lived experience of bisexual women who identify as monogamous.

This aim is focused on what it actually means for individuals to identify as bisexual in the context of a monogamous relationship. Of particular interest are the ways in which participants understand their bisexuality in the context of a monogamous relationship alongside the ways in which they personally define their sexual identity.

2) To understand the ways in which bisexual women in 'same-gender ' and 'different-gender ' relationships construct their identity.

This aim attempts to investigate whether the gender of participants' partners impacts on the way in which they experience their bisexuality.

3) To describe the ways in which women who identify as bisexual and monogamous maintain their bisexual identity.

The final research aim attempts to explore the ways in which bisexual women maintain their bisexuality when engaged in a monogamous relationship. Of particular interest are the ways in which the gender of participants' partners might impact of their strategies of bisexual maintenance.

1.3.1 Why the focus on bisexual women?

In Western patriarchal society, bisexual women face a number of types of marginalisation and oppression that are specific to them as bisexual women (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013; Balsam & Mohr, 2007). For example, bisexual women experience unique forms of discrimination compared to bisexual men, such as men sexualising their identity and making assumptions about their availability to engage in mixed gender-sex (Friedman & Leaper, 2010; Dyar, Feinstein & London, 2014). I contend that the current research will to some extent serve to give these women a voice, particularly given the suggestion that occupying a monogamous relationship renders one's bisexual identity invisible.

A number of researchers have discussed how women can be seen to occupy the identity label of 'bisexual' more often than men (Floyd & Bakeman, 2006; Brown, 1995; Diamond, 2007; Baumeister, 2000; Rodríguez-Rust, 2000; Hartman, 2013). Suggestions as to why this might be include the argument that female sexualities exhibit higher degrees of *'plasticity'* (Fahs, 2009, p. 435) and are thus more pliable than male sexualities. This view understands that women are more likely to adapt to environmental and situational changes leading them to present more fluid sexual orientations. This plasticity can be viewed in a number of ways, for example the suggestion that female sexualities can be considered ever-changing and responsive to context and situation. This results in them acquiring more strategies of self-enhancement such as the ability to connect with diverse individuals. However, one must be mindful that plasticity can also be considered a tool for further oppression of female bodies, particularly when it is used in the assumption that women desire to move between gendered intimate physical relations (Fahs, 2009).

1.3.2 Why focus on bisexual women in monogamous relationships?

I wondered what it must be like for bisexual women in monogamous relationships, bearing in mind the existing social and perhaps individual/internal stereotypes that pervade society in relation to bisexuality. How do these women experience their bisexual identity? When one chooses to monogamously commit to another individual in the traditional sense of the word, one is effectively saying 'I will not be intimate with anyone else' (obviously definitions of intimacy vary from emotional, sexual, physical, and spiritual). A simplistic definition of monogamy can be seen as *'the custom or condition of having only one mate in an intimate relationship, of being dedicated to a single partner'* (Cat, 2008, p. 1). The practice of monogamy can therefore be seen to further render one's sexual identity as invisible due to the fact that a person's sexuality is seen to be a reflection of who one is partnered with. If one makes a public claim to unite with another person through a civil ceremony or marriage does this further reify the assumption that one is monosexual in orientation? I wanted to include women who were monogamously partnered with either a person of the same gender or a person of a different gender, as opposed to only focusing on bisexually identified monogamous women Key to my interest was how these women experienced their bisexual identity as a result of various 'taken for granted' assumptions made about them, and indeed, if they felt it had any impact on their personal sense of 'bisexual' identity.

1.3.3 Issues with the use of the term 'bisexual'

It is important to acknowledge the perhaps problematic use of the term 'bisexual' in research which attempts to understand those who are attracted to people of the same and different-gender. The term 'bisexual' denotes that there are two 'bi' corresponding genders and sexes. This conception has been shown to be a fallacy as research has highlighted how gender and sexuality are primarily social constructed (Monro, 2015; Diamond, 2008a; Diamond, 2008b; Rodríguez-Rust, 2003; Edwards & Brooks, 1999; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953; Klein, 1993). Paul (1985) sums up this point when he suggests that, *'there is far more variability and fluidity in many people's sexual patterns than theoretical notions tend to allow'* (p. 21). However by utilising the term 'bisexual' in this work, I am not in any way assuming that this is the only accepted validated term for those individuals who would claim attraction to people of the same and different-gender. I acknowledge and recognise that there are a myriad of self-ascribed identity labels in society such as 'pansexual', 'polysexual', 'multisexual', 'fluid', 'unlabelled' and sapiosexual'. Contemporary research investigating younger people's understandings of the relevancy and accuracy of sexual identity labels has estimated that there are potentially up to twelve self-identified categories (Vrangalova & Savin-Williams, 2012). This clearly shows that for some, the traditional categories of LGBT[1] are perhaps no longer considered appropriate.

I use the term bisexual primarily for pragmatic reasons, in that it is a fairly common recognisable term and is generally understood to mean attraction to people of the same and different-gender. Having said that, I opt to use the term for two further reasons. 1) The binary master titles of 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' are accepted as legitimate and 'true' in relation to sexual identity (Yoshino, 2000). Given the plethora of sexual identity terms available to those who find people of the same and different- gender attractive, I suggest the term 'bisexual' to be the most recognisable. Nonetheless it is also ridiculed, sexualised, and negatively stereotyped in a number of ways due to the lack of coherence in respect of what bisexuality is (Diamond, 2005; McLean, 2007). It is for this reason that I suggest we have not yet reached a time or space in the Western world whereby the term 'bisexual' is understood and taken seriously. 2) To claim to be a 'bisexual' is conceptualised as unauthentic and as such, it is not afforded the same legitimacy as terms such as 'heterosexual', 'homosexual', 'gay', and 'lesbian'. The current research therefore, has the potential to build up and support the power behind the language of 'bisexual' and 'bisexuality'. Plummer (1995) discusses how relying on other sexual minorities to champion the specific issues that pertain to [in this case] bisexuals, is to engage in acts of *'ventriloquism'* (p. 19). He argues that this is not helpful in terms of shaping a cohesive identifiable narrative in respect of identity. Bisexual voices and their experiences are unique and different (Hubbard & O. de Visser, 2015; Callis, 2013) and for that reason the current research has the potential to

[1] Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender.

contribute towards ‘de-mything’ some of the stereotypes in relation to monogamous bisexuals specifically.

Supporting the identity category of ‘bisexual’ can assist people in their own understanding of their attractions to people of the same and different-gender (Plummer, 1995). Research has shown that in relation to identity construction, those who believe they potentially occupy a non-normative sexuality often require support from other sexual minority individuals and/or communities to connect with. The ability to positively identify with others is imperative and, as studies into social identity have shown, the ability to see oneself in others has positive effects on both self-esteem and wellbeing (Cass, 1979; Kerr & Emerson, 2003; Brown, 2002; D’Augelli, 1994). Bisexuality is often understood to be a kind of resting place between two valid, authentic, sexual identity categories (Diamond, 2008b). This can be seen to instil within bisexuals a sense of uncertainty, in that the proposed liminal space they currently occupy is not a place they can comfortably reside in for any length of time. I utilise the term ‘bisexual’ in order to further substantiate the view that the category and identity of ‘bisexual’ is a permanent sexual space (and identity) for those who are attracted to people of the same and different-gender. Again, that is not to suggest that some individuals do not change their identity label from bisexual to heterosexual or from lesbian to pansexual to better reflect their identity, as Diamond’s (2008a, b) research has shown; I merely outline a personal rationale for why I choose to persistently utilise the term ‘bisexual’ in my work.

1.3.4 Additional terms of understanding

Terms such as ‘biphobia’, ‘binegativity’, and ‘monosexism’ are often used interchangeably in everyday discourse and the media. Although they all denote negative views related to those who hold bisexual identities, they also refer to the different ways in which prejudice and negative stereotypes manifest themselves. Monosexism refers to the view that people can only be sexually attracted to one gender (Klesse, 2011; Ross, Dobinson, & Eady, 2010) - for example, heterosexual, gay, and lesbian identities are considered the only legitimate sexualities. Bisexuality is either considered to be a transitory phase, or bisexual individuals are viewed as dishonest about their sexuality. Roberts, Horne, and Hoyt, (2015) identify a further, and perhaps more insidious, problem in that monosexism reinforces the ideology of binary divisions (as discussed above). Biphobia and binegativity are understood to refer to more generalised negative perceptions of, and behaviour towards, bisexuals, either as individuals, or as members of the bisexual community. The term binegativity is often understood as preferable on the grounds that biphobia raises clinical connotations[2] and has the potential to locate prejudice against bisexuals alongside other phobias such as arachnophobia. Biphobia has been defined as the *'fear of the other and fear of the space between our categories'* (Ochs & Deihl, 1992, p. 69). In other words, biphobia is a generalised aversion towards bisexuality as a concept and bisexual people as a social group or as individuals (Eliason, 2000). Klesse, (2011) provides a useful way in which to understand how 'binegativity' works to position bisexuals as not worthy of legitimacy. Klesse draws attention to the ways in which institutional practices operate to render bisexuality invisible. He argues, *'. . . binegativity works through a broad set of oppressive practices, which include forms of violence (interpersonal, legal, institutional), discrimination (social, cultural, legal), as well as epistemic erasure and denigration through negative representations. The operation of stereotypes is part and parcel of the last strategy'* (Klesse, 2011, p. 234). Highlighted in this definition is the suggestion that one of the consequences of oppressive practices is the 'erasure' of bisexuality as a legitimate sexual identity. The erasure of bisexual identity is of particular interest to the current research aims due to the assumption that one's identity is no longer relevant in the context of occupying a monogamous relationship.

[2] As could potentially terms such as homophobia and transphobia

1.4 My BiCon Experience

I feel it pertinent to include a brief synopsis of my thoughts in relation to my experience of attending BiCon (United Kingdom Bisexual Conference) because it paved the path for my interest in the current research. Without BiCon, I do not think I would have been so oriented towards the study of bisexuality. BiCon, is a UK based national conference/convention held in a different location every year (usually Universities), where bisexually-identified people of varied backgrounds and ethnicities can meet and attend workshops and seminars over a period of a three to four days (Monro, 2015; Bowes-Catton., 2015; Barker et al., 2012). Participants also attend various social events such as discos or tea-parties. BiCon is probably the most well-known bisexual community event in the UK (Bowes-Catton, 2015). Here, bisexual people and their allies can get together and re-connect with people they have not seen for some time or have only met on-line. I first became aware of BiCon after I attended a critical sexology conference in London which was organised by Dr. Meg John Barker. Whilst there I picked up on a 'vibe' that BiCon was a place and space for bisexuals to just 'be'. After reading a document put together by some researchers who attended a previous BiCon, I was left with the impression that BiCon was an environment or community of bisexual people who could express their bisexuality and meet other bisexual people who may perhaps struggle with similar issues. BiCon also offered attendees a place to feel in the majority, as opposed to being the minority in both a heteronormative and homonormative world. For these reasons I was keen to attend, and looked forward to meeting other bisexual people I could relate to. If I could sum up my overall feeling of my time spent at BiCon, I would say that, as a bisexual woman in a monogamous relationship, I did not feel welcome. I very much felt that the 'welcome' offered to me was tokenistic. I concluded that I would not want to return and experience BiCon again and would not recommend it to other bisexual women who were in monogamous relationships, for fear they, too, would feel ostracised and engage in self-critical thoughts about not being 'bisexual enough' because they are in monogamous relationships.

1.5 Ricoeur: Culture and temporality

This thesis draws on the work and ideas of Paul Ricoeur to support the exploration of the lived experiences of bisexual women who identify as monogamous. One of the challenges faced by anyone trying to use the ideas of Paul Ricoeur is that his work covers a wide range of topics and philosophical thinking. His work spans the latter half of the twentieth century, and his last major book was published in 2004 shortly before his death in 2005. There are two aspects of Ricoeur's work that are particularly relevant to this thesis - firstly, his articulation of a hermeneutic phenomenology, and secondly, his conceptualisation of the cultural and temporal dimension of our lives. Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology provides an ontological and epistemological basis for the thesis and is discussed in detail in Chapter 4. An overview of the key features (in relation to this thesis) of his ideas on the cultural and temporal aspects of our lives is presented below. These ideas are used to inform my analysis and review of the relevant literature presented in Chapters 2 and 3, as well as the interpretation and analysis of the data presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

A cursory inspection of the literature on sexuality reveals a topic that is closely tied to a constantly changing set of societal views. What are considered to be appropriate and acceptable forms of sexuality changes through time (Halberstam, 2005; Weeks 1995; Plummer 1989). It is argued here that the work of Ricoeur provides a framework and set of ideas to explore the cultural and temporal dimension of human life. These ideas are organised into three sections - firstly, Ricoeur's ideas on the relationship between actions and agents is presented. This is followed by a discussion of his ideas on the related concepts of ideology and utopia, and finally, a brief summary of salient points from his work on temporality.

1.5.1 Actions and agents

Throughout his work, Ricoeur holds the view that the way to understand people is to focus on their actions, what they do as agents, and what they experience as a consequence of the actions of others. Ricoeur argues that action is central to our way of being in the world, and says, *'There is no world without a self who finds itself in it and acts in it; there is no self without a world that it can act upon in some fashion'* (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 311). Ricoeur is also quite clear that any form of discourse constitutes an action as well as purely physical modes of action (Dauenhauer, 2007). Although Ricoeur argues that all actions are events he also makes a distinction between events that are actions and those that are not. An action requires the involvement of an agent - a person, who makes a choice and acts upon it. In other words, there is the involvement of a 'capable self' (Ricoeur, 1992). Whereas, an event is something that does not necessarily involve the intervention of a person, for example, an earthquake, which is a spatio-temporal occurrence that has both antecedents and consequences, but no agentic involvement. Through the process of acting, Ricoeur (1992) argues, agents, as well as impacting on others, are also affecting themselves, in other words, we experience our own actions. Sometimes these effects may be unintentional, such as tiredness brought on by excessive work, but it, nevertheless, serves to remind us that we are always subjects of our own actions. Dauenhauer (2007) argues that an important feature of Ricoeur's consideration of action is that, for him, all action is interaction, and he goes on to say, there are no *'...actions that do not depend for their meaning on other actions that contextualize them.'* (p. 206). Actions take place within a specific cultural setting which provides a context for their interpretation. On a daily basis, we conform with accepted social practices through our engagement in actions which reflect social norms, and the expectations of other people. These practices include both linguistic and physical actions, such as, saying 'Hello' and shaking hands when meeting someone, dressing in a particular style for specific events. In these situations, 'action' is associated with conforming to established and accepted social practices. As Ricoeur (1992) says, these *'...practices are based on actions in which the agent takes into account, as a matter of principle, the actions of others.'* (p. 155).

Having established that action is inescapably interaction, and this interaction is located within, and depends upon a cultural context, we inevitably come to questions about the issues of choice and autonomy. On the one hand, individuals are capable of making choices and acting on them, but on the other hand, no one can act without drawing on historically situated cultural meanings. In this sense, all our actions are dependent to a greater or lesser extent, on the context within which they take place (Dauenhauer, 2007). According to Ricoeur all the actions and events we are involved in have the potential to be incorporated into a narrative. It is through this process of constructing narratives that we come to understand the world and our place in it. One of the features of narrative construction is that it enables us to *'impute actions to agents'* (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 10). This process of imputation goes beyond simply specifying the physical cause of a specific event or action; Imputation allows for ethical judgements to be made, such as, who deserves blame/praise for the event/action, and as Ricoeur (1992) suggests, it is impossible to have an ethically neutral narrative. Thus, it is clear that Ricoeur focuses on human action and the 'capable self', but it is also important to recognise that the capable self *'…acts within – and draws on and interprets – socio-cultural contexts.'* (Adams et al., 2015, p. 23).

1.5.2 Ideology, utopia and the social imaginary

Ricoeur (1986) contrasts reproductive imagination with productive imagination. He does this through the development of the concept of utopia and, in turn, contrasts that with the concept of ideology. The term 'utopia' translated literally, means 'nowhere' and for Ricoeur (1986), it represents the possibility of a new kind of reality. He sees it as the expansion of our day-to-day sense of reality into a new and different set of possibilities. Throughout his work Ricoeur draws on the work of Aristotle, and his writings on ideology and utopia are no exception. Ricoeur (1986) uses Aristotle's analysis of Greek tragedy to draw our attention to the notion of a productive imagination. Aristotle argued that tragedy in a play does more than merely duplicate and reproduce human life; it instead sheds light on it and provides us with opportunities to explore different ways of being. The concept of utopia as 'nowhere' has the potential however to create problems, if we try to think about it as being completely unrelated to anything that has gone before. The 'nowhere' of utopia has to be thought of in terms of its potential to transform existing categories and ideas. It is this idea that Ricoeur (1986) refers to as the 'productive imagination', which is synonymous with his use of the term 'utopia'. According to Taylor (2006) *'…it alerts us to the disclosure or reality that is both available and yet to come'* (p. 99). Having said that, despite the potential of the productive imaginary of utopia to provide opportunities to explore possibilities for new ways of living, Ricoeur is also aware of its potential dangers. Since the productive imagination emerges out of our existing ideas, its products are subject to the judgements of ourselves and others.

Ricoeur (1986) draws on Mannheim's twofold definition of ideology which distinguishes between the specific and the general. In this view of ideology, it serves to obscure the *'…real nature of a situation…'* (Mannheim, 1997, p. 49) and it also reflects the widely held views and beliefs of different social groups (Mannheim, 1997). Mannheim (1982) acknowledges that people typically identify with different groups, and argues that, *'…there is no sphere of life …*

which is not smothered in ideologies' (p. 356). One of the problems Mannheim struggled to resolve was the relationship between ideology and utopia (Sargent, 2008). Ricoeur (1986) recognises this and addresses it through the conceptualisation of ideology and utopia as in a dialectic relationship. Ricoeur (1986) argues that both ideology and utopia have positive and negative characteristics. Utopia can be seen a fantasy and ideology as a distortion; both of these characteristics have the power to deceive. Ideology (as a form of distortion) is the basis of Marxist philosophy, which Ricoeur discusses at length in his writings on the hermeneutics of suspicion (see for example, Ricoeur, 1970). In contrast, the positive aspects of ideology are that it provides a basis for legitimating and integrating individuals into specific cultures. The fantasy of utopia is not as straightforward, and Ricoeur uses the word 'escapism' as a synonym for fantasy (Sargent, 2008). Ricoeur (1988) proposes that utopias are problematic and can be dangerous if they are not rooted in reality. On the contrary, utopias provide the opportunity to explore different possible worlds and alternative modes of power (Ricoeur, 1986, p. 310).

There are two major problems confronting Ricoeur's thinking about ideology. Firstly, its all pervasive nature, and secondly, how to recognise it from within (Sargent, 2008). We are immersed in ideology and *'…think from its point of view rather than thinking about it'* (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 137). So how can we break free from the tentacles of ideology? Ricoeur's solution rests on the subversive influence of utopia. He argues, utopia *'…has a constitutive role in helping us unthink the nature of our social life'* and goes on to argue that utopia provides us with a radically new way in which to conceptualise for example, the family, authority etc. (Ricoeur, 1986). For Ricoeur, the creative opportunities possible within the 'nowhere' of utopia enable us to challenge and, in some cases overthrow, the inequalities embedded in ideology. So, although utopia offers the potential for new ways of living one's life it falls short of presenting the concrete actions required to create this new life. Ricoeur (1986) recognises this when he suggests, *'The decisive trait of utopia is then not realisability but the preservation of opposition'* (p. 180). The way out of the constraints of ideology and social dreams of utopia, for Ricoeur, is to convert the *'…utopian imagination … into specific expectations'* (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 258). It would be difficult to discuss the concepts of ideology and utopia without touching on their relationship to power, as Ricoeur (1986) argues, *'My basic hypothesis is that what is at stake in ideology and utopia is power'* (p. 298). Ideology supports the status quo in relation to the distribution of power and access to resources, whereas utopia provides the basis for challenging and subverting the existing order and the power relationships within it. Ricoeur (1986) argues that the solution to the problem of challenging ideology rests on the notion of attestation; making a claim which can then be judged by others.

For Ricoeur, the social imaginary is the product of the cultural imagination and its ideological and utopian variants (Adams et al., 2015). He is also quite clear about the dialectic character of the social imaginary when he says that it is, *'…an ensemble of symbolic discourses'* that can *'…function as a rupture or reaffirmation'* (Ricoeur, 1991 p. 475). The concept of the 'social imaginary' plays a minor role in Ricoeur's (1986) discussions of ideology and utopia. However, Adams et al., (2015) present a convincing argument for the topic of the social imaginary to have reached the point where it should be treated as a recognisable 'field' of study in its own right. They propose that the work of Ricoeur alongside Taylor and Castorides forms the basis for this new emerging field. Although there are commonalities across each of these theorists, there are also some differences in the way they conceptualise the 'social imaginary'. This thesis draws on Ricoeur's conceptualisation, which is not to deny the contribution of either Taylor or Castorides, but to rather to ensure that there is a logical coherence to the arguments presented here. Adams et al., (2015) point out that there is no single agreed upon definition of the 'social imaginary'. However, all the theories do, in one way or another, acknowledge the role of human creativity, action and language in the maintenance of existing social institutions and practices. As well as providing a basis for social continuity, these cultural configurations are also central to the emergence of new social practices and social change.

Ricoeur (1994) understands the social imaginary as *'…the touchstone of the practical function of the imagination'* (p. 118). In some senses, Ricoeur considers the utopian imagination to be situated at an intersection between theory and practice. This relationship between action, language (or symbolic systems) and ideology in Ricoeur's thinking is clearly evident when he suggests, *'Ideology and utopia have ultimately to do with the character of human action as being mediated, structured and integrated by symbolic systems'* (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 512). The position that Ricoeur takes is that the distorting role of ideology is only possible if our social reality is already symbolised. This provides the means by which society reproduces itself and provides the basis for maintaining a sense of identity and cohesion. The utopian imagination provides alternatives to the established configurations of power and encourages a move away from the 'given' towards what may be 'possible' (Adams, 2015).

1.5.3 Temporality

Ricoeur considers issues of temporality and language at length in his three volume series, 'Time and Narrative' (Ricoeur, 1984, 1985, 1988). There are connections between Ricoeur's analysis of time and his thinking about the nature of action and human agency. For Ricoeur, our actions are intentional and have a relation to other actions that have already taken place. In other words, actions take place within a context and that context has a history of actions that have already occurred - there is a temporal dimension to them. Throughout our lives, we experience countless events, some of which are more important than others, for example, births and deaths of those important to us will typically be more significant than trips to the shops. In 'Time and Narrative' Ricoeur develops a model of how we, as individuals, make sense of the events we experience. Central to his model is the notion of 'emplotment' which is based on a development of Aristotle's notion of 'Mimesis'. Aristotle was concerned with the representation of ideas and life in the Greek Tragedies such as 'Oedipus Rex'. Aristotle proposed that plays were imitations of actions and events and used the word 'Mimesis' to represent this relationship. Ricoeur extends these ideas into a model that applies to our day-to-day lives. The idea of 'Mimesis' is developed into a threefold concept which he refers to as: 'Mimesis 1', 'Mimesis 2' and 'Mimesis 3'. The concepts of emplotment and 'Mimesis' are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. The present section focuses on 'Mimesis 1' as providing a link between Ricoeur's ideas on ideology and utopia, and our lived experiences. 'Mimesis 1' refers to our preunderstanding of the social world we inhabit and the ways in which we are able to make sense of the signs and symbols we encounter. For example, when I look at my friends new engagement ring I see it as a sign of the affluence of her partner, as well as a decorative item and a symbol of a forthcoming ritual event. My understanding of the ring is therefore based, (in part) on my cultural and personal history. For Ricoeur, it is our preunderstanding of the world that enables us to make sense of everyday situations, but it also embodies our ideological distortions. This provides us with a means by which we can begin to develop an understanding of the relationship between culture, ideology and our day to day experiences.

Throughout his work, Ricoeur reminds us that there is a temporal dimension to our lives. We are beings who exist through time. One of the consequences of this is that histories are written which are intended to provide an account of events. However, Ricoeur is quite clear that there is no sense in which historical accounts can be seen as 'true'. This is a position acknowledged by contemporary researchers. Rickett (2016), for example, in her discussion of the social construction of motherhood states, *'...rather than discovering 'truths', feminist poststructuralist thought concerns itself with the disruption of dominant knowledges'* (p. 322). This is clearly consistent with the ideas presented by Ricoeur and it could be argued that this positions feminist poststructuralism at the utopian pole of Ricoeur's ideology/utopia dialectic. One of the problems that Ricoeur confronts is the fact that history is always written by someone, and that someone is inevitably from a specific cultural and ideological location. In relation to the topic under investigation in the present thesis - the experience of bisexual women, definitions and beliefs about bisexuality have changed through time. We have witnessed a shift in attitudes and approaches, not only in terms of general societal views, but also in the legal system and academic theorising. In literature reviews presented in the following chapters, the ideas of Ricoeur on action, ideology, and temporality will be used to provide a critical interpretation and analysis of the relevant literature. In conclusion, it is argued here that the ideas taken from Ricoeur's work provide a framework for reviewing the literature and focus attention on the cultural and temporal dimensions of our lived experiences that are sometimes neglected in psychological research. As Steeves (2000) states, *'Paul Ricoeur's philosophy provides a response to the problem of interpreting the social world'* (p. 222).

1.6 Thesis Organisation

The thesis is principally organised around thematic chapters, each concluding with a summary of content. In chapter two, I present a detailed review of the literature in relation to the definitional issues surrounding bisexual identity, and the issues bisexuals' face. I then go on to explore, in some depth, the specific issues that bisexual women in particular encounter. In chapter three, I present a historical overview of monogamy before moving on to address the contemporary conceptualisations and social pressures to be monogamous in Western society. I then turn my attention specifically to bisexuality and monogamy and discuss the assumed tensions between them. In chapter four, I present the methodology undertaken in this work. This includes the epistemology, ontology and conceptual framework underpinning the research aims and conduct. In chapter five, I outline the specific methods of data collection employed in this research and discuss the analytical process before presenting the ethical dilemmas inherent within the research. In chapter six, I present the first of my findings chapters. This particular chapter is concerned with the Template Analysis undertaken with the diary and telephone interview data (phase one and two of the research). In chapter seven, I present the second of my findings chapters which is centred on the Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis of the photo-assisted data. Finally, in chapter eight, I present a summary of the pertinent points gleaned from my analysis in relation to my overall research aims. I then conclude with on overview of the thesis, discussing the strengths and potential limitations of the research as well as identify the contribution of this body of work for bisexual women in monogamous relationships.

Chapter 2: literature review 1: Bisexuality

2.1 Introduction

In the first section of this chapter I present a review of the empirical research on gay and lesbian identities. I provide a theoretical backdrop with which to discuss bisexuality in relation to academic research that has more recently turned its attention to the field of focused bisexuality studies. More specifically, I discuss the context and implications for bisexuals particularly in light of the recent social and legislative advances gay men and lesbians have achieved in Western society. In the second section, I provide a review of the bisexual literature in a bid to outline a more in-depth, and focused presentation, of both the historical and contemporary perspectives of bisexuality and the effects of this on bisexually-identified women in particular (although in places this may also pertain to bisexual men also). In the third section, I discuss empirical studies related to models of sexual Identity. In particular, I explore some general models of non-normative identity and outline some of the problems with taking a 'stage' approach to understanding bisexual identity. The fourth section of this chapter presents an overview of the ways in which prejudice and stereotypes impact on the day-to-day lives of bisexuals. Finally, I review the research that has focused on women and bisexuality particularly. I explore the suggestion that bisexual women are understood to perform their identity for the male gaze specifically. This section also includes discussions related to bisexual visual identity, and the problems associated with locating and identifying specific bisexual appearance mandates. In addition I examine bisexual communities and explore the perceived support and barriers these communities provide to self-identified bisexual people.

2.2 Review of the gay and lesbian literature

'When a subject is highly controversial and any question about sex is that, one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold whatever opinion one does hold' (Woolf, 1929, p. 7).

Same-gender sex and attraction has always existed in one form or another (Weeks, 1985; Rodriguez, 2009). However the further back in history one goes to find accounts of this, the less empirical data there is to draw from (Green, 1999). Empirical evidence points to the work of a number of sexologists working in the late 1800s as a pivotal era of sexuality inquiry (Foucault, 1979; Weeks 1986; Rodriguez-Rust, 2002). Sexologists of the time viewed same-gender attractions under the medical model and for many decades, people were pathologised as a result

(Gibson, Alexander, & Meem, 2014). Biological theories, prenatal hormonal exposure and factors related to childhood upbringing have all been proffered over the years to account for same-gender sexual orientation (Freud, 1905; Krafft-Ebing, 1894). Nevertheless, the general conclusion rested on the belief that sexuality was based on a person's biology and was not something one consciously chose in order to be controversial or immoral (Ellis, 1915). The twentieth century has witnessed a plethora of attempts to better understand same-gender attraction (Hill, 2008; Armstrong, 2002; Ault, 1994; Bauer, & Jairam, 2008). The discourse or ideology that one is born gay or lesbian has been a central argument expressed by activists campaigning for political and social equality with heterosexuals (Bailey, 1995). I use Ricoeur's definition of ideology as it refers to *'a set of symbolic structures that constitutes an identifiable community. There are as many ideologies as there are sets of symbolic structures. Without some set of these structures, human community would be impossible'* (Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 215). Thus, for Ricoeur, the ideologies people live their life by represents some '*phenomenological truth about our lived experience*' (Langdridge, 2006, p. 645). Framed in this way, ideology plays an important and powerful role in a person's life. The ideology that sexual identity is involuntary has, for many gay and lesbian activists, proved to be a strategic way in which to claim political, legal and social rights, such as the right to civil partnerships and marriage[3] (Kitzinger, Wilkinson, Coyle & Milton, 1998).

Many lesbian and gay rights activists disapprove of essentialist arguments that position their sexual identity as something they are 'born with' (Whisman, 1996). Such activists are critical of

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[3] The Civil Partnership Act came into legislation in 2006 and The Same Sex Marriage Act came into legislation in 2014.

practices that they feel serve to assimilate gay men and lesbians into the fold of heteronormative cultures and 'traditions' (Hull & Ortyl, 2013). Radical lesbian feminists have long argued that lesbianism opens up a unique way in which to live in the world free from patriarchal structures of oppression such as marriage (Bindel, 2014; Overall, 1998). Wittman (1970) writing in 'The Gay Manifesto' argues, *'Traditional marriage is a rotten, oppressive institution. . . marriage is a contract which smothers both people, denies needs, and places impossible demands on both people. . . Gay people must stop gauging their self-respect by how well they mimic straight marriages. . . To accept that happiness comes through finding a groovy spouse and settling down, showing the world that 'we're just the same as you' is avoiding the real issues, and is an expression of self-hatred'* (p. 4). The contested way in which marriage has been, and continues to be viewed in the lesbian and gay community highlights the problem of attempts to homogenise gay men and lesbians (Altman, 2013; Richardson, 2000). Not all lesbians and gay men wish to be viewed through the same political lens as heterosexuals[4]. Many people who are same-gender attracted but do not identify as lesbian or gay, and instead choose to identify themselves as bisexual, queer or 'other', argue that gay-marriage renders invisible their specific identities (Dreher, 2017; Taylor, Kimport, Van Dyke, & Anderson, 2009).

An alternative understanding of sexuality is rooted in social constructionism. This approach challenges essentialist conceptualisations of sexuality. Social constructionists position sexuality as historically and culturally sanctioned (Weeks, 1977, 1995; Plummer, 1989). Taxonomies of sexual attraction and identity are a recent phenomenon (Halperin, 1990). Prior to definitional accounts of the nineteenth century, gay and lesbian identities did not exist, only same-gender

[4] Many heterosexuals also see marriage as oppressive and choose not to enter into it.

sexual behavioural acts were acknowledged (Weeks, 1986; Foucault, 1979; Denman, 2004). Language, then, is central to the way in which we connect and understand others. However language can also restrict and constrain the way in which we communicate. For example, sexual identity categories and our assimilation of them allow us to both transmit and translate aspects of ourselves that we identify with, and if disclosed, enable others to understand. Despite this they can also serve to constrain subjectivities and facets of ourselves that may change over time (Diamond, 2008a; Fuss, 1991). Therefore, the rigid adherence to particular sexual categories can, for some people, represent a constriction of identity. This perspective does question 'taken-for-granted' assumptions related to concepts such as 'sex' and 'gender', and draw attention to the ways in which identities are actively constructed and collectively understood through processes of social interactions (Burr, 2003).

As Burr (2003) observes, ideologies and discourses are immensely influential and all-powerful, so much so that the ability to not refer to them as 'true' things poses real challenges (see also, Clarke & Braun, 2009). Social constructionists do not, however, reject a material reality, and do acknowledge emotions, feelings and embodied experience. Rather, it is more accurate to suggest that social constructionists are critical of the suggestion that this equates to an essential biological determinism (Burr, 2003). If one takes the view that sexuality is socially constructed, then essentialist claims that argue 'sexuality' or sexual identity is 'real', based on fact, and considered transcultural and universal, is flawed. Hegarty (2003) argues that there are numerous models of sexuality in existence of which same-gender attraction is one. The reification that one is monosexually attracted only obscures the possibility that individuals can be attracted to people of the same and different-gender at the same time (Yoshino, 2000), as well as a whole plethora of alternative 'sexualities' (Clarke, Ellis, Peel, & Riggs, 2010). Nevertheless, essentialist views appear to currently dominate popular understandings of sexual identity (Diamond, 2008a, b; Whisman, 1996).

The 1990's saw the emergence of Queer theory (see section 2.3.2 for a more detailed discussion of this approach) this is a theoretical approach that sets out to problematise or deconstruct binary labels and categories of identity (such as male/female, heterosexual/homosexual) seeing them as socially constructed, thus, confining and oppressive (Green, 2010; Sedgwick, 1992). Queer theorists go on to argue that sexual identity is not fixed and should instead be conceptualised as flexible and fluid (Diamond, 2008; Schoene, 2006; Stewart, 1995). The homogenisation of gay and lesbian identity proscribes and pressures individuals into conforming to a validated recognised gay or lesbian identity (Butler 1990). The suggestion that there are particular authentic and legitimate ways in which to live one's life as a lesbian or gay man is rejected from this perspective. Researchers have identified more than one 'type' of lesbian, for example Kitzinger and Stainton-Rogers (1985) identified five different types of lesbian in their research, highlighting the various ways in which lesbians define themselves and see their lesbianism. Thus queer theorists are mindful of the ways in which identity can be unstable and continually reframed in light of different experiences, acknowledging the multiplicity of ways gay men and lesbians experience their sexual lives and sexual identities (Fuss, 1991; Stewart, 1995).

Up until quite recently gay and lesbian identity has been framed as something that is formed and established in mid-to-late teenage years (see section 2.4.1 for a discussion of models of sexual identity development) (Holt & Griffin, 2003; Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1989; Edwards & Brooks, 1999; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). More recent research however, has acknowledged identity as something that is negotiated past adolescence (Savin-Williams, 2001). When one suggests that they have carried out the 'identity work' needed to claim an 'authentic' identity, they are assumed to reach a place where they 'know who they are' (Holt & Griffin, 2003). Many second wave feminists and gay liberation activists of the 1970s and 1980s championed those who claimed essentialist gay and lesbian identities as people who were being 'true to themselves' (Holt & Griffin, 2003). This authenticity discourse is problematic and fails to take account of the way in which identity is dynamic and multi-faceted (Fuss, 1991). Intersectional researchers such as Choo and Ferree (2010) and Kantola and Nousiainen (2009) have been critical of claims that do not take account of the ways in which identities are shaped and produced in particular contexts and amongst different people. Foregrounding the experiences of particular privileged groups in society such as people who are white, educated, and liberal results in a bias narrative of identity discourse and understanding (Crenshaw, 1993). Many postfeminists, third wave feminists, queer theorists, and social constructionists are more sympathetic to the myriad of ways in which identities are fluid and in flux (Heywood & Drake, 1997; Diamond, 2008). As such they too are critical of steadfast claims of authenticity and essentialism in relation to sexual identity (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; Bellafante, 1998; Weeks, 1995).

The social constructionist approach to sexuality is more accepting of the suggestion that social processes are influential in respect of sexual object choice. The feminist movement of the early 1970s drew on such arguments in order to free themselves from heterosexuality and choose same-gender relationships (Clarke et al., 2010). The framing of sexuality as a choice has proved problematic for many gay and lesbian activists as they claim this way of conceptualising sexuality potentially puts at risk the legal and social rights they have secured (Yoshino, 2000). This reading of social constructionism lacks the key point they wish to make which is the acknowledgement that agency can, and does, for many people play a part in sexuality. Sexual object choice is underpinned by many physical, social, and political considerations, all of which are important and contribute towards an individual's sexual identity. Nevertheless, the importance of sexual identity in modern Western society is central in relation to how we come to relate to other people. How one identifies themselves enables others to both conceptualise and categorise them as a person who shares, or does not share, the same romantic and sexual attractions to others. Jenkins (2008) argues that, *Identification matters because it is the basic cognitive mechanism that humans use to sort out themselves and their fellows, individually and collectively* (p. 13). Weeks (1995) and Plummer (1989) note that, despite the problems associated with adopting a stance that renders identity as rigid and fixed, the importance of it cannot be under-estimated in that it provides one with an ideology that gives a sense of meaning and connection to others (Ricoeur, 1986; Langdridge, 2006). The way in which we view ourselves and our need for ontological security is inextricably connected and achieved through our social interactions. Thus, the communities and groups we identify with say something meaningful about the way in which we see ourselves. (Giddens, 1991; Murray, 1989).

Yoshino (2000) argues that many gay men and lesbians are heavily invested in ensuring that they are conceptualised as no different from heterosexuals. The normalisation of gay and lesbian identities has, according to Phelan (2001), rested on the positioning of bisexual[5] people as fraudulent and wrong. The lack of bisexual specific social scientific research both in the UK and US reflects what researchers suggest is a form of biphobia (see section 1.3.4 for a more detailed discussion related to this term) (Barker, Richards, Jones, Bowes-Catton, & Plowman, 2012). Monro, Hines and Osborne (2017) carried out a review of sexualities scholarship within UK and US social sciences and found a systematic exclusion of the topic of bisexuality in publications focused on sexualities. The continual way in which bisexual people are marginalised and rendered invisible represents a form of epistemic violence in that they are positioned outside frames of discussion. In effect, they are deemed to be undeserving of academic, social and political examination and analysis (Monro et al., 2017). Hemmings (2002) agrees and further argues that the field of bisexuality studies has not attracted the same amount of interest as lesbian and gay studies. Researchers have been seen to conflate the experiences of non-heterosexual people with one another (Klein, 1978) resulting in the topic of bisexuality remaining peripheral in sexuality studies (Barker, 2007; Klesse, 2011). For example queer theory has been accused of neglecting to pay attention to bisexuality in its analysis of homosexuality and heterosexuality (Sedgwick, 1991), disregarding the critical role bisexuality and bisexual identity potentially plays in the deconstruction of all sexual categories (Monro et al., 2017).

2.2.1 Lesbian and gay communities

The seeking out of communities and physical spaces where one can access others who share the same sexual identity has long been thought important for those who claim lesbian and gay identities (Cass, 1979; Troiden, 1989; Edwards & Brooks, 1999; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996).

[5] Alongside transgender people and other non-normative sexual identities such as pansexuals.

Alongside this the role of dress and appearance appears central in communicating one's same-gender attractions (Clarke & Spence, 2012; Carroll & Gilroy, 2002; Painter, 1994). Rudd (1996) discusses what he refers to as the 'appearance code' in transmitting meaning and recognition amongst gay men. The adornment of specific jewellery, styles of clothing and hairstyle are assumed to signal to others a shared sense of romantic and sexual attractions. The ability to recognise this aspect of shared identity is considered important for identity affirmation and self-esteem (Carroll & Gilroy, 2002). The world is heteronormative and such spaces are presumed heterosexual unless they have been identified as homosexual (Bell & Valentine, 1995). Research has shown how lesbians and gay men have long sought to establish and claim places of their own in order to liberate themselves from continually being in the sexual minority (Weeks, 1977; Plummer, 1989). Often these places were intergenerational sites where people could meet and learn more about the history of their same-gender attractions as well as ignite romantic and sexual relationships (Stein, 1997). Occupying a space where gay men and lesbians can demonstrate affection free from judgement is considered important for healthy identity development and self-esteem (Green, 1999; Edwards & Brooks, 1999; Cass, 1979). Gay and lesbian spaces have been shown to provide people with a sense of community and belonging. In the UK these spaces are typically commercially-run pubs and clubs where people can engage in leisure activities such as socialising, dancing and drinking (Taylor, 2011; Holt & Griffin, 2003). The extent to which gay men and lesbians need to access physical spaces in order to support their identities has attracted debate (Halberstam, 2005; Cook, 2014). In contemporary Western society gay men and lesbians have secured a number of legislative rights that prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual identity. These legal achievements (such as the right to marry) have resulted in the perception that gay men and lesbians are no different to heterosexuals, and as such no longer have an identity need for same-gender community organisation and spaces (Holt & Griffin, 2003). Seidman (2001) argues, politics of assimilation that accentuate the similarities between heterosexual, gay and lesbian identities are problematic in that they render invisible the unique aspects of identifying as lesbian and gay. On balance, it appears there have been many positive developments in respect of rights and equality for LGBT+[6] people however, it remains the case that bisexually focused attention remains marginal (Alexander & Yescavage, 2003). Elia (2010) discusses how what she terms *'the alphabet soup approach to inclusion'* (p. 457) rarely, if ever, directly attends to the 'B' within the acronym LGBT and advocates caution in relation to conceptualising sexual identities as more similar than different.

Globalisation and, in particular, technologies such as the internet have had a huge effect on the way in which people communicate and come to conceptualise their own sexual identity (Joinson & Paine, 2007). For lesbians in particular, this has had a profound effect on the ways in which they meet and connect with others who share their sexual preference (Stein, 1997). This technological advance has been accused of contributing to the decline in physical lesbian social spaces. However physical gay male social spaces continue to flourish and profit from the pink pound (Sampson, 2015; Brown, 2013). Researchers questioning why this is argue that women's limited access to resources and their childcare responsibilities make it more difficult for them to access and maintain such spaces. This is also coupled with the fact that lesbians are considered more likely than gay men to want to commit early in the relationship thus, contributing to their lack of interest in frequenting such spaces (Stein, 1997; Taylor, 2011). Currently, there is much debate within the feminist movement and in particular, amongst radical lesbian feminists, in respect of who can be a woman, and thus be included in female and/or women's communities and spaces (Jeffreys, 2014a; Murphy, 2016). Gay politics has been challenged by a queer political agenda, that directly includes the voices of bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning,

[6] For efficiency I use the acronym LGBT+ to refer to Lesbian (L), Gay (G), Bisexual (B), Transsexual (T) and (+) Others. My use of the plus sign to represent 'others' in this context is my attempt to incorporate the breadth of non-heterosexual identities that could be argued to warrant inclusion under the rainbow umbrella.

intersex and ‘other’ sexual identities, the boundaries of fixed gender and sexual identity positions such as ‘woman’, and ‘lesbian’, are challenged by those who argue for a more flexible and fluid approach to such concepts and ideologies (Hillier & Harrison, 2007). The intersectional approach to conceptualising identity has led to a fraction of feminist and lesbian communities where white, middle class women have been accused of dominating the political agenda (Currier & Migraine-George, 2017; Jenkins, 2000). Lesbian women of colour have long since discussed how race impacts on all aspects of identity and cannot be factored out in a bid to unify the lesbian movement (Moody-Mills, 2012; Crenshaw, 1993). One of the contentious issues facing the feminist and lesbian movement more generally is the debate centred on the community currently being oriented towards gender non-conforming individuals (Bindel, 2014; Jeffries 2014a). More and more people profess to be queer, bisexual, transgender, and identify as non-binary (Callis, 2014; Alexander & Yescavage, 2003). This has resulted in a tension between lesbian identified women who are resistant against the inclusion of such people in their communities and spaces. The argument against the inclusion of ‘others’ who make up the acronym LGBTQQI[7] is that it deflects attention and resources away from woman and lesbians who are in need of specific identity support (Mackay, 2015; Jeffreys, 2014b). From their perspective, the admittance of transgender and bisexual women in lesbian space puts the safe spaces they have fought hard to establish over many years at risk of male infiltration (Jeffreys, 1997; Bindel, 2014; Jeffreys, 2014a, b).

[7] Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex.

2.2.2 What this tells us about bisexuality?

As discussed above, research shows that bisexuality has not been considered a topic worthy of the same amount of critical consideration that is afforded to gay and lesbian identity (Monro, et al., 2017). Research shows that bisexuals commonly experience biphobia and discrimination within lesbian and gay communities (McLean, 2008; Hartman, 2006). The root of such negative perceptions stems from the belief that bisexual identity is fictitious and constructed as a way of retaining heterosexual privilege and avoiding 'owning-up' to a gay/lesbian identity (Diamond, 2008a). Whisman (1996) reported findings from her research that showed participants who professed to be bisexual suffered higher rates of social isolation from gay men and lesbians. Previous research has acknowledged the tension between lesbians and bisexual women specifically (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1974; Rust, 1992; Rust 1995). Hartman (2006) suggests that lesbians express their distrust of bisexual women which contributes towards them feeling as though they do not belong and as such they struggle to fit in with the lesbian community. Rust (1995) reported survey findings that showed lesbians were dismissive of the existence of bisexuality with 79 per cent believing that bisexuality was a transitional identity and 96 per cent expressing a preference to date a lesbian rather than a bisexual women. Roberts, Horne and Hoyt (2015) found that the level of discrimination bisexually-identified people suffered from gay and lesbian communities was comparable to the discrimination they faced from heterosexuals. Shokeid (2002) refers to bisexuals as *being 'twice rejected, once by heterosexuals, and again by homosexuals'* (p. 64). Despite the inclusion of the 'B' in the acronym LG'B'T, many bisexuals express feeling not accepted and actively prejudiced against in spaces and communities that profess to be inclusive of them. Research investigating the impact of antibisexual attitudes from the lesbian and gay community have highlighted the consequences of this on bisexual people's mental health (Dobinson, & Eady, 2010; Meyer, 2003; Page, 2004). Figures show that bisexuals report higher levels of mental illness than heterosexuals and homosexuals. Bisexual women in particular report the highest rates of depression and anxiety (Barker, 2015; Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2013; Hunt & Fish, 2008). The rejection that bisexuals face in so-called inclusive LGBT+ communities can be seen to have tangible consequences for them (McLean, 2008).

Research shows that bisexuality has not been considered a topic *'worthy of scholarly concern'* (Monro et al., 2017, p. 13) and has in the main been perceived as an illegitimate sexual identity position (Callis, 2014). Monro et al., (2017) suggests that one of the reasons bisexuality as a sexual orientation has remained on the fringes of authenticity is the positioning of it alongside stigmatised identities such as sadomasochism and sex-workers. This has resulted in bisexuality being perceived as a 'deviant' practice. Postmodern conceptualisations of gender and sexual identity have broadened the landscape of what was traditionally[8] considered 'legitimate'. In recent years, research has moved away from focusing specifically on monosexual identities such as heterosexual, lesbian and gay and oriented their attention to other non-normative sexual and gender identities in a bid to elucidate a better understanding of human relationships and desire (Barker & Langdridge, 2010; Sonnie, 2000). Nonetheless, it is important to highlight and understand the history of the gay and lesbian rights movement, so that the struggles and sacrifices they made to establish and maintain their human rights, in terms of equality and legitimacy[9], are not forgotten. That being said, it is paramount that research continues to explore alternative expressions of both gender and sexuality so that people who identify as bisexual, for example, can be better understood and supported. Women who are attracted to people of the same and different-gender clearly share many of the same issues and concerns all women share, irrespective of sexual identity. In the Western world, women as a class of people are marginalised and subordinate to men (Jeffreys 2014a). Social injustices and inequalities are predicated on factors such as race, class, ethnicity, sexuality and religion (Crenshaw, 1993). Thus it is crucial to acknowledge how such intersections of identity are managed and negotiated.

[8] I use the word 'traditionally' – however I recognise that the way in which we conceive of sexual identity is relatively modern.

[9] That being said it is important to acknowledge the contributions of those who did not identify as gay or lesbian, be they heterosexual, bisexual, transgender, or allies who did not identify with any of the recognisable sexual identity terms in their fight for LGBT+ equality and recognition.

It is apparent that early studies focusing on gay and lesbian sexuality suffered from an over simplistic analysis of their identities. Often research focused on the ‘sex’ element of their identity make-up. In contemporary Western society, gay men and lesbians are understood to be more than just who they sleep with - their identities and relationships are considered stable. It could be argued that, whilst gay men and lesbians continue to be statistically non-normative, they are in a psychological sphere considered normative alongside heterosexuals possessing equal rights and respect in society such that marriage is now afforded to those who are same-gender attracted (Denman, 2004). The same, however, is not true for those who identify as bisexual, and in particular bisexual women (Fahs, 2009) with the focus often centring on the ‘sex’ in the word ‘bisexual’ (McLean, 2011). Bisexuals, in general, are over looked in academic research and ignored in many social scientific subjects (Barker, 2007). Most social scientific research of the 1970s and 1980s neglected to take into account bisexual identity and experience (Barker, 2007; Rust, 1993). Bisexuality has been framed as a transitional or intermediate space (Chapman & Brannock, 1987) and so research pertaining to bisexuals has been fairly thin on the ground (Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2013). It is often the case that bisexuals are the minority within a minority population and, as such, their unique accounts and voices are often conflated alongside the experiences of lesbians and gay men (Tweedy & Yescavage, 2015). The dichotomous way in which sexuality is conceptualised continues to marginalise bisexual and other pluralistic sexual identities, and frames them as peripheral to heterosexuality and homosexuality (Roberts et al., 2015).

It is worthwhile once again to pay tribute to the history of lesbian and gay communities that have seen them reach a place where a number of the social, political and legal rights they set out to achieve have been secured (Rubin, 2001; Klesse, 2014). Nonetheless, it is important to recognise and acknowledge the many allies, including bisexuals[10], who fought alongside lesbians and gay men in their pursuit for equality (Bowes-Catton, 2015). It is unfortunate that many bisexuals and 'other' sexual minority identities continue to struggle to feel accepted and included in communities and spaces they too contributed towards constructing. The Office for National Statistics report figures released in 2016 that suggest that more young people in the UK identify as bisexual than either gay or lesbian (Knipe, 2016). This shows a rise of 45 per cent on the previous three years (Bingham, 2016). This change in identification marks an attitudinal shift from conceptualising sexual orientation and identity as an either/or exclusive attraction to people of the same or different-gender, and a move towards the recognition that many people are sexually attracted to people of the same and different-gender highlighting the mutability of attraction. Many lay theories related to bisexual women in particular have assumed that they are sex-obsessed and incapable of monogamy (see section 2.5 for more discussion related to this point) (Yoshino, 2000; Esterline & Galupo, 2013; Fahs, 2009; Diamond, 2005). Whilst bisexual women have in common their sexual attractions towards people of the same and different-gender, their experiences are no doubt varied and influenced by the gender of their partner (McLean, 2004). Previous research has demonstrated the issues inherent in conflating the experiences of gay men and lesbians as it neglects to acknowledge the material reality of gender differences that men as one class and women as a different class experience, both in wider society, and within their intimate relationships (Clarke et al., 2010; Gibson et al., 2014; Monro, 2015). Feminist research in particular draws attention to the way in which women experience and encounter a range of disadvantages because they are women (Taylor, 2011; Stelbourm, 1999; Overall, 1998; Bindel, 2016). Thus it is imperative that studies focus on women's reality

[10] Alongside transgender, heterosexuals, and 'other' sexual identities who campaigned and fought alongside their gay and lesbian brothers and sisters.

and the way in which their lived experiences are affected by both the gender of their partner and their sexual identity. Research that attempts to gather the lived experiences of women who identify as bisexual and choose to enter into dyadic monogamous relationships offer the field of sexuality studies a greater nuanced understanding of sexual identity more generally.

2.2.3 Section summary

The above section has three parts. First, I presented a brief review of the literature related to gay and lesbian identities before outlining the importance of lesbian and gay space and communities in respect of identity support and recognition. I then went on to discuss how despite the positive advances made in lesbian and gay communities, and within wider society with regards to same-gender relationships being conceptualised as authentic, the same is not true for those who identify as bisexual. It is clear that bisexually-identified people struggle with many of the same challenges related to societal understanding, acceptance and legitimacy that faced gay men and lesbians in Western society before their identities were considered authentic and socially acceptable and finally being understood as no different from heterosexuality[11].

2.3 Historical constructions of bisexuality

Rodríguez-Rust (2000) points to a number of historical paradoxes in the way bisexuality has been defined and conceptualised. She proposes that, prior to the nineteenth century, the terms

[11] However it is important to understand that not all gay men and lesbians attest to feeling accepted in society. A recent School Report carried out by Stonewall in 2017 reported that 45% of LGBT youth are bullied for being LGBT at school. Another investigation carried out by Stonewall in 2017 reported that 1 in 5 LGBT people have experienced a hate crime due to their sexual orientation.

‘bisexual’ and ‘heterosexual’ did not exist in the way that we understand them today (as touched on above). In cases where women engaged in sexual relationships with other women, they were not labelled as ‘lesbian’ or ‘bisexual’. Therefore, in this sense, bisexuality for women both existed, and did not exist, at one and the same time. The position in respect of bisexuality in men was conceptualised a little differently in that historically men have engaged in sex with other men with less direct consequences to their identities[12]. However discourses around men engaging in sex with people of the same and different-gender changed in collision with sexology research to a pervasive assumption that bisexual men were really in transition to a gay identity (Anderson & Adams, 2011). This invokes the ‘one drop rule’ (Davis, 1991), where one same-gender sexual encounter or experience is considered to highlight a ‘real’ gay identity in a man. The same thinking however, has not been applied to women. With the same behavioural act, a woman is understood to neither be a lesbian or bisexual, instead she is still understood to be heterosexual (Davis, 1991).

Rodríguez-Rust, (2002) argues that the construction of desire as attraction to either men or women developed from a sexualisation of identities. She presents an argument based on the logic of difference to outline the paradox of bisexuality. The stages in the argument can be summarised as; a) men and women are different and opposites; b) sexual attraction is directed to either men or women; c) because men and women are opposites then it is impossible to be sexually attracted to both men and women. A situation has been established where bisexuality is both conceivable and inconceivable. This paradox, which became established in the mid-twentieth century, and which creates the possibility of the ‘non-existence’ of bisexual

[12] Men having sex with men was however illegal in the UK until it was eventually decriminalised in 1967.

individuals, is a theme that continues in the twenty-first century and will be explored in more depth later in this chapter.

2.3.1 Binary understandings of sexuality

Sexuality has been conceptualised in binary terms for well over a century (Callis, 2014; Rodríguez-Rust, 2000; Weeks, 1985). 'The elephant in the room' is a metaphor used to illustrate how discussions and representations of bisexuality are kept on the fringes of the sexuality binary (Hartman, 2006). The binary is exhaustive in the sense that at one end it is exclusively heterosexual and, at the other homosexual. Thus, sexualities that do not fit into those contested categories are rendered mute and invisible (Anderson, McCormack, & Ripley, 2016; Klesse, 2006; James, 1996). The binary opposites both reify and strengthen one another in the respect that they are hinged on each other's continuation in order to exist (Namaste, 1994). One of the problems when attempting to conceptualise oneself outside the binary is the resulting ethereal space one inhabits.

Callis (2014) uses the metaphor of the 'borderlands' to illustrate non-normative identities. This concept originated from the work of Anzaldua, (1987, 2009) who attributed it to individuals who lived on, and crossed over, the border between Mexico and the USA. Anzaldua noted the liminal space these people occupied, referring to it as *'an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always in transition space lacking clear boundaries'* (p. 243). Callis (2014) noted the similarities between the individuals Anzaldua describes, and those who hold non-binary identities. Both groups can be seen to be on the border of two dominant power-houses, that of heterosexual and homosexual, Mexico and the USA. Both groups are betwixt and between, not fitting in to either, or. Callis, (2014) argues, that just like the individuals Anzaldua (1987, 2009) discusses, bisexuals and other queer identified people are *'caught between two communities and two labels'* (p. 69).

Effectively, to understand bisexuality, one has to refer to the binary, because without it there is no bisexuality, and consequentially there can be no bisexuals. Bisexuality then, is situated along the continuum and as such, can be seen to hold the potential to problematise the binary and break down assumptive discourses related to sexual orientation and identity (Stein & Plummer, 1994).

The lesbian feminist and gay liberation movements of the mid to late twentieth century were constructed in terms of an oppressed minority struggling against a heterosexual and patriarchal majority. One of the unintended consequences of this struggle was the acceptance in everyday discourse that there are only the dominant oppositional sexualities. More recently identity categories, such as bisexual, transgender, and transsexual are acknowledged and have become more visible (Callis, 2014).

The fact that sexualities are conceptualised as categories is problematic in that it potentially limits the ways in which individuals can define, talk and think about their sexuality (Fox, 2000; Hayfield et al., 2014). This is a point pursued by Plummer (1995) who argues that there are many types of sexualities in existence; however, language constrains the way in which we are able to conceptualise these differences. This is supported by Blackwood (2000) who notes that particularly in Western society there is a drive to consider sexual orientation as fixed and thus to afford individuals a label. Despite this acknowledgement, dualistic understandings of bisexuality can be seen to, in effect, further reinforce the categorisation and power of the binary. Attraction to people of the same and different-gender is positioned and understood as being attracted to a, or b, this or that, culminating in the assumption that there are 'two'[13] to choose from (Morgan & Davis-Delano, 2016). One of the issues with positioning sexuality or sexual identity in this way is that the potential plethora of identities are rendered invisible and consequently, do not receive the same amount of interest (Morgan & Davis-Delano, 2016; Monro, 2015). It is problematic if research around sexuality and sexual identity focuses only on binary opposites, (Barker, 2007;

[13] I am not suggesting that all self-identified bisexual people are only attracted to two genders. Many individuals claim attraction to more than one gender, in effect not discriminating against the plethora of gender identities and presentations.

Lee & Crawford, 2007; Barker & Yockney, 2004; Kitzinger & Unger, 2001) as according to Angelides (2001) this can serve to erase bisexuality as a category. (This point is discussed in more detail later in this chapter). Angelides (2001) summarises the issue faced by bisexuals when she highlights, *'[i]n contemporary discourses of sexuality . . . what bisexuality does and what bisexuality might do are in large measure conditioned by what it has done and has made happen within discourses inherited from the past'* (Angelides, 2001, p. 191).

2.3.2 Queer theory

Queer Theory evolved out of, and adopted, many Foucauldian ideas and perspectives around power, control and discipline (Green, 2010). The aim of queer theorists is to critically interrogate how people come to identify with particular categories of sexual identity (Tasker & Delvoye, 2015). Queer theory has been one of the most influential and productive approaches in theorising and researching sexuality over the past 30 years (Callis, 2009). The domain of queer theory has been accused of largely marginalising bisexuality, relative to gay and lesbian studies, leading to the *'exclusion of bisexuality as a structuring silence'* (James, 1996, p. 232). Nevertheless, it does provide a framework and a set of ideas which can be useful to draw on in any area of research into sexuality. Butler (1990) is a key theorist and provides helpful insight into how the normalisation of particular beliefs serve to reinforce heteronormativity through what she terms the 'heterosexual matrix'.

According to Butler (1990) one is not born a particular gender. One is ascribed a gender dependent upon one's sex at birth. Butler (1990) borrows from Simone de Beauvoir's (1949) idea that *'One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one'* (p. 301). Thus, gender is socially constructed and rests upon what the dominant culture's reference points are in relation to what is seen as feminine or masculine. Therefore gender is not fixed, it has the capacity to be flexible, and fluid, with the ability to shift alongside aspects of both masculine and feminine. This is not suggesting that gender is a coat you can discard. Rather, it is perpetually reinforced and reconstituted in everyday life, making the process of extricating oneself from gender problematic. Butler's (1990) related concept of performativity is helpful here to conceptualise how gender and sexuality is reified through what people do. It is through gendered performances such as how one dresses, wears their hairstyle or their postural positions, that one is understood by society to be either masculine or feminine. The performance is always conditioned through and enacted in relation to the heterosexual matrix. Butler (1990) goes on to say, *'Acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means'* (p. 185).

The heterosexual matrix is a way of understanding how society conceptualises the links between gender, sex, and sexuality. Individuals are read and thus understood by others through a process of looking and seeing. So binaries come into force quite predominantly as one is read as either masculine or feminine in presentation. Depending on the ascribed label, society further assigns a binary sexuality label or identity, that of gay, straight or lesbian as it is assumed to directly correspond with one's gendered performance (that of masculine or feminine). According to Butler (2006), *'. . . the term heterosexual matrix ... designate[s] that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized. I…characterize a hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality'* (p. 208).

The use of binaries are a way in which to comprehend and conceptualise the dominant discourse in relation to the understanding of sex, gender and sexuality. Only by acknowledging that this is the way in which performances are read can the dominant binary model of sexuality be disrupted (Tredway, 2014). Therefore, utilising Butler's matrix we can better understand how particular views about women are reinforced, such as the inability to be bisexual in the first place.

2.3.3 Defining bisexuality

Academic research into bisexual identity in its broadest sense began to emerge in a substantial form in the early 1970s (Rodriguez-Rust, 2002; Fox, 2000). It was not until the early 1990s that it became possible to identify 'bisexuality' as a specific topic area/discipline with the publication of a number of ground-breaking texts such Weinberg, Williams and Pryor's 'Bisexuality' (1994), and the 'Psychology and Politics of an Invisible Minority' (1996) by Firestein. 'The Journal of Bisexuality' emerged in 2001, providing a forum for researchers to share their ideas and focus on the various issues that face bisexuality and bisexual people. (Barker, 2007). According to Callis, (2014) two strands of contention can be seen to emerge from the work of theorists. First, the invisibility of bisexuality and consequently bisexuals. Second, the disbelief and ineffable status of bisexuality. Macalister (2003) referred to how bisexuality has been called the *'snuffaluffagus of sexualities'* (p. 25), effectively suggesting that bisexuality is assumed to not to be real. There is no doubt that defining bisexuality is problematic, in that it is difficult to know what counts in respect of warranting the category of bisexual (Diamond, 2008a; Hemmings, 1997). There has been considerable debate within the literature in relation to the characterisation of bisexuality (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1990; Rust, 1992; Chun & Singh, 2010; Hayfield et al., 2014; Hartman, 2013; Hartman-Linck, 2014; Macalister, 2003; Callis, 2014). Some understandings rely on behaviour, for example, those who have had sex with people of the same and different-gender qualifying for the title of 'bisexual' (Greenesmith, 2010; Moss, 2012). Other definitions focus more on the self-determination of individuals who may actively choose 'bisexual' as a personal or political label, despite not having had any sexual encounters at all (Diamond, 2008b). Alternative approaches focus on the view that the identity category of 'bisexual' is not legitimate because the identity is not stable or permanent (Laumann et al., 1994). Supporting this line of thinking was the now infamous[14] article written for the New York Times titled ‘Straight, gay, or lying’ (Carey, 2005). The article drew from a study carried out by Rieger et al., (2005) where the researchers measured the genital response patterns of self-identified gay, straight and bisexual men. Findings showed that three quarters of the bisexual participants’ demonstrated the same level of sexual arousal as gay men, whilst the remaining number were similar to straight men’s arousal levels. This led the researchers to conclude that there is no such thing as an ‘authentic or true bisexuality’. This finding and the aforementioned New York Times’ subsequent publication contributed towards the suggestion that people who define themselves as bisexual are in fact not, and are telling lies or doing it for attention (Macalister, 2003; Fahs, 2009). Whilst it is important to bear in mind the original empirical study was carried out on bisexual men, the popularist article published in the New York Times referred to bisexuals, thus inclusive of women also. Therefore the tone of the article, that there is no such thing as bisexuality, affects perceptions of bisexually identified women also.

Research has also attempted to construct a typology of bisexual types (Halperin, 2009; Little, 2015). For example, Savin-Williams (2005) argues that within the literature there are at least nine different types of bisexualities (see table 2.1).

[14] Infamous in the bisexual community as opposed to infamous in the mainstream consciousness.

Table 2.1: Savin-Williams (2005) bisexual types.

	Bisexual type	Example of bisexual type
1	Situational	When self-identified heterosexuals have same-gender emotional or sexual relationships in particular contexts or circumstances such as in prison.
2	Transitional	This is somewhat of an extension of situational bisexuality in the sense that the individual continues the behaviour beyond the constraints of the particular situation and is making the transition to a gay/lesbian sexual identity.
3	Chic [15]	This type is considered mostly heterosexual with occasional same-gender involvement. Fahs' (2009) term 'performance' would also fit into this category. This label is assigned to those who perhaps practice same-gender sexual engagements as part of a wider social scene. Often associated among females and largely practiced at parties or spaces where same-gender kissing is done to capture the attention of men. As discussed this type of bisexuality is not taken seriously in these contexts as it is assumed to be just a 'bit of fun'. Young people are more likely to engage in this type of behaviour (Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009) and it is not usually used to lay a claim to a fixed bisexual identity.

[15] This is often referred in the literature as heteroflexibility (Essig, 2000).

4	Historic	This type is of bisexuality is understood when an individual has a history of same-gender sexual encounters or relationships but does not adopt a non-heterosexual identity label and instead is seen to be in the closet.
5	Technical	This type of bisexual is a person who does have sex with people of the same and different-gender but does not directly adopt the label of bisexual and prefers instead to identify as either straight or gay/lesbian. In this respect the fact that they have sex with males and females technically renders them behaviourally bisexual but they do not self-identify with the label itself.
6	Cop-out	These type of bisexuals are those who are considered to 'have their cake and eat it', in that they have sex with people of the same and different-gender usually in the context of sex parties but do not identify with the label of bisexuality and do not feel any sense of pressure to make any commitments to other individuals.
7	Sequential or Serial	This type illustrates those who engage in monogamous relationships. For example they may have a relationship with a person of a different-gender and when that relationship has ended they will go on to have another monogamous relationship with a person of either the same or different-gender. These bisexuals are often not considered to be bisexual due to the belief that by virtue

		of their monogamous relationship[16] they no longer engage in sex with anyone other than their partner.
8	Concurrent	These type of bisexuals are understood when individuals are in physical or emotional relationships with people of the same and different-gender at the same time. Individuals prefer to practice polyamory and engage in a number of relationships at the same time but not necessarily all together.
9	Experimental	This type is often seen as similar to concurrent bisexuality in that individuals have sex with who they want to, be they people of the same and/or different gender, because they elicit pleasure from it. These types of bisexuals are not so interested in the adoption of a sexual identity label but are more concerned with the experience of having sex and all the potential positives that result from that.

Pinning bisexual identity down to one unified definitional understanding is ontologically problematic as the above typology demonstrates. It is plausible to consider that during a person's lifetime one might occupy a number, or all, of the types of bisexualities (Savin-Williams, 2005). One of the potential criticisms with accounts or types of categories of bisexuality is that it simply extends the concept of binary divisions and potentially contributes to the perpetuation of some of the bi-negative stereotypes associated with bisexuals, such as the 'greedy or promiscuous bisexual' (Callis, 2014; MacDowell, 2009; Balsam, & Mohr, 2007; Angelides, 2001).

[16] Monogamous with a man or woman equalling heterosexual or lesbian.

It appears clear that the search for a single, widely agreed upon definition of bisexuality is problematic to secure (Steinman, 2011). The suggestion that a ‘one size fits all’ definition will always be problematic as the label holds different meanings for individuals (Weinberg et al., 1994; Steinman, 2011). In general the assumption is that bisexuals demonstrate erotic responses to people of the same and different-gender (Rodríguez-Rust, 2002). However, clearly there are issues with these umbrella understandings of bisexuality in that they do not directly address any of the questions related to what this really means. For example, can a person claim a bisexual identity if they have only ever fantasised about sex with someone of the same or different gender? What about if they are in a monogamous marriage and have never engaged in a same-gender relationship? What if they have sex with different genders but only experience romantic love for one gender?

The gamut of possibilities in respect of the potentialities of what could be included in a definition of bisexuality is wide ranging and ever expanding. There are many storied accounts of bisexuals who talk about how they have not physically engaged in same-gender sexual behaviour but are no less certain of their bisexual identity (Monro, 2015; Yoshino, 2000; Hutchins & Kaahumanu, 1991). Jones’ (2010) illustration below (see figure 2.1) offers a useful way in which to conceptualise bisexuality in that people who claim a bisexual identity may only be a portion of those individuals who engage in same-gender activity or behaviour, and of that group, they may only be a sub-set of people who experience attraction to people of the same and different-gender.

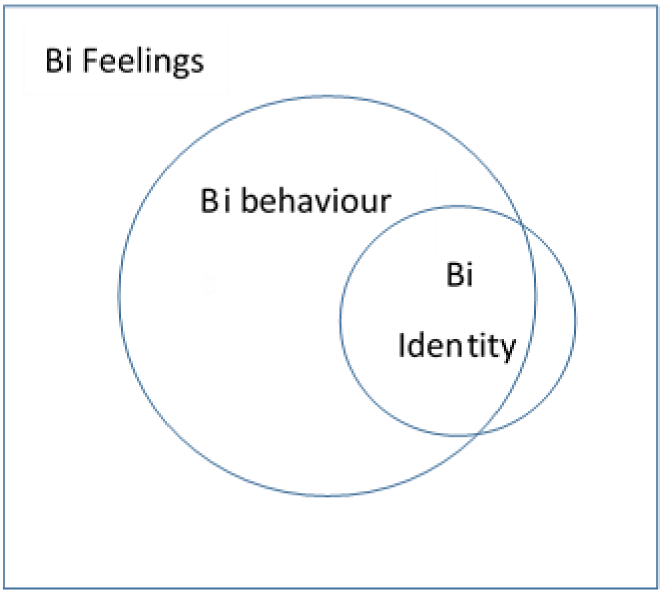

Figure 2.1: Conceptualising Bisexuality (Jones, 2010).

Barker et al., 2012) provide a useful articulation in relation to the definition of bisexuality. They suggest, *'People who see themselves as attracted to 'both men and women', people who are mostly attracted to one gender but recognise this is not exclusive, people who experience their sexual identities as fluid and changeable over time, people who see their attraction as 'regardless of gender' (other aspects are more important in determining who they are attracted to), and people who dispute the idea that there are only two genders and that people are attracted to one, the other, or both'* (p. 3). Inherent within this definition is the acknowledgement that there are a number of understandings of bisexuality and, consequentially, a bisexual. Ochs, (2011) definition (presented in chapter 1) is also useful as it acknowledges one's potentiality. Encapsulated within Ochs articulation is the recognition that one need not be concurrently engaging in relationships with individuals of the same and different-gender in order to self-identify as bisexual. For Ochs' it is the potential, rather than simply the behaviour, that is important. If a person thinks, feels and understands that they are attracted to people of the same and different-gender, then that is their reality. The acknowledgement of one's bisexual orientation does not necessarily mean they have to act on it in order for it to be any more 'real' to them. In addition, there is no expectation inherent within Ochs' definition that one must go against any promises they made to their partner in order to live as a bisexual person because, if one self-identifies as bisexual, then one is bisexual.

2.3.4 Clarifying terminology

The label 'bisexual' is understood to be a broad term, and, as the section above demonstrates can include different groups of people who may, or may not, understand their attractions in the same way (Barker et al., 2012; Barker & Yockney, 2004; Petford, 2003). In contemporary Western society, it is pertinent to highlight how gender is considered of primary importance in respect of sex and attraction. Common understandings of gender are understood to align with one's assigned sex at birth (that of male or female), whilst for many people this is unproblematic there are a growing number of individuals for whom this is not the case, for example transgender and non-binary people (Alexander & Yescavage, 2003). It is therefore important to acknowledge that gender is a social system that sets out particular attitudes and behaviours that are viewed as congruent with one's assigned sex, for example female being synonymous with feminine and woman, male being synonymous with masculine and man. The organisation of gender in this way has material effects on everyone, but in particular women, such that they are positioned as subordinate to men and face a number inequalities because they are women (Hemmings, 2002). It is also important to acknowledge that we live in a patriarchal society whereby men stand to benefit from female subordination and marginalisation both within the public and private sphere (Oakley, 2008).

Homosexual and heterosexual identities are principally defined as attraction to the same or opposite-sex respectively (Bowes-Catton and Hayfield, 2015). This hegemonic perspective of sexual attraction positions monosexuality as authentic and natural (Flanders, Dobinson, & Logie, 2015). Bisexual identity and attraction has been conceptually positioned between the binary poles of heterosexuality and homosexuality. Bisexuals are therefore understood as people who are attracted to the same and opposite sex and gender. Framed in this way bisexuality poses the hegemonic view of sexuality with two central issues. Firstly it challenges the assumption that sexuality is static and fixed (Diamond, 2008), and secondly it contests the notion that gender is fundamental and essential in respect of sex and attraction (Bowes-Catton, 2015). The general conceptualisation of bisexuality as being positioned in the middle of the binary, is for many people, an inaccurate way in which to represent and understand the identity (Petford, 2003), in that it serves to over-simplify the specificities of gender, attraction and desire (Corey, 2017; Barker et al., 2012; Kinsey et al., 1958). As mentioned in section 1.3.3, many people find utilising the term ‘bisexual’ problematic as the pre-fix ‘bi’ donates that there are only two genders with which to be attracted to (Barker et al., 2012; Barker & Yockney, 2004; Petford, 2003). Consequently many individuals who are attracted to more than one gender choose not to define or refer to themselves as bisexual (Callis, 2014; Macalister, 2003). For example, research carried out by Rodríguez-Rust (2001) identified that many of her participants utilised more than one term to describe their non-heterosexual identity, opting for terms such as, pansexual or queer rather than ‘bisexual’ *per se.* Research suggests that by adopting terms such as, ‘same’, ‘different’, ‘other’ and ‘binary’ when referencing gender, serves to reinforce and support the notion that there are only two legitimate genders with which to choose from (Yoshino, 2000). This assumption erases individuals whose pluralistic identities fall outside traditional definitions and understandings of what constitutes gender (for example, transgender people). In addition, many bisexuals would agree with the assertion that they are attracted to a variety of gender presentations, including, for example, transgender and genderless people. Nevertheless, participants in both Ault’s (1999) and Barker et al’s., (2008) research continued to draw from dominant constructions of gender and sexuality when discussing their attractions and relationships despite professing the view that they did not adhere to hegemonic constructions of gender and sexuality. This demonstrates the challenges individuals face when attempting to articulate concepts such as gender and sexuality without referring to binary constructions. The communication and expression of bisexuality and one’s attractions to others, becomes difficult to operationalise when avoiding established binary categories of such things as gender and sexuality.

It is for this reason that I have chosen to refer to ‘same-gender’ and ‘different-gender’ when expressing bisexual attraction in the current research. I believe this articulation highlights how one can be attracted to a person with whom they share the same gender category with, more specifically whose gender identity (e.g. internal sense of being female) corresponds with their sex (e.g. assigned biological and physiological characteristics that define female). When referencing ‘different-gender’ I include and acknowledge those people with whom one does not share the same gender category with, including for example, non-binary people. As discussed above, I understand and acknowledge the problems associated with the use of such binary defined terms when speaking about gender, attraction and relationships (Richardson & Monro, 2012). However, as highlighted I argue that these terms are the most intelligible to use when attempting to discuss bisexuality and bisexual relationships.

2.3.5 Problems with behavioural definitions

Walker's (2014a; 2014b) research explored women who identified as heterosexual and were in committed monogamous relationships with men but they continued to seek sex with women in secret, or as could be described, as on the 'down low'[17] (Ford, Whetten, Hall, Kaufman, & Thrasher, 2007, p. 209). (For the purposes of her research Walker utilised the term 'undercover' to convey the same sentiment[18]). What she found was a group of women who did indeed actively look for sexual relationships with other women at the same time as they were in a committed relationship with a man. Participants talked about how they did not want their husbands/boyfriends to discover their infidelities as they wanted to retain their male partnered relationship. These women spoke of how they were not interested in love attachments or fostering emotional intense relationships with the women they slept with; instead they preferred to keep the focus on the sexual experience and encounters. Walker's (2014a; 2014b) participants felt that sleeping with women as opposed to men was more acceptable to them psychologically. They understood that in relation to any desires they required from men specifically, they already

[17] The term 'down low' largely originates from communities of African American men who publicly consider themselves heterosexual but who engage in sexual activities with other men. This behaviour is not thought to interrupt their self-ascribed sexual identity label of heterosexual and further it is not considered to be something they needed to discuss with their girlfriends, wives or wider family members

[18] Although her participants were not drawn from the same demographic as the participants who took part in the research conducted by Ford et al., (2007).

had direct access to them through their male partner. The way in which these women dealt with these activities was to *'live a secret, compartmentalised life'* (p. 197b). Participants articulated that often these undercover sexual encounters or relationships served to positively contribute towards their marriages. In addition, they professed to have no interest in transitioning to a bisexual or lesbian identity as they were only interested in the act of sex with women. They did, however, draw on gender differences in relation to what they psychologically got out of these encounters. For example, they spoke about sex with women being more *'intimate'* (p. 921b), *'mentally intimate'* (p. 925b) and *'intense'* (p. 925b). Participants spoke about a unique connectedness and level of closeness with women. For example, the ability to talk openly with them, as well as feel *'safer'* (p. 925b) in their company. A number of them discussed how women were better lovers because they had the same anatomy and were more aware in relation to what women want sexually. This demonstrates that despite their protestations that these dalliances were underpinned by the act of sex only, Walker's participants can be seen to recognise that they acquired something different and unique from their sexual relationship encounters with women. These findings are consistent with George's (1993) findings, in that bisexual women also expressed that they had different experiences in their relationships with both men and women.

One can begin to understand where some of the lesbian caution and apprehension in relation to dating bisexual women comes from, particularly if lesbians have encountered women such as Walker researched. Participants who took part in Walker's (2014a, 2014b) research also cited times when they had to deal with women who became *'too attached'* (p. 297) and, as such, referenced difficulties in respect of extricating themselves from these relationships. One must be mindful however that Walker's (2014a, 2014b) participants did not identify themselves as bisexual and, in fact, were critical of the identity label itself. These women state that they have never claimed or expressed a bisexual identity to their male partners or indeed the women they are sleeping with. Of course, the women who are having relations with Walkers participants may assume that due to the fact they are engaging in same and different-gender encounters they are at least behaviourally bisexual. However Bauer and Jairam, (2008) and Cochran and Mays, (2007) found that individuals who were behaviourally bisexual but did not identify as such showed poorer mental health outcomes than those who identified as bisexual but did not have any same-gender sexual experiences. Thus, this body of research points to the protective aspect of adopting an identity label of bisexual, irrespective of whether or not one has had any sexual experiences with people of the same-gender.

Garber (1995) avoids the use of the term ‘bisexuality’ in her book ‘Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life’. Garber (1995) prefers instead to utilise ‘bi-eroticism’ as she argues that historically we can see many presentations of individuals who both write about, and profess love for, people of the same and different-gender. Examining what we claim to know about historical influential non-heterosexual figures opens up new understandings and interpretations. For example, Oscar Wilde has long been acclaimed to be a gay man despite the fact that he had a wife with whom he professed to love. Despite this, and other examples of well-known people having same and different-gender attractions, why is there still such a reluctance to acknowledge this reality? Some theorists have claimed that to do so would destabilise the Western binary construction of sexuality and that this is much too threatening for monosexuals (Yoshino, 2000). In effect, the complete and total denial of the existence of bisexuality serves to ensure that both ends of the binary remain dominant and continue to be viewed as legitimate.

According to Yoshino (2000), one of the most concerning aspects of bisexuality is the view that bisexuals are unable to hold down monogamous relationships. Esterberg (2002) refers to the lesbian and gay communities’ perception of bisexuals as a ‘menace’, in that they are understood to potentially put at risk all the rights the community have fought for. Gays and lesbians have spent decades campaigning to be accepted as normative in their love for the same-gender and have emulated heteronormative institutions and practices (Esterline & Galupo, 2013). Therefore, they do not want to potentially lose all that they have gained by affiliation with bisexuals, who for some, claim that their sexual identity is not fixed and is instead fluid and dependable on the environment or context (Diamond, 2008a; Diamond, 2008b). Having said that, many bisexuals claim that their sexual identity is solid and fixed (Moss, 2012). Once again we can see how definitions of bisexuality are still in flux. The perceived instability of bisexuality is a cause for concern for monosexuals (particularly same-gender attracted monosexuals for the reasons discussed above). The ways in which bisexuality is understood on a societal level is to deny its existence and ridicule relationships by levelling accusations of non-monogamy in an attempt to distance this perceived distasteful practise away from monosexual relationships. Monosexuality is, by definition, orientation towards one gender so by association they are assumed to be more capable of monogamy than bisexuals are (Klesse 2014). (I talk more about this in chapter 3).

2.3.6 Intersectionality

Intersectional analysis has highlighted the case that people have various identities as opposed to one fixed identity position. Although intersectionality has been referred to as a theoretical 'buzzword' (Davis, 2008), it has been useful in interpreting various modes of discrimination (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Kantola & Nousiainen, 2009). In a person's life both situation and context is important, and it is for this reason that theories in relation to the intertwining of identities is useful when thinking about bisexuality because identifying as bisexual is understood to impact on one's lived experience. Intersectionality is an approach developed by Crenshaw (1993) and it acknowledges the way in which identity is multi-faceted. Intersectionality is particularly concerned with identity and attempts to explain ways in which certain groups in society are marginalised (Davis, 2008). Taylor (2009) defines intersectionality as, *'… the mutually constrictive nature of social divisions and the ways these are experienced, reproduced, and resisted in everyday life. A successful intersectional practice thus explores relational and reinforcing exclusions and inclusions'* (p. 190). Women who identify as bisexual are often dealing with other aspects of their identity such as gender, (Choo & Ferree, 2010), race, (Crenshaw, 1993), and motherhood (Ross, Siegel, Dobinson, Epstein, & Steele, 2012). Intersectionality is a way in which to understand that these identities intersect with one another to produce the person. Thus, there is rarely one aspect of identity which is positioned as the most important and therefore occupies the top of the person hierarchy (Caldwell, 2010; Monro, 2015; Taylor, 2009).

Discussions in relation to the types of social divisions that should be included in the 'list' of inequalities are not helpful. Conceptualising intersectionality in this way serves to perpetuate the assumption that there is indeed a hierarchy of social oppressions. This is clearly problematic because what an individual perceives as the most pertinent inequality at a given time or in a particular context, will differ between and amongst individuals (Lutz, 2002). Obviously there are situations where one is mindful that a particular part (or parts) of one's identity is being subject to judgement (this can be positively or negatively), particularly aspects of visible identity such as gender or colour (Crenshaw, 1993). Often women of colour who are disabled and identify as queer face multiple prejudices from society and may therefore struggle to identify which particular aspect of their identity is the most marginalised, and indeed, if it is at all possible to disentangle identity (Caldwell, 2010). Thus, assumptions should not be made in relation to which aspect of a person's identity is the most important, or indeed, the most marginalised. Intersectionality theory understands the social context of individuals varies and is mindful that issues such as race, gender, class and so on should not be *'tagged onto each other mechanically'* (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983, p. 62) as the *'intersection. . . is something that lives, breathes and moves'* (Taylor, 2009, p. 194). King (1988) argues that *'each discrimination has a single, direct and independent effect on status, wherein the relative contribution of each is readily apparent',* and goes on to say, *'. . . the non-productive assertions that one factor can and should supplant the other'* (p. 47) is not helpful, and does not account for the multiple ways in which identity is intersectional.

In relation to women who claim a bisexual identity, it is clear that they face challenges in respect of whether to out themselves as bisexual and run the risk of perceived bi-negative stereotypes that can impact upon their sense of self-esteem and more directly their mental health (Barker et al., 2012; Ross, et al., 2012; Brewster & Moradi, 2010; Bostwick, Boyd, Hughes & McCabe, 2010; Balsom & Mohr, 2007). Bisexual women may refrain from informing others and retain their assumed heterosexual or homosexual privilege. In remaining hidden, they may well face internal challenges in relation to authenticity, which again can impact upon their mental health as well as their self-concept. However, if the individual is already facing challenges because they are female and/or black and/or disabled, then the potentiality of having to overtly face another prejudice may well be too much to bear.

Theorists argue that it is a mistake to conceptualise others as ever just privileged and/or oppressed (Jordan-Zachery, 2007; McCall, 2005). Individuals constantly regulate opposing aspects of themselves, therefore identity viewed in this way can be seen as in flux, and not fixed and static. Intersectionality theory can help to aid in the understanding that people adopt strategic ways in which to deal and manage multiple aspects of their identities and that there are occasions when the presentation of a holistic self is felt not to be appropriate, directly because of the potential ramifications of the various stigmatisations they may face. McCall (2005) provides an interesting and useful way in which to look at the various approaches to the study of intersectionality. In particular, her approaches can be utilised in the study of non-normative sexualities (Monro, 2015).

McCall (2005) suggests an approach which completely deconstructs identity categories rendering them of no use whatsoever. This includes the identity category of ‘bisexual’, which she calls *‘anticategorical complexity’* (p. 62). This way McCall (2005) argues that the notion that there are such things as fixed immutable sexual identities is absurd. She acknowledges that the structural and social forces which populate and perpetuate such constructs ultimately serve to marginalise individuals who do not fit into organised, neat sexual categories. Researchers working within UK bisexual communities are mindful that this is a difficult endeavour, as they have observed that despite the deconstruction of sexual identity categories in these communities, they are still very much predominantly occupied by white, middle class educated people (Barker et al., 2011; Monro, 2015). In addition, in order to better understand the ways in which power is distributed in society one must be aware of the *‘intercategorical complexity’* (p. 62). In effect, there exists structures in society that have paved the way for there to be inequality and prejudices between the sexes, classes races etc. Knowledge in relation to the underpinnings of how we, as a society and culture, have arrived at where we are now, can lead to a better understanding of the position of those who do not ascribe to the existing monosexual assumed relationship practice. This approach to the study of intersectionality is acutely aware that structures and categories can be used in strategic ways in order to give them power. Anticategorical approaches would break down such categories and delete them, whilst intercategorical approaches would have us utilise the term and category of bisexual as a force. Thirdly, McCall (2005) introduces *‘intracategorical complexity’* (p. 62) as an approach which is mid-way between the previous two approaches. It employs an interrogative style of questioning the utility of categories and boundaries of such things like sexual identity as well as understanding that such practices are in and of themselves useful and important. So, although intersectionality is not a theory of bisexuality *per se*, it is helpful in relation to the understanding the lived experiences of bisexuals. In particular, it draws attention to ways in which prejudice and discrimination may manifest themselves and the complex ways in which different aspects of identity interact with others (Monro, 2015).

2.3.7 Section summary

We can see that the way in which sexuality has been conceptualised has changed over time. Culture and history have shaped the way in which sexual behaviour and identity has been conceptualised (Foucault, 1978). The twenty-first century has seen gay and lesbian identities assume an equal footing with heterosexual identity, in terms of them both being conceptualised as legitimate and authentic sexual identities [19](Plummer, 2017). Queer theory has highlighted the temporal aspect of identity in that it can shift and change over time thus they are critical of all binary categories of identification, seeing them as problematic and constricting the understanding of human sexuality. Nonetheless, the current binary construction of sexual identity offers us the opportunity to define and understand our sexual identities in relation to others. Definitions of bisexuality have struggled to catch the essence of what bisexuality means for many people and there have been many attempts at constructing a unified definition that incorporates what it means to be romantically and sexually attracted to people of the same and different-gender. Many of the most drawn on definitions of bisexuality are inclusive also of other pluralistic sexual identities that may, or may not necessarily conceptualise themselves as bisexual *per se*. Intersectional theorists argue that identity is never just one ‘thing’ as it is underpinned by one’s history and culture and so is multifaceted and layered. Conceptualising bisexuality in the middle of the heterosexual and homosexual binary leads to misunderstanding and inaccurate articulations of what is involved when one claims a bisexual identity. However the continued pursuit of a unified bisexual definition as a way of uniting those who are attracted

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[19] I am referring to Western society specifically. According to Plummer (2017) there are approximately 72 countries that continue to criminalise same-sex relationships.

to people of the same and different-gender appears to be important, particularly in respect of contributing towards reaching a time and place where bisexual identity is afforded the same legitimacy and authenticity as both heterosexuality and homosexuality.

2.4 Maintaining a bisexual identity and models of non-normative identity

'All of us have to learn how to invent our lives. Make them up, imagine them [. . .] If we don't, our lives get made up for us by other people' (le Guin, 2000, p. 208). In relation to sexual identity development there have been a number of models that have attempted to succinctly conceptualise the process one goes through in relation to an awareness and acceptance of a healthy non-heterosexual identity (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Martin, 1991; Troiden, 1989; Degges-White., Rice., & Myers, 2000; Horowitz & Newcomb, 2002). Most models tend to focus on gay men only (Edwards & Brooks, 1999) and are constructed with a monosexual end in mind, failing to consider same and different-gender attraction in any way. That being said, discussions in relation to the usefulness of models in providing a framework for locating one's sexual identity is helpful, particularly for the person undergoing the process, as well as for those who work in specific contexts such as therapy and counselling support. McCarn and Fassinger (1996) have argued that utilising such models in therapeutic settings may provide clinicians with a helpful base with which to work with individuals who have what they believe is a *'stigmatised identity'* (p. 508). Working through models such as those I outline below could aid in the construction of a positive sexual identity. Thus, I think it is useful to briefly overview some of these in an attempt to better understand the problematic issues bisexuals face in an attempt to map on to these (and other) types of same-gender orientated models of identity.

There are a limited range of categories with which individuals can locate their sexual identity. Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin, (1948) and Kinsey et al., (1953) carried out research into the sexual behaviour of men and women in America. Their research is perhaps the most well-known and influential in modern sexology; it provided one of the first psychological insights into how individuals saw their sexual identity, and that for some people sexual identity was not located firmly at the ends of the existing dichotomous binary. Incorporating both desire and behaviour in to their research, the researchers devised a sexual orientation grid in order to measure and quantify sexual behaviour from one end of a zero to six point scale[20]. This research was influential particularly in relation to theorising about bisexuality, but also for adding weight to the suggestion that for many people sexuality and sexual preference is fluid (Bowes-Catton, 2015; Diamond, 2008a). Following on from this work, Klein (1978) went on to develop a framework he called the 'Klein Sexual Orientation Grid' (KSOG) which included some of the components he felt were missing from Kinsey's original scale. Klein (1978) argued that Kinsey et al., (1948, 1953) failed to incorporate many of the variables that were important in the construction of one's sexual identity (such as sexual attraction, sexual fantasies, emotional preference, social preference, self-identification and lifestyle). The KSOG therefore provides a useful way in which to conceptualise sexual identity in that it acknowledges more directly the complexities surrounding sexuality more generally.

Both Klein (1978) and Kinsey et al., (1948, 1953) contribution to the understanding of bisexuality have been important; however, they are both not without their criticisms. For example in relation to Kinsey et al., (1948, 1953) inclusion of the term 'incidental', researchers have questioned what exactly 'incidental' means as it no doubt can hold a different meaning for individuals. Similarly, the KSOG requires respondents to think about the past in relation to all seven variables, however, he does not specify how far back in the past one should delve into, making it problematic to get a real sense of what matters and what does not.

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[20] Zero represented exclusively heterosexual with no homosexual experience. Six represented an exclusively homosexual orientation. The midpoint marker of three represented equally heterosexual and homosexual. One represented predominately heterosexual only incidentally homosexual. Two represented predominately heterosexual more than incidentally homosexual. Four represented predominately homosexual more than incidentally heterosexual. Finally five represented predominately homosexual only incidentally heterosexual.

2.4.1 Stage models of identity development

Coming from a developmental perspective, the psychologist Cass (1979) developed a six stage[21] 'Homosexual Identity Formation Model' that included both gay men and lesbians (Edwards & Brooks, 1999). Cass' (1979) position in relation to sexual identity was that it developed through a process of interaction between the individual, context, and environment (Kenneady & Oswalt, 2014). Cass (1979) suggested that individuals proceed through the stages in a linear type fashion, and that at any stage in the process they can terminate their progression. Firstly, Cass (1979) argues that before one can begin the process of moving through the stages, one must acknowledge that the world is heteronormative. As such, this dominant discourse gives weight to the perception that non-normative sexualities are subordinate in status to heterosexuality. Cass (1979) goes on to suggest that stage one of her model is characterised by what she calls 'identity confusion'. This is when individuals begin to question the dominant heterocentric view of sexual identity and begin to recognise that their own thoughts and behaviours are more in line with the minority status of lesbians and gays. Stage two is characterised by 'identity comparison'. This is when individuals fluctuate between two positions; one being that of denial of a potential gay or lesbian identity and the other being one of acceptance of their minority status. 'Identity tolerance' marks stage three of Cass's (1979) model. Here, the individual is seen to move closer to a position of acceptance of one's minority status. However, this stage can be perceived as somewhat uncertain because individuals can fall into one of three camps. First, they can be pleased about this realisation and positively accept the identity. Second, they can be displeased and perceive the identity as undesirable and third, there can be a combination of the previous two

[21] Later subsumed into four stages.

positions, with individuals acknowledging that a minority status is likely. At this point, individuals are thought to be in the process of reaching out to other non-normative sexualities in an attempt to foster connections. The building of friendships with other minority status individuals at this point serves to diminish thoughts of isolation and alienation. Stage four is 'identity acceptance'. This is a continuation of the previous stage in the sense that individuals are thought to continue to build networks of minority status friendships or search for other ways in which to glean positive support for their gay and lesbian identities. Stage five is the point at which individuals show 'identity pride' in their gay or lesbian status. This stage is characterised by a sense of fitting-in and belonging to the wider gay and lesbian community. Individuals may choose to be active in the community in order to encourage positive identity support for others. The final phase in Cass's (1979) model is 'identity syntheses'. By the time an individual reaches this stage of identity development they are thought to be in a place where their personal and public self-image is in congruence. One's sexual identity is considered to be an integral part of who one is, existing side by side with other intersections of identity. Cass (1979) believed that coming out and disclosing one's sexual identity was important in relation to a complete and full integration of one's minority status. Other researchers have considered Cass's model and have adapted elements of her stages, or utilised parts of her model (Chapman & Brannock, 1987; Van de Meerendonk & Probst, 2004; Levine, 1997; Brady & Busse, 1994; Degges-White et al., 2000).

Although models such as the ones presented above tell us something useful in relation to identity development, there is discrepancy and disjuncture in relation to the suitability and 'best fit' of models irrespective of the specific sexual identity (gay, lesbian etc.) they are attempting to articulate. One of the issues with the models presented above is that they are largely simplistic in description. Whilst in and of themselves descriptions are useful this becomes problematic when one is ultimately expected to reach a final monosexual destination in relation to their sexual identity. Diamond, (2008 a, b) has demonstrated that for many women sexual identity shifts over time and context and is considered fluid. Thus, the notion that one is expected to reach some kind of Holy Grail of identity knowledge once the identity work is all done and dusted is problematic.

Implicit within a number of stage models of sexual identity is the belief that in order to be viewed as fully accepting of one's queer identity, one must be content to disclose one's non-normative sexuality to others. This ethnocentric perspective is problematic as it assumes understandings of identity are the same for everyone. Clearly this is not the case globally as there are cultural differences in respect of what is considered to be the truth of sexuality and identity. (Ford et al., 2007). There are those who, despite engaging in same-gender sexual behaviours, do not consider themselves to be queer in any way shape or form (Walker, 2014). Weinberg, (1984) points to the fact that not everyone starts from the same position in respect of identity. For example, research has indicated that some bisexual women are certain of their sexuality before any sexual experience has taken place, whilst others have reported no conception of feeling attracted to the same-gender till they fell in love unexpectedly with a woman (Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2000; Dank, 1971).Therefore, the concept of a linear progressive model of identity is problematic. In addition, models also fail to explicitly acknowledge that individuals can hold multiple identities at the same time (Crenshaw, 1993; Davis, 2008).

An alternative way in which to view sexual identity development has been to recognise that sexuality and sexual identity is far too complex and flexible to be reduced down to a set of stages in a constructed definitive model (Diamond, 2008b; Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). Attempts have been made to formulate a model of bisexual development, incorporating the unique differences between monosexual identity development, and those who are attracted to the same and different-gender (Weinberg et al., 1994; Brown, 2002).

Weinberg et al., (1994) carried out their research over a number of years to ascertain some understanding of the process of identity development for bisexuals. The researchers found gender differences, identifying that the physical act of same-gender sex appeared easier for men than the emotional component of same-gender relationships. The opposite was true for women, in that they reported having romantic love feelings for women before they engaged in sex with them. The researchers concluded that there were four broad stages individuals progressed through in the construction of a bisexual identity.

The first stage is 'initial confusion'; this stage can potentially last a long time. Individuals are understood to struggle with the idea of being attracted to people of the same and different-gender and are thought to deal with both internal and external homophobia and bi-negativity. The next stage is 'finding and applying the label'; this stage is centred around participants' finding an appropriate word or term that they feel best articulates their sexual attractions to the same and different-gender. For some individuals just knowing there was a word was enough for them to feel as though they could utilise it to describe themselves. Despite now feeling the label of bisexual best fit their sexual identity, participants reported internal, negative, stereotypical attitudes in relation to bisexuality and that these views contributed towards confusion over the identity. The following stage, 'settling into the identity', is a time where participants can be seen be more at ease with their sexuality. Although participants' still questioned their identity and oscillated between thoughts of being homosexual as opposed to bisexual, they reported more comfort with the label. Those either in, or desiring, monogamy reported that, irrespective of this relationship constellation, they would retain the identity label of bisexual, whilst others questioned if that would be possible. The final stage in Weinberg et al's., (1994) model is 'continued uncertainty'. Despite previous points in the model where participants' discussed acceptance of their bisexuality participants can be seen to intermittently question if the label still applied to them. The researchers hypothesised a number of rationales for this, ranging from a lack of access to positive bisexual role models, to the absence of queer community support and validation. Those who were in monogamous relationships were seen to question the legitimacy of their identity given that they had committed to a monosexual relationship. In addition, those individuals who had never had intimate relationships with other people as well as those who reported unequal attraction to people of the same and different-gender at times continued to question the fit of the identity label.

The researchers identified that within feminist communities there was a potential source of negativity directed towards bisexually identified women as their connections with men often challenged their commitment towards the female cause as they were often viewed as *'selling out the world of women'* (Weinberg et al.,1994, p. 35). The researchers came to the conclusion that of all the stages proposed in the model, the final stage of 'continued uncertainty' seemed to best characterise the situation for participants. Researchers theorised that there were a number of reasons for this, in that they recognised the difficulties maintaining a positive bisexual identity in a culture that stigmatises and positions bisexuals as illegitimate. The researchers acknowledged that variables can shape decision making, such that if one is engaged in a same-gender relationship, and is also active within the lesbian community it might feel unauthentic to maintain a claim of bisexual legitimacy.

Brown, (2002) rearticulated the stages of Weinberg et al's., (1994) model and extended them taking account of the role that gender differences play in the lived experience of each stage. He also acknowledges the role of culture in the construction of identity in that it can aid or impede the identity process. According to Larson, (1981) *'. . . sexual identity is multifaceted and involves significant contributions from gender, social gender role, and sexual orientation'* (p. 27). Firstly, Brown (2002) discusses how gender can result in individuals experiencing identity development qualitatively differently from one another. Research has shown that women are more accepting of non-normative sexual behaviours than men (Falco, 1991). This is supported by the findings of researchers who have shown that female sexual identity appears more fluid than male sexual identity (Diamond, 2008a; Diamond, 2008b; Savin-Williams, & Diamond, 2000). Another difference in relation to men and women is that women tend to be more tuned into emotional connections as opposed to physical sexual connections. For women this is an important factor in the process of feeling attracted to other women. Furthermore, women are less likely to feel as though they can initiate sexual relations with other women, whereas men take a much more pragmatic and proactive approach to the physicality of initiating sex (Weinberg et al., 1994). In relation to the initial confusion stage, one of the issues for individuals could be anxiety in relation to the role they would play in a same-gender relationship. In effect, some people may feel anxious over potential expectations others may have of their gender performance in a same-gender relationship. In relation to applying a label stage of the model, Brown (2002) points out that this stage of Weinberg's model may be problematic as research has demonstrated that there can be uncertainty in relation to the adoption of labels. Brown (2002) draws on those women who identify as lesbian but also engage in sex with men (Glassman, 1995; Golden 1987). Thus, there can be suspiciousness in relation to whether or not the label is the best one for the individual.

Youths in particular find sexual identity labels too restrictive (Savin-Williams, & Diamond, 2000) and prefer to utilise terms which leave the potential for change in orientation flexible. Brown (2002) elaborates the third stage of the model 'settling into the identity' by adding that research has shown the difficulties individuals face when they are unable to glean support for their identity. This results in hesitation in the coming out process, as often people are concerned about the impact the disclosure will have on close ones. One of the factors that supports those in this situation is a supportive, accepting partner (Coleman, 1985). In effect, for some individuals this can cancel out their need for wider social support. (Legate, Ryan, & Weinstein, 2012). Those who are accepting of their sexual identity also claim better mental health (Kerr, & Emerson, 2003; D'Augelli, 1994). This is somewhat supported by evidence from a recent 2008 report by Stonewall showing that bisexual women suffer higher rates of mental illness, in particular depression and anxiety, and that one of the perhaps contributing factors towards women feeling stressed is the issue of identity non-acceptance. Brown (2002) renamed stage four of Weinberg et al's., (1994) model from 'continued uncertainty' to 'identity maintenance' to reflect the view that once an individual has adopted an identity label of bisexual, the individual begins the continued process of maintaining that identity by engaging in various behaviours to reify and support the identity (Hartman, 2013; Hartman-Linck, 2014). This stage of the rearticulated model is a position one can be seen to be engaged in forever, or at least as long as one adopts the identity label of bisexual.

2.4.2 To be or not to be: Bisexual coming in and out

To 'come out' is a difficult term to define, largely because it has multiple meanings. One definition suggested by Rodríguez-Rust, (2003) is, *'The process by which individuals come to recognise that they have romantic or sexual feelings towards members of their own gender, adopt lesbian or gay (or bisexual) identities, and then share these identities with others'* (p. 227). Coming out is understood more generally to form part of a wider developmental process in which 'being out' is the recognition that one has built an authentic and stable sense of self (Raggins, 2004). Historically, to out oneself as gay or lesbian was seen as a necessary thing to do, particularly in respect of advancing the political agenda in relation to equality for non-heterosexual people (Armstrong, 2002; Shepard, 2009). The Gay Liberation movement of the early 1970s was adamant that queer people needed to be visible and one way to achieve this was to out oneself. Thus, coming out can be positioned as necessary for political reasons, and less so for perhaps personal ones. One of the ramifications of this way of conceptualising coming out is that personal rationales for disclosing one's sexuality are overlooked or assumed (Orne, 2011).

Orne (2011) focuses his research on gay men and their written narrative conceptualisations of coming out. Orne's (2011) participants engaged in what he calls 'strategic outness' as a means by which they managed their sexual identity. This takes on board the fact that when people are making decisions about whether to disclose their sexual identity, they are mindful of the context they are in, as well as the person they are talking to, in effect, making the decision relatively strategic. This re-conceptualisation in relation to non-heterosexual people adopting a strategic approach to outing themselves is in contrast to traditional models of coming out which has seen coming out as the end point of identity work (Stein, 2003). There is a misplaced consensus in the literature that coming out is underpinned by the ways in which individuals interact with each other. The environment also plays a part in the coming out process. There is no end point in relation to coming out; to be out to everybody all of the time is impossible. Therefore, in that respect one is always *'both in and out of the closet'* (Mosher, 2001, p. 169). Orne (2011) identifies a number of strategies in relation to participants making the decision to come out as gay. He suggests that embedded within participants' consciousness is an awareness of the environment and context they are in. Orne goes on to say that there are 'tools' participants use in managing their coming out episode/s. First, *'direct disclosure'* (p. 689); this is when they directly tell others they are gay. Second, participants disclose their identity through the use of *'clues'* (p. 690). This can be done through dressing in ways which stereotypically suggest a non-heterosexual identity, or by verbally expressing views and interests in the 'gay world'. Third, participants engage in *'concealment'* (p. 690) strategies as a way in which to avoid being out to particular people. Participants would change their behaviour in the presence of the person they did not want to disclose their sexual identity to. Lastly, participants utilise *'speculation'* (p. 691) as a strategy whereby they leave people guessing about their sexual orientation. They are not necessarily keeping the information from them, rather they are choosing not to be explicit in relation to their sexual identity. This can be due to a perception that it is not important for them to be seen or understood as gay by other people, therefore removing the assumed pressing urge to disclose the perceived vital identity information.

Clearly underpinning all these findings were the participants motivations to disclose their gay identity. The participants were mindful about these motivations (or discourses) when they were engaged in the process of coming out or not to people in their lives. Motivations of *'explosive knowledge'* (p. 692) and *'living a lie'* (p. 692) were identified due to the fact that participants were mindful of the impact that both these motivations could have on themselves and others around them. The discourse of explosive knowledge was understood as a fear that coming out would have negative consequences for both sides. Only by managing ones gay identity could one avoid any danger. The latter originates from a historical discourse which positions one as only reaching true fulfilment through disclosing one's sexual identity (Orne, 2011).

The narrative of 'living a lie' is reflective of the political calls of duty in that gay and lesbian individuals should come out, and is relatable to the 'the closet' metaphor used to describe individuals who were hidden away in the dark, which is assumed to equal unhappiness (Rasmussen, 2004; Seidman, 2002). Other writers have identified with what they term the 'disclosure imperative' (Rasmussen, 2004; McLean, 2007) in that individuals weigh up the consequences of outing themselves in respect of these two motivational discourses. In addition, context and social distance can be seen to influence participants' strategic decision making processes in respect of coming out. Social distance is understood to relate to the space between people often as a result of attachment, social interaction, proximity, and mutual expectations (Chelune, Robison & Kommor, 1984). Orne (2011) succinctly characterised this concept by the use of the phrase *'We're close'* (p. 698) to illustrate the importance of this variable in relation to coming out. The rationale being that one is more likely to out oneself to those who they are closer to in terms of social distance, than those with whom they are not. The decision in relation to outing oneself as gay is fraught with a variety of considerations, and is a complex continual process. Although Orne's (2011) research focused on gay men I would argue that in general the findings have considerable resonance for the experience of bisexuals 'coming out'.

It would appear to be the case that there are several benefits to identifying and outing oneself as non-heterosexual (Bauer & Jairam, 2008; Cochran & Mays, 2007). For example, research has pointed to the personal health benefits of being out to friends and family (Ragins, 2004). Having said that, researchers have identified that outing oneself as LGBT+ can have negative implications on the self, particularly if the environment and context one is in is not supportive. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000) understand that social contexts vary in relation to what Legate et al., (2012) term *'autonomy support'* and *'controlling environments'* (p. 145) in considering the support one receives for a non-heterosexual identity. They postulate that environments which are perceived to be high in autonomy support are more likely to result in LGBT+ people feeling supported in coming out, as they trust and believe they are accepted for who they are. Conversely, environments which are perceived to be controlling do not foster openness. In these spaces there is assumed to be more emphasis on fitting in and behaving in expected ways. In such environments LGBT+ people are seen to weigh up the risks in relation to coming out as non-heterosexual.

Some of the concepts Orne (2011) found in his research can be seen to be considered in Legate et al's., (2012) study looking at the relationship between autonomy support and wellbeing across relationships. They identify *'concealment'* (p. 146) as something lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals do in order to avoid potential negative reactions in relation to their sexual identity. Participants were seen to avoid situations whereby they could be made to feel negative in respect of their sexual orientation. Yet paradoxically engaging in concealment strategies can result in worse outcomes psychologically over time. Mohr and Fassinger, (2006) identified how engaging in such strategies have long term negative effects on relationship satisfaction, particularly for same-gender couples. Other researchers have pointed to the fact that concealment strategies affect job promotion and foster higher negative attitudes in relation to work (Ragins, Singh, & Cornwall, 2007).

Experimental research has identified how those who have to hide their sexual identity perform less well at on a range of both cognitive and physical tasks as opposed to those who are open about it and do not have to conceal their orientation (Critcher & Ferguson, 2011). Research focusing on both verbal and physical abuse carried out by D'Augelli, Hershberger and Pilkington, (1998) concluded that youths who had come out as LGBT+ to their families experienced higher rates of abuse than those who had not come out. Thus, coming out is further understood to be a complex decision to make for oneself. The notion that this decision is one in which only young non-heterosexual people need to consider is not accurate. LGBT+ people across the life-course are affected by coming out and can be seen to engage in considerations of the utility of coming out both to themselves and to others. The same is true for older generations of LGBT+ individuals who may have experienced greater victimisation in relation to their orientation (D'Augelli & Grossman, 2001). Legate et al., (2012) suggest that one of the ways in which LGBT+ people manage their disclosure of non-heterosexuality is through their engagement with what they term ones *'outness level'* (p. 146). This is the acknowledgement that in relation to coming out it is often not the case that one discloses one's sexual identity to the world all in one go in the same way. Often those who claim a non-heterosexual sexual identity label negotiate how 'out' they want to be in particular contexts and with particular people.

In 2017 there is no doubt that sexual minority acceptance has grown. We are at a point in history where gay and lesbian people can marry each other and claim the same rights as heterosexual people (Gibson, Alexander, & Meem, 2014; Alarie & Gaudet, 2013). Over thirty years ago Kitzinger (1987) discussed how society had moved beyond seeing lesbians and gays as people to avoid. Today, they are considered as people who can legitimately claim valid sexual identities. Never before has there been such consistent sexual minority representation in various mediums of communication such as film and television. One might think that the work in relation to sexual minority identity is over. That, however,would be a mistake because although gay and lesbian people are able to access rights once denied to them, such as the societal acknowledgement that the lives and loves they have are legitimate and valid, the same is not true for those who claim a bisexual identity (Alarie & Gaudet, 2013; Israel & Mohr, 2004).

Research has discussed the ways in which bisexual women face negative stereotypes, stigmas and assumptions (Barker & Langdridge, 2008; Balsam & Mohr, 2007). One such negative assumption emanating from lesbians is the suspicion that bisexual women will leave their female lovers and return to the comforts of heterosexuality (Firestein, 2007; Walker, 2014). The assumption is that bisexual women continue to *'consort with the enemy'* (Rust, 1993) in their relationships with men. The belief that bisexual women are less loyal to issues surrounding lesbian identity and community are pervasive in the lesbian community (Dyar et al., 2014; Zaylia, 2009; Rodríguez-Rust, 2000; Hartman, 2006). Therein lies the pressure for bisexual women who are in monogamous same-gender relationships to potentially make decisions to accept that life might be less problematic if they choose not to out themselves as bisexual in some contexts (Ochs & Deihl, 1992). The danger however in concealing one's identity in this way is that over time a potential build-up of managing binegativity (Burleson, 2005) leads to what Anderson et al (2016) call *'bisexual burden'* (p. 25), which has been shown to have an impact on mental health (Ross, Siegel, Dobinson, Epstein, & Steele, 2012). Bisexual women who are assumed to be heterosexual, particularly if they are mothers, have discussed how this 'passing' comes at a psychological cost and causes both distress and irritation (Tasker & Delvoye, 2015; Ross et al., 2012), in the sense that they are rendered invisible, particularly in the eyes of the lesbian community. This invisibility has knock on effects in respect of the kinds of identity support women feel they can access (Rodriguez-Rust, 2002; Ross et al., 2012). Women also further face accusations of privilege and betrayal; as previously stated, bisexuals are already dealing with a myriad of stigmatisations ranging from being viewed as neurotic, confused, and sex starved, to going through a phase, attention seeking or unable to make firm decisions (Roberts et al., 2015; Callis, 2013; Rust, 1992).

2.4.3 Section summary

The above section has three parts. Firstly I outlined some general considerations in respect of non-normative identity development models. I then moved on to discuss in more depth a number of theories and models which specifically pertain to bisexual identity development. The final section explores research that has looked at the process of coming out as a bisexual. Many models of sexual identity formation are constructed with a monosexual gay or lesbian identity in mind. Thus they fail to capture the particularities involved in the construction and realisation of a bisexual or other pluralistic sexual identities. However models focusing specifically on bisexual identity have identified problems associated with linear models of development highlighting the ways in which gender impacts on one's experience of attraction to people of the same and different-gender. Nevertheless, incorporated within these models is the suggestion that support for one's identity development is crucial in respect of building a healthy sense of who one is. Disclosing one's sexual identity has been framed as necessary both for political and personal reasons. The disclosure of one's sexual identity holds a number of potential positive and negative consequences for individuals. Similarly to the disclosure strategies that many lesbian and gay men report, bisexuals also engage in measured and strategic disclosure, particularly in contexts where they are likely to feel discriminated against if they reveal their sexual identity. Thus ‘coming out’ as bisexual is fraught with considerations related to a cost-benefit ratio. Societal misunderstandings and prejudice of individuals who claim a bisexual identity positions them as illegitimate and not to be trusted, particularly bisexual women in lesbian spaces and communities. The disclosure of one’s attractions to people of the same and different-gender is strategically considered in light of where they are and who they are with.

2.5 Gender influences and bisexual erasure

Alarie and Gaudet (2013) carried out interviews with ‘emerging adults’ aged between 18 and 23 to ascertain how bisexuality is represented in their discourses about sexuality. The participants self-identified with various sexual identities including gay, heterosexual, bisexual and ‘other’ however no lesbians took part in this research. The researchers analysed the ways in which bisexuality was rendered invisible. They identified four ways in which their participants did this. First, *‘ignoring bisexuality as an identity’* (p. 200). Participants were seen to directly ignore bisexuality. They did this by referring to binary opposites of heterosexuality and homosexuality rendering bisexuality as invisible. Although participants’ claimed that bisexuality was a legitimate sexual identity, they were seen to articulate the world in terms of binary constructions. For example, they referred to heterosexuality and homosexuality when they talked about sexualities. Participants acknowledged that a bisexual experience or same-gender sexual encounter was not suggestive of a monosexual conflict. What was interesting, and I suggest supports both Fahs’ (2009) and Diamond’s (2005) suggestion that gender plays a part in the shaping of constructions of bisexuality, was they identified a difference between understandings of male and female bisexuality. Participants could be seen to reify the previously mentioned ‘one drop rule’ (Davis, 1991), in that a man who at one time kissed another man was understood to be more than likely gay. However, a woman who had one experience of kissing another woman was considered more than likely to be heterosexual. Alarie and Gaudet (2013) are clear in their assertion that *‘female bisexuality heterosexualises women’* (p. 199). Participants who took part in their research confirmed the suggestion that women who perform their bisexuality were seen as doing so for strategic reasons, such as for the male gaze, or to elicit specific attention. The researchers also identified *‘depicting bisexuality as a temporary identity, sexuality, and/or* *lifestyle'* (p. 200) as another way in which bisexuality is made invisible. This is largely due to a belief that bisexuality is a phase one goes through before ultimately identifying as gay or lesbian. This further reifies the belief that the only true legitimate sexualities are the binary opposites of heterosexual and homosexual. Despite participants' earlier claims that bisexuality was a legitimate sexual identity, they continued to utilise and reify binary ascriptions of sexuality. For example, bisexuality was understood to be rooted in indecisiveness. Participants talked about those who claim the identity label of bisexual as being people who change their mind and move from relationships with men to relationships with women, and that this practice further demonstrates that bisexuals do not know what they want.

Alarie and Gaudet (2013) postulated that because marriage and monogamy requires one to commit to one person and settle down to potentially have children, their participants felt that bisexuals are indecisive and not capable of achieving these things. In essence, they intimate that the practice of marriage equalling monogamy means that bisexually-identified individuals find this to be much too challenging. 'Real' bisexuals by their definition are those who demonstrate equal amounts of romantic and sexual attraction to people of the same and different-gender. Those who define themselves as bisexual must have a preference for one gender. This serves to support the original perception that some self-identified bisexuals are indeed not truly bisexual. Participants' were more critical of women who professed to identify as bisexual than men. This was largely because of the assumption that if men do identify as bisexual, this is almost like an identity to rest in before jumping the final hurdle in to ownership of a gay identity. Women were more likely to be viewed as imposters, once again underpinned by assumptions of them performing their identity for the attention of men. The performance and physical practice of sexual expression with women was not considered proof enough for them to claim an authentic bisexual identity. Finally, the researchers identified *'devaluing bisexuality as a legitimate permanent identity and lifestyle'* (p. 206) as a common theme to come from the data. Although in the main, participants attempted to talk about sexual minorities in respectful ways using phrases like *'it's his sexual orientation he can do whatever he wants with it, it's none of my business'* (p. 206) they reverted back to negative comments about bisexuals. For example, they drew from negative stereotypical assumptions about bisexual behaviour, such as bisexuals *'cheat a lot'* (p. 206). The implication being, that to have a relationship with a bisexual person would result in trust issues. On balance, individuals can be seen to on the one hand display tolerance and acceptance towards those who claim a bisexual identity, whilst on the other be seen to buy into and reaffirm largely negative myths related to bisexuality and bisexual people. Participants in this research can be seen to marginalise and render invisible bisexual identity by reconfiguring it to fit in with the narrative that bisexuals are people to be avoided (Callis, 2013).

A substantial amount of work has been carried out by LGBT+ communities and their allies in relation to legitimising gay and lesbian identities to ensure equal rights. One could suggest that this has positioned bisexuals and bisexual identity on the fringes somewhat, in effect, socially erasing their existence (Hartman-Linck, 2014; Hartman, 2013; Yoshino, 2000). It has been argued that this erasure is brought about through collaboration of both the heterosexual and homosexual communities. Yoshino (2000) talks about how they use the same methods in order to bring about bisexual erasure. First, *'interest in stabilising sexual orientation'* (p. 362). This is the argument that is suits both gay and straight people to be seen as though their sexual identities are fixed and secure. One of the issues faced by monosexuals is the threat that perhaps sexuality, in itself, is not fixed (Diamond, 2007). The existence of bisexuality can be seen to threaten that certainty. Second, Yoshino (2000) identifies *'Interest in retaining sex as a dominant metric of differentiation'* (p. 362). This relates to bisexual erasure in the sense that sex is seen as an important societal trait and monosexual individuals are invested in retaining this dominant view. Encompassed with being a man or a woman are 'sex norm' assumptions in relation to attraction and orientation, this can be seen to create and reinforce sex dominant bonds resulting in binary shared investments. Third, *'Interest in defending norms of monogamy'* (p. 363). As previously mentioned, Western society has placed monogamy as a highly valued societal norm (Willey, 2006; Anderson, 2010). Research conducted by Schmookler and Bursik (2007) found that both men and women saw monogamy as *'relationship enhancing'* (p. 831) and that being in a monogamous relationship led to *'increased intimacies'* (p. 831). Both gay and straight people are invested in keeping monogamy as the dominant relationship practice (I discuss this in more depth in chapter 3). Bisexuals, therefore, are assumed to not be capable of monogamy (Ochs, 1996; Klesse, 2014, 2011, 2007) and it is for this reason that heterosexual people wish to distance themselves from non-monogamous practices. The straight community feel more protected from sexual infection as bisexual men in particular have historically been positioned as the vectors of HIV transmission from the gay community to the straight one. Gay people can also be seen to prefer this practice to remain dominant because it mirrors the straight world's relationship performance, and gay and lesbian communities have for decades fought to be assimilated into the straight world (Yoshino, 2000).

An alternative explanation for why heterosexism looms large in society is Rubin's (1984) concept of the 'Charmed Circle'. Rubin suggests that by and large, heterosexism engenders heterosexuality as normative as it is portrayed as essential, natural, and normal. Heterosexism is predominantly carried out through the socialisation process as children are guided into heteronormative practices and ways of being. Right from gendered names ascribed to female and male children, to the commercialised gendered toy selection (Burr, 2015), the pressures on girls to orient their sexual identity towards boys in adolescence results in the majority of females ending up with males. Their identity as heterosexual, is a taken for granted assumption that is rarely questioned. According to Rich (1980), women who claim an alternative identity, (such as lesbian) are seen to have veered from the straight trajectory. Rubin's (1984) concept of the 'Charmed Circle' is useful when considering why such a path is preferred. She suggests that special rights are awarded to those who occupy the privileged positions of monogamous, married, and heterosexual. Further privileges are awarded if these individuals go on to have children together. Rubin (1984) is clear in her assertion that those who claim the above are the ones who sit in the charmed circle and as a result are the ones whose relationships are most validated and legitimated. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in the act of opposite partnered sex. Penis-vagina sex is perceived to be the sex that matters according to Rubin. This sex is assumed and is commonly recognised and understood. UK Schools discuss it as part of the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum, and included in this are details guarding against pregnancy (Gov.uk). Information in relation to LGBT+ relationships and the physical practice of sex are somewhat missing thus, conceptualising what non-normative sex is can be considered ineffable. Penis-vagina sex in the context of a monogamous union is considered to be particularly charmed. The notion that some women who are sexually and romantically oriented towards people of the same and different-gender might exhibit internalised biphobia or find themselves reifying negative stereotypes and stigmas in relation to non-normative sexuality is not surprising given the cultural ingraining of such narratives. Therefore, it is not a surprise that research carried out by Robinson and Espelage (2011) found that bisexual youths are more likely to think about committing suicide more than any other sexual minority. This is despite the claim that young people are more accepting of non-normative sexualities and can be seen to express positive attitudes towards LGBT+ people, and are more likely to view hostility towards such individuals as wrong and unacceptable (McCormack, 2011). We must, therefore, acknowledge that bisexual people have their own unique stresses (Meyer, 2003) to contend with, such as the ones I have outlined above, and that these stresses have real impacts on the lives of many bisexually identified people.

2.5.1 Interpersonal consequences of binegativity

In addition to being the target of society's misguided views and assumptions, bisexual people have to endure micro-aggressions (Sue, 2010) in relation to their sexuality from those close to them. Micro-aggressions have been defined as *'brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or hostile indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults'* (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal & Torino, 2007, p. 72). This can be when friends, partner/s or family members, hold negative views or attitudes about bisexuality and go on to verbalise an opinion which hurts or offends. It is often the case that the person who engages in the use of micro-aggressions does not purposefully mean any harm and views the exchange as playful and/or not serious. However the impact of micro-aggressions are cumulative (Meyer, 2003). Victims are seen to endure these largely negative verbalisations of their minority status over time. One can never know when the next one will appear, or indeed who will verbalise it. Research on micro-aggressions focuses largely on black and ethnic minority individuals (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Torres, Driscoll & Burrow, 2010) however, Sue (2010) put forward seven types of micro-aggressions which specifically relate to sexual minority groups: 1) Over-sexualisation, 2) denial of individual heterosexism, 3) homophobia, 4) sinfulness, 5) endorsements of heteronormative culture and behaviours, 6) heterosexist language and terminology and 7) assumption of abnormality. Platt and Lenzen (2013) expanded the remit of micro-aggressions by adding a further two types that are used specifically against sexual minority groups. First, micro-aggressions as humorous; this is when individuals, although not intending to harm, make humorous references in relation to a person's non-heterosexual identity. Second, under-sexualisation; when sexuality is accepted as long as there are no overt displays of affection. According to Sue, (2010) sexual minorities' experience of micro-aggressions are different to the experiences that other minority groups have, particularly black and ethnic minority groups. This is largely because sexuality is not something you can physically see. Sedgwick (1990) would support Sue's (2010) claims in that she states, *'. . . vibrantly resonant as the image of the closet is for many modern oppressions, it is indicative for homophobia in a way it cannot be for other oppressions. Racism, for instance, is based on a stigma that is visible in all but exceptional cases . . . so are the oppressions based on gender, age, size, physical handicap'* (p. 75).

Clearly individuals whose identity markers are visible experience various forms of oppression, however they are visible, and understood as black, female, elderly etc. In relation to sexual identity markers, they are, as Sedgwick (1990) discusses, relatively invisible. Of course one can hide one's orientation much easier than a black person can hide his/her colour, and as such, sexual minorities can dodge the bullets of oppression much easier. However, those who identify as non-heterosexual have to make decisions to either endure the aggressions or avoid addressing them, or disclose their non-heterosexuality and open themselves up to potential negativity and prejudice. So endemic and ingrained are power inequalities and stereotypes in our culture, it is incredibly difficult for everyone to avoid engaging in types of micro-aggression on some level. Perhaps, because these aggressions are for many people rooted in light-hearted banter and humour, individuals are more susceptible to directly using them. Thus we both use and experience them as well as accept them from others, in effect, perpetuating the use of micro-aggressions.

2.5.2 Section summary

The above section has two brief parts. First I discussed the underpinnings of bisexual erasure before outlining the consequences of this on bisexually identified individuals. We can begin to see how bisexuality as a legitimate sexual identity in its own right is not accepted in society, particularly for women. Bisexual identity in women is criticised as they can be seen to face negativity, and identity erasure, from opposite positions of the sexuality binary. This is in part due to the way in which bisexuality represents a rejection of monosexuality or monosexual practice (Alarie & Gaudet, 2013; Sarno & Wright, 2013).

2.6 Women and bisexuality: the male gaze

Bisexual women have been subject to claims of inauthenticity from heterosexual quarters in that they are often assumed to specifically perform bisexuality for the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975). Indeed bisexual women have been found to be objectified by straight men (Ponterotto, 2016; Carr, 2011). Fahs (2009) utilises the term 'compulsory bisexuality' to denote the pressure that women are under in modern society to act out, or perform bisexuality for the specific needs of men. Fahs (2009) argues that this can be seen to affect both younger and older women in different ways, with the former citing pressure to perform bisexuality externally at a party or on nights out, whilst the latter feeling more pressure to perform privately, often directly for their male partners, through the engagement of threesomes. Research that has looked at the perceptions of women who kiss other women in public settings such as at a party and have found that women are viewed as more promiscuous than if they were to kiss men in the same settings (Lannutti & Denes, 2012).

Diamond (2005) is sceptical of the assumed growing acceptance of female-female sexuality and performances, and questions if this really denotes society's embracement of sexual diversity. Female public bisexual performances tie in with the representation of female-female sexuality as transitory (Barker & Langdridge, 2008), thus giving further weight to accusations of inauthenticity. The performance of a 'heteroflexible' (Essig, 2000) sexuality serves to reiterate the possibility that these women still *'remain sexually available in the conventional heterosexual marketplace'* (p. 105). In some senses, this permissiveness of sexual behaviour could be articulated as empowering for women (Martin, 2007). A number of third-wave feminists have struggled with the notion that the performance of their sex is oppressive and as such have sought to reclaim their bodies by advocating sexual freedom and pleasure by highlighting how for them the performance of sexuality is a way in which to feel empowered. (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003; Frank, 2002). The backlash women receive both overtly and covertly for choosing to express their sexuality results in stigmatisation (Vrangalova, Bukberg, & Rieger, 2014). Another danger in relation to this issue is the potential for women to experience the tension between the increasing pressure on them to be more sexually open and, in effect, sexually perform in public settings and the resulting potential internalisation of what is seen as moral and appropriate. All this can serve to inculcate a sense of low self-esteem in women as the flip side of the 'do whatever you like' is 'do not do anything' (Katz & Farrow, 2000).

Rich (1980), writing from a feminist perspective, sees compulsory heterosexuality as affecting women and feminism in particular. She discusses how, in relation to the history of sexology, there has been a focus on the attempt to better understand homosexuality. Rich (1980) argues that the focus has been misplaced and more attention should be paid to the understanding of heterosexuality, as she believes heterosexuality to be a compulsory fiction, in that the practice of heterosexuality is something people do because of the normative pressures to do so, such that it is considered normal and natural. Thus, heterosexuality, is not seen as a choice *per se*. This 'fiction' is therefore propagated to ensure that society believes that women are innately attracted sexually to men. This fiction renders non-heterosexual (non-normative) individuals and practices invisible, and that the state is complicit in the maintenance of such a status quo. It is through the institutional practice of society to reinforce and perpetuate the biological script of naturalness that serves to ensure that anything that falls outside of the norm[22] is delegitimised.

Moving on and extending this line of thinking, researchers have considered how the pressure of performance may well lead to the taken-for-granted assumption that bisexuality is again seen as a natural practice, particularly for women, and if performed for the male gaze (Fahs, 2009). According to Baumeister and Twenge, (2002) female sexuality is scrutinised much more closely than male sexuality and this results in women having to contend with inequality in terms of behaviour. For example, the number of sexual partners a woman has is judged more critically

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[22] In this case heterosexual.

than the numbers men have, leading to women facing moral and sexual double standards. To reference oneself as bisexual is perceived by both ends of the heterosexual and homosexual binary as potentially threatening to the constructed 'natural' order of sexuality (Yoshino, 2000; Israel & Mohr, 2004). As outlined, views in relation to bisexual women are not pleasant (Ochs, 1996; Israel & Mohr, 2004). Fuelled by heterosexist notions that bisexuality is not possible serves to pave the way for further societal misconceptions that bisexuality does not exist as a distinct sexual identity. However, as discussed behavioural bisexuality in women is acknowledged and accepted even more so if it is expressed for the male gaze or imagination (Fahs, 2009; Alarie & Gaudet 2013; Diamond, 2005) (I discuss this in more detail later in the chapter).

2.6.1 The media and bisexuality

Research has explored the ways in which sexual minorities and specifically bisexuality is represented in the media (D'Erasmo, 2004; Beirne, 2006). It is important to consider this as the media serves to reinforce the common stereotypes available to us (Croteau, Hoynes, & Milan, 2012; Bell & Garrett, 1998). In recent years there have been some positive media representations of lesbian identities which is a positive development (Gomillion & Giuliano, 2011; Bringaze & White, 2001). However, in relation to the depiction of bisexuality in contemporary mainstream media, we can see that there is much less visibility (Barker et al., 2012; Greenesmith, 2010). In addition, when bisexuality is represented the characters are often depicted to be in a state of uncertainty or confusion (Hayfield et al., 2014; Rodriguez-Rust, 2002). This perpetuates the view that bisexual people, or more specifically their sexual identity, is not stable and that they are in a state of transition. Nowhere is this more evident than in Ang Lee's film 'Brokeback Mountain', Andre (2011) discusses how this movie was considered a *'gay cowboy movie',* or *'a gay watershed'* (Burr, 2006, p. 69). The film is essentially a love story between two cowboys. Both the cowboys were throughout the narrative in relationships with women, however, the suggestion that they could be bisexual was never discussed within the film or in any mainstream media discussions after the film. It could be argued that this effectively erased bisexuality as a legitimate identity for these two characters. Bisexual women also face unique negativity within the media as they are often portrayed as people to avoid due to the fact that they are assumed, in some way, to emotionally harm others (Bryant, 1997). For example in the television drama Lip

Service[23] Frankie, who is positioned as a bisexual woman, has sex with her male friend who is in a heterosexual monogamous relationship. Later in the series they split up. Although the blame is not laid at Frankie's door, it is intimated that the experience contributed towards her friend's subsequent doubts about committing to his fiancé. Thus, bisexual women are positioned as dangerous (Callis, 2013) as the emotional harm is potentially enacted through perhaps leaving relationships or having sexual affairs with women in order to attract men (Barker et al., 2012).

The media can be seen to be extremely reluctant to discuss any matters related to bisexuality *per se*. This is the case when it is clear that characters within films are behaviourally having sex with both males and females and they are, more often than not, positioned as either gay or lesbian rather than bisexual. Here we see evidence of Western society refuting the notion that anything which falls between the opposite ends of the sexual binary continuum is lacking authenticity and thus is failed to be conceptualised as authentic. However, identities such as 'gay', 'lesbian', and 'straight' are understood and accepted as legitimate. Films in particular have enormous power in relation to the cultural messages that are transmitted to society (D.Erasmo, 2004; Warn, 2006). The fact that bisexuals rarely see themselves reflected in film and other related media is concerning because it limits their experience with and exposure to bisexual role models. Whilst it is true that gay and lesbians have had similar struggles with media representation one can see that in contemporary society they are in one guise or another part of mainstream viewing. For example, long standing gay and lesbian characters appear in primetime British TV soaps[24] where

[23] Lip service is a 2009 TV drama set in Glasgow in Scotland portraying the lives of a group of women who identify as lesbian and bisexual.

[24] Both Coronation Street and EastEnders have featured long standing stable lesbian and gay characters.

they can be seen to enter in relationships and lead normative lives. Russo (1987), in his review of gay characters in film, suggests that historically both gays and lesbians have been shown in film but that it is how they have been depicted that has caused concern, *'. . .gay visibility has never really been an issue in the movies. Gays have always been visible its how they have been visible that has remained offensive for almost a century'* (Russo, 1987, p. 325). Bisexuals, however, have no such stable representation on TV. When bisexuals are shown on TV, the depiction is often a reflection and perpetuation of societal stereotypic views. According to Wan-Hsiu (2010), bisexuality on TV is considered a non-issue as he argues bisexuals are rarely explicitly referred to. For example in a 2001 beer advert (Wilke, 2001) an attractive women is depicted drinking a bottle of beer whilst having a sociable evening in a pub with her male and female friends. The next shot shows how underneath the table both the female and male sitting at either side of her each have their hand on her knee. The narrator then says *'at Amstel Light, we believe in having the best of both worlds . . . especially when it comes to beer'*. One reading of this could be that it directly feeds into stereotypic notions of male girl-on-girl fantasies, as well as projects the image that bisexuals indeed have the 'best of both worlds', intimating that bisexuals do not experience such issues as biphobia and prejudice. The examples outlined above can be seen to show how bisexuals are positioned as opportunistic, undecided, incapable of monogamy and likely to hurt those they get into intimate relationships with.

A recent article written by Cosmo Landesman in 2014 argues that bisexual women who are in the public eye more often than not make the ultimate choice to enter into a monogamous relationship with a man, *'so many bisexual idols end up returning to the stable, monogamous heterosexual fold'.* Landesman (2014) cites individuals such as Angelina Jolie and Katy Perry as high profile women who lamented their attractions towards women before finally making long-term commitments to men. Media depictions such as this focus their attention on women who are presumed to now be in a heterosexual relationship because they have entered into a long-term relationships or marriages. There are two inaccuracies inherent within this type of media reporting. Firstly, the relationships are assumed to be heterosexual thus assumptions have already been made in relation to these celebrities in that they no longer identify as bisexual (if they ever privately did), or as people who are attracted to people of the same and different-gender. Second, little attention is paid to those women who settle into partnerships or marriages with women, in effect 'the stable, monogamous lesbian fold'. The predominant message that the media wants to portray is that the old adage of ‘a bisexual woman will leave you for a man’. Such messages continually present bisexuality as a ‘dangerous’ identity and reinforce stereotypical narratives that bisexuals will ‘hurt you’.

The issue of visibility in mediums such as film and TV can be a double edged sword as what is made visible can never be fully representative of bisexual life. Often what is transmitted is a palatable version of LGBT+ people (Walters, 2001). Whilst any representation can be assumed to have some pedagogical value, the danger is that wider issues faced by non-heterosexual people can be overlooked and assumed to not exist, for example as mentioned above, binegativity, monosexism, or workplace marginalisation. One interesting contemporary representation of queer women’s lives has been The L Word [25] (Warn, 2006). However, it has been widely criticised for showing white, middle class, high earning, and hyper-feminised women. Much the same as the critiques of the central female characters from Sex and the City (SATC). Many single women living in New York lamented the fact that life is not really like it is portrayed on SATC (Warn, 2006). The L Word characters who are positioned as bisexual have been accused of not really occupying a bisexual identity, as they are seen to ‘give-up’ on their bisexuality quite early in the series. One of the interesting things that The L Word did was open up a discussion about all things Sapphic related particularly on-line. Women logged on and discussed everything from the representation of lesbians to the fashion and style choices ascribed to each character. Although the drama attracted a largely lesbian audience it also drew viewers

[25] The L Word is a lesbian themed, six series, American TV drama, which focuses on a friendship group of lesbians and other queer identified women, tagged as ‘same sex different city’ (Curve Magazine, 2005) the drama portrays their trials and tribulations. The show aired in 2003 and in the same year aired in 51 different countries (Oz & Slicey, 2003).

from the straight community, particularly in America. However according to Graham (2006) The L Word did not attract the same amount of interest in Britain. Disparate reviews of the show have ranged from those who attest the representation of lesbians as hyper-feminine, hairless bodied women, to those who are thankful for any representation of lesbians at all, irrespective of the depiction.

These bi-polar views represent a tension in relation to the visibility of women who are sexually attracted to other women. Wolfe and Roripaugh (2006) discuss this agitation by citing *'assimilationist visibility' vs 'marginalised visibility'* (p. 45). This means that either one is supportive of a type of 'queerness' that can morph into normative ideas of sexuality, or one can resist that and remain in the fringes of what is hidden from sight. In effect, something is better than nothing vs nothing is better than an inaccurate something.

2.6.2 What do bisexuals look like?

Brennan (2011) argues that it is the right of the sexual citizen to be recognised. She goes on to say that one of the best ways to communicate one's non-heterosexuality is to choose signs and signifiers that mark out one's queerness. Walker (2001) argues*, 'Privileging visibility has become a tactic of the late twentieth-century identity politics, in which participants' often symbolise their demands for social justice by celebrating visible signifiers of difference that have historically targeted them for discrimination'* (p. 868). Therefore, the search for visibility can be seen to be underpinned by a need to be seen and recognised (Clarke & Turner, 2007; Clarke & Spence, 2012). Utilising fashion to communicate sexual identity primarily depends on the culture's ability to decode the message. In Western society the fact that we have recognisable lesbian appearance markers demonstrates that the surrounding culture is able to read and understand lesbian appearance norms. When one is recognised as lesbian they have access to the in-group (of lesbian). This affords them the right to speak about lesbian culture and relationships because they are assumed valid (Brennan, 2011). Thus, the importance of appearance should not be underestimated in relation to the power and voice it brings with it. Yoshino (2000) articulates the view that the complete and total denial of the existence of bisexuality serves to ensure that both ends of the straight/gay binary remain dominant and continue to be viewed as genuine and well-founded. According to Yoshino (2000) one of the most concerning aspects of bisexuality for monosexuals is the view that bisexuals are unable to hold down monogamous relationships. Yoshino (2000) goes on to argue that monosexuals do not want to potentially lose all that they have gained by any affiliation with bisexuals who for some claim that their sexual identity is not fixed and is instead fluid and dependable on the environment or context. Yoshino (2000) argues that the powerful binary identities are invested in marginalising bisexuality in order to reinforce and strengthen their own positions. Consequently, bisexuals find themselves in a space where they have limited bisexual-specific signs and appearance mandates that mark them out as people who find people of the same and different-gender attractive. Therefore, if bisexual women wish to alert others of their same-gender attraction potential, their only option is to take from an existing narrow set of recognisable lesbian stereotypes. Simpson (2009) argues*, '. . . contrary to popular belief, there is really no lesbian fashion aesthetic. There's a 'look', but it is hard to quantify and even harder to emulate if you're a newcomer to the scene. It is one of those you-know-it-when-you-see-it things. And it only applies to the shorthaired stereotype-adhering among us; if you're high-femme, you're on your own. Queer women who come out in their 20s instead of their teens seem to be hit the hardest by the lesbian fashion crisis. I have more than one bisexual friend who, accustomed to dressing up to get the attention of men on a Friday night, is entirely at a loss when it comes to dressing for other women'*. (p. 10).

Here Simpson (2009) highlights the difficulties that lesbian and bisexual women face if they opt to refrain from choosing traditional lesbian signifiers. Little attention has been paid to what a bisexual looks like in relation to dress and appearance. Some research has suggested that lesbians are affected by dominant cultural appearance norms of, for example, the 'thin ideal' in the same way as heterosexual women are (Taub, 1999: Dworkin, 1989). Other studies (Hayfield et al., 2014; Rothblum, 1994) have concluded that although lesbians are indeed subject to cultural beauty norms they are somewhat reconceptualised within the wider lesbian community (Kelly, 2007). The singer and performer Pink encapsulates some of the issues associated with the relationship between sexual identity and dress when she says, *'I should be gay by the way that I look and the way that I am. I just happen to not be'* (Pink, 2012). This supports the suggestion that there are particular ways of being read as a lesbian which are different to that of a straight woman. In relation to being read as bisexual, the water becomes a little muddy. More recent research carried out by Hayfield, (2013) found that bisexuals were impossible to identify. Her research, which focused on heterosexual people, was interested in ascertaining if indeed they could identify gay, bisexual, and heterosexual men, as well as lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual women. Participants were aware of the dominant stereotypes that are referenced in relation to these identities, yet they often drew on them, despite acknowledging that stereotypes such as lesbians presenting themselves as *'not very girly, wearing jeans and t-shirts to show masculinity, short hair'* (p. 19), was unlikely to be representative of the general lesbian population. Participants did specify, however, that it depended on the *'type of lesbian'* (p. 19), highlighting that they were aware of perhaps other ways in which lesbians present themselves.

Hayfield (2013) found that participants described 'femme' lesbians however, they were regularly referenced in relation to 'butch' lesbians which in some respects, serves to marginalise 'femmes' as they are most noticeably discussed in relation to their connections with 'butch' lesbians (Eves, 2004). Participants were not able to draw on a recognisable image in relation to a bisexual presentation, and some participants questioned if there even was one. In the main Hayfield's (2013) participants can be seen to draw from other sexual identity types in relation to what a bisexual would look like, for example, looking more like a heterosexual or lesbian. This inability to not take from other identity presentations demonstrates that the binary construction of sexuality makes it problematic for participants to fully conceptualise what a bisexual looks like. All participants can do, is draw from what is out there in the world, even though they themselves acknowledge that they are using inaccurate markers. Interestingly, a participant who identified as bisexual in this research, so had a real lived experience of the research aims, was able to provide researchers with a description of a bisexual appearance utilising terms such as *'Goth'* or *'alternative'* (p. 21). Researchers interested in what a bisexual looks like have also identified similar appearance terms when attempting to address this question (Hayfield, 2013). Although these terms do not depict a stand-alone identity and can be seen to make up parts of various sub-groups (Lees, 1993).

Miller (2006), drawing on the work of Goffman (1971), highlights some of the problems faced by bisexuals in performing their identity. Miller (2006) talks about 'doing sexuality' as the ability to 'do bisexuality' is problematic because of the way in which sexuality is currently conceptualised in binary terms. Effectively, one will always be misappropriated as either gay or straight (Hartman-Linck, 2014; Hartman, 2013). Therefore, the only real option open to bisexuals is that they can choose to do either heterosexual or homosexual. Gender performance (Lorber, 1999) is useful because, although at a societal level these performances serve to reinforce the invisibility of bisexuality they can at the individual level support one to express their sexual identity or orientation. However as the Pink quote above illustrates, gender expression is not always necessarily expressive of sexual preference. There are issues in respect of relying on gender performances in the transmission of one's sexual identity. Having said that, the lesbian appearance norms Hayfield's (2013) participants discuss above are well recognised in society as being associated with women who are attracted to other women. It is not surprising that bisexual women draw from them in an attempt to be visible. Keeping in mind that gender performances are not always indicative of one's sexual identity, Hartman, (2013) and Hartman-Linck (2014) refer to how it is often the 'display' rather than the performance that is more useful to the individual. The researchers claim that a performance suggests a large audience and, as such, requires mass understanding and interpretation. Whereas a display relies on the meaning underpinning the display and quite often it is that which is of most importance. A display can also signal meanings to those directly around the individual. Hartman (2013) and Hartman-Linck's (2014) participants talked about how this was more useful for them (I discuss this research in more depth in Chapter 3).

2.6.3 Bisexual community

One of the challenges facing bisexual individuals and women in particular, is locating a community with which they can identify. Hartman (2006) agrees with the suggestion that bisexual women are *'twice rejected'* (Shokeid, 2002, p. 64) by both straight and lesbian communities because they occupy a liminal position on the binary. The consequences of their location results in a sense of discord, in that they do not feel as though they fit in to either group. Bisexual women have referenced how the lesbian community in particular affords them *'a chilly climate'* (Hartman, 2006, p. 64) in that tensions are evident between them. Rust, (1995) noted in her research with lesbians and bisexual women that lesbians did hold binegative focused views and opinions. Bisexual participants talked about the subtle ways in which they were made to feel prejudiced against, such as lesbians actively avoiding any associations with them. The most pervasive tension for bisexual women was the rendering invisible of their bisexual identities. For example, 74% of her respondents professed a wish to not enter into a potential relationship with a bisexual women, whilst 96% preferred to date a lesbian. Half of Rust's (1995) participants referenced a belief that bisexuality was a transitional identity and as such, not to be trusted. In the face of such identity opposition Shokeid (2002), Hartman (2006), and Deschamps, (2008) highlight the importance of support to ensure one has a place where they do feel they fit in. Consequentially they discuss how bisexually identified people have sought to create their own communities of support. Participants who took part in Hartman's (2006) research lamented the issue of fitting in with the wider LGBT+ community and concluded that it was more productive for them in relation to building a positive sense of their identity, to engage in smaller communities of people with whom they did fit.

Bisexual people in the face of rejection can be seen to employ a level of resilience and organise their own spaces with which they feel accepted. According to Barker and Yockney (2004) there exists a community of bisexuals and this community has seen growth over recent years (Bowes-Catton, 2015). Groups which represent bisexual people are thriving particularly on-line (Walker 2014a), and more and more people are 'coming out of the bisexual closet' from an identity position of lesbian, gay, or straight. Having a space or place where bisexuality is understood has been cited as important for some bisexuals; this can be as part of local activist groups to LGBT+ orientated events such as Pride. Although Pride is assumed to be a place where queer people under the umbrella flag of all presentations are thought to be welcomed and supported, this is not the case for everybody. The reality is, some bisexual women feel Pride can be a place where they are made to feel unwanted because of their refusal to deny their attractions to people of a different-gender. Pride has a history of tensions in relation to who should be included in the festivities, as various sexualities are thought to be more authentic than others (Gibson et al., 2014).

BiCon is a UK based national conference which is populated by bisexual people and their allies and is considered to be an inclusive space where people can just *'be bisexual'* (Monro, 2015, p. 94). According to Monro, (2015) many people attend BiCon to occupy a space where their sexual identity is the majority. Living in a heteronormative and monosexual society often renders those who do not identify with those categories somewhat on the outside. For some individuals BiCon can be a haven and a place where their sexual identity is understood and accepted without prejudice. Both Monro (2015) and Bowes-Catton (2015) in their research spoke to individuals who felt that BiCon was a positive place and space where they felt they fit in. However, Monro (2015) identifies that some bisexuals may feel that there are some barriers to inclusion. For example, she acknowledges that whilst a number of attendees do share similar concerns in respect of activism, politics, and sexual practices (Bowes-Catton, 2015; Hayfield et al., 2014; Klesse, 2011; Jeffreys, 1999) not all attendees will share those concerns. A number of Monro's participants also commented that there was a particular noticeable set of people in attendance who they considered to be the *'in-crowd'* (p. 97). One can assume that if one were to not directly identify with the majority of what the attendees at BiCon considered relevant and important, one would struggle to find a comfortable place to 'fit'. Researchers suggest that much of the recent research into the bisexual experience has focused on those who are part of a visible bisexual community, (Barker et al., 2012: Bowes-Catton, 2015) and that there is a need for research that develops a deeper understanding of the experiences of bisexual women in particular those outside of this community.

2.6.4 Section summary

The above section focused more specifically on women's bisexuality and was organised into four sections. First I explored how female sexual identity is often considered to be performative for a male audience. I then discussed the role of the media in the formation and maintenance of negative stereotypes before exploring the appearance choices of bisexual women. I then went on to look at the role of community in the lives of bisexual women (although some of the section pertains to men also). The notion that female sexuality is performative for men continues to be perpetuated particularly when women are expressing their bisexuality and engaging in same-gender sexual expression. This view invalidates female same-gender attraction and relationships and positions them as inauthentic. The fact that bisexuality continues to be unrepresented in the media contributes towards the assumption that bisexuals are not 'out there' and so do not exist. In relation to bisexual women in particular when they do make an appearance in film and television they are more often than not negatively depicted and positioned as women who are promiscuous and not to be trusted, once again supporting the misapprehension that bisexual women are dangerous. Research has confirmed that there are stereotypical appearance norms for lesbians, however the same is not true for bisexual women. The difficulties bisexual women have in relation to signifying their attractions to people of the same and different-gender through appearance markers has been identified. The importance of appearance cannot be underestimated as clothes and styles of dress and hairstyle are important ways in which we express ourselves (as discussed in section 2.2.1). It is important to reiterate the fact that this is problematic as appearance does not always accurately depict sexual identity. Bisexual people have identified that the wider LGBT+ community often leaves them feeling as though they do not belong. Lesbians in particular have been shown to hold negative attitudes towards bisexual women and this has resulted in them feeling unwelcome and discriminated against in lesbian communities. The lack of support for their bisexual identities have seen many bisexual people create their own bisexual specific communities and spaces (such as BiCon) where they can feel accepted and be amongst others who can relate to their sexual identity.

2.7 Concluding comments

This chapter has presented an in-depth review of the literature in respect of sexuality and bisexuality in particular. Research has shown how sexualities are socially and culturally constructed and, whilst in contemporary Western society monosexual orientated sexualities are viewed as legitimate, it still remains the case that women who are attracted to the same and different-gender are considered with suspicion. The issues surrounding a coherent unified definitional understanding related to what occupying a bisexual identity involves continues to warrant interest both in and outside academia. Much of the research cited in this chapter draws from studies that have been carried out in the USA, for example Rust, (1995), Legate et al., (2012), Dyar et al., (2014), Vranglava et al., (2014) and Robinson and Espelage, (2011) have all adopted quantitative approaches to data generation, drawing specifically from on-line questionnaires such as in Dyar et al's., (2014) research or from larger survey data, as in Rust, (1995), and Robinson and Espelage's (2011) research studies. Many of the participants in the research highlighted above were recruited from American, Australian, and/or Canadian educational institutions such as colleges and/or Universities. In order to secure research participation, incentives were offered to potential participants such as cash or course credits. Research questions were generally oriented in relation to ascertaining beliefs and/or attitudes towards bisexuality. In the case of the study carried out by Feinstein, Dyar, Bhatia, Latack & Davila (2015) the researchers set out to investigate the attitudes of 438 heterosexual men and women, as well as lesbian and gay men, towards bisexuality and their willingness to enter into romantic and/or sexual relationships with bisexually-identified people. Research carried out by Lannutti and Denes (2012) randomly allocated their participants into one of three different scenarios. The first involved a woman kissing another woman. The second scenario involved a woman kissing a man, and in the final scenario the woman was not kissing anyone. The researchers then asked participants to evaluate the women in the scenarios by completing 14 items adapted from Conley, Collins, and Garcia (2000) promiscuity scale.

Many of the qualitative strands of research carried out and presented in this literature review were conducted primarily in the UK and USA. Data was primarily drawn from focus groups on a relatively small number of participants. Hartman (2013) and Hartman-Linck (2014) carried out focus group research that explored how bisexual women in monogamous different-gender relationships maintained their bisexual identity. Insight from this method of data generation is invaluable in relation to the quality of data it produces, however the use of focus groups does attract some criticism. Focus groups are often accused of glossing over individual accounts or aspects of experience that are not the majority experience articulated or expressed within the discussion (Hollander, 2004). Ideographic accounts can therefore be minimised and/or subsumed within broader focus group dialogue and discourse (King & Horrocks, 2010; Hopkins, 2007). The current research attempts to focus on individual accounts of participants, by conducting one-to-one interviews with bisexual women in order to center and concentrate on the detail of each narrative. Some of the research presented in the above literature review also carried out one-to-one interviews with self-identified bisexual women. Hayfield et al., (2013) research for example explored visual identities and the role dress and appearance played in the construction of identity. The majority of Hayfield et al's., participants were seen to have some form of bisexual community involvement, with only two out of a total of twenty participants reporting no connections with known LGBT+ organisations. Barker et al's., (2008) research generated both qualitative and quantitative data, nevertheless, participants were solely drawn from BiCon attendees and so can be considered *au fait* and knowledgeable in respect of the bisexual community particularly. In relation to the current research, participants were drawn from three complementary avenues in an attempt to recruit those who have no prior knowledge or connection with organised bisexually focused groups or communities.

One of the overarching issues facing the majority of research carried out and presented in this literature review centres on the difficulties researchers have in recruiting people of colour, and in particular, women of colour. Whilst many studies cited above such as Morgan and Davis-Delano (2016), Hartman (2006), and Hartman-Linck (2014) do include ethnic minorities in their research sample they are by far outnumbered by white participants. Hayfield et al., (2013) were only able to recruit one woman of colour in their total participant number of twenty, with the remaining participants identifying as white. It is hoped that the current research will attract women from all ethnic backgrounds in a bid to illuminate the experiences of non-white bisexual women in a monogamous relationships.

It appears that one of the notable concerns with much of the research conducted with bisexual people is the inclusion and incorporation of individuals who do not necessarily identify specifically as bisexual, instead utilising other labels such as pansexual, unlabelled, and/or queer when discussing their sexual identity. Research conducted by Barker at al., (2008), Morgan and Davis-Delano (2016), Diamond (2008), Moss (2012), and Hartman (2006) all include participants who chose alternative sexual identity descriptors. The conflation of bisexual identity alongside other minority sexual identities obscures the particularities that exist between those who consider themselves to be bisexual specifically, and those who do not. The current research draws only from women who consider themselves to be bisexual in order to ascertain an insight into how these women experience their bisexual identity. Whilst participants are unique in relation to their specific lived experience, the commonality they share in respect of conceptualising their sexual identity as bisexual offers the research a valuable insight into this under-studied group of women. A number of the qualitative research studies cited in the above literature review adopt a feminist theoretical perspective, such as research carried out by Diamond (2005), Walker (2014), Moss (2012), and Clarke and Turner (2007). Such theoretical perspectives are important in terms of foregrounding and examining the specific experiences of women. The current research however adopts a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to analysis and takes account of the way in which both the researcher and participant impact on each other. Utilising this approach to analysis acknowledges the researchers interpretation of the participants life-world and is mindful of researcher reflexivity.

Despite the work that queer theorists have carried out in relation to problematising sexual identity categories, it appears that the label of bisexual has been adopted to such an extent that there is currently more interest in the make-up of bisexual identity. The representation of women who find people of the same and different-gender attractive has been depicted and reflected in the media. However the portrayal has more often than not been inaccurate and largely negative. Research has also presented how the binary giants of both heterosexuality and homosexuality have been shown to be somewhat invested in the perpetuation of misinformation in relation to bisexual identity. For example, the assumption that bisexual people do not desire a monogamous relationship and if they are engaged in one, they will be unable to remain monogamous. Bisexual women specifically are assumed to engage in different and same-gender behaviours in a bid to make themselves more attractive to men and are more likely to be viewed as heterosexual irrespective of a previous relationship history involving same-gender relationships. Bisexually identified women in same-gender relationships have also been seen to struggle with feelings of acceptance, particularly in lesbian space. Studies such as McLean (2008) and Hartman (2006) have highlighted how bisexual women in general encounter difficulties with respect to being recognised as bisexual specifically. The ways in which monogamy impacts on how bisexual women experience their identity is worthy of consideration, given the fact that once one engages in a dyadic relationship their potential to continue to be attracted to people of the same and different-gender is rendered somewhat unimportant and consequently renders them invisible.

Chapter 3: literature review 2: Monogamy

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of current research concerning monogamy. The discussion is organised in to six sections. First, I present some discussion in respect of the way in which monogamy has been conceptualised historically and then move on, in the second section, to present contemporary views of monogamy in Western society. In the third section, I examine the relationship between monogamy and the manifestation of it specifically through behaviour, acknowledging the ways in which the experience and meaning of monogamy can change throughout the course of a relationship (Finn, 2012b). In section four, I draw attention to the ideological assumptions that influence relationship practices in contemporary society, specifically focusing on monogamy and non-monogamy. In section five I focus specifically on bisexual women and monogamy. I present some of the challenges bisexual women face when occupying a monogamous relationship. Finally I present some conclusions and orient the discussion towards the research questions underpinning the thesis.

3.2 Changing views on monogamy

Views about the nature of monogamy in Western society, particularly monogamy through the sanctioned institution of marriage (Anderson, 2010; Burgess & Locke, 1953), position the monogamous dyadic relationship as the most successful and valid type of relationship (Green, Valleriani, & Adam, 2016; Anderson, 2010). The monogamous dyad is also considered the site in which both partners' needs can be met, although not easily, and not without some degree of commitment and work. This is however a relatively modern conception of monogamy and is somewhat different to constructions of monogamy historically and in other cultures (Barker, 2011).

In the eighteenth century the concept of monogamy appears to have been central to marriage (Jackson & Scott, 2004). Marriage acted as an organising principle for all classes in Western Europe and North America in respect of gender roles and economic labour. Those who had wealth married not only for children, but also for the appropriation of property and family. For those who were not financially well endowed, marriage was rooted in functional considerations such as, 'Will life be physically easier in this marriage?' and 'What will s/he bring to the table?' Questions such as these were seen as paramount in relation to decisions about marriage (Coontz, 2004). The suggestion that the primary motivator in relation to acquiring a partner should be love was thought to be unwise[26]. It was not uncommon for men in this period to commits acts we

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[26] I am not suggesting that at this time in history there were no cases of people marrying for love, of course there were. Having said that it is more likely according to Coontz, (2004) & Hunt, (1996) that individuals got married with a sense of affection for their partner as opposed to outright love. Love was assumed to be an emotion that would grow and endure over time.

would view today as infidelity. This behaviour was, to a certain extent, tolerated and there was belief that it was acceptable for men to have their emotional and sexual needs met outside the context of their ‘monogamous’ marriage (Hunt, 1996). These views changed during the nineteenth century, with love and affection becoming much more important in decisions to enter into a monogamous marriage, replacing the idea that such unions ought to be carried out solely for functional and/or economic reasons. This shift in rationale for monogamous love marriages only applied to those who could afford to marry for those reasons. The majority of working-class people continued to enter into such relationship arrangements to secure resources (Barker, 2013).

The eighteenth century also saw a shift in social norms in relation to love and marriage. There was a growing belief that married couples ought to spend intimate quality time together as opposed to utilitarian time (Finn, 2012b). This radical new approach, in relation to partner expectations in marriage, coincided with the term ‘privacy’ being reconceptualised. Privacy underwent a change in meaning going from being understood as concealment, in the sense that one was hiding and missing out on things, to being conceptualised as positive seclusion and protection where one could assume security and comfort (Finn, 2012b). Alongside this developing notion of ‘home’ as being safe and secure, came the idea that one’s home is a place where one can experience closeness and romantic exclusivity (DeSwann, 1990). According to Finn (2010), by the end of eighteenth century the home was seen as a closed, safe, and secure space, where one could experience both emotional and sexual closeness. These ideas from the eighteenth century contributed to an ideological position which proposes it is only through the safe enclosure of a couple that they can find happiness (Ahmed, 2010). This way of conceptualising the home has continued to the present day, and contributes to the widespread acceptance of monogamy as the preferred relationship model (Anderson, 2010).

The idea that a secure home and base from which to explore the world is important to an individual’s well-being is also evident in the work of attachment theorists of the twentieth century (see for example, Bowlby, 1973). These theories centred on the notion of a ‘secure base’ highlighting the importance of an exclusive bond with a caregiver (usually the mother) enabling children to explore the world feeling free from threat and danger. This conceptualisation has also been applied to adult relationships in a way that reinforces the importance of an exclusive dyad.

(Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Consequently, psychological theories and discourse related to relationships have positioned the couple relationship as the most ideal and the one most likely to succeed if it is conducted monogamously (Hatfield & Walster, 1978; Finn, 2012b). It is argued here that these ideas contribute to an ideology which seeks to promote monogamy over other forms of relationship.

In the late Victorian era, Krafft-Ebing (1894) proposed the view that sexual desire is something that needs taming, particularly in men, as left to its own devices it is dangerous. He argued that morality tames the explosive nature of sexual desire and that monogamy sets this power some boundaries. Krafft-Ebing (1894) states, *'. . . the fact that in higher civilization human love must be monogamous and rest on a lasting contract was thus recognized. If nature does not more than provide for procreation, a commonwealth (family or state) cannot exist without a guarantee that the offspring shall flourish physically, morally and intellectually . . . establishing monogamous marriage and securing it by legal, religious and moral ties'* (p. 5). Krafft-Ebing's (1894) message is clear; in order to secure a stable future for children, parents ought to engage in a monogamous relationship. Monogamy for men is a moral and respectable way in which their sexual needs can be met. Krafft-Ebing (1894) also argued that women did not experience sexual desire in the same way as men. Women's desire is to be understood as being focused predominantly on love, rather than being driven by sexual desire. This enabled women to be positioned as persons who serve the needs of their husbands and cared for their children. The views of Kraft-Ebing (1894) were influential through the early part of the twentieth century but have received a critical reception from academics more recently. For example, Savoia, (2010) and De Block & Adriaens (2013) argue Krafft-Ebing (1894) was instrumental in creating a set of myths about women that contributed towards their subjugation. In a similar vein Szasz (1980) states Krafft-Ebing *'. . . was not interested in liberating men and women from the shackles of sexual prejudice or the constraints of anti-sexual legislation. On the contrary, he was interested in supplanting the waning power of the church with the waxing power of medicine'* (p.45). On the other hand, Oosterhuis (2012) argues that Krafft-Ebing modernised sexuality and, despite his Christian views in relation to gender roles, he did advocate the view that men and women were equals.

Although the dominant view in the late nineteenth century was that monogamy was the most natural form of relationship, there was evidence from social anthropology that monogamy is a socially constructed ideology and not necessarily a ‘natural’ human practice (Barash & Lipton, 2001; Pieper & Bauer, 2005). Despite this, Victorian society continued to practice and value monogamy as the only civilized, ethical form of relationship. According to Fee (1973), monogamy was *‘. . . the glorious end-product of man’s whole social, sexual, and moral evolution from savagery to civilization’* (p. 24). Framed in this way monogamy provides a set of social norms for organising men and women in particular ways such that the roles and responsibilities they held were understood to be for the benefit of the family unit. Feminist scholars have argued that the institution of marriage and monogamy grew out of patriarchal thinking that positioned women as the property of men (Stelboum, 1999). From this perspective, monogamy is viewed as restraining and constricting the agency and freedom of women (Weadock, 2004). This line of thinking reflects the arguments presented by the Marxist philosopher Engels (1884), who argued that sexual monogamy served two primary functions. First, monogamy ensures that property and wealth is inherited by biologically related children. Second, securing a monogamous marriage provides men with a wife whose role is to bear children and engage in unpaid domestic work. The notion that love should be present within a monogamous relationship was not a primary consideration.

Coontz (2005) argues that it was not until the 1950s that the majority of people in Western society could afford to marry for reasons of love and sexual desire. Although the moral superiority of monogamy was challenged by some writers in the Victorian era, by the mid-twentieth century the dominant discourse was that marriage and monogamy are ‘normal’. This also resulted in monogamy being conceptualised as the ‘traditional’ relationship practice (Coontz, 2004) which was far from being an accurate representation of social history. The 1960s marked a generational shift in attitudes towards relationships and extra-marital sex (Edmunds & Turner, 2005). The contraceptive pill was released in the UK in 1961, initially to married women only, before becoming available to all in 1967 (Bridge, 2007). This social change alongside others, such as the improvement of women’s position in the workplace (Goodson, 2001), marked a shift in the way sex and relationships were perceived. Feminists saw this development as freeing women up to engage in consensual sex without the fear of an unwanted pregnancy. In addition, many feminists, especially radical lesbian feminists, saw this medical advance as an opportunity for women to challenge heterosexual patriarchy and advocated a reconceptualisation and redefinition of practices such as monogamy (Summerfield, 1994). The late 1960s and 1970s could be seen as a time of sexual and social experimentation with women questioning taken-for-granted assumptions related to their social and relationship roles and behaviours. This led to many feminists choosing to reject monogamy in their intimate relationships. However, by the 1980s, and in the throes of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, many feminist heterosexual women returned to monogamy (Miller, 2001) as they reported experiences of being treated disrespectfully by their male partners, and fearing potential sexual infection (Bindel, 2013). Claims related to non-heterosexual people being in better positions to *'construct their relationships from scratch'* (Heaphy, Donovan & Weeks, 2004, p. 168) were for many same-gender attracted people side-lined in favour of practicing their relationships in the same fashion as the majority of heterosexuals, namely in a monogamous dyad[27]. The monogamous couple relationship continued to be central to social life with popular romantic films and songs reinforcing the monogamous, mono-normative relationship arrangement for both heterosexuals and homosexuals (Ahmed, 2010; Finn, 2012). Sexual exclusivity in intimate relationships became positioned as the normal and moral way in which to live out one's love relationship.

3.2.1 Section summary

Historically, we have a picture of monogamy as a concept that has changed over time. The Victorian era marked a shift in views from a tolerance of non-monogamy evident in the eighteenth century to a position which saw monogamy as an essential component of a

[27] Although gay male relationships have a more prevalent history of being practiced non-monogamously (Heaphy, Donovan & Weeks, 2004).

relationship. The idea that sexual desire was different for men and women was actively promoted by the scientific community towards the end of the nineteenth century (see, for example, Krafft-Ebing (1894)). This set the scene for the development of ideologies around relationships and sexuality which dominated the first half of the twentieth century and beyond.

3.3 Contemporary views on monogamy

Despite the changes in views and beliefs about sexuality and relationships there is evidence that monogamy is still considered to be an important social norm. Data from the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSAS) (2017) identified a rise in liberal attitudes towards both same and different-gender sex and relationships, 75% of respondents report the view that sex before marriage is 'not always wrong', marking an increase of 11% since 2011. This finding highlights the changing nature of the way in which sex is conceptualised in contemporary UK society. This reflects data from the UK National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (NSSAL) (2003) which reports an increase in tolerance in relation to some types of sex and relationship expression. Respondents showed a greater degree of tolerance towards pre-marital sex. Having said that, findings show that monogamy continues to be considered important in committed relationships and/or marriages with 77% of men and 85% of women reporting that sex outside of a relationship as 'wrong'. These figures show an increase from data reported in 1990 (NSSAL, 1990) when 67% of men and 78% of women expressed the view that sex outside of a relationship was 'wrong'. A similar pattern is found in the USA where the majority of respondents in the General Social Survey (GSS) (2013) report that infidelity is *'always wrong'* or *'almost always wrong'* (p. 165).

Although large scale social surveys, such as the GSS and the NSSAL, are valuable sources of information about general social views and attitudes, they are not able to explore issues in detail. They do not for example, provide any insights into the reasons why respondents consider infidelity to be 'wrong'. Green et al., (2016) carried out a study that explored in depth contemporary views on monogamy. Their participants were predominantly white and identified as either heterosexual, gay or lesbian. In response to questions about monogamy, in general participants' attitudes fell into two broad groups; those who took a *'normative approach'* (p. 422) and those who took a '*reflexive approach'* (p. 422). The 'normative' group expressed the view that there is little point getting married or committing to a monogamous relationship if their partner behaves in non-monogamous way. In other words, this group valued the principles of monogamy and were prepared to commit to these values in a relationship. The 'reflexive' group expressed the view that what individuals do in the context of their own relationships is up to them. In other words, their values and beliefs were less constrained by social norms and ideologies. Green et al., (2016) went on to look at how their participants conceptualised monogamy within their own relationships and again identified two broad groups, *'structured'* and *'plastic'* (p. 423). The 'structured' group believed that, whilst non-monogamous practices might be acceptable for other people, they were not drawn to conducting their personal intimate relationship in that way, preferring to follow a 'normative' approach to relationships. The 'plastic' belief group were more open to the possibility that sexual activity outside the context of their relationship was something that would have to be considered and negotiated, but, they were not directly opposed to it. What is particularly interesting about this particular piece of research, for this thesis, is that it presents evidence that heterosexual, gay, and lesbian participants hold different attitudes towards monogamy. Heterosexual participants, particularly women, whilst professing to accept how other people constructed their relationships as being unproblematic, were themselves less likely to implement any alternative behaviours in their own relationships.

According to Green et al., (2016) this finding demonstrates that heterosexual people are tolerant to those who choose to lead their relationships in a 'plastic' fashion, whilst at the same time holding an 'it's ok for you, but not me' attitude. Lesbian and gay participants were much more likely to opt for a plastic belief position, in that they were seen (particularly gay men) to engage in open dialogue with their partner in relation to meeting each other's sexual and emotional needs. Green et al., (2016) concluded that, in relation to monogamy, heterosexual people were much less critical of the institutional practice and took an explicit positive stance toward monogamy. However, their gay and lesbian counterparts could be seen to take a more pragmatic approach to monogamy, implying more discussion related to the relationship style effectively being fit for their purpose. An important methodological point in relation to Green et al's., (2016) research is that a number of participants were interviewed alongside their partners. Although some research espouses the positive aspects of interviewing couples together to enable richer data generation (for example, Bjørnholt 2009; Doucet, 2001), it has also been argued that the presence of a partner can influence (both positively and negatively) what is expressed

(Valentine, 1999). In addition, participants in Green et al's., (2016) research were in monogamous relationships and this could have influenced their views on monogamy more generally. None of the participants in Green et al's., (2016) research identified as bisexual people, so it is impossible to ascertain if their views on monogamy differed to those who identified as heterosexual, gay and lesbian. Nevertheless, their research does demonstrate that beliefs about monogamy do vary across different groups in society.

Finn (2012b) reported findings that monogamous individuals often utilised metaphors of *'the home'* (p. 127) when talking about their relationship. It seemed to be the case that 'home' was used in a way that was synonymous with 'partner'. Finn (2012b) also argues that using 'home' as a metaphor presents a monogamous relationship as a place of comfort and stability with a sense of order and structure. One is safe and secure with a partner. Non-monogamy was constructed by Finn's (2012b) participants as 'chaos' (p. 129). For example, participants talked about how there would be unpleasant psychological consequences if one engaged in sex outside of their monogamous relationship. The perceived consequences included arguments with their partner and the breakdown of their relationship. For Finn's (2012b) participants' monogamy provided a dimension of security to their relationship. It is important to note that Finn's (2012b) research was a relatively small scale study (n=14) in which the majority of his interviews were conducted in a couple dyad. Participants were interviewed alongside their intimate partners and so, as with Green et al's., (2016) research, the presence of a partner may have influenced participant disclosure.

Barker (2011) argues that views about monogamy are typically implicit in relationships and overt discussions about it are relatively rare. A monogamous relationship requires couples to ensure that others are 'kept out', which is reflected in social norms relating to the notion that couples have 'couple time' on their own. Social norms such as this support an ideology that finding a partner and engaging in a monogamous relationship is the path to a happy life (Barker, 2011). Gotta, Green, Rothblum, Soloman, Balsam, and Swartz, (2011) conducted research in the USA, drawing on a range of professed sexual orientations, including heterosexual, gay and lesbian, compared couples' aspiration for a monogamous relationship. Their findings suggest that couples in the year 2000 desired and engaged in monogamy more so than couples did in

1975. This appears to indicate that monogamy continues to be a desired form of relationship. It is nevertheless important to note that the researchers received responses from only one member of the couple relationships and so their partners may have expressed a different perspective. It is also plausible to consider the suggestion that awareness of diseases such as AIDS and other STI's have led to more active focus on health care behaviours (Kolstee, Philpot, Grierson, Bavinton, Duncan & Prestage, 2017: Moors, Matsick, Schechinger, 2017). Gotta et al., (2011) present evidence that monogamy agreements between all couples, irrespective of sexual identity, were more explicit in the year 2000 than 1975. This may reflect changes to the legal and social rights afforded to individuals in the USA between 1975 and 2000. In 1975 civil unions were not available to same-gender attracted people, but by the year 2000 some states in USA sanctioned them which may have some influence on the desire for, and views on, monogamous relationships.

Warner (1999) argues that positioning monogamy as the most important relationship practice serves to encourage *'damaging hierarchies of respectability'* (p. 74), framing alternative relationship styles such as polyamory as inferior (Rubin 1984; Pieper & Bauer, 2005). Little attention has been paid to relationship practices that lie outside of monogamy despite growing numbers of people professing to be engaged in consensual non-monogamy (Barker, 2013). In a review of the monogamy literature Moors, Matsick, and Schechinger (2017) suggest that irrespective of sexual identity people in modern Western society express moderate to high positive attitudes towards *'a hypothetical willingness to engage in different types on consensual non-monogamy'* (p. 677). It important to note that many of the studies Moors et al., (2017) draw on are taken from convenience samples and are cross-sectional in design making it difficult to determine if this view is transitory and, or likely to change over time. In addition, because participants are responding to a hypothetical scenario, they may well be appraising a situation favourably precisely because they are not currently experiencing this relationship arrangement.

Thus far I have used the term 'monogamy' to refer to the practice of having sexual relations with only one partner. Anderson (2010) developed a set of categories which describe four different forms of monogamy. The first of these he refers to as 'Physical' monogamy. This type of monogamy refers to bodily behaviours. There is often disagreement in respect of what constitutes physical infidelity. Some people regard passionately kissing someone else as not acceptable however performing oral sex would be acceptable (Docan-Morgan & Docan, 2007). Individuals set their own parameters in respect of what physical behaviours constitute fidelity and infidelity. The second type is 'Desirous' monogamy which is concerned with desire and fantasy. Some people regard their partner as cheating if they sexually fantasise about someone else, particularly during sex, whereas, other people actively engage in fantasies and do not consider it to be an act of infidelity. Anderson's (2010) third type of is 'Social' monogamy and is concerned with how other people or society at large sees them. The individual may engage in behaviours which could be seen as non-monogamous such as having sex with someone else. However, they continue to desire to be thought of as monogamous and do not disclose this behaviour to others. In this way, individuals maintain an appearance of being monogamous whilst engaging in sexual relations with people other than their partner. Anderson's fourth type is titled 'emotional' monogamy and refers to the practice of staying emotionally faithful to one's partner so far as one does not engage in emotional relationships with other people[28] outside of their current relationship however they may initiate sexual connections with others.

Anderson's (2010) typology was based on research with undergraduate men who identified as monogamous. He suggests that some of his participants can be seen to be in a state of 'cognitive dissonance' (Festinger, 1954) simultaneously desiring monogamy and wanting to be seen and understood as monogamous, but at the same time, engaging in what could be considered to be non-monogamous practices. Anderson (2010) refers to this as the *'monogamy gap'* (p. 859). The social importance his participants place upon monogamy despite the fact that there are variations

[28] This does not include family or friends.

in their understandings of monogamy and their engagement in what they themselves understand as non-monogamy, places them in a liminal space somewhere between actively desiring monogamy yet making non-monogamous choices which they understand goes against their implicit monogamy agreements (Nelson, 2010). Nearly 20 years ago Townsend (1998) concluded that, despite all the cultural and generational changes that have taken place, women, in the main, continue to desire monogamy within their love relationships. This still appears to be the case and also applies across different sexualities (Hartman-Linck, 2014; Rust, 1995).

3.3.1 Section summary

In this section I have presented evidence that the social norm of monogamy is still a dominant ideology in twenty-first century Western society. Monogamy continues to be thought of as a practice that provides individuals with both security and safety. Therefore the ideology of monogamy retains its position at the top of the relationship hierarchy.

3.4 The reality of monogamy

This section reviews the research that has looked at the actual rates of monogamous and non-monogamous behaviour in relationships, in order to explore the relationship between an ideology of monogamy and its manifestation through behaviour for men and women. The expectations and ideals associated with monogamous relationships present real challenges to people, particularly in relation to implicit and/or explicit ‘rules’ associated with sexual fidelity. According to Copen, Daniels, Vespa, and Mosher, (2012) the likelihood of a first marriage in the UK lasting 20 years is only 54%. Statistics published through the National Opinion Research Centre’s General Social Survey (2013) reported that female infidelity had risen nearly 40% since 2010. Wysocki and Childers (2011) carried out research which focused on internet infidelity involving the illicit communication with other people on-line for the purposes of igniting an emotional and/or illicit affair (including such behaviours as flirting or sharing naked photographs with other people). They found that just over two thirds of participants disclosed a level of infidelity on-line whilst over three quarters admitted to being unfaithful in real life. Barker and

Langdridge (2010) report infidelity levels somewhere between 10% and 25%[29]. The act of 'mate poaching'[30] (Schmitt & Buss, 2001) has been shown to be a regular strategy used by single people to entice married people away from their partners so that they can ignite a new relationship. It is important to note that researchers have identified gender differences in the explanations people give to account for their unsanctioned relationships. Men are more likely to cite sexual gratification needs as a justification for infidelity. Women, however, articulate a primary need for emotional connection as a reason for engaging in this behaviour (LaSala, 2004; Banfield & McCabe, 2001; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1990). The evidence appears to highlight gender differences in respect of infidelity behaviours. Nevertheless, we can see some people struggling to maintain a monogamous relationship albeit for different reasons.

Northrup, Schwartz, and Witte (2013) reported that the reasons individuals give for committing acts of infidelity are related to feelings of sexual boredom and communicative psychological barriers between partners. Images of individuals engaging in 'hot sex' type acts saturates the media. We are bombarded by celebrity relationships whose intimate lives are sold to the highest

[29] The figures in relation to infidelity are difficult to pin down particularly in relation to the gender differences. The accuracy of figures is dependent upon those reporting the behaviour being as detailed as possible and it is not difficult to understand that due to the way in which infidelity is stigmatised people may feel reluctant to divulge the extent of their infidelities

[30] This is when single people engage in strategies to encourage married people to leave their partner and embark on a relationship with the enticer (single person).

bidder in an attempt to ensure that their relationship is known by pretty much everyone[31]. It is extremely difficult to avoid this knowledge, as a simple scroll down any social media sites will reveal story after story of who is getting married, divorced, remarried, or who has been 'dumped' or 'cheated on'. *'If you were to judge the success rate of monogamy by the sex lives of public figures, perhaps couples should change their marriage vows to say 'till a tempting new partner do us part'* (CNN). Orbuch (2009), cautions those in the 'real' world against taking leads from celebrities. People who are in the public eye hold a certain degree of power and resources and, as such, have more opportunities whereby they could cheat on their partners. She suggests that the attention received by those in the limelight leads them to be more likely to seek out the adrenaline rush of new relationships. However, it is still the case that many of those not in the public eye and in assumed monogamous relationships do engage in infidelity of some kind or other (Barker, 2013).

Hite's (2004) research presented evidence that some men believed their marriages would not survive if they did not have extra marital affairs. This finding supports the view that there are gender differences in how monogamy and non-monogamy are understood and practised. Constructions of masculinity are framed in relation to societal expectations regarding appropriate gender-schematic attitudes and behaviour (Butler, 1993; Bem, 1993). The specific gendered ways in which boys and men are socialised into the cultural narrative that they ought to be sexually experiencing a number of partners may account for Hite's (2004) findings. The implication of this is that some men believe that going outside of one's relationship for sex is a

[31] I say everyone because it is difficult to escape celebrity news as it appears in all its guises across mediums of communication. National UK news channels have spent airtime discussing the likes of the Beckham's, Kardashian's, etc.

relationship enhancer. For those who carry out clandestine affairs, the pressure is on to ensure their behaviour is kept hidden, and Hite (2004) discusses how this often leads to feelings of secrecy and shame. The overall impact of behaviours such as this on the ideology of monogamy appears to be minimal. Society seems to accept the fact that extra marital affairs and infidelity happen without challenging the ideological status of monogamy (Fisher, 2011; Nelson, 2010). So entrenched and embedded is the cultural norm of monogamy, that critiques of monogamy are rarely considered by those within it. The suggestion that the practice of monogamy negatively impacts sexual desire and libido is rarely discussed (Barker, 2011).

Anderson (2010) explores temporal aspects of infidelity and argues that participants tend not to think about extra dyadic relationships in the early months of a new relationship. This stage of the relationship could be seen as a time when individuals feel a sense of 'headiness' that is typically experienced by many when entering new relationships and is reinforced and scripted through discourses of romance (Duncombe & Marsden, 1993). The positive feelings one experiences at the start of a new relationship serve to reinforce the belief that monogamy is the ideal and that enjoyment and satisfaction can be found with one person because in effect, it has been. Therefore, participants had a negative view of those who were unfaithful at this stage of the relationship. Ultimately his participants conceptualise their infidelity as behaviour which is unconnected to the love and care they feel for their partner. It is relevant to note that Anderson's (2010) cohort were made up of white, undergraduate, heterosexual men who had been in a monogamous relationship for at least three months. Participants were aged between eighteen and twenty-one and so they are likely to be at a point in their life where they are engaging in identity exploration, and with that comes instability in relation to future life-goals and desires (Arnett, 2001; Arnett, 2004).

3.4.1 Section summary

In the above section I examined contemporary understandings of monogamy. I discussed the challenges that monogamy creates both in terms of the practice of it and the ways in which monogamy is defined. I also presented evidence in support of the view that gender impacts on how monogamy and non-monogamy is experienced and practiced. Various ideological social and cultural conditions have situated monogamy as a highly regarded and important social norm in society. Despite the emotional and physical challenges monogamy presents for many individuals, it is the case that the custom of monogamy continues to be desired by the majority of society. The French writer Jacques Attali (2005) predicted that, in the future, monogamy will lose its position at the top of the relationship style hierarchy and be replaced by various styles of non-monogamies[32]. He suggests that due to people living longer it is unfeasible to expect people to stay in monogamous relationships. He does not discuss specifically what he means by monogamy but it is likely he is referring to supermonogamous (Emens, 2004) relationship styles, which involve staying with one partner monogamously for the whole of one's adult life and not the myriad of alternative forms of monogamy[33]. These ideas are discussed in the next section.

3.5 Monogamy, non-monogamy and ideology

This section examines in more detail some of the ideological assumptions that influence the behaviour of people in relationships in contemporary society. It goes on to examine the 'utopia' of alternatives to monogamy. Ricoeur (1981) argues that individuals are born into a world where there are pre-existing historical, cultural, and linguistic signs and symbols which we become aware of through being in the world. This means that our understanding of concepts such as monogamy is based on a culturally constructed ideology. There is some evidence that contemporary Western society is more open and diverse than it was in the first half of the

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[32] I use this term to illustrate other forms of relationships which are not monogamous. I am mindful however that the use of this term can signify monogamy as the most validated accepted construction rendering all others constellations as somewhat subordinate. Having said this I utilise the term as I feel it is the most widely understood.

[33] Such as the ones Anderson (2010) outlines earlier in this chapter.

twentieth century, for example, there is no longer an expectation that couples will go on to marry and have a family (Gross, 2005). This supports the arguments presented earlier that what it means to be involved in an intimate relationship is culturally and historically constructed. Ideologies permeate society and are present in our everyday lives through a range of media and discourse. Despite Gross' (2005) observation that we live in a more open society, there are still dominant ideologies which legitimate certain ways of behaving in a relationship, such as monogamy (Green et al., 2016).

3.5.1 Monogamy and ideology

It has been argued that monogamy is a taken for granted, privileged relationship practice in contemporary society (Mark, Rosenkrantz, & Kerner, 2014; Conley, Moors, Matsick & Ziegler, 2013). This view is supported by laws that position the dyadic union as the most legitimate (Finn, 2012b) and, as such, the best one to raise children in (Ruskin, 2011; Wilson, 2002). Together, with hegemonic moral views related to non-monogamous sexual behaviour, it appears that monogamy, irrespective of the challenges it often brings to individuals, is positioned as an important social norm (Burleigh, Rubel, & Meegan, 2016). This view perpetuates the proposition that monogamy is the most natural union (McDaniel & Twist, 2016). In contrast, non-monogamies are presented as being predominantly centred on the practice of sex rather than valid alternative forms of relationship (Grunt-Mejer & Campbell, 2016). The challenges to non-monogamous relationships are often phrased in terms of moral questions in relation to the implications this may have on children. The position taken is that alternative relationship forms are likely to have a negative impact on children and consequently seeks to maintain the status of monogamy (Ruskin, 2011: McDaniel & Twist, 2016). The status of monogamy is also evident in the UK legal system where adultery is seen as providing grounds for divorce. Although views have shifted in relation to apportioning blame, the system still reinforces the view that monogamy is the relationship form we should all aspire to have.

As mentioned above Emens (2004) uses the term ‘supermonogamy’ to refer to the most extreme form of monogamy, that is, staying with the same partner throughout one’s life. However, this is not the reality for most people in contemporary society and it is safe to say that the majority of people aspire to and practice ‘serial’ monogamy (Anderson, 2010; Barker, 2011). This means being with a person monogamously until such time when the relationship ends, and then the next relationship is practised monogamously, and so on. The logical outcome of this type of practiced monogamy is a serial change of partner. Emens (2004) suggests that in this type of relationship children are not experiencing their parents in monogamous relationships, instead they are imbued in poly structured type relationships. In effect, many children have biological parents alongside a number of step-parents and ex-step parents in their lives and, as such, children adjust to shifting social conditions within their families (Sheff, 2011). Feminist writers such as Stelbourm, (1999) have argued that serial monogamy contributes towards the direct abandonment of children by their fathers. The argument that monogamy is better for children can only apply if it refers to the supermonogamous relationship types discussed by Emens (2004). However, that is not the type of monogamy that is most common in contemporary UK society (Anderson, 2010). Despite concerns expressed by some writers about certain types of monogamy we seem to have a situation where any form of monogamy is more valued than other forms of relationship (Conley et al., 2012). One of the ways this position is sustained is by drawing on rhetoric which makes claims about the impact that parents relationship forms can have on their children (Amato, 2010). The rhetoric does not appear to be supported by the empirical evidence, especially in the case of serial monogamy (Barker, 2005).

The ideology around monogamy also draws on cultural constructions of emotions, in particular jealousy. Jealousy is often a reason women cite when explaining why they are unwilling to consider a non-monogamous relationship or a more open style of relationship practice (Anderson, 2010; Robinson, 1997). One cannot underestimate the negative feelings associated with this emotion as it is clearly not pleasant when one experiences it. Despite its negative connotations, jealousy has been constructed to indicate the presence of love in one's relationship (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2000; DeSteno, Bartlett, Braverman, & Salovey 2002). The cultural and historical construction of jealousy has positioned it as an emotion that is central to a process of self-justification, which highlights the importance of a specific and exclusive partner and marking this relationship as different from all other relationships (De Visser & McDonald, 2007; Sharpsteen, 1993). The distinction between friendship and love serves to reify the suggestion that an intimate dyadic relationship is different to all other relationships one has in their life (Finn, 2012b). The relationships that one has with friends are not considered to be subject to any forms of jealousy[34] (Van Duijn, Evelien, Zeggelink, Huisman, Stokman & Wasseur, 2003; Walker, 1994), whereas there is some implicit, and perhaps explicit, expectation that one should experience and externalise jealousy in their love relationship. Jealousy is seen as a way of making a distinction between relationships that are based on either love or friendship (Giordano, Manning, & Longmore, 2010). Jealousy is believed to provide confirmation to the recipient of the emotion that their partner loves them. Essentially, jealousy is seen as being a way of declaring one's passion for the other, and as such, the lack of jealousy in one's intimate relationship is seen to be demonstrative of a lack of love (Schippers, 2016; Emens, 2004).

Davis (1950) provides an interesting and insightful way in which to view jealousy and goes as far as to say that it is monogamy that produces jealousy. It seems that the institution of monogamy is paradoxically fed through the emotion of jealousy and the emotion of jealousy is fed through the practice of monogamy (Conley, Ziegler, Moors, Matsick & Valentine, 2012). This reciprocal relationship is rarely contemplated and the kinds of issues experienced in monogamous relationships, which can lead parties to explicate the union, are laid at the feet of external reasons and not at the practise of monogamy itself. Taking a rather cynical view, Nelson (2012), argues that monogamy as a desired relationship stays intact, ready for the next monogamous relationship.

Research into the explanations people provide for desiring a monogamous relationship also provide some insights into its ideological status. Green (2006), investigating the life histories of

[34] I am referring to adult friendship relationships not children's friendships which are often fraught with tensions such as, 'she is my best friend not yours' type issues.

straight and gay men, found that all boys growing up were subject to the same societal expectations in respect of marriage, monogamy and family. Heterosexual men however, referenced an *'irresistible gravitational pull'* (p. 183) towards such practices as monogamy much more intensely than gay men. Green (2006) speculates that ultimately, the fact that gay boys grow up knowing they are unable to marry each other impacts upon how they internalise societal expectations such as monogamy and being monogamous in their intimate relationship. Perhaps this may well change as gay and lesbian children grow up in societies where they are able to engage in legal unions and marriages. All women, including those who are attracted to people of the same and different-gender grow up with particular expectations on them. Like the heterosexual men in Green's (2006) research, they probably feel the expectation of marriage and monogamy. However, Rust (1995) and Diamond (2008a) have pointed out that those in same-gender relationships also desire monogamy irrespective of the fact that they were unlikely to have role-models on which to base their same-gender monogamy (Green, 2006).

Schmookler and Bursik (2007), found that women had a higher regard for both emotional and sexual monogamy than men. They also found that women were less likely than men to consider monogamy as a sacrifice. The researchers suggest that the differential valuing of monogamy is related to the emotional expectation that monogamy brings with it. Bem (1993) argues that relational traits associated with emotionality are strengthened and reinforced for women and not men. It is for this reason that women value traits such as commitment and intimacy more so than men, and as a result have a higher regard for monogamy (Conley et al., 2012). Schmookler and Bursik (2007) report that if both men and women were in happy current relationships they were both more likely to value monogamy than those who reported less relationship satisfaction. The participants who took part in their research above were all heterosexual, unmarried, and were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. The longest relationship was three years and the shortest six months. Thus, it is safe to assume that the current permanent others of the participants had not been around for a long time and as such, may well be at the stage in the relationship when they experience the most passion (Anderson, 2010). As such, they would be less likely to express the view that they were dissatisfied with their monogamous status (Anderson, 2010). The research findings presented by Schmookler and Bursik (2007) seem to indicate a link between relationship satisfaction and attitudes towards monogamy. Research suggests that gay men are more likely to engage in non-monogamous forms of relationships compared to heterosexual couples and lesbians (Klesse, 2007; LaSala, 2004; Kitzinger & Coyle, 1995). Bonello and Cross (2009) caution against framing gay, non-monogamous relationships as somehow dysfunctional and suggest that the social context of gay relationships needs to be understood as different to heterosexual relationships, and as such, monogamy for gay men may well be conceptualised differently but no less considered important (Weeks, 1984; LaSala, 2004).

Ahmed, (2010) talks about how we utilise *'happiness scripts'* (p. 126). These are *'straightening devices'* (p. 126) or paths that point us in the direction of what is there to be engaged in. Happiness scripts describe ways in which to live our lives which are more likely to offer us positivity as well as feelings of safety and comfort. Ahmed (2010) goes on to argue that heterosexual culture has provided a path or script of the monogamous couple which is perceived as ideological, hence normative. The practice of monogamy, therefore, is considered to represent an 'alignment' with others who are also in search of happiness. The logical conclusion for individuals who choose to veer off the path of a happiness script (and monogamy) is unhappiness (Finn, 2012b), and this goes against what humans are thought to so ardently desire (Ahmed, 2010, 2007). Research investigating the quality of both monogamous and non-monogamous relationships has found similar rates of expressed satisfaction, highlighting no significant differences related to self-report measures of happiness, particularly if the relationship practice is desired by participants (Conley, Matsick, Moors & Ziegler, 2017; LaSala, 2004). It is clear that the dominant ideological status of monogamy continues to be supported and legitimised in Western society (Barthes, 1977; Finn, 2012a). Thus far I have focused on the ideology that exists in relation to monogamy in contemporary society and ways in which this ideology manifests itself. The next section looks at research and ideology associated with alternative relationship practices.

3.5.2 Non-monogamy and ideology

Modern conceptualisations of monogamous relationships are underpinned by the assumption that if one of the partners was to experience feelings of discord (either emotionally, spiritually or sexually) then this could be taken to be a clue that perhaps all was not well in their relationship (Rodriguez-Rust, 2002). The notion that relationship problems could actually be a consequence of the institutional practice of monogamy itself is rarely considered (Robinson, 1997). Alternative relationship styles which lie outside of the ‘charmed circle’ of monogamy are positioned as immature and inferior (Rubin, 1984). Consequently, consensual non-monogamous (CNM) styles of relationships are rarely considered by people as an alternative to monogamy (Klesse, 2007). Polyamory (often referred to as ‘poly’) is a style of relationship practice where people have more than one *‘romantic, sexual and/or affective partner’* (Sheff, 2005, p. 252). Polyamory is presented by its advocates as an ethical form of non-monogamy in which partners engage in open and honest discussions which each other about their their potential other partners (Emens, 2004). There are no set rules for those who enter into these styles of relationships. The number of partners that is acceptable is negotiated and individuals try to work out what is best for them. Relationship arrangements recognised as poly include, one male, two female partners, and one male partner many other partners (mixed or single gender depending on each person’s sexual identity). Polyamory and other CNM styles of relationships are rarely discussed or presented in society as credible alternative relationship practices (Burris, 2013). The ideology of monogamy creates a level of resistance to these forms of relationships through the social norm that within intimate relationships there can only be two people (Finn, 2012b). Women who are in poly or other CNM relationships with men specifically are often perceived as more likely to be oppressed in these types of relationship arrangements than men (Bindel, 2003; Sheff, 2014). This argument is based on the view that polyamory is predominantly of benefit to men, in that they are able to procure many female partners as they are more likely to have the resources available to them such as money, time and opportunity (Stelboum, 1999). It appears to be the case that gender is significant in terms of the perception that is propagated in respect of these forms of relationship practices (Ziegler et al., 2014). Barker and Langdridge (2010) have highlighted the perceived advantages of CNM across genders. In particular, they argue that CNM provides the opportunity to break free from conventional and constricting forms of relationship expression for both men and women. Rodríguez-Rust (2003) also challenges the cultural narrative that ‘true’ love is dyadic and monogamous only. She goes on to argue that those who choose various forms of non-monogamies in the construction of their sexual and emotional relationships do so not because they are deficient in some respect, but because they believe it works for them. The same is therefore true for those who choose monogamy (Robinson, 1997; Klesse, 2007).

Emens (2004) discusses how it is possible that people have particular dispositions that orient them to specific relationship practices, such as polyamory or monogamy, and that because monogamy is the practice which is most socially sanctioned it is, as a result, the one most people practise without any critical consideration of it. It may be the case, as Robinson (1997) argues, that monogamy as well as polyamory should be seen in terms of strategies of sexual expression that individuals employ as opposed to fixed orientations. In effect, Robinson (2013) argues for strategic identities that are framed in relation to sexual orientation being conceptualised as being directed *'. . . towards types of relationships as opposed to types of people'* (p. 21). She suggests that this is important in terms of identification with other individuals who adopt the same identity. Finn and Malson (2008) discuss how those in poly relationships often appear to be constrained by the language of monogamy and frequently conform to monogamous standards and/or ways of behaving in their non-monogamous relationships. Finn and Malson (2008) found that monogamy had a presence in the lives of those individuals who were engaged in non-monogamous relationships, particularly in respect of the language they used to discuss their relationships. Both Barker (2005) and Klesse (2006) acknowledge that this is not surprising, given the fact that society is heteronormative, mononormative, and monogamous. As such, it is challenging to engage in non-monogamous relationships when the surrounding culture and beliefs reify monogamy as the only intelligible relationship arrangement. Thus, the intelligibility of practicing and navigating one's non-monogamous relationship as unique and not reflective of monogamy, specifically, is problematic. The fact that many individuals in poly relationships draw on traditional monogamous frameworks or languages to discuss their experiences is therefore predictable and, according to Ritchie and Barker (2006), not demonstrative of any desire to re-enact traditional monogamy in any way.

Within a monogamous ideology, all forms of non-monogamous relationships are presented as immature on the basis that they lack the level of seriousness and maturity necessary for intimate relationships (Conley et al., 2017). In binary terms, monogamy is presented in the form of an angel, whereas, non-monogamy is a demon (Willey, 2015). This analogy is evident in Willey's (2015) analysis of films with a polyamorous theme, which identified that there was a tendency to represent women using a binary construction of morality. Women in monogamous relationships were represented as 'good', whereas those in polyamorous relationships were represented in a less than positive way. In a manner similar to Rich's (1990) seminal work discussed earlier, Willey (2010) invites us to consider what she calls 'compulsory monogamy'. Rich (1990) focuses on the privileges that heterosexuality endows to men, but also points out that monogamy is considered to be an essential *'building block of contemporary culture'* (p. 621) which gives it a privileged status in relation to other forms of relationship. This uncritical stance towards, and widespread acceptance of monogamy has been identified as contributing to the cultural invisibility of alternative forms of relationship (Barker & Langdridge, 2010; Ritchie, 2010). Willey (2010) suggests that the normative function of femininity in women is utilised in order to position monogamy as the 'right' and 'good' way to conduct one's relationship. Consequently, other forms of relationships are positioned as being undesirable and somehow less 'healthy' (Willey, 2010). Women in monogamous relationships are still considered to be sexual beings, but only as far as it remains both decent and honourable (Farvid & Braun, 2013). As discussed earlier in the chapter, men, and notions of masculinity, are rooted in attributes that champion behaviours that are the antithesis of feminine qualities (Reynolds, 2015) and as such, the policing of male sexualities is subject to far less scrutiny in comparison to female sexuality. As shown above, social norms change over time and this also applies to perceptions of non-monogamous relationships. There is some evidence that there is a growing awareness of the alternative ways of engaging in intimate relationships. Moors et al., (2017) report that there has been an increase in internet search terms related to non-monogamy such as 'polyamory' and 'consensual non-monogamy'. The reasons behind this behaviour are unclear, but at the very least it does indicate that social norms are always open to challenge.

Duncombe and Marsden (1993) explored the role of love and ideology in monogamous couple relationships and identified gender differences in emotional behaviour. Women were found to be more orientated towards the emotional aspects of their intimate relationships than men. Women often felt a sense of isolation and emotional distance from their male partners because of the way in which ideologies related to masculinity (such as the belief that men do not disclose their feelings), shaped male responses to female expressions of intimacy. It is clear that gender impacts on the differential valuing of certain emotions (Segal, 1990) and that this impacts on how men and women relate to each other in the context of their intimate relationships (Schmookler & Bursik, 2007; Moss, 2012).

3.5.3 Section summary

The above section reviews the literature in relation to the practice and ideologies associated with monogamy, and alternative relationship practices such as CNM. It seems to be the case that the dominant ideology associated with monogamy is based on what Emens (2004) refers to as 'supermonogamy'; the practice of staying with one partner monogamously for the duration of one's adult life. This is despite the reality that the majority of people in contemporary Western society engage in 'serial' monogamy. Monogamy as a cultural ideology and narrative is understood to be what Toff and Yip (2017) refer to *'. . . as a defining characteristic of an 'authentic' committed and 'fulfilling' couple relationship'* (p. 3). It is important to recognise that the dominant ideological cultural script in contemporary Western society presents monogamy as the most valued and sanctioned relationship form and this brings with it an often unquestioned adherence to the practice. It is also apparent that gender plays a role in the way in which monogamy is experienced, understood and practiced. Monogamy is positioned as somehow 'better' than other CNM forms of relationships which seems to be erroneous as the key to relationship satisfaction appears to be rooted in agency and individuals being free to choose the type of relationship arrangement that best suits their needs. The suggestion that people may be orientated towards particular forms or styles of relationship as opposed to types of people (Robinson, 1997) is interesting. However, one of the potential problems with pursuing this line of argument is that it would inevitably lead to essentialist arguments and the categorisation of people into 'relationship type boxes'. It is argued here that Ricoeur's ideas about ideology and utopia presented in Chapter 1, are relevant to our understanding of the status of monogamous and non-monogamous relationships. Monogamy is clearly the dominant ideology in relationship styles, despite societal changes and evidence that 'supermonogamy' is a rare phenomenon. Ricoeur (1986) suggests that ideology provides a basis for legitimating and integrating individuals into specific cultural practices. In Ricoeur's terms ideology serves to distort or conceal reality and it is this that enables ideology to maintain itself. In contrast to the ideology of monogamy, it is possible therefore to consider non-monogamy as a utopian challenge, providing the basis to explore different possibilities.

3.6 Monogamy and bisexual women: myths and reality

The significance of gender in respect of how monogamy is experienced has been discussed above. The influence of gender and more specifically identifying as a bisexual women brings with it a number of specific binegative assumptions related to their both to their character and behaviour (Callis, 2014). *'When I think of 'bisexual' I think of bedhopping. . . they not only can't commit to being one or the other, but probably can't commit to whoever they're with, be it male or female. How could someone who wants to be in a long-term committed relationship still call themselves bisexual . . . without some infidelity coming into the picture?'* (Ault, 1994, p. 117). This quote succinctly encapsulates one of the common myths faced by bisexual women particularly in respect of the assumption that bisexual women are more likely to be hyper-sexual than men (Lahti, 2015). There is a belief that the very nature of bisexuality makes it is impossible to maintain a monogamous relationship (Callis, 2014). To a large extent this is based on the assumption that women who claim a bisexual identity are unable to practice monogamy because they are assumed to be naturally promiscuous (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013; Israel & Mohr, 2004; Macalister, 2003). There appears to be a set of negative stereotypes, or an ideology, associated with the sexual behaviour of women who identify as bisexual. One of the consequences of this ideology is that bisexual women who do practice monogamy feel invisible since they are assumed not to exist in the first place (Hartman 2006, 2013; Hartman-Linck 2014; Ochs, 1996). Occupying a dyadic relationship, particularly one that is monogamous, brings with it a sense of invisibility in respect of one's bisexual identity both in heterosexual and homosexual communities (Bowes-Catton & Hayfield, 2015).

The myth of the 'promiscuous bisexual' clearly contributes to the view that bisexual women are incapable of securing and retaining a monogamous relationship (Rust, 1993; Walker, 2014a; 2014b; Robinson, 1997; Diamond, 2008a, Diamond, 2008b). This belief seems to be rooted in a binary construction of sexuality that, by definition, excludes the whole concept of a distinct and separate 'bisexual' identity. Attempting to conceptualise bisexuality within a binary systems results in some form of part-heterosexual, part-homosexual hybrid, which in turn leads to further mythical beliefs, such as that bisexuals are in a state of internal psychological conflict because they are unable to satisfy their sexual desires (Diamond, 2008; Callis, 2013). In other words, the assumption is that if a bisexual person is in a relationship with a person of a different-gender they will have a need for sexual and/or intimate connections with a person of the same gender. If they have committed to a monogamous dyadic relationship then this assumed need is not likely to be met and as such they are thought to be in a state of internal conflict (Roberts, Horne, & Hoyt, 2015; Rodriguez-Rust, 2002).

It has been argued that bisexuals are *'. . . people whose common characteristic is their refusal to practice gendered exclusivity'* (Rust, 1995, p. 241) which positions them as insecure and untrustworthy (Flanders et al., 2016; Barker et al., 2012). The perception that entering into a monogamous relationship with a bisexual person would present real challenges is pervasive. Eliason (2000) found that 75% of participants who took part in her research preferred not to date a person who identified as bisexual, in part due to the stereotypical belief that the person could not be faithful and would no doubt leave them for someone of a different gender. Vrangalova et al., (2014), further support this finding in that those who have stigmatised identities such as bisexuals, report finding it more problematic to secure a relationship. Bradford (2004) also concluded that her participants were concerned they could not attain a romantic relationship because they identified as bisexual and were hyper-aware of how they were positioned in society, making it a barrier to finding someone to be with.

Hartman (2013) and Hartman-Linck, (2014) explored the lives of bisexually identified women in monogamous different-gender relationships. The researchers found that participants engaged in a number of strategies such as reading LGBT+ orientated literature, in an attempt to keep alive their bisexuality. Participants were considered to be monogamous if they met two criteria; they had to have been in a relationship for at least a year, and in the last twelve months they must only have had sex with their partner. One of the problems with this definition is that it perpetuates the view that physical monogamy (Anderson, 2010) is more important and valued than other forms of monogamy. Anderson (2010) points out that people define monogamy in at least four different ways, but the belief that monogamy means 'no sex outside the relationship' remains a dominant social norm (Fisher, 2010).

There are conflicting views about the extent to which bisexual women desire a monogamous relationship. Some research (see for example, Weinberg et al., 1994; Rodríguez-Rust, 2000) seems to suggest that bisexual women are more likely than other sexual orientations to desire a non-monogamous relationship. Other research argues that bisexual women prefer a monogamous dyadic relationship compared to other relationship forms, such as polyamory (Diamond, 2008a; Rust, 1995). It seems to be the case that for some bisexual women, having concurrent relationships with people of the same and different-gender represents a way in which they feel that they are truly living out their bisexuality (Moss, 2012; Rodríguez-Rust, 2003). One of the ways in which this lifestyle may be achieved is to have discreet affairs with someone who is of a different gender to one's current partner. Clearly this course of action is abhorrent to many bisexuals as it involves deception, dishonesty and confirms stereotypical views of bisexuals as not to be trusted (Klesse, 2007). There is no doubt that some bisexuals engage in sexual and romantic relationships with people of the same and different-gender concurrently (as in fact do other sexualities such as gay, lesbian and straight), but many bisexuals prefer to opt for monogamous relationships (Toft & Yip, 2017; George, 1993; Rust, 1995; Nelson, 2012). This is a view supported by Diamond (2008a) who concluded that women who identified as bisexual were more likely than self-identified lesbian and unlabelled women to actively desire and reside in a monogamous relationship. This finding contradicts the pervading stereotype that positions bisexual women as unable to be monogamous. The reality is that some bisexuals (alongside all other sexual orientations) choose to practice monogamy whether serially or with one person 'forever' (Hartman-Linck, 2014, Hartman, 2013; Diamond, 2008b; Klesse, 2011).

3.6.1 Changes through time

Longitudinal research carried out by Weinberg et al., (2001) and Jones, (2016) shows how the perception related to the kind of relationship practice one wishes to engage in can change over time, particularly as one ages. The researchers argue that as bisexuals enter mid-life, life challenges and commitments change. Specifically, participants talked about how as they aged they desired fewer sexual partners or preferred monogamy, specifically with one gender. Participants expressed how circumstance, lack of opportunity, hormone changes, and lack of motivation led them towards a monosexual relationship. Some participants talked about preferring a monogamous relationship because it brought with it *'a simpler life'* (p. 192).

Weinberg, et al., (2001; 1994) understood that the move away from casual sex, or non-monogamous relationships, was not always rooted in participants directly wishing this for themselves. It was, in some cases as a result of pressure from a partner who desired monogamy, as well as more social and cultural pressures to be settled down in hetero/homo/monosexual life (to perhaps raise children etc.). What is striking from this research is that in the main, participants were no less sure of their bisexual identity. Despite the challenges and changes over time, participants retained a clear understanding of their identity as bisexual despite the fact that they were not necessarily 'doing' bisexuality any more.

The reality is that many bisexual women are in long term monogamous relationships despite the stereotypic assumptions that they neither desire them nor are unable to secure them. Diamond, (2008a, b) found that 60% of bisexually identified women in her research were in an ongoing relationship that had lasted at least five years, with a further 30% currently married and monogamous in the traditional sense. This indicates that many bisexual women, despite the societal belief that they are unable to do monogamy, appear to be engaged in monogamous relationships. The majority of bisexual women are aware of and do reflect on the consequences of engaging in non-monogamous relationships (Weinberg et al., 1994). Therefore, the notion that those who practise monogamy do so without thought or consideration is a naive stance to take (McLean, 2004; 2011). Mark et al., (2014) found that in relation to monogamy, bisexual people considered it to be more *'sacrificing'* than *'enhancing'* (p. 267) compared to both the gay, lesbian, and straight identifying groups. Within the bisexual group women expressed the view that monogamy was more enhancing than sacrificing compared to bisexual men. This seems to suggest that some bisexual women do experience some dissatisfaction with the practice of monogamy, although less so than men.

3.6.2 Monogamy and bisexual invisibility

It is argued here that monogamy contributes to bisexual invisibility and marginalisation. Moss (2012) explored the experiences of non-monosexually identified women (including bisexual and pansexual[35]) who were married to men, and in a relationship with a woman, at the same time. She uses the term *'doing bisexuality'* (p. 406) to describe the practice of physically 'doing' or engaging in relationships with people of the same and different-gender. Moss (2012) argued that this is one way in which married women can be visible as they are able to *'externalize their bisexuality'* (p. 407) as well as disrupt ideas around the family and monogamy. This is problematic because it suggests and reinforces the notion that being in concurrent relationships with people of the same and different-gender is the only legitimate way to claim the identity label of bisexual. Consequently, those bisexual women who choose monogamy are more likely to have one aspect of their identity - their sexuality - marginalised and invisible to others.

The concept of sexual subjectivity which Tolman (2002) defines as *'. . . the experience of oneself as a sexual being who feels entitled to sexuality and sexual pleasure and sexual safety'* (p. 5) is also relevant to discussions of marginalisation. Sexual subjectivity is considered important in the context of one's self-esteem in that one's sexual identity has an impact on how one navigates their way through the world. Given that women and girls are brought up in a patriarchal society it is vitality important that their sexualities and their bodies are not rendered 'silent' (Tolman, 2002). Bisexual women who are in monogamous relationships with men may well experience their sexual subjectivity differently from those in relationships with women. Feminists argue that positive sexual subjectivity is particularly challenging for women, regardless of sexuality, to construct, because they grow up in a socio-cultural environment where their sexuality is policed by men and, as a result, they tend to conceptualise their sexuality from a male perspective

[35] Pansexual is a term used to describe a person whose sexual and/or relationship choice is not limited by the gender of the person. Pansexual identity and bisexual identity are often understood to overlap.

(Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006; Baumeister & Twenge, 2002; Lees, 1993). Women occupy a heteronormative world that positions them as heterosexual if their partner is someone of a different-gender. If their partner is of the same-gender then women continue to be assumed potentially available to men as their sexuality is often considered performative for men (Fahs, 2009). The consequence is that whether one is in a monogamous different-gender or same-gender relationship, one's bisexual identity remains hidden (Barker et al., 2008).

Whenever a bisexual woman enters into a monogamous relationship with a man her non-normative sexual identity is more or less hidden from the world. Clearly, in some cases close friends and family may be aware of an individual's sexual identity but there is still the potential that it becomes overlooked and invisible. For example, being in a monogamous relationship with a man can lead to claims from others that her bisexuality was a 'phase' she was going through, or perhaps she was doing it to seek out the attention of others (Fahs, 2009; Israel & Mohr, 2004; Yost & McCarthy, 2012; Yost & Thomas, 2012). Monogamy presents more challenges to bisexual people than other sexual identities in relation to invisibility. A bisexual woman who has children and is in a monogamous relationship with a man, is to the on-looker, assumed to have a heterosexual identity (Delvoye, & Tasker, 2016) as she is defined according to the gender of her partner thus, her, bisexual identity is rendered invisible. When a bisexual woman enters into a monogamous relationship with a woman she faces similar challenges, with the additional consequences associated with moving away from heteronormativity. Being in a relationship with a woman brings with it the additional pressure and expectations to accept a lesbian identity and to no longer consider oneself as a bisexual woman (Pachankis & Goldfried, 2004). This set of expectations may not come directly from her partner but, instead, be levelled at her from the wider lesbian community (Callis, 2014). This situation has been likened to a 'tightrope walk' in which a bisexual woman in relationship with another woman has to balance the pros and cons of expressing their bisexual identity (Anderson et al., 2016; Ross et al., 2012).

Wiley and Deaux (2010) argue that visibility, in relation to one's sexual identity, is important, and contributes to the extent to which individuals feel connected to others as well as a means by which one can become involved in social action. One of the challenges faced by bisexual women is that there are no universal physical appearance norms that specifically signify bisexuality

(Hayfield, 2011; Macalister, 2003). The danger is that, as a bisexual woman, one may be subsumed under the label of lesbian or heterosexual and suffer the consequences of invisibility. It has been suggested that this contributes to the practice of polyamory; having a male and female partner at the same time, as a way being recognised and understood as a bisexual (Moss, 2012; Nichols, 2004; Rust, 1995; Page, 2004).

3.7 Concluding comments

It is argued in this chapter that in contemporary Western society conceptualisations of monogamy are culturally ingrained into our relationship practices. The polarising positions of women engaged in monogamous relationships as being ‘good’ versus women engaged in in non-monogamous relationships signalling ‘bad’ appears to be pervasive in our culture. Despite second wave feminist articulations related to the potential freedoms that being same-gender attracted could bring to their relationship practices, many bisexual women and indeed lesbians continue to desire monogamy in their intimate relationships. The changing circumstances of women’s lives such as growing older, or having children, has, for many women, oriented them towards leading their relationships in a monogamous fashion. Monogamy and alternative styles of relationship expression such as CNM have been shown to function well in respect of relationship satisfaction rates being reported as similar, particularly if the relationship arrangement is desired. However research has shown that within poly relationships, individuals often draw on monogamous frames of reference in order to navigate their relationships. This highlights the difficulties associated with completely explicating the practice of monogamy *per se*. The assumption that identifying as a bisexual woman somehow means that she would not desire a monogamous relationship has been shown to be incorrect. Many bisexual women are engaged in CNM relationships, however, many are not. The view that bisexual women can only be bisexual if they are engaged in relationships with people of the same and different-gender concurrently invalidates their experiences and renders their identity invisible.

The practise of monogamy is problematic for some individuals (Wlodarski et al., 2015; Wysocki & Childers, 2011; Nelson, 2010). It is clear that monogamy is the most favoured relationship constellation in Western society. Although a number of people happily practice CNM and report their relationships to be as satisfying, many of them go on to enter into monogamous relationships. The changing nature of people's lives orients some individuals to enter into, or opt out of, previously chosen relationship practices. The culturally constructed ideology of monogamy permeates our everyday lives through narratives of such concepts as 'love', as well as media depictions that position monogamous relationships as the most appropriate. These discourses present us with what we understand to be the path to happiness and fulfilment. Whilst many people do not choose monogamy in their intimate relationships the majority of people in Western society do. Despite the cultural inculcation of monogamy, it is important to acknowledge that monogamy is important to many people irrespective of gender or sexual identity. Monogamy represents and provides people with a sense of security and stability. Claims made by many in the lesbian and gay community highlighting the opportunities that being same-gender attracted offered those in respect of actively opting out of heteronormative relationship frameworks such as marriage and monogamy have resulted in what some might consider the appropriation of a form of heteronormativity (Bindel, 2013) particularly in light of the recent legislative changes allowing same-gender people to marry.

The research related to how bisexual women in monogamous relationships negotiate their lives and experience their bisexual identity is relatively under investigated (Mark et al., 2014). Research has pointed to the ways in which bisexual women may struggle with feelings of marginalisation and invisibility as a result of engaging in a monogamous relationship, because their sexual identity is assumed to reflect the gender of their partner and relationship arrangement (Moss, 2012). It is important to consider the ways in which bisexual women experience their sexual subjectivity when they are engaged in a monogamous relationship, as research highlights the ways in which all women are inculcated into patriarchal society which conceptualises their sexuality as a response to male sexuality. Bisexual women who are in monogamous same-gender relationships are therefore engaged in sexual relationships that do not include the participation of men and, so, they may well experience their bisexual identity somewhat differently to bisexual women in different-gender relationships and those who are not in an intimate relationship. Hartman (2013) and Hartman-Linck's (2014) research (discussed above and in the preceding chapter) acknowledges how feelings of invisibility are consequential for bisexual women in monogamous relationships with men specifically. As such, she discusses how her participants engage in bisexual displays in an attempt to maintain their bisexuality. It is my intention to extend Hartman (2013) and Hartman-Linck's (2014) research somewhat by focusing on bisexual women in three different relationship structures, 1) in monogamous different-gender relationships, 2) in monogamous same-gender relationships, 3) not in a current intimate relationship. I aim to understand how bisexual women in monogamous relationships navigate their lives whilst being assumed monosexual in orientation. I hope to fill the gap in the psychological literature in relation to these bisexual women and explore how these women live their lives in the context of monogamy and their assumed status of invisibility. More specifically the aims are:

1) To explore the lived experience of bisexual women who identify as monogamous.

2) To understand the ways in which bisexual women in 'same-gender' and 'different-gender' relationships construct their identity.

3) To describe the ways in which women who identify as bisexual and monogamous maintain their bisexual identity.

In the following chapter I present the development of the methodological approach to the current research, exploring bisexual women in monogamous relationships.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the underpinning epistemological and ontological assumptions that underpin the research. The present research draws heavily on the ideas of Paul Ricoeur, in particular his hermeneutic phenomenology which he develops in his later writings (for example, Ricoeur, 1992). Consequently, the chapter starts with a discussion of the development of ideas in phenomenology and hermeneutics and explores the ways in which Ricoeur has sought to draw together these two quite different philosophical positions. The next main section discusses the implications that taking a hermeneutic phenomenological stance has for data collection, analysis and interpretation. It will be argued here that hermeneutic phenomenology provides an appropriate epistemology and ontology to meet the aims of the research which are concerned with the 'lived experience' and identity of women who identify as monogamous and bisexual. Ricoeur's (1992) hermeneutic phenomenology brings together the focus on our direct experiences of the world provided by phenomenology, with the insights into the interpretation of text and symbols located within hermeneutics. Drawing on these ideas clearly has implications for both the collection and interpretation of data which are discussed below.

4.2 Hermeneutic phenomenology

In philosophy, hermeneutics and phenomenology developed from quite different starting points. Hermeneutics has its roots in Greek philosophy and in its original formulation was concerned with the interpretation of texts. Hermeneutics in its modern sense began its development in the eighteenth century culminating in the work of Gadamer. Forster (2008) argues that there are different accounts of the development of hermeneutics, but there is some agreement about the key figures. In the twentieth century, it is Heidegger and Gadamer who have been credited with the development of hermeneutics within philosophy. Phenomenology is concerned with how the world appears to us through our sensory systems and the meanings objects have in our experience. Husserl is invariably seen as the person who developed phenomenology into a method that can be used to explore the lived experiences of individuals (Langdridge, 2007).

At the start of the twentieth century hermeneutics and phenomenology were separate branches within philosophy, but their relationship had become far more complex by the end of the century. Husserl (1980, 1988) developed a method to investigate the ways people experience the world and make sense of those experiences. His ideas have advocates today, notably Giorgi (see for example Giorgi (1997)), but there are others who believe, based primarily on the writings of Gadamer, that Husserlian phenomenology is not a viable approach due to the highly descriptive nature of Husserl's focus. This thesis argues that the later work of Paul Ricoeur (for example, Ricoeur, 1992) has built on the phenomenology of Husserl and the hermeneutics of Heidegger and Gadamer to provide a hermeneutic phenomenology that can be used in the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data.

The next part of this section explores phenomenology and hermeneutics in more detail.

4.2.1 Phenomenology and Hermeneutics

Husserl's ideas developed in part as a response to the ways in which psychology was following the scientific methods of the natural sciences (Laverty, 2003). At the time, the dominant paradigm in psychology was behaviourism where the focus was on observable and measurable external stimuli and responses. In contrast, Husserl (1980) proposed that we should focus on how individuals experience and make sense of the world they live in. Husserl's focus was on the way in which phenomena appear in our consciousness. One of the defining features of phenomenology is that it moved away from Cartesian dualism of a separate internal and external reality (Koch, 1995). One of the challenges faced by phenomenology is addressing the impact that our pre-existing knowledge has on our experience and perception of the world. According to

Husserl, our experience of living in the world is dependent on taken for granted assumptions about the world and our place in it. Our understanding of culture, language, and our bodies, is not something that is normally challenged or even considered in our daily lives. Drawing on ancient Greek philosophy Husserl used the term ‘epoche’ (often referred to as ‘bracketing’) to describe a process of setting to one side our objective knowledge of an object (Koch, 1995). This process, whereby individuals attempt to ignore their pre-existing ideas and beliefs about the phenomena under investigation, is central to the phenomenological method Husserl developed (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008: Crotty, 2003). Husserl believed that through the process of ‘bracketing’ it is possible to perceive phenomena and objects as they really are (Osborne, 1994). In other words, for Husserl it is possible for individuals to access their conscious experiences and his method is intended to facilitate this process. The outcome of Husserl’s method is a largely descriptive account of the phenomena under study (Valle, King & Halling, 1989). It was an attempt to identify the ‘essence’ of an object or phenomena. The concept of essence in phenomenology refers to the attributes that are necessary or essential to defining an object or phenomena and without which it would lose its identity.

Another key concept in Husserl’s philosophy is that of ‘intentionality’, which he argued is an important feature of the process of experiencing the world. Intentionality is related to the way in which our minds or consciousness are able to represent things, objects and ideas that are in the world. Our representation of the external world is something that we experience, it is an experience of something other than ourselves. Our consciousness is about something, it is directed towards something, and it this that Husserl is referring to when he uses the term ‘intentionality’ (McIntyre & Woodruff-Smith, 1989). However, although our consciousness is directed towards something it does not necessarily have to be the external world. For example, we can think about the ‘Man in the Moon’ or other fictional characters and even though they do not exist in reality we can have an intentional mental state that is about them.

Husserl’s ideas were challenged by one of his pupils at Freiburg University, Martin Heidegger. Heidegger shifted the focus away from Husserl’s understanding of beings or phenomena towards the situated meaning of a human in the world or ‘dasein’ (Annells, 2006; Annells, 1996). Laverty (2003) suggests that Husserl focused on people as ‘knowers’ of and about the world they live in, whereas Heidegger saw people as being concerned with their fate in a world they did not really understand. Both Heidegger and Husserl believed that consciousness is not separate from the world. Heidegger emphasised the role that historicality plays in our understanding of the world we live in. Historicality in this context refers to the culture into which the person was born with all its history, rituals and social practices (Munhall, 1989). Interpretation is central to Heidegger's (1967) thinking, and he goes so far as to claim that to be human is to interpret. So for Heidegger there is a dialogical process between individuals and the world in that they both constitute and are constituted by each other.

Gadamer also studied philosophy at Freiburg where he was influenced by the work of both Husserl and Heidegger. One of his major contributions was the development of a practical methodology from the ideas of Heidegger. Gadamer (1997) argued that, *'Language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs. Understanding occurs in interpreting'* (p. 389). One of the ways in which Gadamer disagreed with Husserl was over the notion of 'bracketing'. Gadamer considered bracketing to be impossible and he went as far as claiming that attempts to do so were manifestly absurd (Annells, 1996). However, there was agreement between them over the importance of historicality in making sense of our lived experiences. Laverty (2003) draws out some of the major similarities and differences (see table 4.1) between the ideas of Husserl on the one hand and those of Heidegger and Gadamer on the other.

Similarities:

a) Both focus on human experience as lived.

b) Both sought to oppose empiricist/positivist research in social sciences.

c) Both opposed to Cartesian dualism as the only lifeworld.

Table 4.1: Differences between Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer's ideas.

Phenomenology (Husserl)	Hermeneutic Phenomenology (Heidegger/Gadamer)
Focus on epistemology – the relationship between the knower and the object of study	Focus on the nature of reality and being in the world

Accepts that there is some distinction between an individual and the object but not in the extreme of Cartesian dualism	Deny distinction between individual and experience. It is not possible for one to exist without the other, therefore bracketing is impossible
Methodology is descriptive and focuses on the structure of experience	Methodology is interpretive and focuses on historical meanings and how these develop over time
Seeks answers that are not dependent on the background of the interpreter	Focuses on the meaning that arises out of the interpretive interaction between the text and the reader
Issues of reliability and validity focus on the process of bracketing	Issues of reliability and validity focus on the multiple stages of interpretation of the data and how interpretations arise from the data

An inspection of any journal publishing qualitative research in the social sciences will typically produce research that states it is phenomenological in nature. Finlay (2012) points out that in the twenty-first Century there are several different ways in which researchers purport to carry out phenomenological research. Giorgi (1997), working within a Husserlian tradition argues that it is possible to identify core features across all varieties of phenomenological research: a) it is descriptive, b) it involves phenomenological reduction, and c) it requires a search for essences. However, Finlay (2012) argues that there is considerable variety in contemporary approaches, some of which conform closely to the core features identified by Giorgi (1997), whereas others are less easy to fit into Giorgi's (1997) framework. An interesting article within which six researchers applied different phenomenological approaches to the same topic provides some indication of the variety available to researchers. Interestingly the researchers did arrive at a consensus in respect of their individual analyses of the participant. Each researcher provided additional insights from their particular epistemological backgrounds (King, Finlay, Ashworth, Smith, Langdridge & Butt, 2008).

Arguably, one of the most influential approaches in recent years in the UK that lays claim to being rooted in phenomenology is Jonathan Smith's Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (see for example, Smith, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2008). While the approach focuses on the lived experiences of people it does not advocate bracketing or the search for essences (Finlay, 2012). According to Giorgi (2010) one of the issues associated with Smith and Osborn's (2008) IPA is that it claims to be a scientific method whilst at the same time claiming to not be a prescriptive method. Giorgi views this as an oxymoron. So although Smith's IPA is not without its critics it has provided researchers in psychology with a framework for carrying out qualitative research which can be considered to be hermeneutic phenomenological in nature. Finlay (2012) provides a broad definition of what constitutes phenomenological research. She states, *'...research is phenomenological when it involves both rich description of either the lifeworld or lived experience, and where the researcher has adopted a special open phenomenological attitude which, at least initially, refrains from importing external frameworks and sets aside judgements about the realness of the phenomenon'* (p. 19).

One of the ways of organising or to a certain extent categorising, different approaches to carrying out research that falls under the broad heading of phenomenological is to use the interpretive-descriptive dimension. Researchers that fall within the Husserlian tradition, such as Giorgi (see for example, Giorgi, 1997, 1992, 1985) would tend to locate themselves at the descriptive end of the dimension. Whereas, Smith's IPA would be closer to the interpretive end of the dimension. The key philosophers writing in the hermeneutic phenomenological arena can also be located on descriptive-interpretive dimension, with Husserl towards the descriptive pole and Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur towards the interpretive pole. This is clearly a simplistic way of categorising both approaches to research and the philosophical positions of individuals, but the relative importance placed on description and interpretation is identifiable in both methodology and philosophical analysis (Finlay, 2012).

In summary, hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with how we make sense of our experiences in the world around us. It provides a philosophical and epistemological basis for interpreting the accounts that people give of their experiences. As Ricoeur (1991a) says, *'. . . the decisive feature of hermeneutics is the capacity of world disclosure yielded by texts.*

Hermeneutics is not confined to texts nor to authors of texts; its primary concern is with the worlds which these authors and texts open up. It is by an understanding of the worlds, actual and possible, opened up by language that we may arrive at a better understanding of ourselves' (p. 490).

4.2.2 The hermeneutic phenomenology of Paul Ricoeur

Paul Ricoeur is a writer who does make extensive use of the term 'hermeneutic phenomenology' in a manner consistent with his style of acknowledging the strengths of different philosophical positions. Ricoeur is careful to acknowledge the influence that others (for example, Aristotle) have on his thinking, so it is no surprise that he uses the term hermeneutic phenomenology to demonstrate the relationship between the two different philosophical positions. Unlike many philosophers Ricoeur wrote on a range of topics and it has taken some time since his death for the academic world to acknowledge the themes that unify his work (Scott-Baumann, 2009). However, it still remains the case that his work has not attracted much interest in the social sciences.

Throughout his life, Ricoeur's work has attracted interest from academics in a variety of disciplines, including history, literary criticism, biblical studies, and of course philosophy. However, despite the fact that social scientists have been drawn to the ideas of Ricoeur's contemporaries such as Derrida, Barthes, Sartre, and Foucault, it could be argued that Ricoeur's ideas have attracted less interest (Simms, 2003). It is difficult to pinpoint any specific reasons to account for this apparent lack of enthusiasm for his current lack of support in the social sciences. One possible explanation could lie in the style of argument and discussion that Ricoeur adopts in his explorations. Ricoeur's arguments and explanations typically emerge from a discussion which lays out a dialectic, a logical argument between two opposing positions rather than adopting a confrontational stance which stands in opposition to different perspectives. (Langdridge, 2003). In contrast to Ricoeur's style much of psychology appears to be based on an adversarial model within which different camps level criticisms at each other and present arguments based on the strengths of their own position and the deficiencies of the other. The long running feud between social cognition and social constructionism and prior to that the 'war' between behaviourism and cognitive psychology are two examples of the adversarial model in operation in psychology (Burr, 2003).

One of the themes that can be identified in Ricoeur's work is his attempt to bridge the gap between phenomenology and hermeneutics. His early work was predominantly concerned with hermeneutics, but he was aware of its limitations and also the strengths and limitations of Husserlian phenomenology. At the same time that Ricoeur was developing his ideas and his hermeneutic phenomenology others, (for example, Heidegger, 1967) were developing an interpretive phenomenology which acknowledged the importance of hermeneutics (see for example, Ashworth, 2003). Interpretive phenomenology goes beyond the focus on senses and sensations of traditional phenomenology and concerns itself with interpretation, the focus of hermeneutics. However, interpretive phenomenology does not really engage with and challenge its initial empathic interpretation of the text (Langdridge, 2003).

Terra, Goncalves, dos Santos & Erdmann, (2009) suggest that Ricoeur considers five aspects of hermeneutics in the development of his own philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology:

a) hermeneutics as exegesis (or critical explanation) i.e. understanding religious texts

b) hermeneutics as a scientific approach to understanding all texts

c) hermeneutics as a humanistic methodology in Dilthey's work

d) hermeneutics as a phenomenological explanation of human existence in Heidegger's work

e) hermeneutics as a process that interprets both explicit and hidden meanings.

This demonstrates Ricoeur's commitment to acknowledging the ideas that have contributed to the development of contemporary hermeneutics and his willingness to seek a rapprochement between seemingly conflicting positions.

The role of language and the relationship between spoken (discourse) and written forms of language are important aspects of Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology. For Ricoeur language is the means by which we can reflect on our existence and our experiences in the world. However, Ricoeur, unlike some social constructionists, argues for a referential role in language, and that humans do have agency and that actions exist outside language (Simms, 2003). Ricoeur (1981) makes an important distinction between discourse (spoken language, for example, conversations) and text. He argues that once discourse has been 'fixed' in the form of text it becomes open to multiple interpretations, whereas within discourse interpretations can be explored, more information and clarification can be sought. In addition, the discourse takes place in a context, a place and a historical time which provides a backdrop to the processes of interpretation. The discourse is addressed to 'another(s)', the listener(s) to whom it is addressed. However, once discourse has become a permanent text its nature changes, it is no longer synonymous with what the author intended to convey. The audience is no longer the listener, it is anyone who has access to the text (Ricoeur, 1981). In some ways once a conversation has become converted into a text it becomes more 'distant' from the future audiences/readers. One of the implications of this is that, as a researcher I will, to a certain extent, become distanced from the text when I return to it after the interview has been transcribed. Even though the reading of the text will evoke memories of mood and tone they will be partial and incomplete, and the 'author' cannot be queried about their intention.

Ricoeur (1981) uses the term 'distanciation' to refer to the separation between the world of the reader/hearer and the speaker/text. He sees distanciation taking place in five settings:

a) through discourse – there is always a 'space' between speaker and listener in a conversation and we are always engaged in a process of making sense of someone else's world

b) when the discourse is converted to text – the space becomes larger because there is no opportunity to seek clarification

c) through authored texts produced for an audience – the text acquires an autonomy in relation to its author and is no longer related to the concrete setting of a discourse

d) in the world the text creates and discloses for the reader – Ricoeur refers to this as the 'text's world', by which he means the new and alternative ways of being in the world opened up by the text.

e) the new understandings and new possibilities offered for self-understanding by the text – Ricoeur (1981) refers to this as *'understanding ourselves in front of the text'* (p. 143). This step includes an aspect of appropriation in that the text has taken us away from ourselves and in the final step brings us back to a situation where we move towards an understanding of ourselves and the text.

Although the idea of becoming more distant from a text could be perceived in a negative light, Ricoeur (1981) sees distanciation in a positive light and argues that it is through distanciation that we are able to move towards understanding. Ricoeur (1981) sees appropriation as being intertwined with distanciation. He defines it as, *'…the interpretation of text culminates in the self-interpretation of a subject (the interpreter) who thenceforth understands himself better, understands himself differently, or simply begins to understand himself.'* (p. 158). Thus, for Ricoeur, understanding is the process of incorporating other possible worlds into your own world.

Ricoeur (1992), in his discussion of the concept of agency, reminds us that whenever a person performs an action there will be someone or something that is at the receiving end of it. He uses the term 'suffering' to denote this aspect of human experience. So considering both poles of the 'acting/suffering' dimension will be used as an analytic tool in the exploration of the data. Ricoeur (1992) argues that human life has an ethical aim of developing one's self esteem. One of the ways in which this is achieved is through living a 'good life'. In this context 'good' is not merely a subjective interpretation, but is also based on intersubjective criteria. In other words, in order to have a 'good life' there must be other people with whom and for whom one acts. The social settings within which we live provide the context for our experiences and actions and if we are to experience a 'good life' those social settings must be consistent with our own sense of what is right and proper. I believe these concepts taken from Ricoeur have the potential to contribute to the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Ricoeur developed a model of narrative identity which is most clearly articulated in 'Oneself as Another' (Ricoeur, 1992). The concepts of plot and emplotment are central to his thinking on narrative identity. For Ricoeur, plot, *'. . . grasps together and integrates into one whole and complete story multiple and scattered events, thereby schematising the intelligible signification attached to the narrative as a whole'* (Ricoeur, 1985 p. x). Simms (2003) argues that the aim of

Ricoeur's work on narrative is a hermeneutic one, captured in the phrase, *'to explain more is to understand better'* (Ricoeur, 1985 p. x). A plot helps understanding through the process of unifying actions, interactions, unintended consequences into a whole. Plots place order on events and establish causal relationships between them. For Ricoeur, there is an iterative cycle that operates between life as lived and narrative. We understand our lives through narrative and through the process of interpreting our lives we turn them into narratives. Ricoeur uses the term 'emplotment' to refer to the process of placing order onto actions and establishing causal relationships between events in our lives. Emplotment also provides the means by which motives and intentions are applied to people who are part of the events we narrate. It is clear from Ricoeur's ideas on the relationships between events, actions and plot that he considers narrative to have a referential relationship to action. In other words, narrative in some way represents action.

Ricoeur draws on Aristotle's concept of 'Mimesis' and extends it to develop his idea that narrative is mimetic of human action. 'Mimesis' is usually interpreted as meaning 'imitation' (Simms, 2003). However, Aristotle used the word in a specific way such that it had to involve some form of creative act. For him it was the human act of deliberately creating one thing to be like another. So for Aristotle, 'Mimesis' was representation rather than imitation.

Ricoeur extends Aristotle's ideas and developed a threefold interpretation of 'Mimesis'. 'Mimesis 1' is prefiguration. This refers to the notion that in order to understand a plot we need to have some pre-existing knowledge of the nature of human action. Ricoeur calls this 'practical understanding' of the world, in other words, what this means is we have day to day experience of the world which enables us to understand how and why people behave in particular ways. For example, generally we expect people to have reasons or motives for their actions rather than behave in an unpredictable, motiveless fashion. Ricoeur proposes that this preunderstanding of the world has three forms: a) semantic, which concerns the reasons behind actions and causal relationships between actions. For example, we are able to understand the sequence of events of the form: A did X to B because of Y. b) symbolic, which concerns the character and or personality of individuals such that people who we believe to be 'good' will behave in ways consistent with this. c) temporal, which refers to how we understand the expected consequences of particular events. For example, we understand that an individual is expected to do something as a consequence of something happening to her.

'Mimesis 2' is emplotment or configuration. This refers to the organisation of events into a whole that makes sense. This goes beyond simply ordering events into a sequence and adds meaning to the interpretation of the narrative. Emplotment also contains a temporal dimension which Ricouer sees as being linked to the temporal dimension of 'Mimesis 1. In 'Mimesis 1' the temporal dimension is concerned with the expected behaviours of a character in a particular situation. In 'Mimesis 2' we can see whether or not the person behaved in the expected way and the reasons behind their choices. So 'Mimesis 2' requires the 'reader' (or narrator) to be involved in the process of bringing the elements of the plot together into a whole.

'Mimesis 3' is refiguration which brings the world of the text and the world of the reader/listener together. In other words, there is a point to narrative that extends beyond the narrative itself. It has a message or lesson that is potentially applicable to the world of the reader/listener. In simple terms, it could be argued that 'Mimesis 1' refers to the knowledge we bring to understanding the narrative, and 'Mimesis 3' refers to our understanding of the world after we have read the narrative. Emplotment is the process that mediates between 'Mimesis 1' and 'Mimesis 3' and the relationship should be considered as a hermeneutic circle, or 'arc', as Ricoeur refers.

A plot helps understanding through the process of unifying actions, interactions, unintended consequences into a whole. Plots place order on events and establish causal relationships between them (Simms, 2003). A plot helps understanding through the process of unifying actions, interactions, unintended consequences into a whole. As Ricoeur (1982), says, *'Plot, in effect, 'comprehends' in one intelligible whole, circumstances, goals, interactions and unintended results'* (p. 142). For Ricoeur, there is an iterative cycle that operates between life as lived and narrative. We understand our lives through narrative and through the process of interpreting our lives we turn them into narratives. Ricoeur uses the term 'emplotment' to refer the process of placing order onto actions and establishing causal relationships between events in our lives. Emplotment also provides the means by which motives and intentions are applied to people who are part of the events we narrate. It is clear from Ricoeur's ideas on the relationships between events, actions and plot that he considers hermeneutics to have a referential relationship to action.

Ricoeur (1981) considers discourse to be a triad comprising the speaker, the listener and the world they inhabit. Writing from a social science research perspective Mishler (1999, 1995) argues that interviews should be considered social interactions in their own right. Both Mishler (1999, 1995) and Ricoeur, starting from quite different positions, point out the importance of context on discourse. Ricoeur (1981) is also concerned with texts and the differences between a text and discourse. As previously stated, Ricoeur (1981) points us to the idea that a text is open to an *'unlimited number of possible readings'* (p. 139). This poses an important challenge for researchers analysing and interpreting transcribed interviews, namely, if my interpretation is only one of an unlimited number of interpretations then what value does it have?

One way to resolve this problem lies on Ricoeur's (1992) notion of 'attestation'. Attestation is a concept that runs through Ricoeur's (1992) work on the self (Kaufman, 2010). Ricoeur (1992) draws a parallel between the belief we have in giving a testimony in a juridical sense and a belief we can have about claims we make in relation to ourselves. Although Ricoeur's ideas are predominantly philosophical and directed to an analysis of the nature of the 'self' I would argue that the same principles can be applied to a justification of an interpretation. Although a testimony, in the strictest sense of the word, applies to a statement made by a witness in a courtroom it can also be used in other contexts. For example, social scientists attest to particular 'facts' on the basis of some form of evidence. So when I, as a researcher, make claims about the meanings and interpretations of a text it is my testimony and as such it is open to challenge by others. Ricoeur (1992) draws our attention to the temporal dimension of interpreting texts. Any interpretation is located in a particular time and is based on our knowledge at that time. So an interpretation that appears plausible at one point in time may appear implausible as our understanding of the situation expressed in the text changes. In some ways the concept of attestation as an approach to justifying interpretation is similar to the concept of face validity in quantitative research. It is a measure of the belief we have in the interpretation, or as Ricoeur (1992) says, the belief we have in *'…the speech of the one giving the testimony'*. (p. 21)

A further potential problem in the analysis and interpretation of interview transcripts comes from the social setting within which the text was created. In this setting the text is a co-creation in which the interviewer and interviewee play a role in its creation. One of the implications for researchers who carry out interviews and then analyse them is that they are in some senses both the creator and critic of the text. This has potential benefits in that being involved in the creation of the text the interviewer has a memory of the emotional tone of the discourse when it was taking place. This provides additional information to bring to the interpretation and perhaps it could be argued that this in some ways adds to the richness of the interpretation. But that in itself is not sufficient to argue that the interview has a privileged position in relation to any interpretation of the text. Any interpretation has to be subject to the challenge of attestation if one is to avoid the pitfalls of a relativistic position where no interpretation is any better than any other.

O'Dwyer (2009) argues that Ricoeur's ideas and theory of interpretation is a useful position to adopt, as he attempts to harmonise philosophy, and methodology. Ricoeur acknowledges that the interpretation of a text can often start out as intensive and laborious, in effect highlighting the researcher's one-dimensional, naïve understanding. However, through the process of exploration of the text, the researcher begins to strengthen their understanding such that they become embroiled in the hermeneutic circle or to use Ricoeur's articulation hermeneutic 'arc'. Ricoeur prefers to use the term 'arc' as opposed to circle as he believed the term better represents the actuality of what is going on in that the researcher/interpreter moves back and forth between world of text and discourse (Tan, Wilson, & Olver, 2009). Thus, they are able to provide testimony in relation to their analysis (O'Dwyer, 2009).

In summary, there are four ways in which Ricoeur's ideas contribute to the analysis and interpretation of data in the present research:

a) He provides a philosophical basis for our understanding of the nature of events

b) He relates language to events through his developments of Aristotle's concept of plot, emplotment, and 'Mimesis'.

c) He highlights the importance of ethical and moral issues in our lived experiences

d) He provides the basis for an approach to interpreting text.

4.3 Methodological implications of the philosophical position

This section considers some of the implications of drawing on Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology for the collection, analysis and interpretation of data in the present research. Finlay (2012) argues that, *'…a phenomenological method which purports to be "hermeneutic" needs to be able to account explicitly for the researcher's approach and how interpretations are managed. It needs to address how the relationship between researcher and researched – the interface between subject and object – is negotiated'* (p. 22). The approach taken to interpretation in the current research is presented in detail in Chapter 5. This section is more concerned with the relationship between myself as the researcher, the concept of monogamous bisexuality, and the participants' experiences. Ricoeur (1981) argues that we are always located in a cultural and historical context which informs our views on the world, in other words, 'we can never have a view from nowhere'. So, my status as a white, self-identified monogamous, bisexual woman from a working-class background, will have an influence on the ways in which I interpret the data collected in this research. One of the challenges for me throughout the analysis is to ensure that the interpretations I present are transparent in the sense that the reader is clear as to how that particular interpretation was arrived at. Although it is not possible to 'bracket off' my preconceptions it is important to continually reflect on them and challenge my own interpretations in order to justify them to the reader. The aim here is to bring a 'critical self-awareness' of my own subjectivity and beliefs in order to be aware of how they might impact on the research (Finlay, 2008).

Ricouer (1970) makes a distinction between what he refers to as the 'hermeneutics of meaning recollection' and a 'hermeneutics of suspicion'. He suggests that the 'hermeneutics of meaning recollection' aims for a 'faithful disclosure' which is intended to inform people about the specific experiences of others. This position assumes that the information participants provide should be taken at face-value. At the opposite pole to a 'hermeneutics of meaning recollection' lies the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' which focuses on the meanings that lie behind the text, or data. It argues that there is a 'deeper' interpretation which can be revealed to challenge the surface account and interpretation. The most obvious approach which draws heavily on a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' is the psychoanalytic model of Freud. One of the important points Ricoeur (1981) makes in relation to these opposite poles is that they are both important to each other. Any philosophy which locates itself solely at one end of the continuum between 'suspicion' and 'recollection' is doomed to failure, as Ricoeur (1981) says*, 'The moment these two interests become radically separate, then hermeneutics and critique will themselves be no more than ...ideologies!'* (p. 100). The consequence of this for the present research is that the process of interpretation must attempt to balance the demands of both 'recollection' and 'suspicion' by describing and interpreting what is presented, but also challenging that interpretation and actively seeking alternative interpretations.

The current research involves collecting information from individuals about intimate aspects of their day-to-day lives. Stake (1998) points out that, *'Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict'* (p. 103). Ricoeur (1992) goes further and suggests that researchers have both an ethical and moral responsibility to treat participants properly in all research contexts. Failing to do this results in researchers doing a disservice to them. Reinharz (1992) encourages researchers to treat participants with the same level of respect and care that they would afford to members of their own family. Therefore, the presumption is that if one's manner and ethics are not respectful then regardless of one's assumed insider/outsider status (I talk more about this below and in Chapter 8) rapport is unlikely to be developed which in turn has the potential to impact negatively on the quality of data generation and validity of the research. This a point reinforced by Walby (2010) who suggests that if a researcher is felt to be disingenuous or they position themselves as authoritarian in the research relationship they will struggle to cultivate participant openness and responsiveness.

Adopting a hermeneutic phenomenological stance when collecting data allows the researcher to be mindful of their identities and understands that aspects of them can be utilised in order to support the research process. Participants come to the research with different experiences and backgrounds which means that being able to draw on different ways of communicating and connecting with them can be of benefit. An awareness of issues as intersubjectivity and the way in which information and knowledge exchange between participant and researcher can be facilitated is important (Pini, 2004; Logan & Huntley, 2002; Falconer & Kawabata, 2002). Mason (2002) argues that researchers have a *'repertoire of demeanours'* (p. 74) which they can draw from in order to be responsive to participants and facilitate openness. Drawing from Goffman's (1971) work on performance, both the researcher and participant perform their identities in construction with each other. This is most evident within the interview context but also occurs in every interaction leading up to (and including) data collection.

A hermeneutic phenomenological position acknowledges the way in which researcher and participant impact on one another. Both play an interactive part in the process and as such are engaged in an interpretative act. Hermeneutic phenomenology, alongside other phenomenological approaches (See for example, Smith, 2004) understands that researcher interpretation of an individual's life-world is just that: an interpretation which is underpinned by a particular epistemology and frame of reference. Thus, fashioning a positive relationship with participants involves more than attending to what they are saying. It involves reflexivity on the part of the researcher in a way that enables them to acknowledge their own perspectives as well as attempting to see the world from their perspective (Walby, 2010).

One of the key principles underpinning the approach to data collection was to not consider participants as a homogeneous group despite the fact that they were selected on the basis of meeting specific criteria. In the present research, I shared some common characteristics with participants. I am female and identify as bisexual and monogamous. That being said these shared features do not mean we are the same or that we can explicitly relate to each other's experiences. Consequently, I considered it to be important to avoid positioning myself as an expert or 'someone in the know'. Similarly, understanding that irrespective of the commonalities participants have (bisexual, female and in monogamous relationships) they are *sui generis* and come to the dialogic table with characteristics that pertain to them only. This was an important aspect of the process of treating participants as individuals. In order to meet the aims of the research and be consistent with a hermeneutic phenomenological position I opted to use three complementary approaches to data collection: diary, telephone interview and photo-assisted interview over the telephone. Each method of data collection is discussed in more detail below.

4.4 Data collection methods

This section presents a rationale for the methods of data collection.

4.4.1 The diary method

There is a long history of using diaries for research. Academics in the social sciences as well as historians, have used diaries and letters as a means of developing an insight into a particular event, perspective or set of ideas (Iida, Shrout, Laurenceau & Bolger, 2012). However, often in this type of research the diaries and letters were not written for researchers; they were personal documents intended only for the author in the case of diaries and ‘another(s)’ in the case of letters. One of the first times that participants in research were asked to complete a diary to be viewed by others was in the early 1900s when Bevans (1913) attempted to develop an insight into how men ‘spent their time’. In terms of the diary method being used for research within psychology this can be seen to date back to the late 1970s when Csikszentmihalyi and colleagues focused on adolescents and the quality of their interpersonal contacts. In this study the researchers looked at the everyday experiences in the participants’ own environment (Csikszentmihalyi, Larson & Prescott, 1977). Since then the social sciences have seen the diary develop into a popular approach for collecting information. Different forms of diaries have been used, for example, the ‘unstructured’, the ‘log’ (Plummer, 2001) and the ‘diary interview’ (Zimmerman & Wieder, 1977). Diaries in qualitative research have also been used extensively within health related research, such as nursing (Bell, 1998; Elliott, 1997).

One of the advantages of diaries as a method of collecting data is that they enable the participant to record events or experiences as they happen, thus giving the researcher a more immediate account of the story (Dillman, 2000). In addition, participants can be seen to be more specifically involved in the process of both creating and controlling what is written and later received (Elliott, 1997). This process of directly involving the participant in the construction of the data puts control back into the participants’ hands in that although the potential content of the diary has an agenda it is up to the participant to define the boundary, that is, to include or leave out anything they feel appropriate. In keeping with a hermeneutic phenomenological position there is merit in the suggestion that, *'Diaries need to be acknowledged as constructed by both the writer and, through research and analysis, by the soliciting researcher'* (Bell, 1998, p. 75).

Positive features of diary keeping from the researcher's point of view are the ways in which the content of the diary often can go beyond what Toms and Duff (2002) call *'collecting and counting'* (p. 1236). Instead, the writing is more organised around description and reflective detail. The process of keeping a diary and using it as part of the research process can encourage stronger participation, in that participants are invested in the content of the diary. Scott (2004) highlights how this investment can contribute towards participants being more likely to take part in other methods of data collection and ultimately complete the research journey. That being said, asking participants to keep a research diary is qualitatively different to the type of diary that one writes for personal use as they are producing an account for the purposes of the research itself. The clarification of this distinction is important because when one writes an account for personal viewing only, one is not expecting the content to be known.

Writing a diary, which will later become part of data collection and analysis, will no doubt produce diary entrants which have a focus or goal in respect of what the researcher is looking to investigate (Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003). Zimmerman and Wieder (1977) support the use of researcher driven diaries that is to say that the diary has an area or topic of focus. They suggest that using this as a platform to engage in other interview methods (for example face-to-face or over the telephone) can be invaluable to the process of collecting meaningful data. Allport (1943) referred to this kind of diary keeping as 'the memoir' in that the contents will be open to an audience. Having said this, the material within the diary and the follow up interview does offer the researcher a window into a world which is kept out of sight and is effectively hidden. Another interesting feature of diaries is the non-textual information which can be found in them. Plummer (2002) refers to this as *'accessories to a life story'* (p. 59) this can be where the author incorporates other material (for example, drawings or photographs). It is also the case that some individuals may well be more fluent when writing as opposed to speaking. Giving participants the opportunity to give some time and thought to what they want to say (and record) as well as the space to reflect and potentially return to a particular topic, and to perhaps re-write sections, is both positive and valuable. When one is writing a diary, the flow can be interrupted and picked up again, in contrast to interviews when the participant often has little opportunity to return to, or reflect on, topics being discussed.

The present research uses the ‘diary-interview’ method as outlined by Zimmerman and Wieder (1977) in that they advocate the use of participant-led diaries in the collection of rich data. They also suggest that researchers should use the diaries as an instrument with which to encourage participants to elaborate on in a subsequent interview, enabling them to be both active and reflective in the research process. I believe their approach meets my needs succinctly in that I also desired a method which would enable and facilitate further discussion.

4.4.2 Telephone interviews

Telephone interviews have typically been used in quantitative research or research using structured interviews (Barriball, Christian, Whiles & Bergen, 1996; Carr & Worth, 2001; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). However the use of telephone interviews in qualitative research is somewhat limited (Novick, 2008). There is an unquestioned assumption that physically meeting and speaking with respondents is both better than other methods (Drabble, Trocki, Salcedo, Walker, Korcha, 2016; Irvine, Drew & Sainsbury, 2012) and more likely to encourage the development of rapport. There is no doubt that developing a good rapport with participants is central to the success of the research interview. This is especially important when the research is concerned with potentially sensitive issues (Willig, 2001; King & Horrocks, 2010). However, this does not mean that rapport cannot be developed in settings other than those where the researcher and participant engage in face-to-face interaction. A number of qualitative research method texts talk in depth about the non-mediated interview method (See for example Tracy, 2013; Patton, 2002), but pay little attention to the role that telephones can play in qualitative data collection. Most texts do single out the traditional face-to-face style as the preferred method with some texts (See for example Warren, 2002) paying attention to other styles of technological interview modes such as email and internet interviewing however, not the use of the telephone *per se*. A hermeneutic approach to data collection understands that the process by which discourse or speech is translated into text results in a joint production between the author of the text and the translator/interpreter; in effect rendering the text a co-constitutive act. Approaching telephone interviews from a hermeneutical position acknowledges this issue and allows for the method of data collection to be inclusive of alternative mediated data collection methods.

The under representation of telephone based qualitative interviews was identified by Chapple (1996) at a time prior to social networking sites becoming part of day-to-day life. Telephones were seen as one of the primary means of communicating with people who were not locally located. Chapple (1996) suggests, *'while entire books have been written about the advantages and disadvantages of telephone interviews for the purpose of social survey work. . . much less has been written about telephone interviewing as a means of gathering qualitative data'* (p. 3). That being said the potential advantages of interviewing participants over the telephone include:

a) some of the social pressures are, to a certain extent, removed (Trier-Bieniek, 2012; Holt, 2010). It avoids the potential problem of judgements and assumptions being made on the basis of one's physical appearance and dress, whereas in face-to-face interviews it is inevitable that the interaction is influenced, to a greater or lesser extent, by these factors. One of the challenges faced by all qualitative researchers are the power imbalances inherent in the research setting. For example, Shuy (2002) and Oakley (2008) point out the hierarchical relationship between researcher and participant in that there exists a potential power and authority dynamic between both parties, *'. . .the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of the interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical'* (Oakley, 2008, p. 222). Therefore, carrying out in-depth qualitative interviewing over the telephone is one way in which to empower participants as they are not subject to the physical presence of the researcher.

b) Participants can be recruited from a wide geographical area who might otherwise have been excluded (Cresswell, 1998; Miller, 1995).

c) The opportunity to make notes during the interview is a much less intrusive activity. When one adopts the traditional face-to-face approach to interviewing making notes during the interview process has been shown to negatively impact on the flow of participant disclosure (Miller, 1995).

d) The use of mobile telephones is widespread in contemporary society (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004) with most people, particularly the younger generation, owning a mobile phone and engaging with various forms of social media. Talking over mediated devices has become the norm with Facebook, WhatsApp, Messenger, Twitter and etc. being familiar ways in which we communicate with others. Asking participants to engage in an interview over the telephone is more in keeping with the ways in which individuals communicate today (Joinson, & Paine, 2007).

e) In her discussion of face-to-face interviews, Walkerdine (1990) argues that the physicality of the interview process may well result in feelings of surveillance and that, on some level, participants may feel they are being watched. Conducting a telephone interview can to some extent avoid feelings of intrusion and may enable them to discuss sensitive topics more easily than in a face-to-face setting. According to Fenig, Levav, Khon, and Yelin (1993) *'. . . partial anonymity granted by the telephone may increase the validity of responses by reducing the embarrassment involved in responding to emotionally or socially loaded questions in a face-to-face situation'* (p. 896).

One of the concerns raised with researchers who adopt an interview method which does not involve physically meeting and speaking with participants is the loss of visual and consequentially non-verbal information (Trier-Bieniek, 2012; Novick, 2008*). '. . . all those non-verbal elements which are a major part of live communication are missing: A layer of meaning is stripped out'* (Gillham, 2005, p. 103). The importance of body language in communication has been well documented (Birdwhistell, 1970; Patterson, 1983; Ambady & Weisbuch, 2010). Despite the absence of visual information when conducting interviews over the telephone there are other paralinguistic communicative signs; sighs, pitch, and stress that are important in the translation of meaning (Argyle, 1975). According to Miller, (1995) *'Paralinguistic utterances'* (p. 36) are readable, irrespective of whether there is a visual connection. Attending to what participants are saying through a process of active listening results in the ability to pick-up on their emotional states in the absence of visual cues (Irvine et al., 2012).

On balance, the limited amount of literature on qualitative telephone interviews seems to suggest that they have considerable potential in situations where research is being carried out into sensitive topics (Trier-Bieniek, 2012; Oakley, 2008). Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) have called for research which explores, in more depth, marginalised populations and the appropriateness of utilising telephone interviews with which to obtain rich quality data. I suggest that my research goes some way to addressing this call.

4.4.3 Photo-assisted interviews

Photo-elicitation, as a qualitative research technique, and the use of visual methods as a tool for gathering data have become increasingly popular (Reavey, 2016; Frith, Riley, Archer, & Gleeson, 2005; Frith & Harcourt, 2007). Fanning (2011) suggests that incorporating the use of photographs into the research process is most useful when they are used alongside other forms of data collection. Harper (2002) suggests that the taking of photographs is*, '. . . based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview'* (p. 13). Therefore, the technique of using photographs in social science research is not new. Harper (2002) cites a study carried out by Collier (1957) that examined mental health in changing Canadian communities, looking particularly at the environmental basis of psychological stress. Reflecting on the use of photos and the usual interview process, Collier (1957), noted that, *'The material obtained with photographs was precise and at times even encyclopaedic'* (p. 14).

One of the main advantages of using photographs taken by participants is that it shifts the agenda from the researcher to the participant and places them centre stage. One of the issues in face-to-face interviews is that the process of 'talking' and explaining as well as the having the ability to recall events, situations, or experiences can be difficult. For some people, the articulation of particular memories or experiences can prove problematic, especially when the topic is sensitive in nature. The use of something visual like a photograph can aid articulation and provide a richer description which, in turn, can lead to much more in-depth data (Banks, 2007). Zaltman and Coulter (1995) suggest that photographs act as reminders, in that memories are stored as pictures and not necessarily as words, so the photograph acts as a prompt to verbal description which in turn results in richer accounts. Loeffler, (2005) argues that a photograph can act as a mental anchor which can capture moments so they can be recalled on to enable future narratives. Using photographs which have been taken by participants puts ownership in their hands. The traditional interview process is predominantly led by the researcher as the one who 'asks' the questions or sets the interview scene. In the current research, the interview agenda is set by participants as it is their selection of photographs being discussed.

One of the issues with conversation between individuals is that what is being said is open to interpretation or misinterpretation, therefore encouraging the use of a tool whereby the participant is responsible for the explanation of an image, and the talking about and around that image in relation to their sexual identity is empowering for the participant (Robinson, 2002; Heisely & Levy, 1991). The vast majority of photo-assisted interviews have been conducted face-to-face, so carrying them out via the telephone provides a challenging and interesting opportunity to extend their use as a research method.

In the present research, I saw it as important to try and ensure that participants were empowered to express aspects of their sexual identity and minimise the extent to which power imbalances in qualitative research settings were manifested. Photo-assisted interviews seem to provide an approach to data collection that can contribute to meeting these aims.

4.5 Insider/outsider status

Given that bisexual women are often tarred with the stereotypic brush of ‘greedy, faithless people who enjoy leading women on’[36], it is no surprise that bisexual women may be cautious about engaging in research about their lives. The potential for participants to feel as though they are somehow on display is something that researchers ought to be mindful of and, as such, endeavour to avoid. Ryan-Flood and Rooke (2009) discuss some of the barriers inherent in

[36] I refer to leading women on because often researchers have highlighted the accusations levelled at bisexual women from lesbians as women who are not to be trusted for fear they will leave them for a man (Rust, 1994).

recruiting queer people to take part in academic research. They suggest that often potential participants feel over-researched, and, as such, can feel apathetic towards the research process. This may be due to them feeling nervous about exposing their lives to essentially someone they do not yet know or trust.

Researching sexual minority populations is problematic in the sense that knowing where to find them is difficult, particularly if the researcher has no knowledge of the community under study (McCormack, 2014). Thus, locating bisexual women in monogamous relationships is according to Hartman (2011), like finding *'a needle in a haystack'* (p. 64). Unfortunately, research into queer minorities often suffers from a lack of diversity in respect of who are selected (Savin-Williams, 2001). The difficulties, in respect of recruiting a diverse sample, is in effect in part-due to the concerns above, as well as potential concerns related to being identified in the research. Often, potential participants do not frequent the venues or spaces (particularly on-line) where researchers would typically promote or encounter members of a targeted community. Thus, researchers have often relied on snowball techniques to appropriate participation in their studies. McCormack, (2014) notes how drawing from the same pools of individuals results in a skewed sample of participants. In effect, the same networks of people participate in research and, as such, the voice being heard is not necessarily reflective of the community undy study. Although the current research in part suffered from this issue, I endeavoured to locate my participants utilising three different avenues[37] which resulted in what I consider to be a healthy amount of differing participant views and opinions.

[37] Diva advertisement, on-line call for participants and participants known to me.

Once participation has been secured it is imperative that the researcher understands the responsibility they have to ensure that they are sensitive to the stories participants tell and that, as such, this is reflected in their writing. Ryan-Flood and Rooke (2009) suggest that, *'. . . writing about minority groups brings certain expectations and responsibilities. The researcher may grapple with exposing the lives of a vulnerable group to a hegemonic audience who may be unfamiliar with or unsympathetic to their difficulties'* (p. 116). Thus the onus is on the researcher to do justice to what participants disclose. Maxwell (2005) draws our attention to the regularity of misinterpretation in respect of under-represented minority groups in research and, as such, the importance of taking time to think about how best to avoid this issue is paramount.

There is debate in respect of the utility of holding insider positions when conducting research with participants (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015; Perry, Thurston, & Green, 2004). Researchers are considered 'insiders' (epistemologically speaking) if they belong to the same group their participants' belong to. For example, they may both identify as female, working-class, bisexual, black, and so on. Occupying an insider position is often understood as advantageous particularly in relation to the design of the research. Insiders can be more cognisant about how and where to find potential participants. They may also have a better understanding in respect of some of the issues or concerns participants may be experiencing and, as such, be in a better position to generate research questions. Having said that, researchers ought to be mindful of the fact that holding a shared identity does not necessarily equate to interpreting experiences in the same way.

Adopting a hermeneutic phenomenological approach recognises that interpretation is co-constructed, therefore if the researcher is an insider this positions them as someone who could potentially set their own agenda in respect of what is focused on in the analysis. In relation to the current research, participants can be classed as a minority group whose experiences are often marginalized (Tang, 2007) and, as such, holding the position of an insider brings with it a level of privilege and personal responsibility to give voice to participants and to not overlook pertinent points they may raise. However potential gulfs between the world of the researcher, and that of the participant/s, needs to be bridged in some way throughout the research process. Like my participants, I identify as bisexual so could be considered an 'insider' in that I share some of the same ideas and experiences as them. However, this one-dimensional position overlooks a number of issues such as, the power differentials at play, as well as the view that the research process is a dynamic one (Smith, 2004). Therefore, it is not sufficient to rely on my experiences as a bisexual woman only to build a bridge over the gulf between researcher and participant. That being said, it is important to acknowledge that, as a part-insider into the lives of participants, I do have a level of understanding that perhaps an outsider does not have.

4.6 Concluding comments

In this chapter, I presented the epistemological and ontological assumptions that underpin the present research. Drawing on the work of Paul Ricoeur, and in particular, his philosophy in relation to hermeneutic phenomenology, I explored the implications that taking a hermeneutic phenomenological stance had for data collection, analysis and interpretation. I argue that using hermeneutic phenomenology as a theoretical framework provides me with an appropriate way of addressing the research aims. In the following chapter, I present the specific methods of data collection employed in this research.

Chapter 5: Method

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides information in relation to the collection and analysis of data and is organised into five sections. The first section outlines the overall description of my approach as well as the steps I took in the design of the research. This is followed by a more comprehensive section where I present stage one of my data collection methods, the diaries and telephone interviews. I include my sampling and recruitment strategies as well as details regarding the holistic data collection procedure. I end this section outlining my approach to analysing both the diary and interview data. The third section presents stage two of my data collection method. Again, I include details related to my sampling and recruitment methods as well as present my approach to analysing the subsequent data. In the following section, I consider the ethical concerns related to the current study, before moving on to present my reflections on the process including my rational for not engaging in the process of member checking my data with participants'.

5.2 Research design

This research was designed to explore the lived experiences of bisexual women who identify as monogamous. The basic design was longitudinal which enabled me to explore specific events that were seen as important by participants in depth and at different points in their lives. It also allows for issues of change and the impact of change on individuals' lives to be explored. Decisions made in relation to the design of this research were informed by the philosophical underpinnings of the research that were presented in the previous chapter and a desire to utilise methods of data collection, that as far as possible, minimise any power differential between myself as the researcher and the participants. In order to meet these aims, three complementary approaches to data collection were used; diary, telephone interview and photo-assisted interview conducted via telephone. The use of different techniques for collecting data has been advocated by numerous researchers, in particular, those engaged in case study research (see for example, Robson & McCartan, 2016). In addition, the use of pluralist approaches enables multiple perspectives to arise (King & Horrocks, 2010). If those perspectives are opposing, then that in itself offers the research some interesting data as often the material researchers are investigating involves complex experiences, thus, the opportunity to investigate the complexity of experience is crucial. A similar view is also expressed by Patton (2002) who argues that adopting the use of different methods can result in a more illuminating picture of the phenomena under investigation. The longitudinal design commenced with participants completing a diary for a period of four consecutive weeks. Approximately two to three months after completion of the diary participants took part in a telephone interview. In the final stage of data collection, a sub-group of the participants took part in a photo-assisted telephone interview. This took place approximately eighteen months after the initial telephone interviews due to my maternity leave. A summary of the design is shown is Figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.1 Summary of research design.

As well as the formal data collection points, it was also my intention to keep in contact with participants via email throughout their involvement in the research process. The diary was designed to be a means for collecting data and also the first stage in a process of creating a sense of connection and establishing a rapport with participants (see King & Horrocks, 2010 for a discussion of the importance of rapport in qualitative research). This was seen as being of particular importance in this research as I would not be meeting the participants face-to-face. Telephone interviewing has been considered by some researchers as less effective than face-to-face methods of interviewing participants (Novick, 2008: Gillham, 2005; Rubin & Rubin, 2002; Shuy, 2003). However, in the present research, it would not have been possible to interview participants face-to-face. The development of a rapport with participants was a process that occurred throughout the research, from the initial contact to the conclusion of participants' contribution. For example, often participants would email me to let me know where there were up to or how they were. An example of this can be seen in my correspondence with Elaine:

> *'Dear Sarah - sorry, was being ostrich-like until I'd actually finished the diary. I just put the last full stop in, told myself not to read it and start correcting, and sealed it in the envelope. Tomorrow morning I will drop it in the postbox on my way to work'.*

> *'Excellent – Cheers Elaine. I look forward to reading it ☺SJ'*

As well as providing an initial insight into the day-to-day lives of participants they also formed the basis for the development of an interview schedule for the telephone interview. The final data collection was scheduled to take place approximately eighteen months after the telephone interviews and involved a sub-set of participants taking part in a photo-assisted telephone interview. Participants were instructed to take up to twelve images of places, people or objects that were meaningful to them in relation to their sexual identity. Participants then took part in a subsequent photo-assisted telephone interview to discuss the importance of these images to them (see Figure 5.2 for a summary of the data collection process and the number of participants taking part in each stage).

5.3 Stage 1: Diaries and telephone interviews

This section presents the details in relation to how I recruited participants and carried out the process of data collection.

5.3.1 Sampling and recruitment

Participants in this research had to meet three essential criteria; 1) they had to be female, 2) they had to identify as bisexual, and 3) they had to either be in a monogamous relationship or, if not in a current relationship, they had to desire a monogamous relationship in the future. Initially a purposive sampling approach was taken in the recruitment of participants, but there was also a ‘snowball’ aspect to the recruitment which developed as the recruitment progressed. This approach was considered to be appropriate given the rather stringent criteria participants had to meet. The first stage in recruiting participants was to place a call for them in an online network group ‘Critical Sexology’. I am a member of the group and regularly receive emails related to calls for research participation as well as personally contribute towards wider discussions on-line on the topic of sex and gender studies. Therefore, I was confident that I would recruit participants using this avenue. Opting to utilise this particular group in a bid to recruit participants resulted in a number of participants commenting that they had previous experience of taking part in research related to sexuality. In order to counterbalance this issue, and in an attempt to recruit participants who were not *au fait* with participating in research, I chose to place an advertisement in *Diva* magazine (see appendix 1), which is a UK based magazine aimed at lesbian and bisexual women. I regularly purchase the magazine and keep abreast of the types of issues or concerns readers write in about through the ‘letters page’ section of the publication. This section is particularly interesting because it highlights how *Diva* helps many women feel they are part of a larger LGBT+ community. Often readers discuss how *Diva* provides them with an outlet with which to communicate with other lesbian and bisexual women, as well as pick-up helpful and informative information related to topics ranging from dating, to LGBT+ friendly hotels. Having reflected on my own experience, in relation to realising my own attractions for same and different-gender people, as well as coming from a small town where there were (to my knowledge) no gay pubs or clubs, I recall how discovering *Diva* opened up a world previously unknown to me. I speculated that placing an advertisement for participants in *Diva* might glean interest from potential participants who had no previous knowledge in respect of participating in LGBT+ research and who were perhaps not so aware of such groups as ‘Critical Sexology’.

Approximately one week after placing my advert in ‘Critical Sexology’, I was contacted by a person who had seen the advert offering to re-post it on an on-line blog called ‘Lashings of Ginger Beer’, which is a queer, feminist, burlesque collective. Twenty-three people expressed an interest via the ‘Critical Sexology’ distribution list and ‘Lashings of Ginger Beer’ advertisements and twenty-six via the *Diva* advertisement. In addition, a person who was known to me expressed an interest in taking part in the research. In total, fifty women expressed an interest in participating in the research and were sent more information (see appendix 2). Of those fifty, forty later responded indicating they were willing to participate in research. . All forty participants were sent the relevant consent form alongside a blank notebook/diary which explained what was expected of them (see appendix 3). In total, twenty participants returned a completed diary and twenty people chose not to participate in the research. Of those twenty five people contacted me articulating why this was. Reasons included not having the time to commit to the research, as well as some individuals feeling anxious about being identifiable in the research. One individual stated that the nature of her job within the bisexual community would make it too easy to identify her in any publications arising from the research. Despite contacting the remaining fifteen individuals a number of times no further communication was received from them. However, one participant was excluded from the research following the receipt of her diary. It subsequently became clear that she was interested in polyamorous relationships rather than monogamy. (See table 5.1 for a summary of where each participant was recruited from). Those who did not return a diary were contacted by email and thanked for their interest in the research. Those who returned a completed diary were contacted by email to arrange a mutually convenient time to take part in a telephone interview. One participant (Kate) felt that she did not want to add anything to what she had already said in her diary submission and commented that she did not have the time to fully commit to the interview/s. Another participant (Caitlin) requested a face-to-face interview, and the remaining eighteen were happy to be interviewed over the telephone (see appendix 6 for a demographic breakdown of participants). The final data collection point involved a sub-set of the initial participants engaging in a photo-assisted interview (see section 5.4 for a more detailed discussion related to this data collection method)

Table 5.1 Summary of participant recruitment source.

Participants recruited from Critical Sexology	Participants recruited from Diva	Participants who were known to me
Sam	Amelia	Caitlin
Elaine	Pippa	
Sian	Cora	
Lucy	Rebecca	
Alex	Eve	
April	Connie	
Zoe	Paula	
Jacky	Honor	
Sarah		
Kate		

To summarise, all participants took part in the diary submission: all participants apart from Kate took part in the telephone interviews: five participants in total took part in the photo-assisted interviews, specifically Paula, Elaine, Sam, Caitlin and Amelia. (See table 5.2 for a biographical summary of participants and changes in life circumstances across data collection points)

Table 5.2: Biographical summary of participants and changes in life circumstances across data collection points.

Participant	Diary submission	Telephone interview	Photo-assisted interview
Elaine	Elaine was aged between 32 and 38 and lived in Norfolk. Elaine confirmed her ethnic origin was white. Elaine was in a monogamous different-gender relationship with her husband Mark. At the time of participating in the diary task Elaine had one daughter called Poppy. Elaine had never had a previous same-gender relationship. Elaine had not disclosed her bisexual identity to the majority of her family and friends, although she had told her husband and a few close friends.	No change	At the time of participating in the photo-assisted interview Elaine had recently given birth to her second child - a son called Noah.
Connie	Connie was aged between 32 and 38 and lived in Warrington. Connie confirmed her ethnic origin as white. At the time of participating in the diary task Connie considered herself to be single,	At the time of participating in the telephone interview Connie had begun a monogamous relationship with her girlfriend Ida. Connie had disclosed the gender of the partner to	Did not participate

	however she was engaging in a number of intimate relationships with people of the same and different-gender. Connie had disclosed her bisexual identity to her family and close friends. Connie had not disclosed her bisexual identity to colleagues at work. Connie did not have any children.	her friends, family and work colleagues. Connie acknowledged that it was likely her work colleagues assumed she was a lesbian particularly now she was in a same-gender relationship.	
Sarah	Sarah was aged between 39 and 45 and lived in Berkshire. Sarah confirmed her ethnic origin as African American. Sarah had two young children, was separated from her husband Dave and considered herself single. Sarah had never had a previous same-gender relationship although she had experienced same-gender sexual intimacy. Sarah volunteers for an LGBT+ organisation and considers herself to be out as bisexual to her husband and out as bisexual in relation to her LGBT+	At the time of participating in the telephone interview Sarah had reunited with her husband Dave with whom she had previously separated from.	Did not participate

	activist work. However, Sarah had not disclosed her bisexual identity to her family.		
Lucy	Lucy was aged between 32 and 38 and lived in the West Midlands. Lucy confirmed her ethnic origin as white. Lucy was in a monogamous relationship with her partner Nick who was aware of her bisexual identity. Lucy had engaged in previous same-gender relationships. Lucy had not disclosed her bisexual identity to her family or her work colleagues. However, Lucy considered herself to be out in respect of those who participate alongside her in LGBT+ activist work. Lucy did not have any children.	No change	Did not participate
Honor	Honor was aged between 18 and 24 and lived in York. Honor confirmed her ethnic origin as white. At the time of participating in the diary task Honour was single and not in a relationship. Honor	At the time of participating in the telephone interview Honor had begun a monogamous relationship with her boyfriend, Drew.	Did not participate

	had a previous history of same and different-gender relationships. Honor had disclosed her bisexual identity to the majority of her family and friends. Honor did not have any children.		
April	April was aged between 25 and 31 and lived in Sheffield. April confirmed her ethnic origin as white. April was in a monogamous relationship with her partner, Andrew. April has a relationship history that includes both same and different-gender people. April considers herself to be semi-out in that she has disclosed her bisexual identity to a selection of family and friends. April considers herself an activist for LGBT+ rights and contributes to bisexual specific events. April did not have any children.	No change	Did not participate
Kate	Kate was aged between 25 and 31 and lived in Birmingham. Kate	Did not participate	Did not participate

	confirmed her ethnic origin as white. Kate was in a long-term, monogamous relationship with her partner, Winnie. Kate has a relationship history that includes same and different-gender people. Kate had not disclosed her bisexual identity to colleagues at work, however she acknowledges that they assume she is a lesbian because she has a female partner. Kate considers herself to be an activist for LGBT+ rights. Kate did not have any children.		
Sam	Sam was aged between 32 and 38 and lived in Bristol. Sam confirmed her ethnic origin as white. Sam was in a long-term monogamous relationship with her partner, Ken. Sam has a relationship history that includes same and different-gender people. Sam works in the area of education and considers herself to be an activist for LGBT+ rights.	No change	No change

	Sam also contributes towards bisexual specific events. Sam had disclosed her bisexual identity to her family, friends, and work colleagues. Sam did not have any children.		
Alex	Alex was aged between 25 and 31 and lived in Manchester. Alex confirmed her ethnic origin as white American. Alex was in a monogamous relationship with her husband, Brad. Alex has a relationship history that includes same and different-gender people. Alex considers herself an activist for LGBT+ rights and regularly contributes towards bisexual specific events. Alex had not disclosed her bisexual identity to her family or to colleagues at work. Alex did not have any children.	No change	Did not participate
Amelia	Amelia was aged between 32 and 38 and lived in Scotland. Amelia was in a monogamous relationship	No change	No change

	with her partner, Josh. Amelia has a step-son, Alec. Amelia had no history of a previous same-gender relationship. Amelia had not disclosed her bisexual identity to her family or work colleagues, however had disclosed her bisexuality to a few trusted friends. Amelia's work brings her into contact with young people.		
Caitlin	Caitlin was aged between 39 and 45 and lived in South Yorkshire. Caitlin confirmed her ethnic origin as white. Caitlin considered herself to be single but did have a relationship history that included same and different-gender people. Caitlin had experienced homophobic abuse in her previous same-gender relationship. Caitlin acknowledges that she has only recently acknowledged her bisexual identity. Caitlin had not disclosed her bisexual identity to family,	No change	At the time of the photo-assisted interview Caitlin had relocated for work.

	friends or work colleagues, largely because of the previous prejudice she had experienced. Caitlin did not have any children.		
Cora	Cora was aged between 18 and 34 and lived in Essex. Cora confirmed her ethnic origin as white. Cora was in a monogamous relationship with her partner, Emma. Cora had a relationship history that included same and different-gender people. Cora had disclosed her bisexual identity to family, friends and work colleagues, although she expressed that she was assumed a lesbian because she had a female partner. Cora did not have any children.	No change	Did not participate
Eve	Eve was aged between 32 and 38 and lived in London. Eve was in a long-term, monogamous relationship with her partner, Stephanie. Eve had a relationship history that included same and different-gender people.	No change	Did not participate

	Eve's work brings her into contact with lesbian and bisexual women. Eve is out as bisexual to members of her family as well as out at work and to her friends and work colleagues. Eve did not have any children		
Jacky	Jacky was aged between 18 and 24 and lived in Cambridge. Jacky confirmed her ethnic origin as mixed-race. Jacky was in a monogamous relationship with a transgender woman called Catherine. Jacky had a relationship history that included same and different-gender people. Jacky was currently engaged in therapy to help affirm her bisexual identity. Jacky had not disclosed her bisexual identity to her work colleagues or to a number of her family members. However, Jacky had disclosed her bisexuality to some family members. Jacky did not have children.	No change	Did not participate

Paula	Paula was aged between 25 and 31 and lived in Staffordshire. Paula confirmed her ethnic origin as white. Paula was in a monogamous relationship with her partner, Wayne. Paula had a relationship history that included same and different-gender people. At the time of the diary task, Paula was excited to start her teacher training course. Paula had not disclosed her bisexual identity to her family or her work colleagues. Paula did not have any children.	At the time of the telephone interview Paula had ended her relationship with her boyfriend, Wayne and now considered herself single. Paula has recently started her teacher training and had moved out of her home town.	At the time of the photo-assisted interview Paula had begun a monogamous relationship with her girlfriend, Kathryn. Paula had also recently secured a teaching job and as a result had again relocated to a new area. Also by the time of this particular interview, Paula had disclosed her bisexual identity to her family. Paula acknowledged that her work colleagues were likely to assume she was a lesbian because she was in a same-gender relationship.
Pippa	Pippa was aged between 46 and 52 and lived in Scotland. Pippa confirmed her ethnic origin as white. Pippa was in a monogamous relationship with her partner, Leighanne. Pippa had previously been married to John with whom she had an adult daughter called Una. Pippa had not disclosed her bisexual identity to family or work	No change	Did not participate

	colleagues. Pippa had not disclosed the gender of her current partner to either her family or work colleagues.		
Rebecca	Rebecca is aged between 32 and 38 and lives in Hertfordshire. Rebecca confirmed her ethnic origin as white. Rebecca was in a long-term monogamous relationship with her partner, Michelle, who also identifies as bisexual. Rebecca is step-mother to Michelle’s son, Will. Rebecca is planning her wedding to Michelle. Rebecca had a relationship history that included same and different-gender people. Rebecca had disclosed her bisexual identity to her family, however Rebecca acknowledges that work colleagues and some friends assume she is a lesbian because her partner is female.	No change	Did not participate
Sian	Sian is aged between 25 and 31 and lives in London. Sian confirmed her ethnic	No change	Did not participate

	origin to be white. Sian was in a long-term monogamous relationship with her partner, Bill after divorcing her previous husband, Neville. Sian had a relationship history that included same and different-gender people. Sian had not disclosed her bisexual identity to any of her family members or work colleagues. Sian considers herself to be an activist and contributes to a number of LGBT+ focused events. She believes her participation in these events outs her bisexuality. Sian did not have any children.		
Zoe	Zoe was aged between 46 and 52 and lived in Wolverhampton. Zoe confirmed her ethnic origin as white. Zoe was in a long-term monogamous relationship with her partner, Alison. Zoe was previous married to Michael with whom she has three adult children. Zoe	No change	Did not participate

	considers herself to be an activist and takes part in LGBT+ focused events. Zoe had disclosed her bisexual identity to family and work colleagues, although Zoe believes people assume she is a lesbian because her partner is female. Zoe's paid work brings her into contact with the area of sexuality.		

5.3.2 Data collection procedure

The full data collection process is outlined in figure 5.2 below.

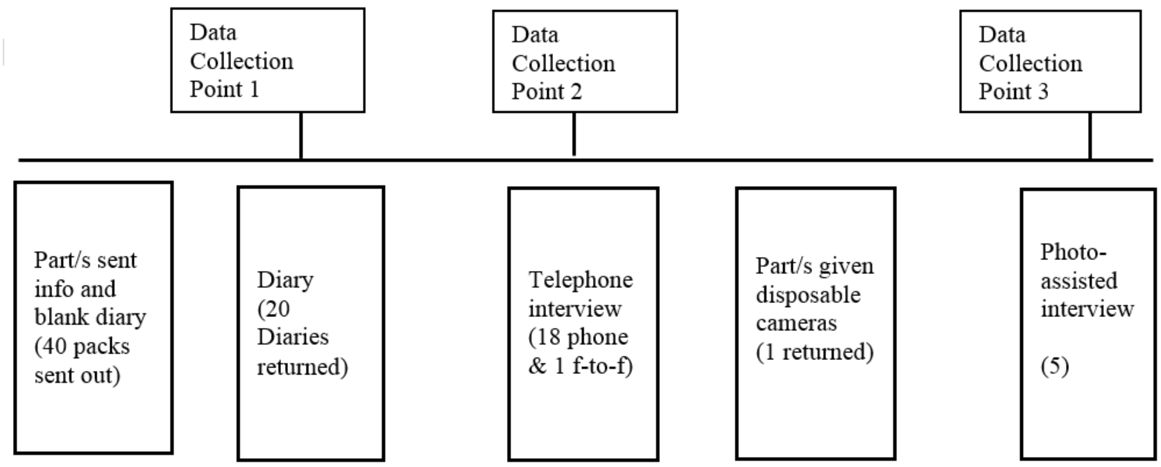

Figure 5.2: The data collection process.

Since the research was concerned with participants' experiences, the diary was designed to be as simple and straightforward as possible. I wanted to avoid, as far as possible, participants believing that there was a 'right' way to complete the diary, or that certain types of diary entry were more acceptable than others. The pack sent to participants consisted of a set of instructions and consent form (see appendix 3), along with a blank diary with sufficient pages to enable participants to record information for four weeks. Participants were provided with two broad guidelines (see table 5.3) to consider as they completed the diary.

Table 5.3: Diary guidelines and instructions.

1	I am interested in bisexual identity in the context of a monogamous relationship. I guess what I am looking for is for you to write down anything that you feel is relevant in your everyday life in relation to your sexual identity. It may be an actual experience that day or a feeling you have. This diary will form the underpinnings of my first interview with you.
2	It might also be that you don't fill your diary in everyday - having said that the more you do engage with the diary the more understanding I am hoping it will give me about you.

The diary submissions were varied in terms of length. The shortest diary was just over a thousand words and the longest diary was just under six thousand words. Participants approached diary writing in different ways. Approximately half of participants returned their paper copy note-books to me with their hand written diary accounts. The other half opted to write their diary using a Word document and chose to email me their completed diary. Those who hand wrote their diaries utilised emoticon style drawings when they wanted to express something in a light-hearted fashion (such as smiley faces). Some participants referred to having to switch the colour of their pen because the ink had run out or they had tired of the colour of their pen. The word processed diaries tended to be devoid of instantaneous mishaps or expressions of emotions that were present in the hand written diaries. In terms of the way in which participants interacted with the diaries, some appeared to write on a daily basis, ensuring to include a submission at the end of every evening. Others included submissions which appeared to be a summary of the previous few days or in a few cases whole weeks. Often participants wrote retrospectively, having included an account on for instance, a Monday, and returning to the account at a later date to embellish what was said, or to clarify points. The information included in the diaries also varied between participants. Some approached the writing in an almost bullet-point fashion; listing things they wanted to discuss in relation to their sexual identity. Others provided more story-like accounts of their experiences and thoughts that day. Other participants wrote in a reflexive fashion, highlighting issues and concerns they felt were important to note (see table 5.4 for an example of the different ways in which participants constructed their diary accounts). Writing the diaries involved no direct interaction with me other than my original instructions informing participants how to complete the diary.

Table 5.4: Diary writing styles.

Connie	I decided to text the women (I'll call her 'Work Chick') and tell her I wanted to kiss her (good old beer confidence!) she responded favourably and at the end of the night we sneaked a quick kiss, attempting to be subtle and failing miserably, we were rumbled by a couple of people!
Zoe	Been too busy to write much - Quick notes Same sex dance class welcomes LGBT. Pah Talking to others about LGBT groups & the need to belong Bi imagery in paper – eg manga emo purple boyish girls Androgyny – gender mixing – not butch – not femme <u>both</u> Politics – freedom as concept trump rights which can be taken away Politics At work – bullys & harassment HR investigation Rookie worker signposts 'quoting' diet to gay hearth profit & then he commits suicide. Also at work – quiet cafe chat with bi ex boss about another new big boss who might be bi & another colleague who might be bi. Laugh at the intrigue but internally i wince at the secrecy
Sam	I remember having a discussion with one of his close friends when we had been together for about a year. I went round to my male partner's house. So Ken's friend Vlad was there, and so was another of Ken's friends, So I was saying something, I don't know what, nor why I was there, but I was, and Ken wasn't around. So I must have brought up my bisexuality and Vlad says 'but how can you still be bisexual, you've been with Ken for however long, blab la bla, you're with a bloke now' and so feeling kind of annoyed I think, I think I was tired, and maybe pissed off with constantly having to come out time and time again.

The decision to use telephone interviews was informed by the following considerations: 1) Using a mediated technology avoids unwanted intrusion into participants' physical space and also enables participants to maintain their anonymity more completely than if they were interviewed face-to-face. 2) The practical difficulties of meeting participants from across the UK to interview them face-to-face would be challenging given both participants' and my own time constraints and commitments. Following completion of the diaries, I contacted participants via email and arranged a mutually convenient time for interviews to take place. All telephone interviews were recorded using a Rowland MP3 Dictaphone recorder. Once a telephone link had been established with the participant I spent some time talking about the research in general and reiterated the aims and structure of the interview. Prior to starting recording the conversation, I double checked with participants that they were happy to proceed and asked if they had any questions.

I considered that it was important to utilise the rich information gleaned from the diaries as a basis to develop and maintain a relationship with the participants. The diaries provided a significant amount of background information about participants' lives which enabled me to have some understanding of the day-to-day issues they faced. In addition, the diaries provided the basis for developing part of the interview schedule. This process involved four stages:

1) The diary was read several times and general notes were made about the tone of the narratives and events.

2) Issues that required clarification were identified.

3) Issues that were mentioned but appeared to merit a further discussion were identified.

4) Issues relevant to the research that were not mentioned in the diary were identified.

This process provided the basis for a set of notes to guide the interview and it contributed to the extent to which the research was driven by the participants and their experiences. An example of how an interview topic/question was derived from a diary is presented in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Example of follow on telephone interview from participant's diary entry.

Diary excerpt	Clarification sought in telephone interview	Further discussion of point in telephone interview
'She has a lot of issues with bisexuality; not just women who leave dykes for men, but women who (like me) appear to leave the life'.	What do you mean when you refer to 'the life'?	1) Explore what a lesbian life involves. 2) Is there a bisexual life? 3) How important/relevant is 'the life' to participant?
'I'd always been a very *'lesbian'* lesbian'	Can you explain what you mean by *'lesbian'* lesbian?	1) Are there ways of expressing one's sexual identity in the word? 1a) If so what are they?

Having read the diary at least twice, I identified entries that I considered to be important in relation to the research questions but raised issues that required further clarification. This was also elaborated into a set of potential questions/cues/probes that could be used in the interview. I generated these specific question from reading literature related to bisexuality and identity construction as well as keeping in mind my research aims.

All participants who took part in the diary task completed an interview apart from Kate who felt that she did not want to participate any further (see table 5.2 for a biographical summary of participants and changes in life circumstances across each data collection point). Kate cited issues related to time constrains making it difficult for her to spend any more time participating in the research. Kate also expressed that she did not want to add any more detail to her diary account. I expressed to Kate that her diary submission was a valuable source of data and I thanked her for her participation in the research. In total, eighteen participants took part in the telephone interviews. In the time between participants completing their diaries and taking part in the following interview, a small number of them had experienced some changes in life circumstance. For example, Paula had ended her relationship with her partner Wayne and was currently single (see table 5.2 for a biographical summary of participants and changes in life circumstances across each data collection point).

Prior to carrying out the telephone interviews, I was slightly concerned about my lack of experience in research interviewing generally and, in particular, conducting telephone interviews. Somewhat fortuitously, I had the opportunity to undertake a face-to-face interview with Caitlin, whom I knew personally prior to undertaking the research. Caitlin commented how strange it would be for her to be interviewed over the phone and so she expressed a preference to be interviewed face-to-face. However, following the completion of the interview there were aspects of it that I was unhappy about. On reflection, I felt the interview was at times ‘stunted’ in the sense that there were points in the conversation when I felt she held back her views or feelings. This may have been due to the fact that this was the first time I had interviewed somebody in relation to this particular research topic, or because I knew her personally. I felt at times that the sensitive nature of what we were talking about and her stance in relation to people knowing about her sexuality may have been responsible for her unwillingness to disclose personal information. A recurring theme throughout the interview was her desire to keep the fact that she was bisexual 'private'. In some ways, the feelings I had resonated with the views expressed by Walkerdine (1990), in that inherent within face-to-face interviews are power dynamics that can influence and impact on the data collected. This reinforced my decision to undertake the rest of the interviews by telephone. The shortest interview lasted just over thirty minutes and the longest interview lasted just under two hours. Gillham (2005) highlights how qualitative telephone interviews tend to be shorter in duration than traditional face-to-face styles of interviewing. I, however, found that, on average, my interviews lasted approximately one hour, demonstrating that it is feasible to conduct reasonably lengthy research interviews over the telephone.

5.3.3 Analysis

The diaries and telephone interviews were analysed using Template Analysis which has been developed by King and his colleagues (see for example, King, (2012) & Brooks, McCluskey, Turley, & King, (2015)). Template Analysis is a specific technique that can be used to analyse qualitative data and falls within the broader approach of Thematic Analysis. Template Analysis is a relatively structured approach to the analysis of data which has a number of advantages for researchers who use it. It is flexible and can be adapted to meet the needs of research across different domains and topics. For example, using Template Analysis is consistent with Smith's (2008) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and has been used quite widely by researchers in health related research, (see, for example Rodriguez (2009) and King, Carroll, Newton and Dornan (2002)). However, there are some qualitative approaches, such as Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis, where the use of Template Analysis is unlikely to be appropriate for the aims of the research. Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis are primarily concerned with the 'work' that language does and are less concerned with the lived experiences of individual participants. (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Template Analysis is not bound to a specific epistemological position. It can certainly be used in interpretative approaches due to the fact it allows for multiple interpretations that can be made of any phenomena. Consequently, it is appropriate to be used within a hermeneutic phenomenological framework.

King (2012) presents a detailed account of the procedural steps involved in carrying out a Template Analysis. Firstly, the data is read several times to ensure familiarity. The second stage is focused on the identification of preliminary codes in the data that warrant interest. The third stage involves moving towards the construction of themes that aid in the conceptualisation of areas or sections of importance. In the current research, a 'theme' was defined as, *'Recurrent and distinctive features of participants' accounts, characterising particular perceptions and/or experiences, which the researcher sees as relevant to the research question'* (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 150). The next step is to identify clusters that have relevance both within participants and across the dataset as a whole. One of the outputs of this approach to analysing and interpreting data is a template that represents the dataset and the relationships within it. The overall aim of the process is to develop a hierarchical coding system which in some way captures the richness of the data.

It is possible to make use of *a priori* themes in the process of developing a template, or rely exclusively on themes generated through the data. The extent to which researchers use *a priori* themes or rely on a 'bottom up' approach depends on the aims of the research and the epistemological stance of the researchers. For example, Maznevski and Chudoba (2000), Shaw and Wainwright (2007) and Turley (2011) relied heavily on *a priori* themes, whereas King and Brooks (2016) adopted a more 'bottom up' approach. The flexibility of Template Analysis and a clearly articulated procedure means that it is an approach that has great utility in the analysis of qualitative data, meaning that it can be used in a range of research settings. However, as is the case with the majority of thematic approaches, it usually aggregates data across multiple cases/participants in the process of developing its coding system. This means that the individuality of participants can be sacrificed in favour of developing a broad understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

Brooks and King (2012) identify some key features of Template Analysis that make it an appropriate approach to use in the current research:

a) It is flexible and not tied to a specific epistemology (although in the present research it has been tied to a hermeneutic phenomenological epistemology and ontology).

b) The coding structure enables researchers to explore aspects of the data in considerable depth.

c) Producing a template ensures that the researcher takes a systematic and well-structured approach to data analysis.

d) The ability to use *a priori* themes means that existing theoretical ideas and concerns can be explored during the analysis.

The latter three features are all consistent with a hermeneutic phenomenological position that focuses on the interpretation of text.

Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis (HPA) facilitates a focus on action and the role that individuals have in specific events. Template Analysis (TA), by definition, focuses on themes in the development of a template which can be used both in the interpretation of data in the current study, and has the potential to be applied in different research settings. One of the features of TA is that it facilitates the identification of commonalities and shared/similar experiences and beliefs across the data. In the present research, HPA and TA are seen as complementary and provide different insights into the experiences of bisexual women. Although TA does not preclude focusing on individuals, the process of it does encourage a focus on the dataset as a whole. From the outset it was my intention to use the final stage of the of the data collection (the photo-interviews) as an opportunity to focus on individual participants and their experiences. Although it may have been possible to have continued with another thematic based analysis, I wanted to use an approach that was more explicitly linked to the hermeneutic phenomenology of Ricoeur.

5.3.4 *A priori* themes

Early in the research process I considered the use of *a priori* themes in the analysis of the data. Three factors influenced my decision: 1) my reading of the research literature related to bisexuality in general which enabled me to identify my chosen a priori themes, 2) the research aims of the current research, 3) my own experiences as a bisexual woman, in a monogamous relationship. These factors led me to make some provisional assumptions about the topics and concerns that participants might discuss in their diary accounts. Initially, I was concerned about the extent to which it would be appropriate to draw on my own experiences. However, Van Manen (1997) acknowledges how one’s personal experience can influence the research and argues that this is not a barrier to collecting data, particularly if the researcher engages in the process of reflexivity. He goes on to suggest that this adds value to the interpretative process. The process of considering *a priori* themes resulted in the identification of three that would be appropriate to include in the construction of the template. These were: 1) ‘bib n tucker’ which I defined as the message ones appearance sends out. 2) ‘media representations’ which reflected the portrayal of bisexuality or bisexual people in the media. 3) ‘death by a thousand cuts’ this represented the way in which individuals known to the person make hurtful, stereotypical or amusing comments about aspects of their bisexual identity.

One of the potential problems associated with the use of *a priori* themes is that it can result in the analysis only finding what it has previously identified as important (King & Brooks, 2016). In order to avoid this potential pitfall, I restricted the number of *a priori* themes to three and tried to adopt an open-minded stance to the data. In addition, the process of developing the final template was an iterative process and the *a priori* themes did not hold a privileged status in the process. Their position in the final template was based on the extent to which they were evident in the data. It could be argued that this poses the question, ‘Why bother with ‘*a priori* themes at all?’. The answer in the present research is that it provided a basis from which to start the process of developing the template and interpreting the data and also provided a link with the research questions and my personal experiences. Through the iterative process of developing the template, the *a priori* themes underwent changes and revision. In relation to the original *a priori* themes, only ‘death by a thousand cuts’ retained a position on the template in its original guise. However, both ‘media representations’ and ‘bib n tucker’ were subsumed under more appropriate codes and so did not disappear completely from the overall thread of the template. For example, ‘bib n tucker’ was originally conceptualised as an independent theme incorporating, in general terms, the kinds of assumed information one’s appearance signifies to other people. However, as the analysis and interpretation progressed I developed a more nuanced account that was more detailed in terms of the particularities of what was at the heart of ‘bib n tucker’. The template section below (see figure 5.3), shows my original articulation of the theme of ‘bib n tucker’ and demonstrates how generalised its conception was.

1.2 Influencing 'out there'
 	
    1.2.1 What is the message?
 	
    1.2.2 Bib n tucker

Figure 5.3: Original template section for theme of 'bib n tucker'.

The template section below (figure 5.4), taken from my final template, shows how the theme of 'bib n tucker' has been dismantled and reconceptualised into a thread of more focused themes related to the 'look', and more accurately represented the concept of 'bib n tucker'.

1.3 The 'look'
 	
    1.3.1 Queer 'look'
 	
    1.3.2 Straight 'look'
 	
    1.3.3 Bisexual 'look'
 	
    1.3.4 BiCon 'look'
 	
    1.3.5 Breaking out of the 'look'
 	
    1.3.6 Chameleon

Figure 5.4: Template section for theme of the 'look'.

5.3.5 Developing the template

My approach to coding and template construction followed the steps suggested by King (2004), Brooks and King (2014) and King and Brooks (2016) in order to glean a holistic sense of the transcripts. These included:

1) Familiarising myself with the data

2) Noting preliminary codes

3) Clustering together meaningful themes

4) Producing an initial template

5) Developing the template

6) Applying the final template

At the beginning of the template construction process I had initially decided to construct stand-alone templates; one for the diaries, and one for the telephone interviews (See appendix 7 for versions of the early diary & interview templates) following the same guidelines set down by King and Brooks (2016). My decision to do this was based on the assumption that I would get different information from each method of data collection. However, whilst to some extent this was true, as the process progressed it became clear that it was going to be more appropriate to combine the diary and telephone interview template into a single template. One of the main reasons behind this decision was the extent to which there was duplication and overlap between the two templates. The process of developing the template began with reading the diary transcripts afresh and making notes on them. Following King and Brooks (2016) advice, I then selected four diaries that were each slightly different from each other and began preliminary coding with my a priori themes in mind. I illuminated points, or sections of interest, before moving on to construct a first draft of my diary template. The whole process was iterative and involved continuous revisions and restructuring of my ideas.

Once an initial template had been constructed I applied it to each diary in turn to double check the themes were appropriate and inclusive. It was at this stage that I experienced some difficulty as I faced the challenge of breaking down ‘chunks’ of data to fit into themes. It was often the case that sections of what participants said could be located under more than one branch of the template ‘tree’. As was the case with the whole process, decisions were made but then revisited to ensure that I felt comfortable with them. This stage of the construction of the template was mostly iterative in that I continually went back and forth over the data, modifying and re-coding the template until I reached a point where I found myself discarding ‘old’ ‘branches’ only to reinstate them time and time again. This resulted in numerous reconstructions and modifications of existing themes with a number of original themes becoming redundant. It was at this point that it became apparent that two of my *a priori* themes ‘bib n tucker’ and ‘media representations’ - no longer reflected the data as I had originally envisaged them. Consequently, they were reconceptualised and subsumed under other themes. I was then finally able to settle on a final template which I felt, on balance, reflected the data across both the diaries and interviews. Subsequently, the diary template was combined with the template from the telephone interviews to create the final template (see figure 5.5 for final template).

1. Word on the street

1.1 Mother of assumptions

    1.1.1 It's black or white

    1.1.2 Little pictures in people's heads

        1.1.2.1 Bisexual types

        1.1.2.2 Trendy to be bisexual

1.2 Role model reflections

    1.2.1 Personal definition

    1.2.2 Anything is better than nothing

        1.2.2.1 Boxed in and up

        1.2.2.2 Media reinforcement of stereotypes

1.3 The 'look'

    1.3.1 Queer 'look'

    1.3.2 Straight 'look'

    1.3.3 Bisexual 'look' (lack of)

    1.3.4 BiCon 'look'

    1.3.5 Breaking out of the 'look'

    1.3.6 Chameleon

2. In/out/in/out shake it all about

2.1 Fears of being out (FOBO)

    2.1.1 FOBO – to parents

2.1.2 FOBO – hurting the relationship

2.1.3 FOBO – past it

2.1.4 FOBO – relationship permanency

2.1.5 FOBO – at work

2.2 Out - head first

2.2.1 Out – to educate

2.2.2 Out – to support others

3. Enduring the pain

3.1 Hostility

3.1.1 Prove yourself

3.1.2 The clique

3.1.3 Fitting in

3.1.3.1 Queer hostility

3.1.3.2 Queer hostility – if dating a man

3.1.3. 3 Interloper

3.1.3.4 Bi-enough

3.2 Straight assumptions

3.2.1 Straight sexualisation

3.2.2 Double the chance

3.3 Negative experiences related to sexuality

3.3.1 Bi-negativity

3.3.2 Internalised ‘bi-phobia’

3.3.1.1 Death by a thousand cuts

3.3.1.2 Bisexual burden

4. We are monogamous

4.1 My monogamy

- 4.1.1 Monogamy ‘fit’
- 4.1.2 Monogamy works
    - 4.1.2.1 I don’t want anyone else
    - 4.1.2.2 One is enough

4.2 Monogamy struggles

- 4.2.1 Keeping the peace
- 4.2.2 Health and Wellbeing
- 4.2.3 Keeping bisexuality alive
- 4.2.4 Hidden by the relationship

4.3 Close attraction

- 4.3.1 Sex and attraction
- 4.3.2 Bisexual sexual horizons
- 4.3.3 Suited to women more than men
    - 4.3.3.1 Desiring the different-gender
    - 4.3.3.2 Experiencing gender differences in relationships

5 The holes and highs

5.1 Identity certainty

5.2 Wobbles

- 5.2.1 Space and time
- 5.2.2 Support to identity (STI)
    - 5.2.2.1 STI - places to go
    - 5.2.2.2 STI – friends and family
    - 5.2.2.3 STI – on-line
    - 5.2.2.4 STI – partner

5.3 Support gap (SG) 5.3.1 SG – from partner 5.3.2 SG – friends and family

Figure 5.5: Final Template.

5.3.6 Overarching Themes

The template analysis created five overarching themes:

1) 'Word on the street' - This theme is concerned with what participants believe society thinks about sexuality and relationships.

2) 'In/out/in/out shake it all about' - This theme is concerned with the complexity of coming out as bisexual to other people.

3) 'Enduring the pain' - This theme is concerned with the often upsetting experiences participants have experienced as a result of occupying a monogamous bisexual identity.

4) 'We are monogamous' - This theme is concerned with the declaration of monogamy made by participants and its implications for them.

5) 'The holes and highs' - This theme is concerned with the different support mechanisms participants utilise to affirm their bisexuality as well as some of the barriers to identity affirmation.

With the exception of the fourth theme ('We are monogamous'), all the themes were identifiable in both the diaries and the telephone interviews. The theme concerned with participants' declarations of monogamy was identified in the telephone interviews.

5.4 Stage 2: Photo-assisted interviews

This section presents the details in relation to how I recruited participants and carried out the process of data collection.

5.4.1 Sampling and recruitment for the photo-assisted interviews

All the participants who took part in the photo-assisted interviews had completed diaries and taken part in a telephone interview. Selecting participants to take part in the photo-assisted interview stage of the research was done through a combination of considering those who throughout the first stage of data collection had expressed an interest in completing this particular phase of the research, as well as trying to ensure representation of participants in same-gender and different-gender relationships, as well as those who were currently single. I adopted a purposive approach and selected six participants on the basis of their geographical location and diversity (in terms of their background and experiences). I approached six participants, via email, to undertake this final stage of the research who had previously expressed a willingness to participate. Unfortunately, one was unable to finish the process due to a bereavement, therefore the following five participants - Paula, Caitlin, Elaine, Amelia and Sam - completed the photo-assisted interviews

The time between the first telephone interviews and the photo-assisted telephone interviews took approximately eighteen months due to me taking maternity leave and looking after my daughter. Whilst the life circumstances of the majority of participants who took part in this phase of the research remained the same as when I had originally interviewed them, some had experienced major changes. For example, Elaine had given birth to a son (see table 5.2 for a biographical summary of those who took part in this section of the data collection process and any changes in their life circumstances between data collection points).

5.4.2 Data collection procedure for the photo-assisted interviews

Participants were sent the relevant consent documentation and additional information (see appendices 2 & 3), alongside a disposable camera with a set of guidelines (see appendix 8). Participants were asked to take photographs of people, places and objects that were meaningful in relation to their sexual identity. They were requested to take no more than twelve photographs within a week of receiving the camera. Participants were supplied with a stamped addressed envelope to return the camera and consent forms after they had completed the task.

I had considered asking participants to use the camera on their mobile phone, but on reflection, I opted to send participants a disposable camera to ensure that they had the same opportunity. I also felt that by sending them a disposable camera it would focus the 'task'. By this, I mean I had originally, somewhat naively, envisaged participants to want to separate these 'task-focused' pictures out from the day-to-day pictures they no doubt capture on their mobile phones (if they had one). Originally, I had planned to develop two sets of photographs and send a copy to participants so that we both had the relevant photographs in front of us during the subsequent telephone interview. However, all but one of the participants opted to send me the photographs as attachments as they had captured the images on their phone (this made me feel old and nostalgic for the 'good old days' when you had to wait to see what the picture looked like). This meant that the process proved to be easier and quicker than I had originally intended. Only one participant returned the camera to me through the post. I ordered two sets of photographs and sent one to her in preparation of the follow-up telephone interview.

The technical quality of the photographs in this research was not, in itself, important rather they were important as representations of some aspect of the participants' sexual identity. The information given to the participants (see appendix 8) pointed out that I was not concerned with the quality of the photograph and that they should not worry about detail and picture quality. I wanted to avoid the situation where by a participant was overly concerned about detail and the technical quality of the photographs they had taken. The photographs themselves were not considered to be of primary importance, it was the meanings and narratives associated with them that I was most interested in.

When I was in possession of the photographs the participants took part in a photo-assisted interview. The interviews were varied in length, with the shortest photo interview lasting around forty-five minutes and the longest photo interview just under two hours. In considering how best to conduct this section of the research process I found it challenging to formulate a structured plan related to specific questions I would ask participants. Prior to the first telephone interview, I was able to identify a number of questions I wanted clarity on. For example, if participants did not reference in the diary ever having a previous relationship history that included both same and different-gender individuals I would specifically ask them a question about this in the interview.

Therefore, the plan, in respect of the first telephone interview, had a semi-structured quality to it. Participants who took part in the subsequent photo-assisted interviews were tasked with taking photographic images that they felt best represented their sexual identity, thus it was highly likely they would present images that were individual and personally meaningful to them. On balance, I felt it was most appropriate to take an organic approach to questioning participants, as the photo-assisted interviews were oriented around what they wanted to say about the images and what specifically those images meant to them. Therefore, questioning participants was dependent on what they chose to divulge. The aim at this point in the research process was to ask for clarity in relation to what they spoke about *in situ* as opposed to directly question them in respect of what they had previously discussed in the diary and first telephone interview.

Participants took a variety of images to illustrate things that related to their sexual identity, including pictures of people, places, and objects such as books, ornaments, and vibrators. The subsequent telephone interview felt more participant focused than the previous telephone interview as it was driven by them articulating their thoughts in relation to the pictures they had taken. In terms of which photograph was discussed first and so on, I left it to participants to select an image they wished to talk about. It was important that the participants and I were confident that we were looking at the same picture/s during the interview/s. Therefore, prior to discussing each image, I confirmed with them that I was looking at the right one. Once participants had selected a photo I would instruct them to discuss what the image meant to them as well as tell me why they had chosen to include it in the research. As a result, some participants gave their photographs names or headings to encapsulate a particular theme that a photo represented, such as ‘friendship’ or ‘marriage’. Others preferred to title the picture more directly reflecting the image, such as ‘wedding ring’ or ‘wardrobe’. As participants articulated their thoughts and considerations of each image I was sure to keep notes of points that came to mind, in relation to aspects of their discussions or narratives that they had previously discussed in the first interview or diary. I felt it was important to check with participants that they were referencing the same issue or story because I considered that it must be important for them to want to discuss it again. The photos gave participants an opportunity to expand and add context to narratives that they had previously touched on. For example, Caitlin expressed in her diary that going to social events brought with it a danger that her picture would be taken without her consent and shared on social media.

I have been invited to a friend's birthday party. Well she isn't really my friend she was a friend of my ex-girlfriends. I dread these gatherings as everyone takes pictures without asking and uploads them onto social media. I really do not want my face ending up on random people's walls.

In the photo-assisted interview, Caitlin presented a picture of some people dancing in a club (see figure 7.15). Once again, Caitlin brought up the topic of how it was difficult to stay anonymous when engaging in social activities, (such as, going to pubs and clubs) and how she did not want to be exposed in this way.

There's lots of photographers there and stuff…and I didn't want to be on those photographs that then are posted on the Internet…the photographers would, they'd post these pictures on-line and, you know, about this gay club and, and, and erm, and it goes on Facebook.

Caitlin discussed how individuals take pictures without consent and distribute them in places that are potentially problematic. Caitlin is mindful of the ways in which information is shared and did not want others to know she identifies as bisexual. Her reference in the photo-assisted interview highlights how this is an on-going concern for her. Thus, in the photo-assisted analysis I was able to highlight a number of consistent themes that resonated throughout the data corpus for each participant.

5.4.3 Analysis

The analysis of the photo-assisted interviews was underpinned by a desire to maintain the 'individual'. The Template Analysis of the telephone interviews provides a summary of the whole dataset which tends to lose the individual participant. This stage of the research was designed to complement that by analysing and interpreting each interview separately. In line with the hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy discussed in the previous chapter, I developed an approach to interpreting data based on Ricoeur's (1992) ideas on the relationship between language, text and events that people experience. One of the challenges faced by qualitative researchers in the social sciences is to identify an approach to analysing and interpreting data that, a) reflects their personal beliefs and epistemological stance, b) is consistent with the aims of the research, and c) meets appropriate standards of validity. In my view, Template Analysis is an approach that has considerable merit and its use in the present research contributed to the exploration of the aims of the research. However, while it can be used from varying methodological positions, including the clearly ideographic, its focus on developing themes across the data set lends itself more to cross-case analysis which could have a more nomothetic emphasis than I needed here. In order to complement this cross-case approach, I wanted to use an approach that was explicitly linked to the hermeneutic phenomenology of Ricoeur, was ideographic, and could be used within the time and resource constraints of the present research. Having reviewed the literature, the closest match was Critical Narrative Analysis (Langdridge, 2007), but Langdridge himself acknowledges the difficulties in applying the method in its entirety. In particular, analysing data using the full method is likely to be excessively time consuming. In addition, CNA draws heavily on Ricoeur's writings on the hermeneutics of suspicion, whereas my focus was more on the relationship between text and action and Ricoeur's ideas about the self and identity as expressed in his later work (for example, Ricoeur, 1992: Oneself as Another).

A concern with action and its relationship to language appears throughout Ricoeur's work (Kearney, 2007) and he articulates it in some detail in his three volume series, 'Time and Narrative' (Ricoeur, 1984, 1985, 1988). Although the key aspects of Ricoeur's ideas on 'Mimesis' and emplotment were discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter 4), relevant detail is also presented here to clarify how Ricoeur's ideas were operationalised and used in the analysis and interpretation of the photo-interview data. Ricoeur (1984) uses a 'threefold Mimesis' as a way of representing the relationship between language and human action, and proposes that human action is emploted in a narrative mode within a temporal framework. HPA seeks to operationalise Ricoeur's (1984) 'threefold Mimesis' and provide a bridge between his hermeneutic phenomenology and the interpretive act(s) which are a necessary feature of qualitative data analysis. Each of the mimetic processes discussed by Ricoeur (1984) can be characterised by a particular type of 'figuration'. 'Mimesis 1' is characterised by prefiguration, 'Mimesis 2' is characterised by configuration, and 'Mimesis 3' by refiguration. 'Mimesis 1' is concerned with our pre-existing understandings of the world, including beliefs rooted in specific ideologies, and its temporal character. These understandings of the world are mediated through the process of emplotment in 'Mimesis 2. In contrast, 'Mimesis 3' is concerned with the person's response to the process of emplotment and returns to 'Mimesis 1' to create new understandings of the world and completes a hermeneutic circle.

Central to Ricoeur's (1984) 'threefold Mimesis' is the process of emplotment which requires an understanding of what human action is, and the symbolic systems used to represent human action (Ricoeur, 1984). The process of emplotment for Ricoeur (1984) involves the drawing together of heterogeneous events and/or sequences of events that occur one after the other. Although the process of emplotment relies on an individual's pre-existing understandings Ricoeur (1984) also allows for the creation of new ideas and new ways of making sense of events through our creative imagination. Emplotment creates a sense order, ('concordance' in Ricoeur's terminology), from a meaningless sequence of events occurring one after another ('discordance' in Ricoeur's terminology). The core activities in HPA are intended to explore this process of emplotment, the relationship between language and action, in participants' accounts. Throughout the process of using HPA consideration is also given to ways in which ideology may be operating to influence the ways in which participant's emplot their experiences.

Having transcribed and read all the photo-interview data the process of analysis and interpretation was based on individual participants. A summary of the stages involved in HPA (see Figure 5.6 for a diagrammatic representation) is presented below and this is followed by a more detailed description using a worked example to illustrate the process.

1 Identify the event and how it has been narrated

Main aim – Collate information relating to an identifiable event that the participant refers to in their interview.

Activities – This stage involves reading the transcript several times in order to familiarise oneself with the data. It can be useful to make notes (for example, in the left-hand margin) about interesting and significant points. Having read the transcript carefully it will be possible to identify specific events and where the participant has referred to them throughout the interview. Sometimes the participant will only refer to an event once in the interview, on other occasions the participant may talk about the same event at different points in the interview. All references to a specific event can then be indexed, for example, by colour coding.

Outcome – Information about a specific event has been collated and indexed. I found it helpful to ‘cut and paste’ the information into a separate word document so that it was easy to look at all the information relating to a specific event.

2 Reinstate the discordance

Main Aim – Identify the sequence of actions/events that form the basis for the narrative account of the event.

Activities – This stage involves focusing on each distinct event (such as ‘legs touching’ presented in the worked example below - taken from Sam’s narrative) and identifying the actions and their temporal order. It involves stripping away the evaluative and interpretive aspects of the participant’s account of the event and trying to focus on the basic structure of the event. This provides the basis for starting to ask questions about the evaluations and interpretations that the participant placed on the event.

Outcome – A set of actions organised in a temporal sequence.

3 Restore the discordant concordance

Main Aim – Restore and question the narrative account and reflect on one’s own assumptions and beliefs.

Activities – Having gone through the process of removing the evaluative and interpretive aspects of a specific event, this stage focuses on the process of interpreting and questioning the narrative account. This involves going back to the transcript of the event collated in stage 1 and asking questions such as: What is the plot? Who are the characters? Why am I being told this story? Why is the story being told in this way? This list is not meant to be exhaustive or limiting, rather it is a starting point for exploring the narrative account. This is the stage of the interpretive process where the relationship between language and action and the cultural, ideological and temporal dimension of lived experience are explored in some depth. Taking a questioning stance to the participant’s account is an important aspect of this stage. It is also a point in the process where the researcher can also examine their own assumptions and challenge their own interpretations of the data. I found this stage in the process to be quite lengthy, involving a return to interpretations on numerous occasions to review and reflect on my own role in the process.

Outcome – An interpretation of the relationship between the event and the way in which it was narrated and emploted. It is in this stage that interpretations about ideological assumptions and interpretations in relation to the research questions will begin to emerge (NB Having undertaken stages 1, 2 and 3 for a single event, these stages will be repeated until all the relevant events in the interview have been analysed before moving on to the next stage.)

4 Compare and contrast narrative accounts

Main aim – Explore the events narrated by the participant and investigate plots and themes across the different events.

Activities – Events do not occur in isolation so it is important to look across the whole interview and explore the ways in which the participant talks about their experiences. In some situations, as in the current research, it may involve looking at other interviews or other forms of data (e.g. diary). This stage builds on the interpretive activities of the previous stage and seeks to explore similarities and differences between the ways in which events are emploted and narrated. A questioning stance is taken drawing on similar questions to the previous stage, but applying them to comparisons across events rather than looking at individual events. Questions such as, Are the same plot structures being used for different events? How does the participant evaluate the events? Is there any evidence of ideological assumptions informing the ways in which the participant narrates events? As in the previous section, it is also important that the researcher continues to question and challenge their own interpretations of the data.

Outcome – An understanding of how different events are emploted and interpreted.

5 Interpret narratives in relation to research questions and theory

Main aim – Relate interpretations from stages 3 and 4 to theory/previous research literature.

Activities – This stage provides the basis for the process of starting to integrate the interpretations that emerged from the previous sections into a coherent written report. Although preliminary notes will be made throughout the whole process this part of the process starts to systematically explore those interpretations in relation to theory, previous research and the research questions of the current research. Whilst it is impossible to completely ignore our existing knowledge and approach data analysis as a ‘tabula rasa’, HPA encourages researchers to continually challenge and question their own assumptions and interpretations as well as undertaking an interpretation of participants' data. Although I was aware of the research questions, and the research literature that underpinned them, I made a conscious effort not to focus on them during the first four stages of the process. It was in this stage that I returned to them and looked for links and ideas that could inform my interpretation and support its presentation.

Outcome – An understanding of the relationship between the participant's experiences and existing theory/research literature, and a preliminary written interpretation of the participant's data.

It is important to note that the stages above are intended to be used in an iterative manner. In the current research, the analysis and interpretation of each event identified took numerous iterations through the stages. Although presenting the stages as a numbered list creates a sense of structure and order, the reality of the interpretive process is rather more 'messy' and time consuming. Each of the five stages are described in more detail below.

1 Identify the event(s). In this context an 'event' is considered to be something that has happened which involves the participant in some way, of which the participant talks about in the interview. According to Ricoeur (1992), the event will be emploted in a narrative account that will typically have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Riessman (2000) points out that the majority of qualitative research relies on some form of interview to collect data, and identifying a narrative account of an event will not necessarily be straightforward. Participants will rarely, if at all, present an account in its entirety and then move neatly on to the next topic. Typically, participants will present an account of an event at one point in an interview, but will often return to it later in the interview and add to it, elaborate on it, or sometimes just reiterate some aspect of their account. This means that the process of identifying an event in an interview transcript(s) involves reading the whole interview(s) and collating all references to the same event. The culmination of this process will be a collection of segments of an interview(s) which are related to the same event. Typically, this will comprise a main section in which the event is presented in its most complete form along with smaller sections which also refer to the event.

For example, in the photo-assisted interview, Sam narrates an event in which she was socialising with a good friend. Sam discusses how they talked about topics including sexuality and bisexuality specifically. After which, whilst sitting next to each other, their legs brush up against each other and, consequently, Sam feels the relationship has changed because of her identity disclosure. Sam says,

> *I was . . . sitting with a friend at, at, at University and erm, after we'd been talking about bisexuality and stuff and like my leg would brush hers and she'd jump a mile…whereas before it would've been no big deal whatsoever, it was like it's crossed a boundary, it's changed the you know, it's changed the dynamics of the friendship and it's not the same anymore [133-146]*.

Looking across the data corpus I noted that Sam had referred to this event in the previous telephone interview. The extract below alongside the event she expressed in the photo-assisted interview provided me with the ability to identify the event.

> *When I was first coming out my close friend, I remember telling her and I don't think she approved all that much, I think she was a bit, well not, I don't think she disapproved but I think she was a bit urgh by it, probably didn't help that I did actually have quite a massive crush on her……but I think people do assume that you're gonna fancy them in fact, that's more of a lesbian tradition isn't it, but I think when people find out that you're attracted to the same sex they then, the next thought they have is do you fancy me……and I remember my friend when I've, not long after I'd first kind of come out to her, our, our legs touched like on bar stools, sat in a bar at uni and erm, she just pulled away more than, you know, I mean you're reading into it as well as people reacting but it certainly felt to me like she pulled away much more than she would've done before…so I think, I think it has an impact in that way [1001-1034]*

2 Reinstate the discordance. Ricoeur (1992) uses the term 'discordance' to describe a sequence of events occurring one after the other but without any plot that enables us to make sense of them. According to Ricoeur (1992), it is the process of emplotment that creates meaning out of a discordant sequence of actions and events. However, the concordance - the sense of meaning and order that is created through emplotment - is always in a state of tension with the discordance from whence it came. Ricoeur (1992) uses the term ‘discordant concordance’ to reflect the tension and mediating role played by emplotment in configuring events, agents and objects into a meaningful whole. The consequence for this approach to interpreting interview data is that we are presented with an account, or narrative, which reflects the participant’s emplotment of events they experienced. This stage in the process aims to identify the sequence of events which form the basis of the narrative account of the event. It attempts to remove the interpretations placed on the events by the participant and focus on the discordant sequence of actions. One of the consequences of emplotment is that it creates a discordant concordance out of the discordance, evident in a series of events occurring one after the other. The aim of this stage is to reinstate the discordance which was present before the imaginative processes involved in emplotment were engaged. Prior to the process of emplotment, we are faced with a series of events occurring in time, one after the other. This stage aims to identify these events and disentangle them from the interpretations that have been placed on during the process of emplotment. The outcome from this stage will be a simple set of actions which form the basis of an event narrated by the participant. It is argued here that this process provides a basis for exploring the narratives in more depth, and asking questions as to why the narrative emerged from the discordance in the way it did. This stage of the model is focused on taking the plot out of the narrative and factually presenting the sequence of events without any interpretation. Using the example from Sam presented above, the sequence of events is reduced to three key points.

1) Disclosure of bisexuality

2) Touched legs

3) Moved leg away

3 Restore the discordant concordance. This stage facilitates the process of questioning the narrative account of the event, and asking ‘Why?’ Having identified the sequence of events/actions upon which the narrative is based, the next stage in the analysis is to start putting the narrative account back together, restoring the ‘discordant concordance’ (to use Ricoeur’s terminology). This stage forms the major part of the analytic process and is developed by taking a questioning stance towards the data. For example, questions such as: What is the plot? Who are the characters and what are their motives? Who is acting/suffering? What are the moral and ethical aspects of the story and its characters? Why am I being told this story? Why is the story being told in this way? This list is not meant to be exhaustive or limiting, rather it is a starting point for exploring the narrative account. The questioning stance taken here reflects the position taken by Ricoeur (1984), who provides a series of questions exploring the relationship between narrative and action. They are: *'What? Why? Who? How? With whom? Against whom?* (p. 55).

Again, in relation to the above example, the aim of this stage of the model is to put the narrative back together by way of adopting a questioning attitude towards the data. Examples of the types of questions asked of the data include the questions listed above, as well as some attempt on the part of the interpreter to formulate an understanding of the way in which Sam has chosen to narrate the event.

4 Compare and contrast narrative accounts. This stage is concerned with the range of events narrated by a single participant. It aims to look across the accounts and explore questions such as, 'Is the same plot type being used in different narratives? Is the narrator acting/suffering? How are moral and ethical issues emploted in the accounts? One of the principal aims in this section of the model is to look across the data and ascertain whether or not a consistent or coherent plot is being used. Ricoeur (1992) suggested that we make sense of our lives through narration and, in doing so, we reconstruct the past and imagine a future in order to glean meaning and identity in our lives. He goes on to argue that we draw on a number of culturally available plots in order to make sense of events and the things that happen to us. Researchers such as McAdams (2007) have gone on to develop ideas that focus on the relationship between plot and well-being. McAdams (2006, 2007) identified plots that were commonly used by his participants and were relatable across different cultures, for example redemption sequences. This form typically characterises some type of transformative act where one turns a negative experience or event into a more positive account. This reconfiguration leads to a narrative of understanding that is coherent and meaningful for the story-teller particularly in respect of how they wish to live their lives.

In the example above, Sam had a number of plots available to her in connection with the event she narrated about accidentally touching her friend's leg with her leg. This stage of the model is interested in considering the alternative plots Sam could have drawn on to emplot the event. For example, Sam could have emploted her narrative in any of the following ways;

1) Sam's friend jumped as an automatic response and reaction to making accidental physical contact with Sam's leg.

2) Sam's friend moved her leg away in a bid not to cause Sam any anxiety particularly in respect of her recent bisexual identity disclosure.

3) Sam is hyper sensitive to her disclosure and interpreted her friend moving her leg away as a negative response to her bisexual identity disclosure.

4) Sam's friend jumped and moved her leg away because she felt anxious about them inadvertently touching. Sam's friend feels differently towards Sam after her bisexual identity disclosure.

The important point in relation to this aspect of the model is to explore the narrative accounts across the data corpus and pay attention to the consistent and overarching plot that participants use when discussing events. In relation to the example above, I have identified a theme titled 'everything changes' (see appendix 9 for a detailed diagrammatic representation of the way in which Sam emplots the 'everything changes' theme).

5 Interpret narratives in relation to research questions and theory. This stage of the process involves considering the narrative accounts in relation to the research question(s) that form the basis of the research and alongside that, drawing on theory to inform the interpretation of the data and using the data to inform our interpretations of theory. The aim therefore is to link interpretation back to theory in order to better understand the lived experience of participants. In relation to the example presented above, I suggest that McAdams (2006, 2007) concept of restoration or redemptive narrative (outlined above) is applicable here. Sam discloses her sexual identity to her friend and consequently experiences her friend distancing herself from her. The way in which Sam thinks about the disclosure of her bisexual identity involves something changing; in this case the friendship. However, Sam does not necessarily view things changing as negative. It could be the case that in order for Sam to make meaningful sense of her life she emplots a narrative coherence of 'things changing' after disclosure. Despite Sam concluding that her bisexual disclosure has affected the dynamics of the friendship, her bisexual identity remains coherent and intact (see section 7.5.3 for more discussion on this particular theme). This conceptualisation is reflective of McAdams redemption narrative.

A conceptual representation of the approach is presented in figure 5.6. The overall aim of this approach to the analysis and interpretation of interview data is draw on the ideas expressed in Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology. It attempts to use relationship between narrative accounts of events and the actions upon which they are based as a way of exploring the day-to-day experiences of participants in this research.

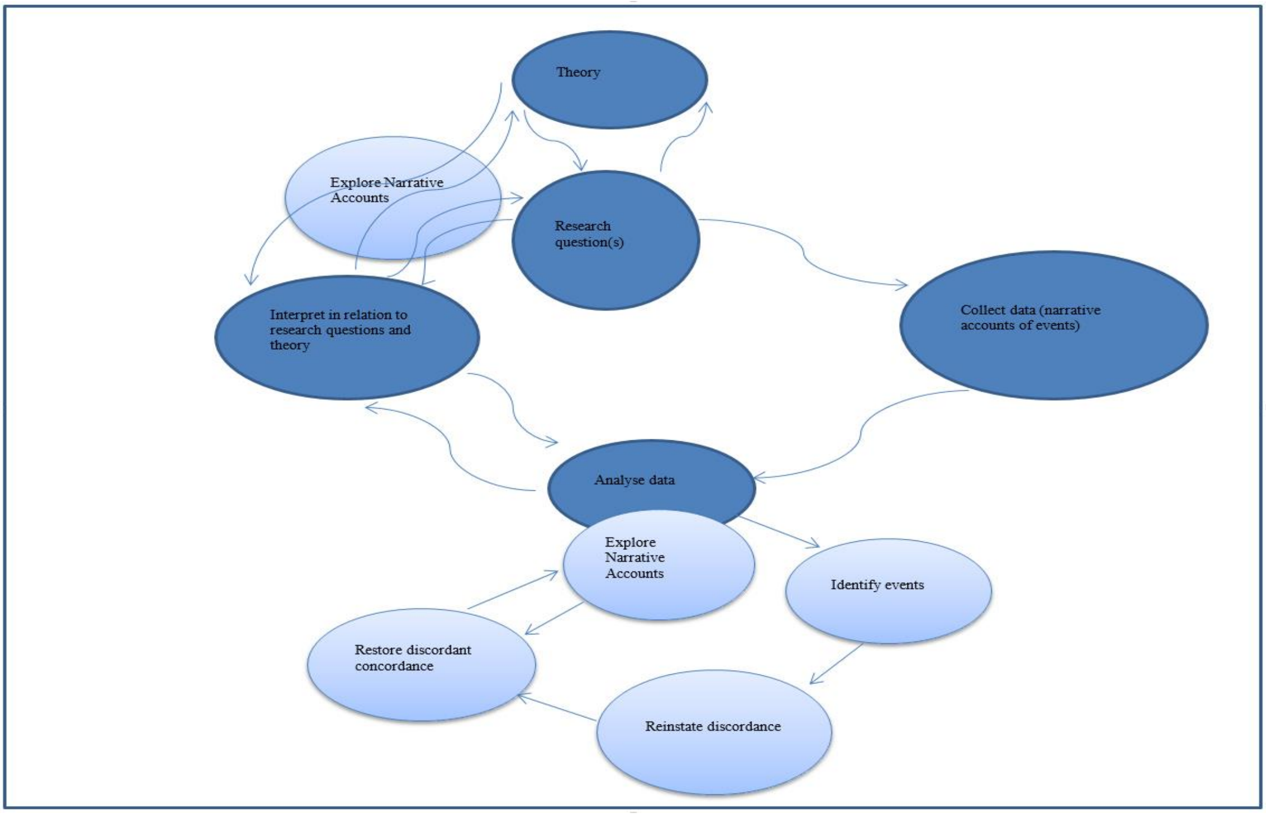

Figure 5.6: Conceptual representation of Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis.

In summary, within HPA consideration of the relationship between language and action, based on Ricoeur's (1984) 'threefold Mimesis', is embedded throughout the interpretive process. In the process of emplotment we draw on pre-existing knowledge and the ideologies that inform our practices. In most situations we will be unaware of the existence of these ideological positions and HPA seeks to explore how and where these may influence participants' accounts of their experiences. HPA uses these ideas to provide alternative lenses through which we can explore the data we are interested in. The relationships within the 'threefold Mimesis' should not be represented as a static, linear set of stages, but rather as a dynamic iterative process. This has important implications for HPA which also needs to be thought of as a dynamic iterative process rather than a set of stages that the researcher simply moves through. Clearly this is difficult to represent in a didactic fashion where there is no opportunity for the reader to engage directly with the author in order to clarify queries and interpretations. The relationship between action and language is not something that forms a 'stage' in the process of using HPA, it is a set of ideas and philosophical position that underpins the whole process, and is derived from Ricoeur's 'threefold Mimesis'. The process of interpreting an individual's experiences and how they emplot them is always done through a particular lens (VanderHaagen, 2013). HPA provides a framework that could be thought of as a set of interpretive lens, each of which focuses the researcher's analytic vision on different aspects of the interview data.

The presentation of the outcomes of an interpretative process in the reporting of qualitative research is always difficult (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). HPA is an interpretive process that that takes a critical and questioning approach to qualitative data and I suggest that the structure and format of the reported findings is dependent on the context of the research. In the present context it was important to maintain a sense of coherence and consistency with the approach taken in Template Analysis reported in Chapter 6, as well as ensuring that the HPA interpretation was valid and credible. Consequently, I decided to organise the reporting of the interpretative process around what have been referred to as 'overarching themes'. King and Horrocks, (2010) use the term to refer to themes that represent abstract concepts developed from the data. For example, the concept of 'hopelessness' was identified as an important aspect of an individual's experience of diabetic renal disease (King, et al., 2002). In the current research the findings presented in Chapter 7 are organised around overarching themes, for example, I developed the theme 'everything changes' in the interpretation of Sam's data. The identification of themes will emerge during stages 3 and 4 of the interpretive process and in the current research it was an appropriate way to structure and report the findings. However, I would not consider it to be the only way to organise and structure the findings of an HPA.

5.5 Ethical considerations

Lee and Renzetti (1993, 1990) refer to research that is classed as sensitive if it has potential costs for both the researcher and the participant. This, therefore, includes research which focuses on people's personal lives. If a researcher is interested in the personal lives of their participants then there is always potential for participants to raise emotive points or refer to distressing experiences which may well impact on them and the researcher, in ways that were initially not anticipated. Robertson (2000) discusses her surprise in relation to how she was affected by her research participants' personal stories of bulimia as she had suffered with the same issue some time before embarking on the research project. Thus, subjects in the social sciences that are considered 'sensitive' or 'touchy' (Walby, 2010) bring with them an ethical and moral responsibility for the researcher to be mindful of who and what is being studied (Lee & Renzetti, 1990). Whilst bearing in mind that almost any topic can be considered sensitive, it is widely considered that research that attempts to explore the personal and private aspects of people's lives has more of a potential to elicit greater anxiety than, perhaps, attitudes towards wallpaper versus paint (Lee & Renzetti, 1990). In Western society, there is a level of embarrassment in respect of discussing one's own sex and sexuality despite the fact that sex seems pervasive in contemporary society (Tarzia, Bauer, Fetherstonhaugh, & Nay, 2013). Therefore, considering that I was inquiring into the lives of bisexual women in monogamous relationships, it was highly likely that we would discuss sensitive subjects. Researching *'delicate kinds of research'* (Bar-On, 1996, p. 20) can be challenging because, often, participants discuss sensitive aspects of their personal experiences and this can pose many ethical considerations (Lavis, 2010).

The first stage in the research process was to obtain ethical approval from the University of Huddersfield's School Research Ethics Panel (SREP). I ensured that I furnished all participants with as much information as possible, both prior to consenting to take part and continually throughout the research process. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any point up to the writing up of the data. In line with the British Psychological Society's Code of Conduct, and the ethical principle of respecting participants, I ensured that I *'recorded processed and stored confidential information in a fashion designed to avoid inadvertent disclosure'* (p. 11). This was done by ensuring to lock away material containing participants recorded data as well as securely storing all hard copy material such as participants' photographs, consent forms and hand written diaries. After submission of the PhD, the data will continue to be securely stored until such time it is responsibly destroyed.

Data collected through the interviews was coded to ensure that participants' identities were not revealed to anyone. For example, pseudonyms were applied to transcripts at the point of transcription and as such only myself as the researcher is aware of the true identity of each participant. Other academics, such as my supervisors, have had access to the coded interviews however participants were identified by a pseudonym. A small selection of the recordings were transcribed by a professional transcriber who was bound by the same rules of confidentiality as myself. In these cases the transcriptions were edited by the researcher to ensure that the identity of the participants was not revealed in the transcripts. For example, I informed my participants that I would refer to them in the interview by their pseudonym in the event that the transcription was not performed by myself. The pseudonym attributed to participants will be used in any publications arising out of the research.

One method used in the collection of the data required participants to take photographs of people, places and objects. This may have resulted in photographs that are linked to identifiable people or places. Photographs that contain images that would enable any individual to be recognised required participants to sign a consent form before the image can be used in the research. In cases where the photographs did not contain images of people, participants were still required to sign a consent form agreeing to the use of the images in research and publications associated with the research. I have chosen to obscure the faces of all those individuals whose faces appear in a photograph in a bid to further anonymise the identity of those who the participants photographed.

Whilst I envisaged there being minimal risk of psychological harm to participants, in the event of them becoming distressed I did advise them, prior to the interviews, that I would provide them with appropriate sources of psychological support such as the LGBT+ switchboard helpline if they felt it would be welcomed. In relation to my own safety throughout the research process, it was relatively innocuous in that I did not physically meet with my participants thus I did not feel I needed to put any measures in place to keep myself physically safe. I used a work phone when I conducted my telephone interviews so I did not give out my personal phone number. Throughout the collection of data, I was mindful to pay attention to any potential effects on me personally. The reason for this is that I consider myself to be a part-insider into the topic under investigation, and, as such, I anticipated relating to many of the things participants would discuss. I endeavoured to remain professional and empathic at every stage of the research process. On such occasions where I felt emotionally affected by a story or a personal experience my participants shared, I took the opportunity to discuss my feelings with my Director of Studies which helped me enormously.

5.6 Reflections

I was struck by the enthusiasm with which participants engaged with the research process as it progressed. They commented on how happy they were to participate and expressed how much they were looking forward to doing it. This level of enthusiasm was something that I had not seen expressed in the early stages of the research. It could be argued that one reason for the apparently increased levels of commitment to the research reflected the way in which the agenda shifted towards participants having more control over proceedings.

Opportunities arose with all participants, after the telephone interviews had finished, for us to talk in general terms about the research and the process of interviewing over the telephone. In some ways this provided a sense of closure to the data collection phase of research process. However, it also reminded me of the constraints inherent in interview settings when some of the participants commented after the audio recorder had been turned off that they did not want to mention a particular point in the interview for one reason or another but were glad that they could mention it to me ‘off the record’. This relatively short period after the formal interview had finished seemed to create a more relaxed atmosphere for participants, and some took the opportunity to return to specific issues that they had raised in the interview. The fact that some participants wanted to talk to me about aspects of their sexual identity ‘off the record’ reinforces the view that the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data must be approached with some degree of caution. From my perspective, the interviews were relaxed and informal, but some of the participants were clearly guarded in the extent to which they were willing to disclose personal information that could possibly seep out into the public domain, albeit in a form that would not have their real names attached to any data. Perhaps some of their concerns may have arisen because bisexual communities - such as BiCon - are quite small and tight knit so that individuals could be identified from small pieces of information even though real names were not attached. This experience also highlighted for me the challenges faced by researchers dealing with sensitive topics (I talk in more depth about this in chapter 8).

Some research advocates the use of member checking (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Carlson, 2010) as a way of validating the interpretations being made of the data. There is no doubt that this is useful in specific contexts, such as, funded NHS research exploring patients' experiences of a particular service (see, for example Doyle, (2007) and Walby & Luscombe, 2016). The point here is that the research is focused on making recommendations to an organisation which may involve changes to the ways in which they operate. The participants in the research will be stakeholders in the organisation and will be either reflecting on their experiences as recipients of services or providers of a service. In such research it is important to ensure that participants' views about their experiences are accurate. For example, if they express dissatisfaction with something it is important to ensure that any interpretation of their dissatisfaction is reported accurately and in the manner in which they intended. In other words, the role of the researcher is to ensure that participants' views are represented in a form they agree with. This approach was considered but, on reflection, it became clear that member checking is not consistent with Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenological position and in particular his views on the nature of a 'text' (as outlined in the previous chapter). The text becomes something that is open to multiple interpretations. As a researcher, I will bring my own history and thinking to the text in the process of interpreting it. It is highly likely that my interpretation will be different from that of other researchers and of the participants themselves. The question then becomes: 'how can I justify my interpretation'? Ricouer (1992) argues that the way in which I establish its validity is through the process of 'attestation'. Thus, there are no real truths as such, only interpretation. Each interpretation is judged on its own merits. The interpretations of the data presented in this thesis, as is the case with any interpretation, are open to challenge and their credibility rests on the extent to which the reader is convinced by the evidence provided. In relation to feedback from participants on my final interpretations of their data, I was clear that it was not appropriate in the context of the underlying epistemology.

The relationship between the diaries and the telephone interviews did have an aspect of feedback in them in that the diaries were used to inform the interview schedule. This was done for three reasons; firstly to develop a rapport with participants so we could talk about issues that we were both aware of. Secondly, there were some diary entries that were either ambiguous or unclear to me, so talking about them with participants enabled them to clarify what the diary entry was concerned with. Thirdly, there were some issues raised in the diaries that were of particular interest in relation to the research questions that I wanted the participants to talk about in more depth. In many cases, participants provided me with more context, or information, about their experiences and thinking at the time of writing about particular events.

Maintaining a rapport with participants occurred in different forms throughout the process, such as occasional emails. One of the unexpected ways in which rapport seemed to develop was when the recording device was switched off at the end of the interview. Participants would explicitly ask to talk 'off the record'[38] which provided an opportunity to share information on a confidential basis and develop a sense of mutual trust. Another way in which I sought feedback was in relation to interview style and technique. At the start of the research, I was relatively inexperienced in conducting research interviews so I requested feedback from one of the

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[38] For example some participants asked me to not explicitly refer to what they did for a living, or where they worked.

participants who was known to me. We have a friendship which, as far as I am aware, is not underpinned by any power imbalance, although I am mindful that inherently there exists a power differential in any relationship between the researcher, and the researched. I know that our relationship is a genuine friendship; thus if she had anything to say, be that critical or encouraging I believe she would have expressed it. I found this to be incredibly useful as she was able to point out a number of habits I fall into when I ask questions. For example, she alerted me to the way in which I assumed she knew what I was talking about, particularly when referring to potential lesbian signs and signifiers. On balance, I felt that this enabled me to refine my style of questioning, as she was in a position to advise me in relation to my approach. This served me well in my subsequent interview interactions with participants.

Chapter 6: Template Analysis

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a template analysis of the diary and telephone interview data into the lived experience of bisexual women, in either current monogamous relationships or those desiring a future monogamous relationship. This chapter has six sections each relating to selected themes. The first section includes themes related to appearance and the thought and considerations participants put into how they present themselves in the world. Next, I present a synoptic overview of the theme ‘fears of being out’ (FOBO). I pay particular attention to the sub-sections related to this theme in an attempt to present some consideration of what is at the heart of participants’ anxieties in respect of coming out as bisexual, or being in a same-gender relationship. I then turn my attention to the template theme of ‘queer hostility’, in order to show how bisexual women are often subject to unwelcome and unpleasant experiences from the queer community. I then concentrate on the sub-theme of ‘queer hostility if dating a man’ as participants raise concerns about the tensions they experience from the queer, and, or, more specifically the lesbian community if they are in a different-gender relationship. The next section concentrates on the subsequent effects that being in a monogamous relationship has in terms of visibility for participants, and includes the strategies a number of them carry out in order to render visible their attractions to people of the same and different-gender. In the penultimate section I discuss the template theme of ‘sex and attraction’ and provide a holistic examination of what participants find attractive in other people. I then concentrate on the theme of ‘desiring the different gender’ in an endeavour to draw attention to the way in which those in monogamous relationships often lament physically being with a person of a different gender to that of their current partner. I then outline the theme of ‘experiencing gender differences in relationships’ to illustrate the tangible differences participants cite when engaged in a different or same-gender relationship. Finally I provide a section outlining my concluding comments.

6.1.1 Selected themes

Although I constructed a comprehensive template which incorporated a number of strands not directly discussed in the overall analysis, they all provide an insight into the lived experience of participants. That being said, there were occasions when themes overlapped. However, I was not able to focus on all the themes that were identified in the template, instead I had to make a judgement in relation to what I considered were the most pertinent in respect of my research questions. My research aims are oriented towards the lived experience of bisexual women in monogamous relationships. However, one of my specific aims was to glean insight into the experiences of bisexual women in same and different-gender, monogamous relationships. This aim therefore enabled me to narrow my focus and select themes that illuminated this particular point. Thus, I believe that my chosen themes are instrumental in relation to my research aims specifically.

The first set of themes (see figure 6.1[39]) provide an insight into how participants put thought into how they look, and how that look might be decoded. Drawing from recognisable assumed gender and appearance markers, they can be observed to disrupt binary understandings of appearance. This strand of themes also illustrates the way in which participants problematise assumed appearance markers which are hinged on assumed sexual identity signifiers and to maintain an aspect of their identity through their appearance. Finally, this strand of themes illustrates how bisexual women make strategic decisions to adopt the relevant signifiers and appearance markers to suit their needs.

1.3 The 'look'

- 1.3.1 Queer 'look'
- 1.3.2 Straight 'look'
- 1.3.3 Bisexual 'look' (lack of)
- 1.3.4 BiCon 'look'
- 1.3.5 Breaking out of the 'look'
- 1.3.6 Chameleon

Figure 6.1: Template theme of the 'look'.

[39] Taken from final template (see figure 5.5)

The next set of themes I focus on (see figure 6.2[40]) relates to internal anxieties about disclosing one's bisexuality and the perceived subsequent ways in which that information is received by the lesbian and gay community more widely. Participants, in one guise or another reference being concerned about being out as bisexual or in a same-gender relationship to other, people in their life. Whilst research has investigated the impact that disclosure of one's sexuality is thought to have on the self (Scherrer, Kazyak, & Schmitz, 2015; McLean, 2007). Particular attention has been paid to the way in which disclosure and outing oneself as LGBT+ is understood to contribute towards a healthy, unified sexual identity. It is legitimate to suggest that the research related to bisexual women in monogamous relationships and their specific fears of coming out, are fairly thin on the ground. It is for this reason that I have chosen to pay attention to this issue in a hope to illuminate the particularities of what lies at the root of these women's fear of being out (FOBO).

2.1 Fears of being out (FOBO)

- 2.1.1 FOBO – to parents
- 2.1.2 FOBO – hurting the relationship
- 2.1.3 FOBO – past it
- 2.1.4 FOBO – relationship permanency
- 2.1.5 FOBO – at work

Figure 6.2: Template theme of 'FOBO'.

[40] Taken from final template (see figure 5.5)

The following themes of ‘queer hostility’ and ‘queer hostility – if dating a man’ (see figure 6.3[41]) relate to resentment, opposition, and disbelief, that participants experience in both the wider LGBT+ community, and more specifically, from lesbians if they are in a different-gender relationship. Whilst research has long since identified the ‘chilly climate’ (Hartman, 2006) that bisexual women face from lesbians, it is insightful to demonstrate the differences and similarities participants experience when they are in a same-gender or different-gender relationship, as well as the experiences of those who are currently single.

3.1 Hostility

3.1.3.1 Queer hostility

3.1.3.2 Queer hostility – if dating a man

Figure 6.3: Template theme of ‘queer hostility’ and ‘queer hostility – if dating a man’.

The following set of themes illustrate the unique ways in which bisexual women are rendered invisible by virtue of the fact they are in a monogamous relationship (see figure 6.4[42]). The gender of one’s partner plays an instrumental role in the experience of their invisibility. The theme of ‘keeping bisexuality alive’ is a concept that has been previously identified in the literature (Hartman-Linck, 2014; Hartman, 2013) and pertains to the things bisexual women do

[41] Taken from final template (see figure 5.5)

[42] Taken from final template (see figure 5.5)

whilst engaged in a monogamous relationship with a man to in effect, keep their bisexuality alive. Hartman (2013) and Hartman-Linck (2014) identified various strategies participants' did in an attempt to do this. Given that a portion of my participants were in same-gender, and different-gender relationships, as well as some who were currently single, I was able to highlight similarities and differences in connection with her research.

4.2.2 Keeping bisexuality alive 4.2.4 Hidden by the relationship

Figure 6.4: Template theme of 'monogamy struggles'.

The final set of themes (see figure 6.5[43]) were selected for analysis because they illuminate the ways in which participants have unique experiences in terms of their orientations and attractions to people of the same and different-gender. Participants' ascription of the category 'bisexual' was left to them. Thus, the identity label was not imposed upon them by virtue of the fact they did or did not have sexual experiences with people of the same and different-gender. Various researchers articulate the suggestion that bisexuals do not make up a homogeneous group of people, and that there exists more than one 'type' of bisexual (Labriola, 2015; Savin-Williams, 2005). The field of bisexuality is relatively young, therefore, further insight into individuals lived experiences related to both sex, and attraction is worthy of analysis. Regardless of the gender of the partners of participants, they can be seen to repine their desire for sex with someone else. The way in which participants identify a shift or change in their own sense of self, or on their direct

[43] Taken from final template (see figure 5.5)

behaviour, as a consequence of being in a relationship with a person of a different or same gender is striking.

4.3 Sex and attraction 4.3.2.1 Desiring the other gender 4.3.2.2 Experiencing gender differences in relationships

Figure 6.5: Template theme of ‘close attraction’.

6.2. The ‘look’

The following section of this chapter will focus on the template themes related to how participants attend to their appearance, both in relation to how they assume they are perceived by others, as well as the signs and signifiers they utilise in order to transmit particular coded sexual identity messages. Following on from the overarching theme of ‘word on the street’ (see figure 5.5), I identified a strand of themes related to appearance. I was able to break them down into six subordinate codes; ‘queer look’, ‘straight look’, ‘lack of a bisexual look’, ‘BiCon look’, ‘breaking out of the look’, and ‘chameleon’. Participants spent some time talking about the thought they put into the way in which they dressed and presented themselves to the world. It is useful to firstly briefly encapsulate participants’ thoughts in relation to these ‘looks’ (presented above) before focusing on the latter two themes of ‘breaking out of the look’ and ‘chameleon’.

The thread of appearance and how one dresses was of particular concern to all participants. The messages they took from how other people presented themselves appeared to be of daily interest to them. Participants were mindful of the potential messages that particular signs and signifiers presented through the clothes they wore, or the hairstyles they had etc. on other people. The lack of contemporary research in relation to ‘what a bisexual looks like’ is evident within the literature with the majority of papers focusing on women more broadly, be they lesbian or straight (Huxley, Clarke, & Halliwell, 2013; Rothblum, 2010; Clarke & Turner, 2007; Myers, Taub, Morris, Rothblum, 1999). Some research has suggested that lesbians are affected in relation to the dominant culture’s appearance norms in the same way as all women are (Taub, 1999), whilst other studies (Hayfield et al., 2014; Rothblum, 1994) have concluded that although lesbians are subject to cultural beauty norms they are somewhat reconceptualised within the wider lesbian community. Lesbians can be seen to be much more accepting than, for example, heterosexual women, of the different ways in which women choose to present their bodies to the world (Myers et al., 1999). Rothblum (1994) talks about how the beauty norms of the dominant culture are somewhat restrained for lesbians. This supports the suggestion that there are particular ways of being read as a lesbian which are different to that of a straight woman. This is further supported by Butler (1990) who argues that it is through the enactment of gender performances as typically either masculine or feminine that others come to an understanding of their own gender identity status.

The quotes below demonstrate how participants recognise that drawing from masculine appearance norms potentially marks them out as looking male,

> ***Paula:*** *'Opted for casual wear today to be comfortable. Huge rugby top and boyfriend jeans with big trainers . . . I probably could have passed for a lad today – well you know apart from the make-up & the blue glitter nails' [Diary: 236-241.D-G[44]].*

[44] 'D-G' represents a participant who is in a different-gender relationship. 'S-G' represents a participant who is in a same-gender relationship. 'S' represents a participant who is currently single and not in a relationship.

Alex: *'From the back, my short hair, oversized camo army jacket (I actually half-pinched it from the boyfriend, who never wore it), trainers… apparently it was enough to make me look like a guy myself!' [Diary: 98-102.D-G].*

In effect participants were able to identify four appearance positions. First, a heterosexual or straight appearance that was directly associated with the feminine, or femininity.

Rebecca: *. . . . me and my girlfriend look, both, both look quite straight. . . . we are quite girly' [Telephone interview: 171-172.S-G]*

Second, a stereotypical lesbian and/or queer appearance that was associated with an androgynous or masculine style.

Connie: '*Baggy jeans and Timberlands for dress down day. Feeling tired and full of cold so can't be bothered to make an effort, of course this means I'm rocking the stereotype that most people judge my sexuality on' [Diary: 2-5.S].*

Paula: *'I guess like I always feel that if I go out on a night out erm, if I go out with, I don't know, I've found myself more and more, especially since I broke up with Wayne erm, like wea, you know, wearing the, the, the, wearing the check shirt and the, and the chinos and…you know, erm, like I wear my hair in a quiff anyway…erm, because, because when er, I don't necessarily want to attract men…erm, so, … I guess, I guess there's, there's definitely signs' [Telephone interview: 323-334.S]*

Third, a theme that centred on the potentialities of what a bisexual person would look like. However, there was much less certainty in relation to this. Participants talked about the difficulties in identifying a bisexual, and when they did consider someone to be bisexual they took their cues from traditional lesbian appearance norms.

> ***SJ:*** *'Do you think there is an identifiable bi-look?*
>
> ***Connie:*** *No. No. . . . Absolutely not I guess that most bi women would not look like me' [Telephone interview: 250-259.S-G]*

> ***Lucy:*** *'I don't think there is a stereotypical bi-look' [Telephone interview: 895.D-G]*

> ***Jacky:*** *'. . . . like it is difficult expressing your bisexual identity in terms of clothes in spaces where whatever you wear is gonna be marked as either straight or lesbian' [Telephone interview: 912-914.S-G]*

Reflecting on her own situation, Paula questions how one can identify a bisexual.

> ***Paula: '****What does a bisexual look like? You have gay visual stereotypes; do you have bi visual stereotypes? When I'm with Wayne I look straight – I'm kissing a boy, holding hands with one hugging one – what does that say? Heterosexual relationship. Do I need to be wearing a checked shirt & Dr Martins to man up this straight image?' [Diary: 20-24.D-G]*.

As outlined the lack of a specific bisexual look is continually referenced by women in this research. The quotes above clearly encapsulate the problems that bisexuals face in respect of their attempts to create recognisable markers that signify their attractions to people of the same and different-gender. The gender binary is so pervasive that the application of items such as clothes, shoes, underwear, hairstyles, body art, and piercings are likely to be subsumed under the umbrella of the binary. Thus, ownership of a look which has not already been claimed by the giant identities of heterosexual and lesbian has yet to be fully actualised.

Fourth, participants who had experience of attending bisexual specific events such as BiCon cited a recognisable look from attendees, thus, it is this which underpins the theme of 'BiCon look',

Sarah: *'. . . . it's very gothy isn't it!' [Telephone interview: 868.D-G]*

Pippa: *'I would look out of place [at BiCon]. . .I went err it was full of Goths and really big women wearing corsets out of the Victorian times I think [laughs] comical really. . . two words boobs and black [laughs] yeah lots of boobs out and lots of heavy black Goth wear' [Telephone interview: 539-547.S-G]*

April: *'I have started to think that there is a definite bi scene which is quite different from the lesbian and gay scenes and there is a particular 'look' which again is very different from how lesbian (stereo) typically look – much more feminine usually. The scene seems to overlap a lot with the poly, kink and generally alternative scenes' [Diary: 286-292.D-G].*

> ***Lucy:*** *'. . . . if you end up going to BiCon and it does look like, it does look disproportionately that if you're bi you have to suddenly start investing in pan velvet…and a lotta lace [laughs]' [Telephone interview: 1040-1044.D-G]*

Participants can be seen to point out how bisexuals who attend BiCon specifically draw from other groups in relation to how they look. The reference of a style of appearance which is most closely associated with Goth culture is not a surprising finding. Both in the current research and Hayfield et al's., (2014) research bisexual women who attend BiCon and/or bisexual specific events can be seen to utilise the appearance norms of alternative sub-groups in society, more specifically a 'Goth' aesthetic. 'Goth' can be viewed as a subculture that is understood to be focused on the *'darker side of life and death'* (Goulding, Saren, Maclaran, & Follett, 2004, p. 3). Goths are understood to be particularly interested in the mythical vampire Dracula whose sexuality is considered questionable because he (alongside vampires in general) does not differentiate on grounds of sex and gender in relation to whose blood is sucked. Thus, the assumed similarities between bisexuals and such a subcultural identity has been shown to be a site where individuals can blur the boundaries of gender and sexuality and instead express a more perhaps androgynous image (Goulding et al., 2004). Wilkins (2008) suggests that embodying a 'Goth' image is a positive way in which to perform one's authentic self. However, whilst this is both insightful and useful, it does support the view that bisexuals do not have a specific image or appearance of their own which is unique to them.

It is important to point out that in relation to appearance, I am mindful that the extremes some attendees go to in relation to what they wear at BiCon may not be representative of how they present themselves in their day-to-day lives. However, participants confirmed that from their experience, there was a palpable appearance norm in relation to BiCon attendees, which was one most closely associated with Emo or Goth sub-culture. A number of participants appeared put off attending the event in the future primarily because of the BiCon look,

> ***Pippa:*** *A friend of mine asked me if I wanted to go to BiCon with him – I went with him a few years ago but I only stayed one night because it was really not my thing. Seems to me it's a place where Goths can have weird sex with each other [Diary: 124-127.S-G]*

> ***SJ:*** *So BiCon then, what, what was your experience of BiCon?*
>
> ***Sarah:*** *Oh it was, some of it was kinda scaring the clothes Oh and off putting to be honest…[Telephone interview: 304-307.D-G]*

BiCon prides itself on being a place where individuals are accepted for who they are as long as they respect the boundaries set out in the code of conduct document (see appendix 5). Clearly, the quotes above illustrate the importance of appearance in respect of feeling as though one fits in with people and the surroundings. Those who attend BiCon for the first time perhaps may feel too starkly part of the out-group (Allport, 1954; Castano, Yzerbyt, Bourguignon, & Seron, 2002) in respect of appearance norms. Consequently, they may conclude that BiCon is not inclusive of them. Ricoeur's (1992) concept of emplotment is a useful tool to utilise here to develop an understanding related to why people say the things they do. For example, why have participants chosen to employ this specific language in this particular way as opposed to utilising alternative language? Events that are emploted result in a particular narrative, such as the quotes above are testimony to. It appears that participants are attempting to understand the world through their own frame of reference. BiCon is an event that not all my participants were familiar with, however once experienced, they begin to develop an understanding related to how BiCon operates, as well as how people present themselves aesthetically. Encapsulated in Pippa's quotes above are her attempts at understanding how this 'world' of BiCon maps onto the world she occupies. Gadamer (1979) also provides a useful framework with which to understand how individuals living conterminously alongside each other, as well as being differentially influenced culturally and politically, attempt to navigate the world around them. His concept of 'fusion of horizons' is helpful in articulating how one brings their life-world to any situation and endeavours to merge their specific understandings alongside others unique understandings of the world. Therefore a BiCon look conceptualised in this way relates to how people engage in the process of ‘other[ing]’. Ricoeur would argue that this is done because the ‘scene’ does not fit into what he frames as the individual’s concept of the ‘good life’. In effect, being confronted with a world one does not expect, nor considers appropriate for them, results in the practice of distancing oneself from the event or situation.

As mentioned above, two further substantive themes emerged from the template which encapsulates what I suggest is at the heart of the overarching theme of the ‘look’ for participants, that of ‘breaking out of the look’ and ‘chameleon’. It is useful to deal with these themes together. Whilst they are different in terms of what lies at the root of their construction, they can also be seen to influence one another.

6.2.1 Breaking out of the ‘look’

All participants agreed that in general, lesbians were identifiable by certain markers related to masculine or butch appearance norms. And whilst this is a rather one dimensional view of lesbian appearance norms, it is the one that is most referenced by participants and the one that is most reconstituted in society (Huxley et al., 2013; Huxley, Clarke, & Halliwell, 2011). Often participants refer to how images shown of lesbians that go against the stereotype of ‘butch’ is welcome.

> ***Rebecca:*** *‘Programmes like the L-word where you’ve got all these stunning women with long hair that don’t look, you know, they’re all professionals and stuff, they’re not that typical stereotypical…lesbian. . It’s freeing’ [Telephone interview: 641-645.S-G]*

I chose to title the subordinate theme, ‘breaking out of the look’ because I identified that the majority of participants who were in same-gender relationships referenced a desire to not look like a stereotypical lesbian.

> ***Pippa:*** *'I don't go for all the usual lesbian ways of looking. I wear glam type feminine clothes and lots of make-up. I wear my hair and nails LONG. I hate the 'lesbian' look of short hair, no make-up bushy eyebrows . . . it isn't how I see myself and it certainly isn't something I would find attractive in a woman' [Diary: 179-183.S-G].*

> ***Kate:*** *'I know Winnie prefers me with shorter hair but that's not part of it, I'm not growing it because I feel any different about her. I quite like the fact that it doesn't fit in with the stereotype of a woman in a relationship with a woman' [Diary: 39-42.S-G].*

> ***Rebecca:*** *'A couple of people couldn't believe that I was with a women. Seems I am too femme' [Diary: 85-87.S-G].*

Participants who were in different-gender relationships can be seen to largely acknowledge that the way in which they present themselves through what they wear fits into more lesbian markers of appearance.

> ***Amelia:*** *'. . . . if I'm dressed in a more, I don't think I dress bu, very butch or anything but…if, in that, in slightly more towards that direction and I think, then I do wonder what people think…of what our relationship is…because of those kinda stereotypes' [Telephone interview: 402-410.D-G]*

> ***Sian:*** *'. . . . I think I'm probably generally quite sort of slightly butch……you know, I don't often wear a skirt……erm, you know, my*

general day-to-day wear is jeans and a t-shirt……erm, my hair for a long time was cropped very very short' [Telephone interview: 662-6645.D-G]

This is a most interesting finding in that I suggest it provides a thought-provoking insight into the lives of participants in that they all spend time discussing their appearance and what it might say about them. Participants acknowledge that there are problems in the application of such assumptions based on what one looks like. However, similarly to Hayfield's (2013) participants, the women in my research utilise the same stereotypic appearance markers in an attempt to identify themselves and others as not heterosexual. However, in the current research, there is a clear attempt by those in same and different-gender relationships, through the performance of their appearance to problematise both the gender and sexuality binary, despite the fact they draw from traditional appearance signifiers.

The difference in relation to how those in same-gender relationships and those in different-gender relationships wish to look and, as a consequence, be read, demonstrates issues around visibility. Underpinning this contention around visibility are issues in respect of being in a monogamous relationship. In relation to the theme discussed above, women who identify as bisexual whilst also practicing monogamy are taken for either identifying as straight or lesbian. One of the most practical ways in which to perhaps disrupt this assumption is to subvert such assumptions and choose appearance signs and signifiers which detract from ones assumed identity based on the gender of one's partner. It is also plausible, perhaps, to suggest that women in same-gender relationships may feel less pressure and therefore, feel less constrained to signify their bisexuality, precisely because they are in a same-gender relationship. As such, participants may feel able to select from traditional feminine markers of appearance as their relationship status acts as the same-gender signifier, and as such alerts others to consider alternative sexual identity positions, if not bisexuality specifically. Whilst for those in different-gender relationships the same cannot be said, and as such they may feel a greater urge to signal their bisexuality to others, in effect illuminating their same-gender attractions through the performance of their appearance.

6.2.2 Chameleon

Often, participants referenced a bisexual person's ability to move between binary appearance norms. This is why I chose to title the following subordinate theme 'chameleon', as this illustrates how participants have the ability to morph into alternate ways of presenting themselves depending upon the situation or context they find themselves in. Having said that the ability to do this depends on participants actively making strategic decisions to do so.

> ***Eve:*** *'. . . . we are kind of like under the radar, sometimes…we look like lesbians and sometimes we look straight…you know' [Telephone interview: 773-775.S-G]*

> ***Paula:*** *'I've got a bit of a crush on one of the trainees at school, [where paula is training to be a teacher] he's a, he's male…erm, and I find, on some days I will, I will dress quite effeminately erm, if I'm, if I know that I'm gonna be spending a lot of time in his company…erm, because I want to feel a bit, you know, a bit flirty and a bit attractive to men…erm, whereas if I'm like, say I'm with my rugby girls. . . I will be more, tomboyish, masculine in my appearance' [Telephone interview: 153-167.S]*

Although Paula directly references being chameleon-like in relation to appearance, her quote below, suggests that this can be tiring and perhaps labour intensive,

> ***Paula:*** *'[sighs] it's a bit, it's a bit like being a chameleon…in a way…erm, like, you know, when I'm with straight people I'm a bit more straight' [Telephone interview: 1466-1471.S]*

Overwhelmingly, irrespective of the gender of their current partner, participants reference the theme of 'chameleon'. Perhaps because they identify as bisexual and have had meaningful relationship experiences with people of the same and different-gender, they feel more fluid in respect of how they look. It could also be the case that they feel less pressured to steadfastly occupy traditional binary appearance norms as they can, and do, select styles from each. This ability is perhaps one of the most interesting and positive aspects of identifying as bisexual. That is not to suggest that women of all sexual orientations and identities do not also subvert expected appearance norms, as of course they do. However, I suggest that participants in the current research feel less constrained to commit to one style of appearance projection. That being said, in the quote above, Paula's *'sigh'* intimates that switching-up appearance norms does not come without a certain amount of effort on her part. Therefore it may be the case that moving between binary appearance norms brings its own pressures.

Ricoeur acknowledges that meaning is created through interaction and, as such, stereotypic recognitions are fashioned through the interplay between people, such as butch and femme appearance markers. Paradoxically, the ability participants have to choose from the binary of masculine and feminine appearance norms can be seen to contribute towards their invisibility by being presumed lesbian or straight. Consequently, this amplifies the difficulties associated with occupying a bisexual specific appearance, and by extension, an identifiable community. Perhaps, because participants have a good understanding of what is expected appearance-wise from those in heterosexual and lesbian communities, they are able to strategically select their 'looks' as a way in which to signal to others that they firstly, belong to the group, or identify with the community, and secondly, as part of a safety mechanism. Participants can feel comfortable and safe in the knowledge that they have not drawn negative attention to themselves. Participants discussed how they were assumed to not be a lesbian, if they appeared too femme, and were subject to invasive comments related to the legitimacy of their identity. Thus, to draw attention to oneself in LGBT+ spaces can invite suspicion (Hartman, 2006).

Rebecca: *'. . . . you almost have to sort of show a public display of affection to say, yeah I'm in your club' [Telephone interview: 175-188.S-G]*

Jacky: *'Join the protest in London. Nearly get kettled. Feel very glad not to be visibly queer, can avoid the police so much more easily' [Diary: 141-143.S-G]*

Those in different-gender relationships referenced how when they went to gay LGBT+ bars and clubs they took more care in relation to the clothes they wore so that they would be more likely to be perceived as a lesbian and, as such, fit in with the environment.

Honor: *'I think occasionally when I've been with women I'm … I've, I've actually kind of dressed down slightly erm…half the time I think it's probably from their pressure without even realising just sort of, you know, well why, like we're going to a gay club, you're gonna look kind of outta place' [Telephone interview: 550-556.D-G]*

The quotes above demonstrate how bisexual women are made to feel somewhat inauthentic both in relation to how they are perceived by the LG+ community as well as the pressures they feel they have to conform to. Interestingly, those in different-gender relationships are much more likely than those in same-gender relationships to alter their appearance in line with expected gender norms. For example, participants discuss how they put thought into presenting themselves as feminine, particularly if they were meeting up with their male partner.

Paula: *'I decided that I really wanted to throw myself into the date & dress up a little bit for him. This morning before work, I styled my hair* *differently. Softer & girlier than it had been in previous weeks. I wore a blue & white strappy floaty (hello cleavage) top & I put on some mascara & eyeliner on. The girlier I feel the happier I am to play it straight' [Diary: 206-211.D-G].*

Sian: *'On my way to Brighton now, to visit my partner, and I'm a bit dressed up (stockings, skirt, corset), noticing some looks from other (male) passengers' [Diary: 90-92.D-G].*

Similar to participants in Taub's (1999), Huxley et al's., (2011) and Hayfield's (2013) research, these women reference an awareness that a certain amount of feminine dress-up is expected from women who are in different-gender relationships. None of the participants who were in same-gender relationships reference a desire to conform temporarily to a lesbian appearance or style.

Perhaps it can be psychologically difficult for bisexual women to know how to present themselves in the world when they are in a monogamous different-gender relationship? Participants in my research can be seen to discuss these issues in the context of their intimate relationships with some feeling that, by presenting themselves as non-feminine, and drawing from presumed lesbian appearance norms, they are able to, at least in some part, be read as not-heterosexual. Participants do not explicitly state that they wish to be read as lesbian, but they can be seen to want to problematise the binary construction in this respect. One way in which they are potentially able to do this is to directly queer their appearance

Paula: *'I wear my hair in a quiff because it feels more masculine that way & a little bit quirky' [Diary: 16-17.D-G].*

Bisexual women who are in monogamous same-gender relationships may, too, face similar pressures to conform to presumed lesbian appearance norms. However, the fact that they are in essence visible, at least psychologically if they are not out to others, perhaps lifts the pressure on them to perform this fact through their appearance signifiers, because in essence they are externalising it through their intimate relationship. Participants in my research clearly consider the choices they have in relation to how they want to look and present themselves to those around them. Bearing in mind that not all participants are out as bisexual (see appendix 4 for participant pen sketch) to everyone in their lives, may well result in some consideration in relation to how they want to be read in particular contexts. Participants may want to avoid questions about their sexual identity which would put them in situations where they might feel uncomfortable. Thus, the ability to draw from dominant heterosexual feminine appearance norms could be understood to serve a pragmatic function for them. For example, Pippa has not disclosed her sexual identity to her work colleagues, or her family. Perhaps norms of femininity therefore are felt to still be in useful operation. Given that there are recognisable lesbian appearance signs, those women in same-gender relationships who have not disclosed their same-gender attraction or relationship, might feel the added pressure to not 'give the game away as it were'. One of the criticisms levelled at bisexual women who are in different-gender relationships is the assumed heterosexual privilege they have access to by virtue of their relationship status. Thus, the avenue appears to be open for them specifically to both queer and heteronormalise their appearance. However, as we can see above, bisexual women in same-gender relationships also engage in switching up their look, demonstrating an issue with Miller's (2006) concept of 'do[ing]' gender. Drawing from Goffman's (1971) work on performance and identity, Miller argues that bisexuals are unable to perform their bisexuality because of the way in which sexuality is conceptualised in binary terms. Consequently one can perform either heterosexual or homosexual only. The flexibility in terms of the choices women make in respect of their appearance, positions these bisexual woman as chameleon like, in that they can, and do move between gendered constructions of what is considered both feminine and masculine.

6.3 In/out/in/out shake it all about

The next section of this chapter will focus on the overarching template theme of 'In/out/in/out shake it all about'. Specifically I present a strand of themes I have called 'fears of being out' (FOBO) in an attempt to show how participants' fears of being out to other people are steeped in a myriad of considerations, both for themselves and for others.

6.3.1 FOBO

The theme of FOBO was prominent in all data accounts. Participants referenced a number of perceived barriers to disclosure, and lamented the impact that disclosing their sexual identity might have on other people. Participants were mindful of the fact they were ‘in’ to some people, and ‘out’ to others based on the gender of their partner. Often the inaccurate identity label afforded to participants was experienced by those in same-gender relationships as though they were ‘out’ as not heterosexual. However, by failing to clarify their attractions to people of the same and different-gender, they effectively remained ‘in’. Often, this misappropriation caused some participants anxiety, and guilt, as well as in some cases relief, particularly in respect of not having to engage in discussions related to their identity. Those in different-gender relationships faced similar dilemmas, although they wrestled with more overt issues in relation to invisibility. Sub-sections, or threads, of FOBO were identified across the data and appeared to form clear clusters of potential explanations related to why participants felt uneasy and, or, anxious about being out as bisexual and or, letting other people know the gender of their partner. These were ‘FOBO - to parents’, ‘FOBO - hurting the relationship’, ‘FOBO - past it, FOBO - relationship permanency’, and FOBO - at work (see figure 6.6[45]).

2. In/out/in/out shake it all about 2.1 Fears of being out (FOBO)   2.1.1 FOBO – to parents

[45] Taken from final template (see figure 5.5)

2.1.2 FOBO – hurting the relationship

2.1.3 FOBO – past it

2.1.4 FOBO – relationship permanency

2.1.5 FOBO – at work

Figure 6.6: Template theme of ‘in/out/in/out shake it all about’.

6.3.2 FOBO: to parents

Participants, irrespective of the gender of their partner or whether they were currently single, referenced a FOBO to someone in their life. Some participants talked about a FOBO to their parents

Sian: *‘I never came out to my parents. I’m not sure why, but I get the impression that they simply wouldn’t understand’ [Diary: 263-265.D-G].*

Alex: *‘I haven’t told my parents . . . . so as far as they know I’m a nice normal person who only knows one gay person’ [Telephone interview: 450-451.D-G]*

Pippa: *‘. . . . I am not out to my parents . . . . They wouldn’t accept it and I don’t feel able to broach it . . . they know I’ve been married so it would be too much of a, it would just be too much of a mind melt to go through that. . . I think it’s, they would see it as like, you know aren’t you a bit old to be doing stuff like that you’re married you’ve got kids blah blah blah so why would you be coming out with that’ [Telephone interview: 178-444.S-G]*

6.3.3 FOBO: hurting the relationship

On the whole, participants were out to their current partners as bisexual, however, those who were currently single, referenced experiences of previous partners, particularly men, sexualising their identity. This led them to rethink the utility of disclosing their bisexuality to potential partners too soon.

> ***SJ:*** *'When it comes to a relationship, you know, you are, you…feel it's important to say straightaway look I'm bi…*
>
> ***Caitlin:*** *Well, I tried it. I don't know now. That's the, it's a bit confusing 'cos I, I've sort of with the, the females I've had like a couple of slightly different experiences where one was fine about it…the other one wasn't quite fine about…it, erm, well she, she's reckoned to be fine but I kind…of felt an undercurrent, you know…erm, and then with the, the guy that I told, he, he was sort of er, erm, sort of quite jovial about it, you know like…they turned you into this sex god sort of…thing, but then he seemed to withdraw his interest [laughs]' [Telephone interview: 915-933.S]*

Jacky recounts advice given to her single friend, in respect of not disclosing her bisexual identity in the future for fear of insulting their partner.

> ***Jacky:*** *'A single friend had been told …that they shouldn't, that when they're in a partnership they shouldn't identify as bisexual, if they're with a woman they should identify as lesbian and if they're with a man they should identify as straight…because to identify as bisexual even in their heads is insulting to their partner' [Telephone interview: 1505-1512.S-G]*

These quotes signify the consideration bisexual women put into disclosure. Whilst all participants are out as bisexual to their current partners, it does perhaps illustrate how participants initially examine the potential impact that disclosing their attractions for people of the same and different-gender may have on the future of a relationship. Clearly they are mindful of the assumptions and expectations that are held about them prior to disclosure. This resonates with Orne's, (2011) research which identifies that decisions to disclose one's non-heterosexuality are done with particular considerations in mind, such as the context and the attitudes of the individual being potentially disclosed to.

6.3.4 FOBO: at work

A number of participants, irrespective of the gender of their partner, discussed how disclosure of their sexual identity would have perceived consequences in a workplace context. From a developmental perspective, coming out and informing others of one's LGBT+ status is thought to positively contribute towards self-acceptance of one's minority sexual identity (Raggins, 2004, Cass, 1979). Despite this assertion, research has shown that there are other variables to consider in relation to disclosure, particularly if one feels their identity will not be supported (Legate et al., 2012 Deci & Ryan, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In relation to being out in the workplace, bisexuals do face discrimination (Barker et al., 2012). Research has shown how bisexuals are more likely to remain in the closet at work compared to their lesbian and gay colleagues (Hunt, & Fish, 2008). Chamberlain's (2009) research found that bisexuals did report feeling discriminated against. Chamberlain's (2009) participants talked about how colleagues drew on stereotypical notions of what bisexuality was, referring to bisexuals as *'untrustworthy'* or *'indecisive'* (p. 7).

Participants who took part in the current research often reflected on the workplace and lamented thoughts in relation to the impact being out would have on them.

Lucy: *'Work is dull . . . . Of course, i couldn't have a goal for planning BiCon!! Not that my boss knows about that! I do wonder whether to tell him, but then i am worried about telling people at work. Work is so terribly heteronormative and i worry that it would affect things there' [Dairy: 62-68.D-G].*

Pippa: *'Was at work today having a coffee with a few of the guys on my team who were discussing a colleague on another team. She has recently changed her surname and double barrelled it to incorporate her female partner's surname. I don't know her really but apparently she used to be married to a man. They couldn't stop themselves from wondering out loud if her husband knew she was a lesbian. Who knows if she is a lesbian!!! Clearly it's more palatable and believable than bisexual to this lot. What's worse is one of the people discussing her was her manager. This is why I am not coming out at work – no way' [Diary: 168-177.S-G].*

Caitlin: *'My senior manager at work is a lesbian and married/has a civil partnership with another lady. Granted my manager has a boyish look about her but the attitude of some people towards her (behind her back) is awful! I am glad I am not out at work' [Diary: 92-96.S].*

Those who had disclosed their bisexual identity status at work could identify times when colleagues specifically engaged in homophobia, or used bi-negative language, which resulted in them feeling marginalised.

> ***Sian:*** *'I 'came out' to one of my colleagues today, when he asked me why I was so interested in LGBT issues. This annoyed me for a few reasons, mostly the assumption that if someone is interested in LGBT then they must be L, G, B or T. He seemed genuinely confused as to why (as he saw it) a straight woman in a happy relationship would be getting upset over LGBT issues. He annoyed me even more with his response, however. As soon as I said 'Well, I am bisexual myself' he asked me whether I'd had gay relationships, or 'just slept with other girls'' [Diary: 121-130.D-G].*

The quotes above highlight the anxiety participants have in relation to coming out as bisexual at work. Despite the fact that, more recently, there have been a number of discussions in relation to tackling both homophobia and biphobia in the workplace (Chamberlain, 2009) participants clearly experience genuine concerns about the workplace knowing they identify as bisexual. Research has identified the importance of context in relation to disclosing sexual identity (Legate, et al, 2012; Deci & Ryan, 2012). The importance of feeling safe is paramount for those who hold non-normative sexual identities. Thus, participants perhaps engage in what could be considered concealment strategies as a strategic way in which to protect themselves against potential negative impacts on their sense of self. This is coupled with a concern in relation to the effects on them personally should they disclose their sexuality, particularly in respect of their future job prospects and promotion opportunities (Raggins et al., 2007). The anxiety related to others finding out the 'truth' of their sexual identity and the tension that some participants feel in relation to keeping that fact hidden from others appears to be an uncomfortable space to occupy.

> ***Pippa:*** *'. . . . I keep my lady loving secret from those at work because I guess I don't want them to start gossiping. I think they wouldn't take me seriously if they knew' [Diary: 97-99.S-G].*

6.3.5 FOBO: relationship permanency

Some participants hypothesised that if they were in a same-gender relationship that they deemed was enduring, stable, and secure they would be more likely to out themselves or their relationship to their parents or loved ones.

> ***Caitlin:*** *'. . . . the relationship was, it, it was a bit of an on/off …and I, I, I think if I'd've stayed with her, the person…then, then it would've been a consideration. But 'cos things were sort of on/off…I, I, I didn't feel I was, it was the right time to…sort of say anything…you know'* [Telephone interview: 536-575.S]

> ***Alex:*** *'. . . . If I was only attracted to women I would've had to like sit them down and, and tell them at some…point. And I feel a bit bad that I'm kind of whooshing out 'cos I'm married so I should be perfectly normal and…respectable, you know'* [Telephone interview: 531-537.D-G]

> ***Pippa:*** *'. . . . well If I felt that I would stay forever [laughs] whatever that means [laughs] with Leighanne I would tell my parents about her I guess I feel bad but I don't feel that you know . . . and erm so I don't think it's necessary to out myself at this time'* [Telephone interview: 451-455.S-G]

Those in different-gender relationships have been accused of accessing privileges on the basis of the gender of their partner. The majority of my participants are mindful of their ability to remain hidden as heterosexual to people in their lives. The tone of their acquiescence, however, is not without tension. The inherent invisibility of their sexual identity whilst in a different-gender relationship causes participants anguish. Pippa experiences the same tension in respect of disclosing her same-gender relationship. The importance Pippa places on not disclosing her relationship to particular people in her life could relate to her long-held heterosexual privileges (for example she acknowledges that her appearance marks her out as heterosexual). Pippa does not appear to be prepared to disclose her relationship unless, as her quote above suggests, she deems the relationship worthy of disclosure.

6.3.6 FOBO: past it

Other participants referenced how they felt they had reached a point in their life whereby they were too old to begin the process of coming out as bisexual to people in their life

> ***Caitlin:*** *'. . . . If I was younger…and sort of taking up on it so to speak…I may, I may do but I just feel that it's because I'm forty and er…you know I've, I've er, always been labelled as heterosexual.*
>
> ***SJ:*** *You, is it almost like you feel a bit, it's a bit too late for you?*
>
> ***Caitlin:*** *Yeah, yeah…to sort of come out, yeah [laughs]' [Telephone interview 487-498.S]*

> ***Pippa:*** *'. . . . well I just think at my age I know this sounds silly but at my age with my known relationship history it would be bizarre to people if I came out as not heterosexual. I think if I were starting out again and could go back in time I think I would of come out earlier when I was young but . . [Sighs] no no it's too late for me now I am content living two lives really I guess' [Telephone interview: 227-233.S-G]*

It appeared that the thread of FOBO was strong for all participants in one way or another. They all, on some level, spent time discussing this issue and how, in their day-to-day lives, this was a concern for some, and consideration for others, as it seemed to impact on other areas of their lives. The fundamental issue underpinning participants' FOBO is the expectation that upon disclosure there will be some form of negative judgement levelled at them. The specific concern participants express in relation to this is heightened by the fact that they start from the position of being involved in a monogamous relationship or desiring one in the future.

The question in relation to the authenticity of bisexuality has been discussed in the literature, with professed conceptualisations being something that one must be concurrently enacting, and as such bisexual women ought to be 'doing bisexuality' (Moss, 2012) to be recognised as bisexual. The fact that this is not the reality for women in the current research opens them up to a potential deluge of judgements rooted in existing misunderstandings of what it means to be bisexual. I suggest there is a tension between identifying as bisexual, and being in a monogamous relationship. Despite contestation, research has shown how monogamy is viewed as the most plausible, workable, traditional, and acceptable style of relationship practice in Western society (Green et al., 2016). Monogamy, coupled with bisexuality is understood as not possiblehowever, Moss (2012) discusses in her research[46] how this is conceivable by engaging in concurrent relationships with people of the same and different-gender. It is this conceptualisation which I suggest has permeated society's thinking in respect of how bisexual women carry out their relationships. It is no wonder that participants exhibit a range of anxieties related to being judged, because they are faced with common misguided stereotypic assumptions about how they live their relationship lives.

[46] Moss, (2012) references bisexual women who are married to men but are partnered with women also.

Wandrey, Mosack and Moore (2015) suggest that the potential backlash bisexual individuals face upon disclosing their bisexuality leads them to avoid coming out to people. It is plausible, perhaps, that participants are keen to maintain aspects of their identity which could potentially be reconceptualised by others, upon disclosure of their bisexuality. Rather like the Oscar Wilde character of Dorian Grey, participants wish to remain to be seen as they always were, particularly in the eyes of those they consider important for one reason or another. The quotes above specify that other people have particular types of knowledge about them in light of the fact that they are in, or were in, a monogamous relationship or have children. If these people were to have insight into their real sexual identity, participants would consider it too strenuous to manage. Effectively, conceptualising it as them harbouring a sexual orientation which does not relate to their partner explicitly. The consequences of such knowledge is perceived to be too challenging a conversation to have at this time.

Research carried out by Orne (2011) acknowledges that individuals utilise a number of tools to regulate how out they are to those around them. His participants engage in levels of what he terms, *'strategic outness'*, as a means by which they manage their sexual identity. Orne (2011) discusses how a range of concealment strategies are utilised in order to make this happen. Individuals differ in their displays of concealment strategies because they are influenced in different ways. For example, the background they come from, and the context they are in etc. In the current research, some participants do not wish to be out as bisexual to their parents, but are happy for their friends or work colleagues to know, and visa-versa. Thus Orne (2011) provides a pragmatic framework with which to conceptualise the different rationales articulated for their engagement in concealment strategies. In the quotes above, it is clear that both Caitlin and Pippa do not want their bisexual identity status to be known for different reasons. For Caitlin, it is underpinned by a desire to not be viewed as a joke by others. Whereas for Pippa, she primarily can be seen to want to avoid being the root of gossip, particularly at work.

Orne's (2011) concept of *'explosive knowledge'* (p. 692) is useful to consider here as he discusses how his participants referenced the potential explosive impact that such an identity disclosure would have on individuals, in effect, putting them off divulging their bisexual identity. As the quotes demonstrate above, participants do not welcome being seen in a different light as a result of disclosing their sexual identity. This fits into what Legate et al., (2012) call *'controlling environments'* (p. 145) in that disclosure is less likely to happen in environments or amongst people with whom one expects to act in predictable ways.

Research conducted by Hayfield et al., (2013) found that bisexual women in same-gender relationships disclose their identity more so than bisexual women in different-gender relationships, or bisexual women who are not in a relationship. Whilst this, in part, can be mirrored in the current research there does not seem to be an overly noticeable difference in respect of my participants. Irrespective of the gender of their partner some are out, some are not out, some are assumed to be a lesbian, and some are semi-out[47]. Participants weigh up the utility of coming out against a backdrop of other considerations, such that participants' lives intersect between work, family, partner, friends etc. culminating in them all considering concealment strategies at some point in various contexts.

6.4 Enduring the pain

Following on from the overarching theme of 'enduring the pain', I present two further sub-template themes of 'queer hostility' and 'queer hostility – if dating a man' (see figure 6.7[48]). A number of participants, irrespective of the gender of their current partner, referred to having experienced feelings of negativity directed at them from the queer community specifically. I

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[47] Semi-out refers to being out to family but not to work colleagues. Or being out at work but not family members. Or being out to friends but not to work colleagues or family members.

[48] Taken from final template (see figure 5.5)

suggest those in different-gender relationships are subject to a form of aggression. In that, their sexual identity is completely dismissed as irrelevant and, consequently, they are rendered invisible by the community with which they initially sought support and understanding from.

3. Enduring the pain 3.1 Hostility 3.1.3.1 Queer hostility 3.1.3.2 Queer hostility – if dating a man

Figure 6.7: Template theme of 'enduring the pain'.

6.4.1 Queer hostility

All participants could identify times, and situations whereby they experienced negativity from the LGBT+ community. For example, people not taking them seriously, because they either identified as bisexual or because it was known that they had a relationship history which included people of the same and different-gender.

> ***Pippa**: 'Lesbians I know who I have had relationships within the past really laughed at me when I told them that I am not a lesbian and that I know I am bisexual' [Diary: 9-11.S-G].*

> ***Sian:** 'Some of the most negative reactions I've come across have been from the, from the LG society……lesbian and gay……sort of social groupings……and by no means everyone obviously……no social group is the same but I've had the most sort of openly hostile receptions in that area' [Telephone interview: 136-146.D-G]*

Participants often referenced feeling some tension and marginalisation in LGBT+ settings,

Eve: *'I've experienced some gyp about my 'place' in the lesbian world since coming out as bi' [Diary: 85-86.S-G].*

Sian: *Oh I've, I've been called a, a lipstick lesbian quite a few times……so, you know, people saying that I, I've only ever gone out with women to titillate men' [Telephone interview: 151-160.D-G]*

Alex: *'. . . . even in LGBT groups, the B is so often ignored or erased' [Diary: 136-137.D-G]*

A number of participants felt disbelieved by those who were supposed to be part of a wider community of people all working towards the acceptance of different expressions of sexuality, and that, within queer communities, some sexualities were more valued than others

Sam: *'Pride is about to happen in my city and I am having debates with people over whether to attend as a bi woman with a man. I feel I don't belong' [Diary: 231-234.D-G].*

Amelia: *'Well the other day I picked up my flatmates' erm, Diva magazine ahm, and er, well they both describe themselves as dykes and erm, they, well I, I, I had a quick read through it and, 'cos that magazine says it's, it's for gay women but it's also for bisexual women…so I'm like okay, cool, I, I get included, that's good…and then erm, there was this article about erm, bisexuality and I thought, oh great, okay, brilliant…but erm, a lot of the article was about erm, there was one page* *full of readers comments and basically the majority of readers comments were like some day women who'd like been hurt by bisexual women…because of their curiosity or because like, you know, I was like oh, erm, and I could not, understand that but erm, dunno, I guess I was hoping for…something ahm, dunno, a bit more, affirmative [laughs]' [Telephone interview: 478-498.D-G]*

Cora: *'I've got a confession to make. Every time I go to pride and take a little survey for an equal opportunities promoter/Stonewall/Unite etc (usually to score a free pen), I tick the box that says 'lesbian'. Why? I fear I'll be judged for being at Gay Pride and not being a 'full-on' lesbian. It's silly but it makes a difference, makes me feel I belong a little more even though me and the rest of us belong in that homely third letter of 'LGBT'' [Diary: 133-140.S-G]*

The personal ramifications of the belief that one is not being listened to because their opinion, practice, or identity is perceived as not valid can be seen as a strategic way in which to further render invisible those who are attracted to people of the same and different-gender (Yoshino, 2000). The quotes above demonstrate the impact that such beliefs have on participants. The marginalisation of bisexual experience has been discussed within the literature (Eliason, 2000; Yoshino, 2000; Israel & Mohr, 2004, 2004; Fahs, 2009; Yost & McCarthy, 2012; Yost & Thomas, 2012; Chmielewski & Yost, 2013; Vrangalova, et al., 2014) and the majority of papers point to the negative effects that such constructions have on individuals (Hunt, & Fish, 2008; Kerr, & Emerson, 2003; Barker et al., 2012). Clearly the quotes above lead participants to feel as though they do not belong and as such, they feel they are not accepted.

The search for acceptance within the lesbian community specifically was referenced by the majority of participants in this research. This was perhaps more of a prominent issue for them at a time when they were acknowledging their same-gender attractions and/or seeking out a romantic partner. A number of sexual identity models reference the support to identity that association with others who hold the same non-normative sexual identity can have for individuals (Cass, 1979; Rust, 1992; Brown, 2002). Thus, the notion that communities can provide much needed respite from inhabiting a heteronormative world is welcomed (Sartwell, 2002). However, as the quotes above illuminate, acceptance from the lesbian community is not necessarily forthcoming to those who hold an 'unpopular identity' - in this case a bisexual identity. The quest for an inclusive lesbian community is perhaps, as Walker (2010) suggests, inaccessible to particular groups.

Ricoeur discusses the quest for recognition and how this is conceptualised as a basic human need (de Lange, 2014). The importance of this, in relation to self-esteem, is critical because he stresses the way in which validation of the self, through the other, fosters genuineness and an ability to build meaningful relationships. However, Ricoeur highlights a tension inherent within the need for recognition. Ricoeur suggests that to overly seek out recognition is to lead a fearful life, and that one must balance this against the pursuit for mutual recognition. For participants, to be respected and given the credence they feel they deserve, is vital. Nowhere can this be seen to be more important than in their intimate relationships.

The practise of monogamy can at times dupe same-gender partners of participants into thinking that their bisexuality is no longer relevant more so perhaps than bisexual women in different-gender relationships (Lahti, 2015). Lesbian cultural and ideological norms are critical of sexual and romantic desire for men specifically (Jeffreys, 2014b; Bindel, 2013). Bisexual women expressing their attraction to people of a different-gender supports the heterosexist assumption that bisexual women are, in fact, heterosexual (Hemmings, 2002). Bisexual women in same-gender relationships appear to deal with more accusations of inauthenticity, with expectations that they should identify as a lesbian.

> ***Eve:*** *'We used to have stupid arguments about how bisexuality 'doesn't exist' or I should stop calling myself bisexual now I was with her'*
> *[Diary: 158-160.S-G].*

> ***Cora:*** *'My current girlfriend used to be worried I'd run off with a boy but now she's convinced I'm a 'convert' to lesbianism' [Diary: 128-130.S-G].*

> ***Pippa:*** *'Although Leighanne is a gold star lesbian and has absolutely no interest in men . . . never has (despite her high heels and lip-stick☺) she wants me to stop calling myself bisexual because I am with her and gets irritated with me whenever call myself bi' [Diary: 184-188.S-G].*

The lesbian community have sought to build a cohesive and supportive environment away from the wider heteronormative world where they can both find and build strength and solidarity (Bindel, 2016; Ochs, 1996; Israel & Mohr, 2004). Historically there exists a tension in this community that involvement with bisexual women will only lead to betrayal, where no doubt at some point in the near future bisexual women will retreat back to heterosexuality when the 'going gets tough'. It is plausible to suggest that lesbians are therefore invested in conceptualising the sexual identity of their same-gender partner as lesbian in order to somehow protect themselves against the potentiality of such a situation arising. The sense of comfort and comradeship that women only spaces provide (Bindel, 2016) may make it difficult to continually reaffirm to one's same-gender partner one's attraction to people of a different-gender. Eve's quote below illustrates how despite the fact she has been in the same long-term monogamous same-gender relationship she continues to manage her partner's insecurities.

> ***Eve:*** *'. . . . so the main thing is just to kind of, you know, back-track a bit and say, look, you know, that it, me calling myself bi doesn't mean I'm, I'm going anywhere…and just remind her of that. Erm, and, you know, but it's difficult because, you know, it makes me feel angry that, you know, that this is still something that she [girlfriend] feels justified in kicking off about' [Telephone interview: 994-1003.S-G]*

Participants who are not currently in a relationship can be seen to reflect on their different-gender relationships, and identify that they, too, have experienced a level of hostility from their partners. However, it is in the form of sexualised references related to a potential that their bisexuality would provide some benefit to them.

> ***Caitlin:*** *'Strangely enough guys I have been with know that I have had a same sex relationship seem to find it a huge thrill!' [Diary: 113-115.S].*

> ***Honor:*** *'I've been in relationships with men before who have found it exciting that I've been with women' [Diary: 173-174.S].*

Participants, irrespective of the gender of their partner, at one time or another experience unpleasant hostile situations views or experiences as a result of occupying a bisexual identity. However, I suggest nowhere is this felt more acutely than from within professed LGBT+ communities.

6.4.2 Queer hostility if dating a man

The theme of 'queer hostility if dating a man' signifies those participants who are in current monogamous relationships with men, citing experiences whereby they felt prejudiced against because of the gender of their partner. Participants discussed how they felt a tangible hostility emanating from the lesbian community, specifically if they were in a different-gender relationship, compared to times when they were engaged in a same-gender relationship or were single.

> ***Sam:*** *'. . . . i first came out and I went out on the LGBT scene and stuff quite a bit and erm, and I felt I belonged and then I got together with a*

man, I felt like I didn't and then I felt like I experienced some biphobia at that point……I felt like it was swept under the carpet, as long as I was single or with a woman……and wasn't doing it in people's faces, which……you know, I was with a man, it was a bit more, it was a bit more threatening and I, and I did feel like I was erm, not welcome any more really, and I……I just, it made me feel really sad but . . . .if those spaces make me feel uncomfortable then I tend to walk away from them' [Telephone interview: 1038-1059.D-G]

Sian: *'When I was at uni I was involved with the LGBT society and i actually erm, was sort of thrown out of a couple of social of events after I started a long term relationship with a man because people basically turning round going well you're straight now……erm, and so there's just still echoes of that sometimes that get to me' [Telephone interview: 102-112.D-G]*

Pippa: *'. . . . it's really interesting because a lot of the lesbians I know fall hard, you know, fall really hard in love with bisexual women, but at the same time they can't stand bisexual women, it's like stay away from bisexual women, and they're like, obsessed with bisexual or straight women, it's a bit weird, but yeah, my experience has been lesbians tend to be quite negative about bisexuals, bisexual woman with a boyfriend in particular . . . . You know almost as though they fear them' [Telephone interview: 35-44.D-G]*

Connie: *'. . . . i obviously think that in the main if you are with a guy people just, just think it is, you know, you're just trying to pretend that* *you're not gay or something like that, it's, it's kinda that, particularly from the gay scene' [Telephone interview: 477-481.S-G]*

In the main, all participants acknowledge that they are considered with animosity, and viewed with suspicion from some lesbians specifically. Several participants attempt to conceptualise why that might be. Pippa considers such antipathy towards bisexual women as a response to them fearing a potential future emotional pain were they to get involved with one.

The hostility these bisexual women face from the lesbian community, particularly if they are in a relationship with a man is clearly palpable for participants. Research has, for some time, referenced the negativity bisexual women face from lesbian quarters (Feinstein et al., 2015; Dyar et al., 2014; Hartman, 2006; Rust, 1995). Taking on board the quotes presented earlier in relation to lesbian appearance norms, one can surmise that participants who present as single, or indeed women in general, are less likely to encounter hostility, negativity and suspicion from other lesbians if they look the part, and adopt markers that signify non-heterosexuality. It is safe to assume that these women are more likely to be assumed lesbian in the first instance, and whilst that can offer bisexual women a protective stance against the experience of hostility in lesbian communities, it does render bisexual women at best invisible, and at worst assumed to not exist.

As intimated above, invisibility has been demonstrated to have detrimental effects on the mental health of bisexual women (Bostwick et al., 2010; Brewster & Moradi, 2010; Barker et al., 2012; Balsam, & Mohr, 2007; Meyer, 2003). Although very few of my participants directly discuss the effects that encountering the type of hostility discussed above had upon their mental health, they can all be seen to on some level experience it. However, it is clear from participant accounts that the inference is that one is no longer bisexual when engaged in a monogamous relationship, particularly if it is with a man, seems pervasive.

Ricoeur draws our attention to the suggestion that without the other there is no self and as such; being content with one's sexual identity is rather inconsequential if there are no other people in the world to verify or deny our existence. For Ricoeur, the accusation that one does not exist in itself is an accusation of existence. The fact that one can be seen to self-reflect on the authenticity of one's bisexuality in the face of such claims of illegitimacy, for Ricoeur, only serves to further establish the truth of one's referential identity.

The level of censure faced by those bisexual women in different-gender relationships is acknowledged by those bisexual women who are currently in same-gender relationships,

> ***Kate:*** *'[Pride] is more relevant now I have been in a same sex relationship for so many years, I don't know how I would feel if I was in a different sex relationship, I guess I would feel a bit of an impostor' [Diary: 235-239.S-G].*

> ***Jacky:*** *'I think there's a lot more negativity from, from the lesbian and gay circles . . . you're kind of like letting down the sisterhood kind of…erm, by being with a man' [Telephone interview: 1027-1036.S-G]*

Whilst the women above are in same-gender relationships, they clearly understand that the lesbian community holds bisexual women to account for their decision to involve themselves in intimate relationships with men. Jacky conceptualises it above as being perceived as a betrayal. Clearly if these attitudes are to be found in lesbian communities then the likelihood that a bisexual women would draw attention to her sexual identity is low as she runs the risk of coming up against these kinds of attitudes. Participants who are in same-gender relationships, although on one level may feel accepted because they are in same-gender relationships, they, as intimated above, may choose not to reference their attractions to people of a different-gender in lesbian spaces or communities, in order to avoid facing potential negativity and prejudice. Research has shown how it is not unusual for bisexual women to feel what Hartman (2006) refers to as a 'chilly climate' from the lesbian community. Participants in her research discussed how the chilliness is often transmitted in a covert fashion through bisexual ignorance and invisibility. In effect, research has consistently demonstrated how lesbians have shown bisexual women both suspicion and distrust (Hartman, 2006; Rust; 1995, 2002; Shokeid, 2002).

6.5 Monogamy struggles

The next section of this chapter will focus on two further themes taken from the overarching template theme of 'Monogamy struggles' (see figure 6.8[49]). The theme of 'hidden by the relationship' is related to participants' feelings of invisibility as a direct result of being in a monogamous relationship. The theme of 'keeping bisexuality alive' refers to the strategies some participants utilise to render their sexual identity visible.

4.2 Monogamy struggles 4.2.3 Keeping bisexuality alive 4.2.4 Hidden by the relationship

Figure 6.8: Template theme of 'keeping bisexuality alive' and 'hidden by the relationship'.

6.5.1 Hidden by the relationship

I suggest that this theme is particularly pertinent to the aims of my research in that it illustrates the fact that participants' sexual identities are hidden by virtue of the fact they are in a monogamous relationship. The issue is less about the gender of one's partner, and more about

[49] Taken from final template (see figure 5.5)

the fact that it is the monogamous relationship itself which serves to render invisible the person's bisexuality. Participants lament over this issue.

> ***April:*** *'I think it's probably the, the worst thing about being bi and in a relationship with a man is the, is the invisibility' [Diary: 274-276.D-G]*

> ***Honor:*** *'I mean obviously there is when I walk around and they would see me sort of hand-in-hand, people are initially making assumptions but I think the same would be the case if I was walking with a woman, you know, they would assume I was a lesbian straightaway, so, I think that's something that unfortunately can't be helped' [Telephone interview: 481-488.D-G]*

> ***Lucy:*** *'. . . . part of the innate problem of bisexuality really……is the fact that you're always, you know, the way that society defines you currently is by your partner so, you, you'll either present as a gay, as a lesbian or a straight woman. . . erm, so sometimes especially in, in the real world I can feel very sort of invisible' [Telephone interview: 447-455.D-G]*

It is a quandary for participants, because they are consciously unable to offer any practical ways in which to effectively address the issue of invisibility. Clearly participants currently desire a monogamous relationship, and, as such, despite the invisibility they experience, they do not want to exit the relationship or negotiate new relationship rules.

Monogamy, as Western society traditionally interprets it, requires commitment and an implicit or explicit promise to not go outside of the relationship for sex in particular (Mark et al., 2014). The societal stereotype of the bisexually identified woman harbouring illicit thoughts in relation to infidelity are prevalent in such media as TV and film (Warn, 2006). Such views are pervasive in that they serve to perpetuate images and messages that bisexuals are not to be trusted due to their incapacity for monogamy (Israel & Mohr, 2004; Chmielewski & Yost, 2013; Rust, 1993; Walker, 2014a; 2014b; Robinson, 1997; Diamond, 2008a).

As discussed above, lesbians have for some time harboured anxieties in respect of their bisexual partners leaving them for men (Rust, 1993; Walker 2014b). I suggest the sense of loyalty participants have in relation to their partners is evident in their claims of monogamy. Participants demonstrate a sense of commitment to their relationship in the same way as other individuals, of all manner of sexual orientations and relationship styles, profess to do. However, it is the case as the quotes above testify that they remain hidden by virtue of the fact they are in a monogamous dyadic relationship. As such, participants appear to accept that the options in relation to being read as a person who is attracted to people of the same and different-gender is limited.

Invisibility has long been an issue for those who claim a bisexual identity (Barker, 2007; Barker & Langdridge, 2008; Angelides, 2001; Yoshino, 2000; Rust, 1992). The potential to not be so easily categorised into an ‘either’/‘or’ box is much more likely if one is not in a current relationship, due to the potential to be, ‘either’/ ‘or’ (Klesse, 2011). It is important to highlight the ways in which Butler’s (1990) heterosexual matrix, in the first instance, assumes all women to be heterosexual, even more so if they are not in a relationship. The potential to challenge that assumption can be actualised more directly from women who are not already categorised into the binary boxes of straight or lesbian, by virtue of the gender of their partner. However, if one occupies a relationship, particularly one that is monogamous, the potential for sexual flexibility is somewhat reduced as one is taken to be ‘either’, ‘or’. The longer the relationship continues, the more likely it is for one’s original claim of bisexuality being assumed to perhaps no longer exist, and consequently for one to be read in relation to the gender of their partner. The danger in respect of being in a monogamous relationship is the feeling that one’s bisexuality is no longer relevant and, as such, acquiescing under the assumption that one’s sexual identity is based on the gender of one’s partner. Participants in same-gender relationships have been shown to come up against this issue (as discussed above).

Being attracted to people of the same and different-gender remains a mental 'thing', due to the fact that bisexuality is not something you can physically see in the context of a monogamous relationship. Thus, a number of those who claim bisexual identities engage in various forms of non-monogamous relationships which can serve to platform their style of relationship as the one that most closely tells the story of what it means to claim a bisexual identity. Bisexuality then, if enacted through the practice of polyamory with partners of differing gender, is perhaps more readily understood. In effect, bisexuality is performed and as a consequence rendered visible. Moss (2012) advocates that only through the practice and performance of having concurrent relationships with different genders, can bisexual women externalise their attractions to people of the same and different-gender. Clearly this conceptualisation of bisexuality is problematic for those who, like my participants, actively desire a monogamous relationship. The notion that to be understood as bisexual involves participation in non-monogamous practices furthers renders those who do not desire this practice as inauthentic and invisible.

6.5.2 Keeping bisexuality alive

The following theme of 'Keeping bisexuality alive' illustrates the kind of things participants do in order to keep their bisexual identity current, in both their own and other people's minds. Hartman (2013) and Hartman-Linck (2014) research, which focused on bisexual women in monogamous relationships with men, discusses how they often took part in queer focused events, or surrounded themselves with queer literature as a means by which they could feel connected to their bisexuality, particularly in the context of engaging in a monogamous relationship. It is for this reason that I choose to utilise her original theme, of 'keeping bisexuality alive', to account for the ways in which the women in different-gender relationships in my research can be seen to mirror many of Hartman (2013) and Hartman-Linck's (2014) findings.

> ***Alex:*** *'I kinda feel bad sometimes but I, like I, I feel so normal that I'm, I'm married to a guy and…you know, we have a blast and we're doing normal stuff…and we go…you know, we went to see his family for the weekend 'cos it was his uncle's birthday and we did normal, couply stuff like that and it just seems like it's, you know, not like I'm trynna hide or*

anything but most of the time it doesn't matter if I'm straight or not so…I guess I kind of like doing the bi stuff as a way to, to remind myself that it does matter' [Telephone interview: 609-623.D-G]

Sam: *'I think, you know. . . [work] was a huge aspect of that for me so I think that kept me in touch with myself or, you know, however you like to phrase it with that…side of myself or that part of myself or that aspect of my…of my sexuality' [Telephone interview: 285-292.D-G]*

SJ: *'You talk about reading Diva and doing other 'lesbian things' to remind yourself of your bisexuality*

Pippa: *Particularly when I was married*

SJ: *When you were married to a man?*

Pippa: Yeah

SJ: *Yeah and why, why do you think you have to remind yourself?*

Pippa: *Mmmm. . . . I think when… I think for myself leading a very sort of straight life and wanting to be kind of monogamous it was a way to keep in touch with sort of what was going on out there that I was no longer part of and that I was happy not to be sleeping with women cos I was happy with a man but yeah, it was kind of my link back into what was sort of going on in the woman loving world' [Telephone interview: 138-151.S-G]*

However none of the women in same-gender relationships discussed feeling a need to keep their bisexuality alive. Although Pippa is currently in a relationship with a woman, in the quote above she does talk about engaging in behaviours to reaffirm her attraction to women whilst she was in a marriage with a man. None of the participants who are in same-gender relationships or indeed who are currently single articulate a need to do this. Eve hypothesises why this might be.

> ***Eve:*** *'I think that's about having a queer identity…than when I'm with a man, erm, my queerness is, is less visible and……I don't have that queerness in common with my partner whereas when I'm with a woman we're both……you know, we're both queer' [Telephone interview: 654-662.S-G]*

In the quote above Eve is able to articulate a, perhaps less impressive, need to engage in either a continual and/or sporadic engagement of strategies related to keeping her bisexuality alive. Interestingly, those women who were not currently in a relationship did not appear to be overly concerned in respect of maintaining their bisexual identity. At the time of the telephone interviews, both Paula and Caitlin were single and could not be seen to reference any strategies of identity maintenance. The freedom they have in relation to being single perhaps results in less of a constraint to adhere to any relationship norms, and, as such, they can be seen to maintain their bisexuality through the process of generally living out their lives alongside the potentialities of opportunities which come with being single.

> ***Paula:*** *'I've now got a good friend on the rugby team who are, do okay and we just talk about whatever now which is great erm, and, you know, at school like, the, 'cos I hang out with quite a lot of, of, of male trainees…erm, you know, they get a little banter with me and talking about women and, you know, all that sort of stuff' [Telephone interview: 977-984.S]*

> ***Caitlin:*** *'I'm fine being single yeah erm I can go where I want when I want and I yeah I don't have to really answer to anyone you know I can*

wear what I want er. . I can eat what I want [laughs]' [Telephone interview: 1861.S]

6.6 Close attraction

The following section of this chapter will focus on the themes related to the template thread of 'close attraction'. This includes, 'sex and attraction', 'desiring the other gender' and 'experiencing gender differences in relationships' (see figure 6.9[50]). Participants can be seen to be mindful of their attractions to others, as well as the way in which they often experience themselves differently, depending on the gender of their partner.

4.3 Close attraction

4.3.2.1 Sex and attraction

4.3.2.2 Desiring the other gender

4.3.2.3 Experiencing gender differences in relationships

Figure 6.9: Template theme of 'close attraction'.

6.6.1 Sex and attraction

Participants came to the research with a myriad of relationship experiences. Not all of the women who participated in this research had any personal experience of being involved in a

[50] Taken from final template (see figure 5.5)

same-gender relationship. However, they could all cite times in their lives when they had experienced strong romantic, sexual or emotional attractions for a person of the same and different-gender. What is particularly striking about this theme is the non-predictability of participants' attractions. Participants appear to have differences in relation to their overall attractions and sexual relationship histories. Some, irrespective of the gender of their current partner, discussed the randomness of their attractions. They highlighted how there were times in which they could identify that they were more orientated sexually and/or romantically, towards people of the same-gender. Whilst at other times, they were oriented towards people of a different-gender.

> ***Paula:*** *'. . . . some days I find myself really attracted to women and some days I find myself really attracted to men' [Telephone interview: 106-108.S]*

> ***SJ:*** *'. . . . so do you find men and women equally attractive or?*
>
> ***Pippa:*** *I find women sexually attractive more than I find men sexuality attractive erm I just well. . . I obviously find men attractive too [laughs] but er yeah umm ok generally I see a hot women and I start to imagine what she looks like naked [laughs] . . . but if I see a hot man I want to know what his thoughts are ok . . . erm maybe not thoughts yeah . . but what he is like as a person. If I like him I might then imagine him naked but with women it's right from the off so to speak' [Telephone interview: 485-496.S-G]*

Other participants referenced the relative unimportance of gender in relation to their attractions. These participants professed to not directly be concerned with gender as a primary indicator of what they found attractive in a person.

Honor: *'I normally look at gender last' [Telephone interview: 111.D-G]*

SJ: *'So would you subscribe to the sort of falling in love with the person and not the gender, you know, and not, you not being massively bothered about the genitals et cetera?*

Sian: *Oh very definitely and…I mean that's the only way I can describe it really…erm, and it's like discovering that I was bi wasn't really that much of a discovery…erm, 'cos just genuinely from a, I have a very erm, aesthetic sense of attraction to people…and erm, I, I will generally just find someone attractive and what gender they are is probably the least important thing' [Interview: 264-278.D-G]*

Research has highlighted how assumptions in relation to what being bisexual means (in terms of who one is attracted to) are often inaccurate. (Diamond, 2005, 2008; Weinberg, et al., 1994; George, 1993; Rust, 1992; Kinsey, 1953). The quotes above illustrate the fluidity of participants' sexual attractions suggesting that these experiences are as Diamond (2005) suggests, *'normative rather than exceptional'* (p. 78). The differential experiences participants discuss in respect of sexually desiring people of the same and different-gender, changes over time and context. This is one of the primary reasons why many bisexually identified individuals have found models of sexual identity formation challenging, as the focus tends to be on a monosexual outcome rendering bisexual identity somewhat problematic (Sophie, 1986).

In relation to appearance preferences, Pippa, Kate, and Caitlin subtly point to desiring a specific 'look' or image in their partners,

Kate: *'I know Winnie prefers me with shorter hair . . . . I prefer women with long hair' [Diary: 39-44. S-G].*

Caitlin: *'. . . . but there's a name, there's a name for that look I go for*

SJ: *Androgyny?*

Caitlin: *Yeah, androgynous look' [Telephone interview: 190-199.S]*

Pippa: *'If I look back on my relationships with women they have all had a similar style. I guess I am attracted to or I find myself attracted to high femme types . . . erm you know slim, attractive, polished women. I don't and have never been attracted to the other type of lesbian*

SJ: *What type is that?*

Pippa: *Oh you know the dyke [laughs] the look at me I am a dyke type. . . I sleep with women type. . I wear men's trousers and shirts and don't wear lipstick types' [Telephone interview: 555-563.S-G]*

The quotes above show that, in terms of the appearance presentations one is sexually attracted to, these women are perhaps oriented towards looking for a validated recognisable type of image in other women, for example, a 'butch' or 'femme' appearance. 'Butch' and 'Femme' have long been considered synonymous with types of lesbian identity (Huxley, Clarke & Halliwell, 2013) and thus are considered relatively constant. However, researchers have differentiated between different types of butch (Halberstam, 1998) and have acknowledged that the meaning of 'being butch', involves more than appearance cues (Kennedy & Davis, 1993). For example, 'butch' is multidimensional identity that incorporates various manifestations, ranging from 'butch-lite' to 'stone butch' (Moore & Schilt, 2006). Earlier in the chapter I discussed participants' ability to recognise and acknowledge the potential they have in themselves to switch between masculine and feminine appearance presentations signalling the ability they have to express both appearance polarities. The socially recognised physical appearance norms of both 'butch' and 'femme' are cues that signal to others ones non-heterosexuality. These appearance markers are understood to be both valued and recognised, particularly that of 'butch' (Luzzatto & Gvion, 2004). Therefore, it is understandable that participants draw on such appearance cues in respect of identifying particular ‘looks’ and/or people they themselves find sexually attractive.

Interestingly irrespective of participants’ relationship experiences, they did not waver in their claim of a bisexual identity. They were clear that they had the capacity to be attracted to people of the same and different-gender. However, for the majority of my participants the current relationship they were in was considered to be one that was both stable and enduring. The opportunity to engage in sexual relationships with other people, of any gender, was not an option for them. All participants spoke about how for them, monogamy was the most appropriate relationship practice and that irrespective of their attractions to people of the same and different-gender their commitment to this practice was of upmost importance.

> ***Caitlin:*** *When I’m in a relationship erm yes. . I am in it and it’s precious to me in that good and bad stuff happen yes but it in no way leads me to want to look elsewhere. It’s just not what I am about [Telephone interview: 1877-1879.S]*

I suggest that the quotes above provide further support for two important points. First, bisexual women are heterogeneous in respect of their attractions (Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009; Savin-Williams, 2005; George 1993). For some bisexual women gender plays a part in their attractions, and for others, it does not. Secondly, there is a tension between a commitment to monogamy and maintaining a bisexual identity. The first point is more or less self-evident and defines one aspect of a bisexual identity. The second point reflects a dialectic that is present, either explicitly or implicitly, throughout the participants’ interviews. At one pole of the dialectic is a commitment to a monogamous relationship with a person of one gender, and at the other there is a defining feature of bisexual identity, sexual attraction to more than one gender. It is suggested here that Ricoeur’s (1992) concept of the ‘good life’ can offer a way of understanding the tension between two seemingly incompatible aspects of one’s identity. Ricoeur (1992) discusses the ‘good life’ in the context of a broader exploration of the relationship between ethics and morals. For Ricoeur (1992) the ‘good life’ represents the dreams and aspirations each of us have in relation to leading a life that we consider to be fulfilling. These aspirations provide a basis from which can make choices and decisions about which course(s) of action to follow in particular situations. However, Ricoeur (1992) points out that at the same time as trying to make choices to fulfil our dreams we are also subject to a set of moral obligations in the form of promises and commitments we have made to others. In relation to the participants in this research they have made a commitment to themselves and others about monogamy which constrains them in terms of the extent to which they can fulfil their sexual desires. The participants in this research are making a choice to be monogamous which has an impact on the ways in which they can express their sexual identity, something they have less choice over.

6.6.2 Desiring the different gender

This theme illustrates how participants, irrespective of the gender of their current partner, at times hark back to previous experiences of being with a different gender in a romantic and/or sexual way. The theme of desiring the other gender can be more strongly demonstrated by participants who are currently in different-gender relationships, than those in same-gender relationships.

> ***Lucy:*** *'. . . . i mean I've been in a very long-term relationship with, with my, my other half and there are points when I would like to be able to press the pause button and……run off and do something with a girl erm……but I kinda can't [laughs]' [Telephone interview: 40-46.D-G]*

> ***SJ:*** *'So would you be more open to seeing, like other women or other men and women?*
>
> ***Amelia:*** *I think not men but women…like just for sex just … yeah' [Telephone interview: 201-205.D-G]*

SJ: 'Is being monogamous, does it have an impact on your bi identity. . . being in a monogamous relationship with a man, do you, like when you strip it all down, do you miss women?

***April:** Yes. Yes to an extent sexually. Yeah' [Telephone interview: 202-211D-G]*

Although Pippa is in a current same-gender relationship she does reference missing the physicality of a man.

***Pippa:** '. . . . if I miss men then I miss being dominated by men sexually and I miss feeling smaller you know' [Telephone interview: 423-425.S-G]*

The quotes above highlight the way in which, participants discuss a sense of longing, in that they miss the physical act of sex with the 'missing'[51] gender. Participants clearly articulate something they believe is tangibly missing when they are engaged in a monogamous relationship. I do not mean to suggest something is missing to the degree that it has a negative impact on their current relationship. However, having said that, it appears that the real-world experience of engaging in a previous relationship with a person of a different gender to their current partner leads them to

[51] I use the word 'missing' to refer to the gender of the person that does not correspond with the gender of their current partner.

comprehend that there are gender differences inherent in the actuality of the sexual experience. In effect, on a sexual level, sex with different genders appears to be experienced differently. However, given that they are in, or desire, a monogamous relationship, the likelihood of them experiencing the missing something again is somewhat reduced in the current relationship constellation. It is striking that on the whole women in different-gender relationships are much more likely to lament their desires for other women sexually. Although Pippa is in a current same-gender relationship, in the quote above she references *'miss[ing] feeling smaller'* [235]. However, I suggest that as Pippa positions herself as a *'top'* [Diary: 46.S-G] she is therefore highlighting the fact that in her relationship with her girlfriend she takes the lead. Pippa's reference to feeling smaller may well have less to do with missing the physical act of sex with a man, and be more about missing norms of femininity, such as feeling as though she would like to be the one who is petite and perhaps protected. Ricoeur discusses a dialectic inherent within what people strive for in anticipation, and expectation, of what he calls *'the good life'* (discussed above). Ricoeur (1990) argues that, people endeavour to live a life that is both ethical, and moral. The ethics of a good life refers to people effectively keeping the promises that they have made to others and relates to the fact that despite the changes one goes through people hope to steadfastly carry out their obligations to others. Leading a moral life is in reference to adhering to the laws of the land, in that we as a society pledge to attest to the rules and regulations which contribute towards a civilized life. For my participants, they have clearly whether implicitly or explicitly agreed to be monogamous in their intimate relationship, and as such, strive to stay ethically and morally faithful to their partner. The dialectic of this declaration, is a tension in relation to keeping true to their word and managing their desires and attractions to others. Thus, participants can be seen to articulate a longing for that which they have effectively said 'no more' to.

6.6.3 Experiencing gender differences in relationships

This theme illustrates the way in which participants who had previous histories of being in relationships with people of the same and different-gender, referenced experiential gender differences in their different and same-gender relationships. In general terms, participants went about their daily business much the same as ever, irrespective of the gender of their partner. However participants cited occasions in their relationships when they noted a change in themselves depending on the gender of their partner.

Eve: *'I think I actually feel more like myself when I'm with a woman . . . than when I'm with a man' [Telephone interview: 652-656.S-G]*

Sam: *'. . . . you know, I'm, I'm different when I'm with a woman than when I'm with a man' [Telephone interview: 234-225.D-G]*

Pippa: *Yeah I think yeah I do experience them [relationships with different genders] differently in the sense that I'm not the same person when I'm in them' [Telephone interview: 103-108.S-G]*

Some participants spoke about how they took on a different role when they were in a same-gender relationship as opposed to a different-gender one. Pippa talked about how she took on the role of protector with her girlfriend, however, reflecting on previous relationships with men, she was content to be the one who was protected.

Pippa: *'I feel quite protective of her really and tend to be the one who does all the stereotypical masculine stuff like open doors for her. Basically my hand goes on top of hers but I notice that when I am in relationships with men their hand goes on top of mine and I want to feel as though they can protect me… Weird I know I don't know why i switch like that really' [Diary: 26-31.S-G].*

The ability to flexibly adjust to the expected gender norms of being in a different-gender relationship could be understood as a process with which girls are socialised in to. Girls learn how to be are feminine and act accordingly (Burr, 2003; Owen Blakemore, Berenbaum, &

Liben, 2009). For women, to adopt this role in their different-gender relationships could be considered a natural extension of how they are already assumed to behave. Those who were in or were reflecting on their same-gender relationships, often talked about the role they assumed in relation to their partner. Some talked about how they adopted a protector ‘butch’ role or submissive ‘femme’ role.

> ***Caitlin:*** *‘. . . . I’ve preferred, much preferred the sexual experience with a female. I feel more dominant with women much more than with a male’ [Telephone interview: 1024-1027.S]*

> ***Paula:*** *‘I’d have to be the girl in the relationship’ [Diary: 159.D-G].*

Some participant’s referenced how their desire for sex differed, depending on the gender of their partner.

> ***Paula:*** *‘He does have to take my hand sometimes because I get lazy or lose confidence. I do feel though that in being intimate with a woman my hands are more prone to wandering’ [Diary: 253-256.D-G].*

> ***Pippa:*** *‘With men I tend to be much more submissive and initiate sex much less and to be honest I don’t want sex as much. . but with women I initiate sex much more because I want it more I guess’ [Diary: 36-38.S-G].*

Rebecca: *'I think looking back I almost used, using them [men] for sex if you know what I mean rather than…emotionally, I never felt like I was really emotionally attached' [Telephone interview: 292-296.S-G].*

Other participant's, cited how the pace of their relationship took different trajectories depending on if it was with someone of the same, or different gender.

Honor: *'This is the trouble I find when I end up in a relationship with a woman, because you move quickly and end up meeting the family early on. This has never happened in relationships with men though; I haven't met their family until a while into the relationship. I wish I could understand why things move so quickly when I'm with a woman. Sometimes, if I've started seeing a guy, I forget that it won't go at that pace and get pleasantly surprised when they don't want be practically married a couple of months in' [Diary: 397-408.S].*

Caitlin: *'My relationship with my previous girlfriend was full on and I don't think I would have had the opportunity to cheat even if I had wanted to . . . because we were always together. It really was like a lover and best friend rolled into one. I have never experienced that level of intensity with any of my boyfriend's' [Diary: 217-222.S].*

In the quotes presented above, participants can be seen to move between expected gender norms depending on the gender of their partner and secondly the pace and trajectory of participants' relationships being experienced differently depending on the gender of their partner. Butler, (1990, 2006) discusses how the heterosexual matrix provides and prescribes individuals with a way of being in the world, that of male or female, corresponding with masculine or feminine, corresponding with an assumed sexual identity, that of gay/lesbian or straight. One can be thought to embody one or the other potentialities of being in the world. However, one is assumed to have a good understanding of the other way of being in the world (that of male/female, masculine/feminine, and lesbian/straight). The fact that participants in this research discuss ways of performing in the world for example, being ‘masculine’, being ‘protective’, being ‘the girl’ and being ‘the top’ is suggestive of the way in which heteronormativity is pervasive in society. In relation to the latter issue, Walker’s (2014a, 2014b) participants, although they self-identify as heterosexual, highlight an intensity in relation to their ‘undercover’ relationships with women. This suggests that there is something unique in relation to women in relationships with other women, which is different to those in relationships with men.

6.7 Concluding comments

This chapter has presented an analysis of the template themes that arose from both the diary and telephone interview data. I provided a rational in relation to the themes I chose to focus on as they represented strong threads of participants’ discussions. Firstly I presented themes related to how participants attended to their appearance as well as their thoughts and choices in relation to presenting themselves to other people in the context of a monogamous relationship. Participants unanimously concluded that a specific bisexual appearance norm did not exist particularly outside of the context of bisexual specific events such as BiCon. Therefore I discovered some interesting insights into the reasons as to why participants chose particular ways in which to dress and present themselves in the world. Specifically occupying a monogamous relationship appears to act as a primary instigator in respect of the way in which participants wish to be read. Those in different-gender relationships largely choose from stereotypically understood lesbian appearance markers. Whilst those in same-gender relationships draw from feminine markers and can be seen to actively choose to not adopt signs and signifiers which would mark them out as lesbian specifically. Those who were single and not in a relationship appeared to make strategic decisions in terms of what they wore in particular contexts. Issues related to assumptions and invisibility appear to underpin participants’ appearance choices. Participants use appearance as a way in which to problematise assumptions made about their sexuality based on the gender of their partner.

The next section concentrated on participants' fears of being out and highlighted how in one form or another all participants at some point in their life had struggled with the perceived consequences of other people knowing about their bisexuality or the gender of their partner. The majority of participants had experienced hostility in one form or another from those in the queer community. However those in different-gender relationships articulated how they felt the lesbian community more specifically levelled hostility at them through claims of inauthenticity and betrayal because of their monogamous relationships with men. Participants who were currently partnered with a person of the same-gender acknowledged how the lesbian community were particularly distrustful of bisexual women and could be seen to resist drawing attention to their own attractions to men in the company of their female partners and lesbians more generally.

The following section outlined the impact that being in a monogamous relationship had on participants' visibility as women who find people of the same and different-gender attractive. All participants referenced how being in a dyadic relationship meant that they would ultimately be read as monosexual. However the impact of this invisibility manifested itself differently depending on the gender of their current partner. Those in different-gender relationships could be seen to engage in more strategies of bisexual display than those in same-gender relationships. Participants' in different-gender relationships felt a stronger need to verbalise and externalise their attractions to the same-gender than other participants did.

The final section outlined the intricacies of who participants found attractive. Participants offered differing rationales in relation to what they found attractive in other people. Some participants discussed how gender was unimportant in respect of the qualities they looked for in a partner, whilst some acknowledged the importance of gender and referenced actively looking for either male or female potential partners. Interestingly those in different-gender relationships lamented their attractions to women much more than participants in same-gender relationships did. Often those who had experience of relationships with people of the same and different-gender referenced how they felt and behaved differently depending on the gender of their partner. The implications of some of these findings are discussed in chapter eight.

Chapter 7: Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis (HPA)

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I presented a template analysis (TA) of the diary and telephone interview data. This approach is relatively structured and identifies broad themes across the data set as a whole. One of the strengths of TA is that it facilitates the identification of a hierarchical set of themes that represent the important features of a complex data set. This enabled me to explore the experiences of participants in considerable depth. However, the process of developing the themes involved focusing on the data set as a whole which meant that the temporal aspects of individuals’ experiences tend to be overlooked. In order to complement the findings of the TA this chapter presents an ideographic analysis of the photo-interviews. Although it is possible to carry out a TA on data collected from one person, in the context of this research, I was concerned that the experience of having already developed a template that included pre-existing themes would unduly influence my approach to the data. One of the reasons why I chose not to apply TA to my photo-assisted interview data was the danger of potentially forcing data into existing Template themes. Consequently, I developed an ideographic approach to analysing and interpreting the photo-assisted interview data which is based on the hermeneutic phenomenology of Paul Ricoeur. Not surprisingly, I decided to refer to this approach as Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis (HPA). HPA focuses on the relationship between language and action and the ways in which people narrate their experiences. This chapter therefore is ideographically orientated and focuses on the experiences of individual participants and provides a temporal aspect to the analysis. This complements the analysis presented in the previous chapter and extends our understanding of participants' lived experience.

This chapter presents an analysis of data that were collected through photo-assisted interviews. Five participants were selected to take part in this stage of the research and were given disposable cameras to take photographs of scenes that were relevant to their bisexual identity. Participants were then interviewed over the telephone to discuss their photographic images. The length of the interviews varied, however all interviews were robust and detailed, particularly in terms of the level of disclosure each participant offered. The analysis and interpretation of each participant's discussion of their selected photographs is presented sequentially. Each sub-heading refers to the narrative themes that emerged in response to the images used in the analysis. Each section includes a brief pen-sketch biography (see appendix 4 for a more comprehensive pen-sketch) to remind the reader of the participants' history and current relationship status. The chapter concludes with a summary and synthesis of the findings.

7.2 Amelia

Table 7.1: Amelia's pen sketch

Age range	Ethnicity	Location	Gender of partner	Pen sketch
32-38	White	Scotland	Male	Throughout data collection Amelia was in a monogamous relationship with her boyfriend Josh. Amelia has a step son called Alec (Josh's son). Amelia has never had a sexual relationship with a woman. Amelia is not out as bisexual at work although she has disclosed her bisexual identity to her boss. Amelia is not out to her family although she has disclosed her sexuality to a number of trusted friends. Amelia considers herself to be an activist for LGBT+ rights and believes engaging in this works outs her non-heterosexuality to others. Amelia's paid work brings her into contact with young people.

7.2.1 'This is me …. but how do I be me?'

Amelia took twelve photographs, and the photo-interview lasted just under one hour. The overall theme that emerged from Amelia's photo-interview was, 'This is me, but how do I be me?' Her photos and associated narratives present her struggle to express her bisexual identity in the context of being in a monogamous relationship with a man. Amelia took twelve photographs and the majority of these were pictures of objects and clothing. Amelia considered creating the photographs as a whole project and she attempted to cover/represent all aspects of her life as a bisexual woman. Amelia discussed how she had never been in a relationship with a woman, but *'…being able to create that in my imagination'* [Photo interview: 596-597] was important to her. There has been much debate in the research in relation to who can legitimately claim the label of bisexual. Typologies of bisexuals have attempted to conceptualise the various presentations of bisexuality (Savin-Williams, 2005; Halperin, 2009; Little, 2015). It is generally agreed that those who actively claim a bisexual identity are understood to be legitimate irrespective of whether or not they have had experiences of sex and/or a relationship with people of the same and different gender (Dyar et al., 2014; Barker et al., 2008; Diamond, 2008b; McLean, 2007; Angelides, 2001). Research espouses the claim that identifying as bisexual can offer a shield against potential mental health issues, thus intimating that acceptance of one's non-normative identity has protective qualities (Flanders et al., 2015; Bringaze & White, 2001).

Amelia's photos and narratives point to a layered and complex relationship between the objects she photographed and the meanings/stories associated with them. The interpretation of Amelia’s presentation of her bisexual identity produced three inter-related concepts that reflect her struggle to express and maintain her sexuality in a monogamous relationship. Hartman (2013) and Hartman-Linck, (2014) identified how women in different-gender relationships strive to *‘keep alive’* (p. 189) their bisexuality and how this is integral to their sense of identity. Amelia’s identity struggles are evident in the role that imaginary others play in the way that she emplots and narrates events. She also desires to be part of a bisexual community, but that is not a straightforward task and Amelia clearly struggles with the challenges of expressing her bisexuality within her monogamous relationship. Each of these is discussed below.

7.2.2 Role of the imaginary other

One of the aspects of Amelia’s narratives that seemed to be important to her was the role of the ‘imagined other’ and the impact they have on her freedom to express her identity. This is evident in the narrative Amelia provides for her picture of her male partner’s chest (see figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1: Male partners’ chest.

The narrative directly related to this picture was more complex than some of the others that Amelia provided and represents multiple events relating to her identity. The photograph of a bare male torso, shows Amelia to be someone who is protective of others. She says,

> *'…I didn't really want to take a picture of him like, that identified him… I'm very protective in that way… even though he's not bothered. So I just thought I'll take something that something really meaningful to me, but still kind of, is relatively anonymous' [Photo interview: 355-365]*

A straightforward narrative associated with the picture is that Amelia enjoys hugging her partner so in her words it *'…needed to go in!'* [Photo interview: 348]. However, Amelia continues to expand on the relevance of the image and says,

> *'And I wanted to sort of erh, to represent that because obviously he is my current partner and that's… it's a massive part of it and it's erhm, the part that I still struggle with, in the extent of I feel like erhm, I'm letting the side down if you like…' [Photo interview: 368-371]*

In this context Amelia's phrase, *'letting the side down*' [Photo interview: 371] refers to the lesbian community who she believes perceive her as someone who is still '*in hiding*' [Photo interview: 376]. Amelia says that these are, *'…imaginary things that I imagine the gay community will say to me.*' [Photo interview: 379-380]. These perceived expectations of imaginary others appear to play a significant role in the struggles that Amelia has in constructing and maintaining her bisexual identity. Amelia's anxiety in relation to the perceived negativity she would face from the lesbian community is not irrational. Research has shown how bisexual women face negativity from lesbians, with reports that lesbians would prefer not to date bisexual women for fear they will leave them for a man (Callis, 2014; Eliason, 2000; Weinberg et al., 1994; Rust, 1992). Bisexual women often face a sense of rejection in lesbian space (Hartman, 2006). As well as the image of her partner's torso representing Amelia as someone who is protective of others, it also shows the tension between the pleasure and comfort she derives from physical contact with her partner and her imagined response of the lesbian community to the act of closeness with a man.

The role of the imaginary other also appears in Amelia's narrative of the tee shirt (see figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2: Tee shirt.

When talking about when and where she wears the tee shirt with a symbol representing bisexuality, she says,

> *'...sometimes to the gym if I'm feeling brave, 'cos I feel like people will be thinking, 'what's that?' [Photo interview: 21-22].*

The role of the imaginary other can be identified in both her diary and telephone interview accounts. In my Template analysis I conceptualised this as a manifestation of the theme FOBO (fears of being out).This Template theme highlights how participants have genuine concerns in respect of being 'out' and disclosing their bisexual identity. Participants fear the potential impact and response this information would have on both themselves and others. Encapsulated within this theme are a number of sub-themes such as FOBO – to parents, FOBO – hurting the relationship, FOBO – past it, FOBO relationship permanency, and FOBO – at work. Each FOBO relates to specific anxieties that participants have within each of these contexts. Amelia appears concerned in relation to how other people might see her. At a social gathering with a number of other women, Amelia writes in her diary how she found some of them attractive but was,

'. . . nervous, because of my sexuality. I felt like they might of thought I was fancying them or something' [Diary: 68-69].

Amelia acknowledges that even in her dreams she is mindful of how what she does, or does not say, is received by others,

'. . . even in the dream I avoided telling the gay women that my partner is male, because of how they might react to me' [Diary: 392-393]

The hypersexual stereotype of bisexual women is pervasive in society. The message that bisexuals cannot be trusted permeates the binary (Callis, 2014; MacDowell, 2009; Balsam, & Mohr, 2007; Angelides, 2001). As a result Amelia can be seen to police her behaviour in an attempt to not offend the other women. Amelia's account of her dream where she avoids outing her bisexuality because of the imagined negative reception to the disclosure is perhaps illustrative of how deep-seated her anxiety is.

The HPA thus extended and deepened my understanding of two independent threads taken from the Template analysis. First, 'FOBO' which relates to participants concerns and apprehension were they to disclose their bisexuality. Second, 'queer hostility if dating a man' which refers to the negativity participants experience from lesbians specifically if they are in different-gender relationships. The HPA identified how these two Template threads intertwined to create the HPA theme of 'role of the imagined other'. This theme illustrates how FOBO go beyond real situations into 'what ifs'. Amelia is clearly concerned about what these 'imagined others' will think about her, or say to her, if they were to find out she identifies as bisexual and that her partner is male.

7.2.3 Being in a community but not part of it

A significant theme evident in Amelia's narratives of her bisexual identity is the dialectic between 'being in a community' and at the same time 'not being in it'. In her narrative of the tee shirt Amelia explains how it was made for her by one of her friends and is representative in some ways of bisexuality. Amelia wore the tee shirt at a Pride March shortly before the photo-interview. The tee shirt has both male and female symbols and Amelia feels that it is an object that enables her to identify with the LGBT+ community. However, she is also aware that by having only male and female symbols, it is still somewhat incomplete because it, '*doesn't have a, a sort of transgender symbol*' [Photo interview: 85]. Two of the objects that appeared in Amelia's photographs were given to her at Pride Marches, this includes a Pride tee shirt and small fluffy rainbow coloured toy (see figure 7.3).

Figure 7.3: Pride tee shirt & toy.

These indicate that she feels sufficiently part of the LGBT+ community to participate in rallies. Wearing the tee shirt given to her at the Pride Scotia event, made her '*feel more visible to the other people in the march*' [Photo interview: 318]. Amelia is aware that her sexuality is not expressed through her appearance, as she references in her diary,

> *'. . Interesting then that at no point did I wonder 'oh I wonder if those walkers are perceiving me as a bisexual woman' Maybe it's because straight and gay to me, have some more established social markers, e.g.*

Gestures. But I can't think of any clothes or gestures that signal bi'
[Diary: 101-105].

For Amelia to be able to express her bisexual identity through appearance markers and in the context of an LGBT+ event was a positive experience. Therefore, in her narratives associated with Pride events, it is clear that Amelia feels part of the LBGT+ community. However, as discussed above in relation to the LBGT+ community as 'imagined other', it is also apparent that in other ways Amelia feels excluded and ostracised by the same LGBT+ community she feels part of when participating in Pride Marches. This is an example of one of the ways in which HPA provides additional insights into the Template analysis theme of 'the look' which is conceptualised as participants being aware of the particular messages they wish to transmit to other people through their clothing and appearance. Participants believed there were a variety of stereotypical styles of clothing and appearances that potentially signified sexual identity. A number of sub-themes incorporated into the over-arching Template theme of 'the look' reflect specific appearance presentations such as 'queer look' which is understood to be the stereotypical appearance norms associated with lesbians specifically, including specific styles of hairstyle, and clothes. Some participants talked about how they looked for these appearance norms when they wanted to attract a same-gender partner or wished other people to make assumptions about their sexuality. Participants therefore recognised a lesbian aesthetic and whilst participants acknowledged that they were drawing on a stereotype, they all had experience of, and were familiar with individuals who fit into these appearance positions. Thus, Amelia's feelings of community acceptance in particular contexts such as Pride are dependent upon whether she looks the part. In wearing the Pride Scotia tee shirt she acknowledges that she is visible as not heterosexual, however she remains invisible as bisexual. Thus she occupies the borderlands (Callis, 2014) or the liminal space between lesbian and heterosexual (Shokeid, 2002). Amelia recognises that bisexual specific appearance markers have not been established (Hayfield, 2013; Hayfield et al., 2013; Taub, 1999) and as such she is unable to project a recognisable bisexual look. Reflecting on how others may see her, Amelia accepts that she struggles to identify a bisexual appearance within herself due to the dominance of binary appearance norms.

Amelia has taken part in one BiCon event which she discusses in relation to monogamy. Although she does not explicitly state it, my interpretation of her attendance at BiCon is that it is part of her struggle to find a group or community within which she feels accepted. One of the positive aspects of her experience at BiCon was that it provided a space or context where her bisexual identity was normalised,

> *'…it was amazing how it was almost, it felt almost like it was a given that it was, like, that was the underlying given (bi identity) so you didn't really talk about it, so you'd talk about other things.' [Photo interview: 505-507].*

She expressed in her previous telephone interview that BiCon would have been more helpful to her at the coming out stage of her identity development, and that now, having accepted her bisexuality she did not experience the same kind of struggles, *'I, I think I would've particularly found it helpful er, at that kind of stage. . .'* [Telephone interview: 523-524]. This illustrates the temporal nature of requiring support in relation to one's identity. Amelia's desire to be part of a bisexual community is also expressed through her photograph of a laptop (see figure 7.4)

Figure 7.4: Laptop.

The laptop represents her connection with a local bisexual support group.

'...there's, I used to one that met regularly erhm, near to me, its, we just kind of folded but erhm and I haven't been for ages either but I just kind of felt like, oh well, it's something about erhm having a community and meeting other and, but I went to that a few years ago, it was about important enough, but I was still relatively new to this (bisexual) label.'
[Photo interview: 1224-1231]

Amelia found the opportunity to talk to other people who identified as bisexual useful and helpful, but she also distances herself in the here and now from the person who was *'relatively new'* [Photo interview: 1231] to her bisexual identity. This again reflects the temporal dimension to identity. Taking on board the fact that Amelia is not out to family members or to the majority of her work colleagues, the opportunity to be amongst a community of people who identify as she does is clearly positive. BiCon is a space where bisexual identities are in the majority, therefore the overt disclosure of one's bisexuality is not necessary. Models of sexual identity development all stress the importance of being out as this reflects acceptance of one's own minority identity. In addition these models suggest that accessing other sexual minority individuals in order to support one's own non normative identity is indicative of what Cass (1979) refers to as 'identity syntheses' (Degges-White at al., 2000; Van de Meerendonk & Probst, 2004; Levine, 1997). It appears that Amelia is at a point where she no longer feels it necessary to access bisexual specific communities in order to support her bisexual identity. Weinberg et al., (1994) argues that it is more appropriate to suggest that over time bisexuals feel more at ease with the label of bisexual, and as such they are less inclined to require regular identity affirmations. This applies particularly if one has a partner with whom they feel accepted and supported (Legate et al., 2012; Coleman, 1985).

The desire Amelia feels to be part of a community is also evident in her narratives associated with a photograph of the L-Word TV series (see figure 7.5).

Figure 7.5: L-Word.

She says,

> *'…it used to be my way of allowing myself to connect to a different culture…with a way of sort of exploring and sort of understanding what possibilities there were…I kind of like wanted role models, I wanted to sort of see what ways of being were possible' [Photo interview: 584-606]*

Amelia's reflections in terms of needing a community to identify with is expressed in her diary account, where she again discusses how queer related TV programmes and films were,

> *'. . . .especially important to nourish myself during my coming out process (especially before I felt confident to go to LGBT club nights etc)' [Diary: 288-290]*

Not only does Amelia want to be part of a community, she is also looking for ideas and alternatives to heterosexual and gay lifestyles. These ideas are also present in the narratives associated with her photograph of a book of photographs entitled ‘Sex Works’ by Del La Grace Volcano (see figure 7.6).

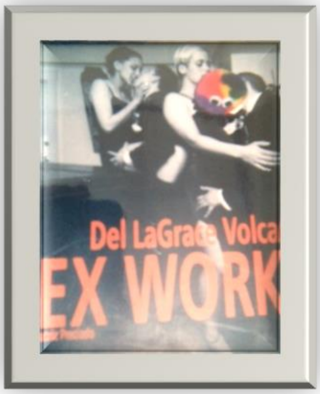

Figure 7.6: Sex Works.

Amelia bought the book for two reasons, firstly, she found one of the images that had been published in a magazine sexually arousing and secondly, she believes that the book portrays positive images of non-heterosexual people. Amelia’s attempts to navigate a way forward in a world where only the binary is represented is challenging. Thus she can be seen to fashion an alternative approach to existing material such as looking for role models on TV in order to build her own understanding of how to live out her bisexuality. The HPA highlights how Amelia attempts to both locate and create a community where she can express herself and feel a sense of belonging.

7.2.4 Expressing ‘bi-ness’ in relationship

One of the aspects of bisexuality Amelia appeared to struggle with at the time of the photo-interview was the relationship between bisexuality and monogamy. She says,

> *‘…because of the way that the label seems to be structured it’s kinda like, oh well, you know, there’s the bi ness to it so I fi.. I still find that tricky to get my head round…how can I really be allowed to, you know,*

just be fine with one person and, and … not have to prove anything by switching between the two…' [Photo interview: 396-406]

There is some indication here that Amelia's concern with imagined others is also impacting on her expression of bisexuality in her monogamous relationship. She emplots monogamy with the belief that in order to express and be recognised and accepted as bisexual there is a requirement to 'prove' it to others by having partners of the same and different-gender. Moss (2012) discusses how her participants live out their bisexuality by being involved in concurrent relationships with people of the same and different-gender. This is positioned as the only way in which ones bisexuality can be performed and consequentially read as bisexual. .Monogamy therefore is framed as a restrictive constellation whereby one's same or different-gender attraction is stifled resulting in some form of psychological conflict (Roberts et al., 2015; Rodriguez-Rust, 2002). To some extent the idea that monogamy is not reflective of bisexuality has been reinforced by Amelia's attendance at BiCon. One of her observations of BiCon was that,

'…there were quite a lot of people there that were, that were, erhm, not monogamous and … I still have a sort of lingering question in my head as to like, oh … if she identifies as bi does that mean, like, you by definition aren't able to be monogamous any more…so at some point, I will, I will maybe resolve that in my head…' [Photo interview: 449-457]

Amelia's desire to clarify and perhaps resolve her confusion about the relationship between monogamy and bisexuality and looking for answers to 'how to be me', is also evident in her decision to undertake a course on gender and sexualities a couple of years before the photo-interview. She says, *'I found it really helpful to erhm read, because it … helps me make sense of these labels' [Photo interview: 1212-1217]*

Amelia expresses a tension between guilt and attraction when she narrates her image of bus timetables (see figure 7.7).

Figure 7.7: Bus timetables.

She says,

'…I was trying to think, you know, how do … how do I express my bi-ness, even within my relationship and whatever and … even though we talk about it and whatever …. But erhm sometimes I suppose I erhm I feel like it comes out from, like if I'm sitting on a bus and I'm bored… and I'm looking out of the window checking out people…and I feel a bit guilty…' [Photo interview: 900-913]

It is not clear why Amelia expresses her guilt at looking at women. However, the narrative associated with sitting on the bus develops into tension between knowing social norms and rules for some situations and not knowing them for others. She says, *'I kind of know what the rules are in the straight world…'* [Photo interview: 944-945], which can be contrasted with her statement, ‘*I’m not sure how to express bi-ness*’ [Photo interview: 930-931]. So the challenge Amelia faces is that she does not experience angst or feel that she is living a lie by being in a relationship with a man, but does feel unsure and uncertain about the social rules and norms that apply to bisexual women who want to be in a monogamous relationship. Amelia is unable to comment on the actuality of being in a same-gender relationship in the same way as she is able to speak about experiencing a different-gender relationship. The Template analysis theme of ‘experiencing gender differences in relationships’ refers to the way in which participants who have had experience of both same and different-gender relationships experience themselves and/or their relationship in different ways depending on the gender of their partner. Some participants spoke about how they had different approaches to relationships and sex according to the gender of their partner. A number of participants expressed how intense their same-gender relationships were in comparison to their experience of different-gender relationships, particularly in relation to commitment and attraction. Some participants spoke directly about the internal percentage of attraction they felt towards men and women. Using a different approach to analysis enabled me to extend this Template finding, thus HPA reveals how despite Amelia’s inability to comment on same-gender relationships she feels a need to know what it is like so she is better able to express her bisexuality in her monogamous different-gender relationship.

In her diary account Amelia discusses how being in a monogamous relationship results in a sense of invisibility and how participating in the current research has given her the opportunity to do that,

> *‘Well I’ve really enjoyed doing this diary, because of having the chance to reflect, daily. I had recognised the need in myself to give my sexual identity some air time. This has been a good way to do it’ [Diary: 435-437]*

Amelia references her desire to spend time giving her *‘. . . sexuality some air time’* [Diary: 242] so that she can affirm her bisexuality in the context of a monogamous relationship. This resonates with the Template analysis theme of ‘keeping bisexuality alive’ which is defined as the active things participants do to remind themselves and/or other people of their bisexuality. Some participants discussed how being able to talk about their attractions to people of the same and different-gender in-part contributed towards the affirmation of their bisexuality. A number of participants explained how they watching lesbian themed films as a way in which they could keep their identity at the forefront of who they were. The HPA theme of ‘how to be me’ extends this Template theme and shows how Amelia attempts to authentically and comfortably express her bisexual identity whilst at the same time engage or participate in activities that render visible, to herself at least, her attractions to people of the same and different-gender.

As discussed in the previous chapter the lack of bisexual specific role models coupled with no overt signs that signify bisexuality contribute towards uncertainty in the expression of ones bisexuality. This is more pronounced in the context of a monogamous relationship. Occupying a different-gender relationship further brings additional challenges, as the potential to be queer is rarely a consideration. Amelia’s actions of *‘checking out people’* [Photo interview: 913], or taking a women’s studies course and participating in this research, are all indicative of what Hartman (2013) and Hartman-Linck (2014) refer to as ‘displays’ of bisexuality in an attempt to render visible her bisexuality.

Amelia’s narratives through which she expresses her sexual identity are complex and multi-layered. She is plagued by the thoughts of imaginary others and is constantly searching for a community where her sexuality is accepted. Amelia faces the challenges of being bisexual in a monogamous relationship and has developed strategies to make it work for her. The whole story of Amelia’s sexual identity can be seen as a struggle against imaginary others and a quest for ways to express her bisexuality and can be summarised as, ‘this is me…but how do I be me?’

7.3 Caitlin

Table 7.2: Caitlin's pen sketch

Age range	Ethnicity	Location	Gender of partner	Pen sketch
39-45	White	South Yorkshire	Single	Throughout data collection Caitlin was not in a relationship and considered herself single. Caitlin has a relationship history that includes both same and different-gender relationships. Caitlin considers herself to have only recently acknowledged her attractions to women, and consequentially has adopted the sexual identity label of bisexual. Caitlin was adopted as a small child. Caitlin is not out as bisexual to any of her family and they are unaware of her previous same-gender relationships. Caitlin has disclosed her sexuality to a few trusted friends but in the main has not told the majority of her friends. In her previous place of employment Caitlin experienced work-place discrimination because she was in a same-gender relationship. As a result of this Caitlin is not out at her current place of employment. Caitlin does not have any children.

7.3.1 'Every sunbeam has a grey cloud'

Caitlin took twelve photographs, and the photo-interview lasted just over thirty minutes. Unlike some of the other participants' Caitlin did not organise her pictures into a specific order. Caitlin saw the taking of photographs as a task which in some ways resembled a college type assessment, *'…I tried to stick to the brief'* [Photo interview: 656-660]. The majority of Caitlin's narratives are focused on what she finds sexually attractive in people of the same and different-gender. She expresses her bisexual identity predominantly through a narrative of attraction to men and women and it seems important for her to express this in the photo-interview setting. Caitlin's narratives in the photo-interview where she is talking about things other than what she finds attractive, have some similarities to the 'contamination sequences' discussed by McAdams, (2007). These narratives can be identified through a sequence of good things turning bad. For example, in the previous interview and diary submission Caitlin cited a number of traumatic events and situations she experienced in a work context as a result of being in a same-gender relationship. Although Caitlin was single at the time of the photo-interview she discussed that she was so affected by the discrimination she experienced, she felt she had no choice but to terminate her employment. This resulted in Caitlin experiencing financial difficulties. The overarching theme that emerges from her photo-interview is, 'Every sunbeam has a grey cloud'.

Caitlin’s themes have been organised into two sections, what I fancy, and bleakness. Each of these will be discussed below.

7.3.2 What I fancy

In her narratives of sexual attraction Caitlin objectifies people of the same and different-gender to illustrate what it is she finds attractive and unattractive about them. Caitlin uses pictures of a male body builder (see figure 7.8)

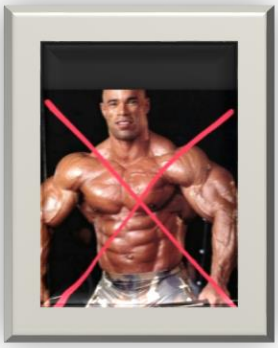

Figure 7.8: Body builder.

A close up of a man’s underpants, (see figure 7.9)

Figure 7.9: Underpants.

and a male actor (see figure 7.10)

Figure 7.10: Male actor.

to express what she finds sexually attractive in men and what she does not. Extreme muscles are something that she finds a turn off, even though she also acknowledges that some people may find that physique attractive. Perhaps this is one way of Caitlin expressing her bisexual identity by making it clear that the stereotypical ‘butch’ male is ok for straight women but not for her. The disembodied picture of a man in underpants is something that Caitlin finds attractive, she says, *‘...I like the bulge’* [Photo interview: 305]. However it is not just the image that Caitlin likes as she goes on to explain that it is the reality of it, the idea of a real man wearing the underpants rather than the disembodied image that is important. Caitlin equates the feelings of sexual attraction associated with that image with the image of a female bottom (see figure 7.11)

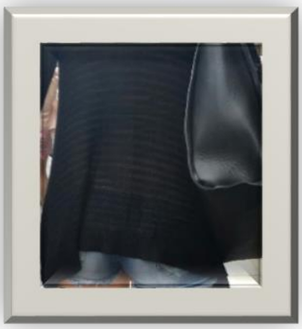

Figure 7.11: Female bottom.

which she took of a woman walking up some steps in front of her. She says,

> *'...I was just walking behind her, I mean I must've looked a right, this was, but I did know I was going to be sending these pictures but, you know, I was out and about and I thought aah, phwoar…. I would've wanted to grab it' [Photo interview: 328-338]*

Caitlin goes to some lengths to express her sexual attraction to people of the same and different-gender through the photographs she took and their associated narratives. This is something that she reinforces through the narrative associated with a photo of a woman in a mask being kissed on the neck by an unidentifiable person (see figure 7.12).

Figure 7.12: Unidentifiable person.

She says,

> *'...it's not so much about whether it's a man or a woman so, you know, have, having the mask on basically says, you know, it..it doesn't*

matter…to me if I like them erhm.. it can be a man or a woman…'
[Photo interview: 370-375]

So for Caitlin her bisexual identity is defined to a great extent by the fact that the gender of her partner is irrelevant. Researchers have identified the fluidity and diversity of female attractions (Jones, 2016; Diamond, 2008a, Diamond, 2008b; Weinberg et al., 2001; Baumeister, 2000). Many of Diamond's (2008) participants' were seen to oscillate between same and different-gender relationships despite previous identifications of their sexual identity as lesbian, heterosexual, or bisexual. Caitlin's adamant articulation of the irrelevances of gender as a factor in respect of her attractions further support the plasticity of desire in bisexual women. Although she is clear to point out in her diary that,

'I am attracted to the person but it also doesn't mean that I walk around eyeing EVERYONE up' [Diary: 153-155]

Throughout Caitlin's narrative she can be seen to pay attention to how other people may perceive her, particularly if they were to know she identifies as bisexual. In the interview, Caitlin talks more about her attractions to women than men. However she is clear that when it comes to her sexual desire for the same-gender, they have to look a certain way.

Caitlin: *'I don't generally fancy women, if that makes sense……they're very specific……sort of types of, of women……that I would be attracted to, so. I do know that when it's been a woman they've tended to be lesbian women…*

SJ: *So, so erm, are they, when you say lesbian women are, is it, are you kind of talk, referring to the way in which they look, like are they identifiable?*

Caitlin: *Er, yes, quite identifiable, androgynous yeah.*

SJ: *Yeah, like you would look at them and think she's a lesbian 'cos of the…*

Caitlin: *Yes…the…clothes… [Telephone interview: 127-170]*

Here HPA offers a deeper or more nuanced understanding of the Template analysis theme of 'sex and attraction' which is defined as what one finds alluring or sexuality attractive. Participants spoke at length about what they found attractive both emotionally and sexually. HPA reveals that despite Caitlin's claim that gender is irrelevant in respect of her attractions, gendered appearance is a concern for Caitlin. Caitlin's identification of, and attraction to, women who she believes are lesbians because they adopt recognisable lesbian appearance markers is potentially fraught with misapprehension because she runs the risk of getting it wrong and mistaking a heterosexual woman for a lesbian. However for Caitlin the binary presentations of femininity equalling heterosexuality, and androgyny equalling lesbian, signal a sense of assurance. Perhaps Caitlin perceives there to be less uncertainty in making assumptions that particular appearance markers or 'looks' demonstrate that they are indeed lesbians. Caitlin does not appear to consider the possibility that the women she tends to be attracted to may indeed identify as bisexual. This indicates the influence the binary has on the way in which Caitlin thinks about her attractions to others. Caitlin acknowledges that were she to enter into another same-gender relationship she is more likely to find recognisable lesbians attractive. However, Caitlin consistently expresses many fears related to being out as bisexual and she remains adamant that she wants to avoid a same-gender relationship because of the pressures she would feel to be out, not as bisexual *per se*, but of being out in a same-gender relationship and assumed lesbian herself.

Caitlin: *'. . . if being bisexual is being sexually or physically whatever attracted in both men and women, then that's what I am but whether I choose to, choose to share that with the world that's different and ho, who knows what will happen in the future…*

SJ: *'…you'll be in a place where you kind of want to share it with others?*

Caitlin: *I'll move to the Outer Hebrides then [Telephone interview: 1815-1829]*

The quote above highlights Caitlin's fear of being out. Caitlin signals that she cannot foresee a time when she would want to disclose her bisexuality to those who know her. She narrates the consequences of being in a same-gender serious relationship as a time when she would retreat from everyone and move to a place where no-one knows her. Caitlin is clearly unable to envisage a future time when she will feel comfortable letting other people know she is in a same-gender relationship. Rubin, (1984) refers to how the 'charmed circle' of heterosexuality has been postulated as the most legitimate and preferred relationship constellation. Despite Caitlin's identification with bisexuality and her previous same-gender relationship history, she can be seen to position a future same-gender relationship as undesirable. Robinson and Espelage (2011) identify in their research with young adults that the cultural ingraining of heterosexuality is pervasive and that the central message young people pick-up is the dominance of heterosexuality. Given that Caitlin is in her early 40's she has no doubt internalised this message from a young age. As such Caitlin's fears of being out relate directly to the potential of being out by association and not necessarily out as someone who finds people of the same and differentgender attractive. Raggins (2004) suggests that disclosing one's sexual minority status is indicative of a stable sense of self in that it demonstrates acceptance and identity integration. However it appears that Caitlin is engaging in what Orne (2011) refers to as 'strategic outness' in a bid to manage who is aware of her bisexuality. In Caitlin's eyes her somewhat extreme position of strategy management is a declaration of avoiding future same-gender relationships. Orne (2011) acknowledges the importance of the environment in relation to sexual minority disclosure, for example how that information may be perceived by others. Clearly Caitlin's previous experiences of being subject to what she regards as homophobia has impacted on her current decision to avoid consciously entering into a future same-gender relationship.

7.3.3 Bleakness

At times there is a sense of bleakness, isolation and uncertainty expressed in Caitlin's narratives. This is most clear in the narrative associated with a photograph of a landscape (see figure 7.13).

Figure 7.13: Landscape.

The photo represents Caitlin being on her own and not *'…complying with anyone or anything really, it's just me…'* [Photo interview: 55]. It also represents thoughts of getting away from her sexuality and being '*at peace*' [Photo interview: 77] with herself; in other words, running away from her identity. In a later narrative associated with a picture of clouds (see figure 7.14)

Figure 7.14: Clouds.

Caitlin expresses similar emotions,

'…sometimes actually focusing on sexuality…I can find it very difficult if I actually focus and think about it too much… you know, I can actually find it brings me down and makes me feel bleak and that…kind of thing. Erhm…but it's more …almost like in society you're forced to think about it.' [Photo interview: 404-414]

So for Caitlin she feels as if she cannot be bisexual and 'just get on with it'. In Ricoeur's (1992) terms she is expressing a sense of 'suffering' brought about by the agency of societal norms and how they are reinforced through the narratives of others. In her narrative associated with a photograph representing a night out in a gay club (see figure 7.15)

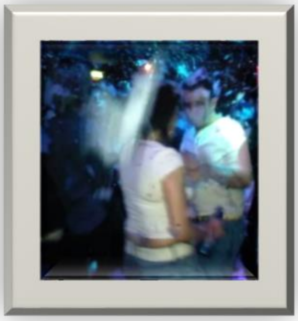

Figure 7.15: Gay club.

Caitlin identifies multiple dimensions to the experience, firstly, it was a fun night out, and secondly, she felt out of her comfort zone, thirdly, she felt in a safe space. Caitlin believes that many people in gay clubs are putting on an act, pretending to be happy and acting 'over the top'. She sees it as all a bit fake and says,

'People are there to kind of erh sort of forget about the real world' [Photo interview: 177-178].

This is a sentiment similar to the views expressed in relation to the landscape picture. There is a question here about the extent to which this is some form of transference, to use a Freudian concept, taking place for Caitlin. In other words, it is her rather than other people who is there to '*forget about the real world'* [Photo interview: 178]. However, she supports her position that it is in fact other people who go there to forget by presenting a narrative about a gay friend who goes to the club, gets drunk, has a good time, but in between the times he goes to the club he has tried to commit suicide. She sees the club as a place where people go to put on a show and get away from their day-to-day lives. Caitlin went to the gay club with a group of straight friends and sees it as being different for them. For example, she believes that in general, straight people go to gay clubs to engage in an act of voyeurism. Consequently, they are not aware of the hidden problems faced by some of the club goers. She says,

> *'… I suppose in a way it's treat still as a bit of a freak show' [Photo interview: 204-205].*

Caitlin presents the idea that the gay club scene is different from straight clubs and an object to be viewed, inspected and judged by the straight community. One of the consequences of the voyeuristic aspect of gay clubs for Caitlin was the presence of people taking photographs which would potentially find their way onto Facebook or some other social networking site. Caitlin was concerned about the personal consequences for her if she was 'outed' on one of these sites. So the gay club is multidimensional setting for Caitlin which is at the same time, safe, false, and dangerous. Having said this Caitlin appears to be on her guard in LGBT+ spaces and is mindful of a possible leak in her management of who knows about her same-gender attractions. Caitlin's hyper-awareness of the spaces she occupies and their potential to contaminate is striking. The HPA adds to a number of Template sub-themes relating to FOBO, in particular, 'FOBO – to parents' defined as the fear of coming out as bisexual to parents because of the perceived negative consequences, and 'FOBO – at work', related to the assumed negative ramifications disclosure would cause. HPA illustrates how these themes relate to Caitlin's resistance to be part of the LGBT +community particularly in light of the fact that she would be unable to manage potential leakages of her bisexuality in such contexts and communities. By Caitlin's own admission thinking about her sexual identity has a negative effect on her well-being and as such she conceptualises her experience in the gay club as ‘fake but fun’. Although Caitlin recounts the narrative of her friend’s struggles with life it appears that she is using his story as a representation of how life for LGBT+ people is not necessarily desirable. Here Caitlin can be seen to profess what she perceives as the truth of what is really going on with people who are not heterosexual. Orne’s (2011) conceptualisations related to what is at the heart of one’s decision to disclose their non-normative sexuality are expressed in two ways. Firstly in not disclosing one’s identity it is assumed that they are *‘living a lie’* (p. 692). The assumption is that this results in potentially not achieving fulfilment due to the fact one remains ‘in the closet’. Second, to disclose ones identity would result in *‘explosive knowledge’* (p. 692). The belief that the ramifications of such an explosion would have dire consequences for the individual is persuasive. Caitlin’s history of experiencing direct homophobia has brought her to this place of fear and insecurity. Caitlin’s aim is to not go through the unpleasantness she experienced as a result of being in a previous same-gender relationship.

Caitlin expresses a sense of being ‘different’ in several parts of the interview, perhaps most clearly in her narrative associated with a photograph of a tee shirt she had designed for a competition to support a breast cancer awareness charity (see figure 7.16).

Figure 7.16: Breast cancer.

The tee shirt and its associated narrative can be interpreted as saying, ‘I am different to everybody else because they see breast cancer as being just about women, but I see it as being about men as well'. During the interview I had encouraged Caitlin into expressing the image as representing 'equality'. It was through the process of reflection and analysis that I arrived at an alternative interpretation of the narrative that the image was more a representation of Caitlin's identity as 'different from others'. Caitlin acknowledges that she has only recently become aware of her same-gender attractions, referring to herself as a *'newbie, yeah [laughs]'* [Telephone interview: 1802]. It is plausible to suggest that Caitlin is going through a process of coming to terms with her bisexuality and as such may well be in the early stages of what Weinberg et al., (1994) refer to as 'initial confusion'. This is a time when one may well be struggling with one's internal homo/bi-phobias. Although it appears that Caitlin has reached the next stage of Weinberg et al., (1994) model of sexual identity development, that of 'finding and applying the label', in that she appears on the surface to accept her self-ascribed label of bisexual. However she may well oscillate between these early stages. Brown, (2002) is mindful of the complexity in respect of identity acceptance and provides a somewhat broader conceptualisation of Weinberg et al., (1994) model. Brown (2002) suggests that acceptance of one's non-normative identity is dependent on the support and affirmations one receives prior to a resulting disclosure. Given that Caitlin experienced negativity when she was in her same-gender relationship, she is much more likely to be cautious in respect of settling into the identity, and consequentially, outing her sexuality to those whom she does not trust.

Caitlin does not refer to a social history of attending lesbian orientated spaces. Therefore it is fair to assume that Caitlin has not immersed herself in the LGBT+ community. Unlike some of the other participants' in the photo-interviews Caitlin does not narrate any instances of bi-negativity from the lesbian community and does not intimate any knowledge of the 'chilly climate' (Hartman, 2006) bisexual women profess to experience in the lesbian community. However as mentioned above she does cite a number of negative experiences related to the homophobia she endured whilst in a same-gender relationship at work. These experiences clearly contribute towards Caitlin decision to not enter into a future same-gender relationship, as she fears having to go through the same torment. She says,

'. . . it was absolutely awful but now I understand erm, what it's like to be in that position' [Telephone interview: 576-577]

The overall theme that emerged from Caitlin's photo interview was 'Every sunbeam has a grey cloud'. Caitlin took twelve photos in total and they predominantly presented narratives that expressed her attractions to people of the same and different-gender. The photos that do not specifically pertain to attraction present some similarities to what McAdams, (2007) refers to as 'contamination sequences' in that events that start off positive end up being negative.

7.4 Elaine

Table 7.3: Elaine's pen sketch

Age range	Ethnicity	Location	Gender of partner	Pen sketch
32-38	White	Norfolk	Male	Throughout data collection Elaine was in a monogamous relationship with her husband Mark. At the time of submitting the diary and taking part in the first interview Elaine has one daughter called Poppy. At the time of the photo interview Elaine has recently given birth to her second child, a son, called Noah. Elaine has never had a same-gender relationship although she references how she has previously fallen in love with women. Elaine is semi-out to a select number of people in her life. However Elaine has not disclosed her sexuality to her husband's family or the majority of her own family. Elaine is an active member of a church and regularly attends church services. At the time of the diary and telephone interview Elaine was on long-term sick leave from work due to experiencing stress and depression brought about by the birth of her first child.

7.4.1 'This is me…if you can find me!'

Elaine took thirteen photographs and her photo-interview was one of the longest, lasting just under two hours. Elaine had organised her photographs by giving them all a title. The content of Elaine's photographs were diverse, ranging from pictures related to clothing, to her place of work. Elaine life appeared to be much more hectic since the recent birth of her second child. The overarching narrative emerging from Elaine's photo-interview was, 'This is me…if you can find me!' Throughout the interview issues associated with hiding her bisexual identity were present alongside a desire to be visible. This dialectic between openness and avoidance created tensions in different ways and contexts for Elaine. This theme is captured when talking about a book about bisexuality and religious faith Elaine says,

> *'I'm not going to hide it, I'm not gonna put it away, but I'm not gonna put it on a bookshelf that catches people's eye' [Photo interview: 418-419].*

The narratives associated with Elaine's photographs have been organised into four themes, ordinary and everyday life, community and friendship, fair and just organisations, and monogamy. Each of these is discussed below.

7.4.2 Ordinary and everyday life

The first photograph Elaine narrated set the scene for the overarching theme of avoidance and hiding occurring throughout her narratives. The photograph was of a diary and an exam script from her undergraduate degree (see figure 7.17).

Figure 7.17: Diary.

The diary represented a series of diaries Elaine had kept when she was a teenager. Elaine's later teenage years are presented as a period of angst and avoidance,

> *'...I spent so much of my teens burying myself in academic work to ...erh... avoid confronting anything else.' [Photo interview: 31-32]*

Elaine refers to being a teenager in her diary submission and how the content of her teenage diaries were focused on her sexuality,

'. . . filling pages with wordy agonising – mostly over sexuality' [Diary: 4-5]

The contents of the diaries are something she,

'...still can't bear the thought of anybody else ever reading them…co there's so much angst in there' [Photo interview: 18-20].

This period of angst seems to have continued up until her second year at university when she '*discovered a social life*' [Photo interview: 48]. It appears that from a young age Elaine retreats and isolates herself from others. It is not clear whether she does this in an attempt to work through issues related to her sexuality or for alternative reasons. However her admission that she *'. . . can't bear the thought'* of others knowing about what she wrote in her personal diaries is illustrative of the turmoil she must have been going through at that time. Research has drawn attention to the mental health impact on individuals who feel as though they have to hide their non-normative identity. Burleson, (2005) discusses how both internal and external bi-negativity contributes towards the *'bisexual burden'* (Anderson et al., 2016 p. 25) that individuals who embody this identity carry. The consequences of this are dire in that those who claim a bisexual specific identity appear to fair worst in terms of depression, particularly in comparison to lesbians and heterosexual women (Ross et al., 2012). Elaine references how she has a history of depression which appears to have been exacerbated by the birth of her first child.

Elaine's bedroom appears in three photographs, the bed (see figure 7.18), the wardrobe (see figure 7.19) and the contents of her bedside drawer (see figure 7.20).

Figure 7.18: Bed.

Figure 7.19: Wardrobe.

Figure 7.20: Bedside drawer.

The bed represents in some ways the temporality of our day-to-day lives and how the nature of spaces can change over time. At the beginning of their relationship the bed was seen as a place for Elaine and her partner to spend time together, sleep, talk, have sex, but at the time of the photo-interview the bed had been adjusted by the addition of a child rail on the side to accommodate their young son, who they often bring into their bed in the early hours of the morning. Elaine's daughter also joins them sometimes so the bed has changed from being a space for intimacy between two people to a family space. For Elaine the bed and the drawer represent two different types of sex. She says,

> *'…that's my bedside drawer, it's the one we call the sex drawer… erh… and there is my vibrator and so on, erhm, it kind of, the the contrast between shared and solitary sex… and although they kind of balance, they, which is part of, the, the kind of balance we keep that we've talked about and agreed what works for us.' [Photo interview: 266-275]*

The consequences of the birth of a second child have changed the sexual relationship between Elaine and her husband. After the birth of their first child Elaine had an episiotomy scar which had never fully healed. However, during the birth of her second child the scar tore again and this time was repaired more effectively than first time around. She says,

> *'So sex has changed quite a lot because there aren't the physical issues getting in the way… and because of knowing that actually quite a lot of what was going on was physical, it wasn't anything that we could've got over by an effort of will, it was a real physical issue … which made me feel better, 'cos it takes away the whole you're not trying enough.' [Photo interview: 329-340]*

This narrative points towards another dimension of the temporal nature of our day-to-day lives, the way in which events can have unintended consequences which can impact on relationships. The narrative as a whole also has a redemptive (McAdams, 2007) quality to it, in that a bad situation gets better.

The impact of everyday life on Elaine's identity is also narrated through her photograph of a child's pushchair (see figure 7.21).

Figure 7.21: Pushchair.

At the time of the photo-interview motherhood had become an all-encompassing part of her identity,

> *'I'd parked him while I got my camera out and I just thought well, that's, it's a kind of, how I am…I feel sometimes like my identity… any kind of identity's been swallowed up in motherhood…' [Photo interview: 614-618]*

Elaine records in her diary submission that,

> *'. . . once upon a time we had candlesticks everywhere. Now we have a baby. Too dark to do anything requiring precision' [Diary: 182-184].*

It appears that Elaine's sexual identity has been partially and temporarily overwhelmed by other aspects of her identity. She talks at length about the day-to-day challenges of managing, caring for, and organising two young children. Elaine regularly draws attention to the way in which her life has changed since she became the mother to two young children. The narrative presented above is illustrative of the way in which identity is multi-faceted and intersectional (Taylor, 2009; Crenshaw, 1993). Currently for Elaine her role as mother appears to be the one that takes up all her time. I do not suggest that the role of mother is the most important aspect of her identity, as rarely does one aspect of identity supersede another (Monro, 2015; Caldwell, 2010; Taylor, 2009). The temporal nature of life means that in the here and now, motherhood is that aspect of Elaine's identity that is narrated as all-encompassing. Motherhood can be seen to encroach on other aspects of her identity and life more generally as she narrates a time when life was different. Utilising McCall's (2005) concept of 'anticategorical complexity' (p. 62) in respect of rendering sexual identity categories as unhelpful does not take away the impact that motherhood has on Elaine. Her overt reference to a time before children signifies her role as mother as one that has a real impact on her lived experience as a bisexual women. Whilst the narrative tone (McAdams, 2007) of Elaine's transcript appears hectic at times it also has a redemptive quality (McAdams, 2008). Embedded within the narrative of how she is hidden amongst the day-to-day of everyday life, is a hint at a future whereby she will be seen again as Elaine, and not primarily as a mother or wife, illustrating the temporality of lived experience. The HPA offers a complementary understanding of the Template analysis theme of 'hidden by the relationship'. This theme refers to experiences and feelings of sexual identity invisibility as a consequence of occupying a monogamous relationship. Effectively participants are hidden by virtue of the gender of their partner and wrongly assumed to be either a heterosexual or lesbian. HPA draws attention to the ways in which 'other' relationships such as the relationships one has with one's children can also serve to 'hide' one's sexual identity and contribute towards further potential inaccurate assumptions related to sexual identity.

Elaine's narrative of a photograph of a high street magazine retailer (see figure 7.22)

Figure 7.22: Magazines.

illustrates the challenge of living in a small town. During the period of her life when she was working in a city she was able to buy Diva magazine, even though at times it was associated with a sense of embarrassment. However, in a smaller town where Elaine knows a lot of people she has been unable to buy it because of the possibility of being found out and identified as not heterosexual. However, this concern about others knowing important things about her identity goes beyond her sexuality. Elaine narrates how the last time she bought a pregnancy testing kit she had to go to the city so that no one from the church would find out. This distinction between large cities and small towns and villages is one that is important for Elaine and her concerns with local gossip and other people knowing details about her personal life are important to her.

> *'…small town life is quite different to city life. I did actually find life easier when I lived in a city cos you're a lot more anonymous. You can't be anonymous here. I can't go out without meeting people I know…'*
> *[Photo interview: 1232-1235]*

Issues in respect of who may potentially discover her personal business are of concern to Elaine. Irrespective of the fact that Elaine occupies the 'charmed circle' (Rubin, 1984), in which she is monogamously married to her male partner, and the mother of their children. Elaine continues to fear the impact that peripheral people in her life might have on her personally. It is plausible to suggest that Elaine wishes to distance herself from having to account to other people her sexual identity, particularly in the context of her current monogamous relationship. Throughout her data accounts Elaine refers to not being able to voice how she feels, irrespective of whether she feels aggrieved or not,

> *'…I agree to not deliberately start fights and to possibly be silent rather than react' [Telephone interview: 285-286]*
>
> *'I kept silent – it's the agreement' [Diary: 146]*

The consequences in relation to how she feels about keeping silent are illustrated when she says,

> *'. . . so i hide, i pass, and i hate it' [Diary: 107]*

Given the commonly understood stereotypes associated with bisexual women as hypersexual and promiscuous (Lannutti & Denes, 2012). Elaine agreement to effectively not voice her opinion or out her bisexuality is done as a protective mechanism for the life she and her husband have built together. This life by Elaine's admissions is not nuclear so much as extended, she says,

> *'. . . .we all come with families attached' [Telephone interview: 264-265]*

Thus, suggesting that for Elaine her sexual identity at this current time is actively being externally suppressed in order that the 'family' business remains private. Although internally Elaine appears to accept her bisexuality she clearly wrestles with the closet she has been encouraged to go into. The HPA provides further understanding of the aforementioned Template analysis theme ‘hidden by the relationship’ discussed above, and goes beyond a perhaps superficial understanding of how occupying a monogamous relationship serves to hide one’s bisexuality. The HPA provides further insight and detail in respect of what that pragmatically involves for Elaine and highlights how Elaine’s relationship with her partner is underpinned by her relationship with members of her extended family. HPA illuminates how one’s relationships with others, be they close or extended family members impact on Elaine’s feelings of invisibility. Elaine’s sexual identity continues to remain hidden as a consequence of maintaining these relationships.

Elaine’s photograph of a wardrobe with a dress and leather jacket hanging on it (see figure 7.19 above) enables her to narrate her views on the relationship between clothes and identity. The dress is an expensive designer outfit and Elaine explains how she was prepared to make financial sacrifices in order to buy the dress. She describes wearing it for her Master’s graduation and despite the fact that her gown was not a good fit the *‘dress looked so perfect. . . very femme’* [Photo interview: 1314-1315]. She contrasts the femininity of the dress with the leather jacket which is *‘…a biker jacket so that’s quite a butch garment’* [Photo interview: 1374]. Elaine uses the items of clothing to represent the ‘femme’ and ‘butch’ dimensions of her sexuality. Elaine can be seen to reference quite regularly her relationship with clothes and appearance. In the telephone interview she reflects on how she looked when she was at school, she says,

> *‘I was short, frizzy haired, wore glasses and spent my entire life in the library’ [Telephone interview: 136-137].*

Again in the diary she acknowledges that her appearance choices reflect her sexuality,

> *‘. . . quite a lot of how I dress has a lot to do with my sexual identity. It’s how I present myself to the world’ [Diary: 26-28].*

The projection of one's appearance is a powerful marker of non-normative sexualities (Hayfield, 2013; Hayfield, et al., 2013; Rothblum, 1994). However as previously outlined appearance choices are limited to either feminine, which signals heterosexual or masculine signalling lesbian (Butler, 1990, 2006). Elaine draws on the identity types of 'butch' and femme' to highlight aspects of her sexuality further illuminating the issue that bisexual women face when attempting to mark themselves out as not heterosexual and not lesbian.

7.4.3 Community and friendship

A photograph of a pair of boots (see figure 7.23)

Figure 7.23: Boots.

enables Elaine to narrate in some detail the event of coming out to her best friend. Elaine was in her mid-to-late 20's at the time and had known her friend since she was 19 but had never disclosed her sexuality during their friendship. She says,

> *'…I'd never said anything about my sexuality to her, and she was my best friend and I was scared… and that particular day I'd actually been*

> *meaning to say it but never could get to a point where the words would arrange themselves on my tongue…' [Photo interview: 163-169]*

In the end Elaine disclosed her sexuality in an email, sent it and *'…then ran away and hid'* [Photo interview: 183]. Her friend emailed her back more or less straightaway to say, *'it is all ok'* [Photo interview: 184]. Elaine contrasts this experience with another time she was wearing the boots on a walk with her friend, and another mutual friend, some five years later. The significant aspect of this episode was that Elaine felt comfortable enough with her sexuality to engage in some gentle teasing of her best friend as being the *'…only straight person we knew…'* [Photo interview: 202]. Elaine uses this narrative to illustrate how the extent to which she is comfortable with her sexuality has changed over time. This narrative resonates with the overarching theme of 'hiding', but also points towards the importance of temporal aspects of lived experience. The HPA expands and broadens the Template analysis sub-theme of 'FOBO – hurting the relationship' which is defined as the fear or belief that disclosing one's bisexuality to a specific person (such as a friend or partner) can potentially negatively affect the future of the relationship. HPA reveals how Elaine works through particular fears to reach a place where she is confident in disclosing her sexual identity. This represents a 'restorative' narrative where negative or unpleasant experiences are reconceptualised into positive outcomes (McAdams, 2007). HPA illustrates the temporality of particular FOBO and shows how over time Elaine's personal understanding and confidence in her sexual identity shifts and changes to the point where she is able to disclose her bisexuality irrespective of the potential impact this information might have on her relationship/s.For Elaine the boots act as a conduit to accessing memories over a period of time when she was both uncomfortable, and comfortable talking about her bisexuality with her friend. Brown's, (2012) stage model incorporates a time when bisexual people are understood to settle into the identity. Thus the process involved in reaching a place whereby Elaine feels content to voice her sexual identity in the presence of others (in this case her friend) demonstrates the temporal nature of internal acceptance. The fact that Elaine's friends' initial response to her disclosure was supporting and accepting no doubt contributed towards Elaine's subsequent feelings of disclosure comfort. Research shows how both supportive environments and individuals can make the difference in relation to those who hold non-normative sexualities feeling as though they can come out (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Throughout her life Elaine has struggled to find a community within which she feels comfortable and at ease. Along with other participants' she expresses a feeling of *'not fitting in'* [Photo interview: 330]. One of the ways she has tried to find a bisexual community is through online social networks. At the time of the research Elaine lived in a relatively small village with poor public transport links which limited her opportunities to develop face-to-face friendships. Although Elaine has disclosed her bisexuality to some of her friends she is by no means 'fully out'. So social networking sites such as Facebook are potentially problematic for her,

> *'…on Facebook because so many of my in-laws are friends with me there, I wouldn't say it outright there (referring to her sexuality). But on Twitter I do, yeah, and I put … I had a flap a few months ago when I thought my mother-in-law had discovered Twitter (laughs).' [Photo interview: 246-254]*

Nevertheless, Elaine makes use of online networking sites as a way of expressing her bisexuality with friends, and references in her diary that, *'It's like taking a corset off, spending time with people who know'* [Diary: 129-131]. When asked in the subsequent telephone interview who she felt like that with, she says, *'It happens a lot with on-line relationships'* [Telephone interview: 506-507]. The importance of friendships, be they on-line, or physical, is important for Elaine to affirm her sexuality. Empirical research has demonstrated how people are more likely to disclose personal information on-line than in face-to-face-settings (Misoch, 2015; Taddei, Contena, & Grana, 2010; Hollenbaugh, 2010). Given Elaine's previously discussed agreement to avoid drawing attention to her attraction to people of the same and different-gender and to '*be silent'* [Telephone interview: 285] it is understandable that she feels a heightened sense of freedom to disclose her sexuality on-line to people she is not likely to physically meet in the future (John, Acquisti, & Loewenstein, 2011).

An important other in Elaine’s life was her friend Emma who passed away several months before the photo-interview. It was Emma who was largely responsible for Elaine’s participation in the research as it was she who had forwarded information about it. Emma was a key figure in supporting Elaine’s exploration and development of her sexual identity. Emma gave Elaine and other friends several books that she thought would be of interest to them. Talking about the photograph of books (see figure 7.24)

Figure 7.24: Books.

Elaine says,

> *‘…she’s (Emma) the reason why I’m involved in this at all, I don’t know where she heard about your project but she passed it on to quite a number of us…erhm and it’s a couple of books she sent to me, she was always sending people books because she thought they’s like them… erhm…and she’d always put in a postcard and she wouldn’t just be here’s this book, she’d write you a proper letter’ [Photo interview: 481-491]*

Emma was someone Elaine could discuss important things with such as, sexuality, faith, and religion. Elaine has strong Christian beliefs which creates a number of tensions around her identity and belief systems. For Elaine this sense of feeling different is exacerbated by her upbringing which was in a rural ‘*middle of nowhere’* [Photo interview: 580] setting. She says,

> *‘…it wasn’t second home people, rich businessmen, it was people who worked on the land and always had, and that’s not very common, especially if you leave and you go to university, and all the people who had more conventional childhoods in towns or cities, the things you say and take for granted they just look at you as if you have come from outer space… so.. I feel as if I’ve got a whole collection of ways in which I don’t quite fit in… and it was just finding someone (Emma) I could talk to about three of them. ’ [Photo interview: 581-594]*

Elaine narrates a sense of being different and not fitting in that is derived from her lived experiences as a bisexual woman, her religious beliefs and her upbringing. However, to a certain extent these feelings of alienation were ameliorated by being able to discuss them with Emma. Elaine raises the importance of friendship as a means of identity support. Knowing that there is someone ‘out there’ who accepts her as she is appears to be enough. Unlike some of the other participants’ Elaine does not point towards a need to be part of the wider LGBT+ community, nor does she reference any pressing concern in respect of how lesbians would perceive her. Legate et al., (2012) and Coleman, (1985) discuss how the need for wider social support is often negated particularly if there is someone who already provides it, such as a partner. For Elaine, Emma appeared to be a rock of support for her. Elaine’s personal circumstances are such that the demands placed on her life such as paid work obligations, and her role as wife and mother, mean that she does not reference a need or indeed have the time to seek out specific LGBT+ communities to support her identity. The HPA identified how Elaine constructed a sense of community from those around her with whom she felt comfortable. Emma was a supportive friend who Elaine trusted enough to discuss personal information with, further illustrating Elaine’s need to connect with people who accept her for who she is.

7.4.4 Fair and just organisations

In her narrative associated with a photograph representing where she used to work (see figure 7.25)

Figure 7.25: Work.

Elaine talks about her experiences of equal opportunities in the office. Elaine had been emailed a copy of minutes of an Equality working group which in her eyes misrepresented the reality of working in the office. The minutes claimed that,

> *'...it was a great environment for people to work in of all sexualities'*
> *[Photo interview: 909-910]*

For Elaine this was blatantly not true, as she points to a complaint she lodged with HR at work in relation to inappropriate comments made about a lesbian colleague,

> *'. . . . they decided she was a lesbian. . . and it, and it, and it sort, and it seemed to be such a massive thing for them' [Telephone interview: 102-105].*

The people on the working party were predominantly managers with private offices.

> *'So I was in an open-plan office hearing everything, all people's conversations and so on… and the gossip, the speculation about various people, it just, this is not a great place… and of course if I had been very open about my sexuality at work I'd have never heard it, 'cos people wouldn't have said these things in front of me… but that doesn't mean they wouldn't have thought them.' [Photo interview: 925-937]*

Elaine expressed her concerns about the minutes and was offered the opportunity to join the working party, but,

> *'…because I was pregnant and I was throwing up several times a day and really exhausted I said I don't think I can do it now.' [Photo interview: 948-950]*

On reflection Elaine expresses some regret at her decision and considers it to be a missed opportunity. In this narrative Elaine is expressing dissatisfaction with what she considers to be an unfair and unjust institution. There is also an indication that the workplace is another context that Elaine feels it necessary to hide her sexuality, even though she goes someway to justifying this by claiming that it enabled her to be aware of the prejudice and discriminatory language used in the office. Elaine intimates that '*the gossip'* [Photo interview: 926] is routine at work and she points to colleagues regularly contemplating other people's sexuality. Although she does not explicitly refer to any bi-specific forms of discrimination her use of the word 'speculation' intimates that she is aware of a plethora of assumptive comments. The kinds of remarks she has heard have almost certainly affected her decision to not disclose her sexual identity as she clearly professes to understand how others would gossip about her. Such concealment strategies have been shown to effect job promotion and foster higher negative attitudes in relation to work (Puckett, Horne, Herbitter, Maroney, & Levitt, 2016; Ragins et al., 2007; Critcher & Ferguson, 2011). Elaine has a history of depression and had previously been on long-term sickness leave before the photo interview.

My interpretation of the narrative above is that the kinds of negative discussions she has witnessed over time in relation to LGBT+ colleagues has contributed to her overall fear of being out at work. In a reverse of Amelia's experience of 'what ifs' contributing and perhaps encouraging her 'FOBO – at work' in particular, the HPA highlights how Elaine's real world experience of witnessing what she regards as inappropriate gossip and speculation of her colleagues sexuality, has in effect answered any 'what if' questions she had with regards to disclosing her own bisexuality at work. The impact of micro-aggressions have been shown to have cumulative negative psychological effects on victims (Bostwick, et al., 2010; Balsom & Mohr, 2007; Meyer, 2003). Seen in this light Elaine may well suffer more harshly by not coming out as bisexual than if she were to come out. Elaine concludes an almost 'knowledge is power' type attitude, because she clearly understands what is going on. Elaine is alert to the reality of negative gossip at work and is not seduced by professed testimonials of others in respect of how great it is *'for all sexualities'* to work there.

7.4.5 Monogamy

Elaine's narrative associated with a picture of her wedding ring (see figure 7.26)

Figure 7.26: Ring.

provide an insight into her views on marriage and monogamy. For Elaine marriage and the vows associated with it constitute a promise made that needs to kept.

> *'I wondered if this diary was going to be the end of our marriage, but I don't think so now. We've got through before, we're getting through this' [Diary: 276-278]*

Although she does waver from that slightly when she acknowledges that non-monogamy is a possibility if all else fails for them to maintain a working relationship,

> *'If we met now, we'd probably, we'd start from a different point and we might, I think we've talked about this and, and said we that we might possibly have agreed to a more open relationship' [Telephone interview: 312-315].*

In terms of her attraction to women, Elaine says at the time of the interview, that because there is no one at the moment she is especially attracted to then it has been easier to manage. She says,

> *'I don't know…I may never fall in love with anyone else again… or it could happen tomorrow' [Photo interview: 1029-1034]*

The insecurity of never quite knowing how she will feel in the future weighs heavily on Elaine. At the time of the photo-interview Elaine's sexual relationship with her husband was better than it had been in the past. In part this was due to the repair to her episiotomy scar mentioned earlier. However Elaine repeatedly refers to the difficulties she experiences maintaining her relationship. Particularly in relation to sex and sexual desire, *'I don't have orgasms with him. Been trying for 12 years. It doesn't happen. . . . I can only come if thinking about sex with a woman' [Diary: 206-220]*

'. . . . .he has to put up with the fact that. . . a good, at least third of the time I'm going to say I'm really sorry I can't do it. . . I can't have sex with you tonight you've got the wrong genitals' [Telephone interview: 761-769]

Despite Elaine's struggle with monogamy she is adamant that she wishes to stay married. Sexual monogamy has been positioned as almost 'myth like' with the suggestion that monogamy is unattainable (Fisher, 2011; Nelson, 2010; Anderson, 2010; Hite, 1990). Alongside infidelity statistics (Wlodarski, et al., 2015; Wysocki & Childers, 2011; Barker & Landridge, 2010; Cherlin, 2009; Schmitt & Buss, 2001) which present a narrative of supermonogamy (Emens, 2004) as near on impossible to achieve. Whilst Elaine points to how she and her husband have got through other difficulties in their marriage, she appears steadfast that irrespective of the current issues she and her husband have, she has made a promise and intends to respect it. Ricoeur, (1992) draws attention to the dialectic between obligation and the good life. For Elaine at this point in her life she prioritises her obligations over any other desires she may have. Rubin's (1984) concept of the 'Charmed Circle' is again a useful way to conceptualise the importance of maintaining that which is privileged. Heteronormativity through the institution of marriage and the practice of monogamy have been shown to be a taken for granted relationship constellation (Mark, et al., 2014; Ruskin, 2011; Anderson, 2010; Bramlett & Mosher 2001).

Research has highlighted how 'passing' as heterosexual, particularly if one is a biological parent comes at a psychological cost (Tasker & Delvoye, 2015; Ross et al., 2012) thus the suggestion that occupying the 'charmed circle' is issue free is misleading. Although Elaine does not directly refer to the aftermath of a potential infidelity or relationship break-up, embedded within the narrative above is the feeling of avoidance thus intimating the potential unpleasantness of it (Finn, 2012a). However, Elaine can be seen to engage in identity maintenance strategies (Brown,

2002) in an attempt to avoid feeling consumed within heteronormativity. The Template theme of 'desiring the different gender' illustrates how participants in monogamous relationships sexually desire a person of a different gender to the gender of their current partner. Participants who were in different-gender relationships spoke about their desire to sexually be with women. These participants talked about how they missed female bodies, or desired a female touch, despite in some cases never having had a same-gender physical experience. This Template theme is further enhanced by HPA and reveals the real impact of this theme on both Elaine's sex-life, and relationship with her husband. She discusses her same-gender fantasies as the only way in which she can achieve orgasm. My interpretation of this narrative is that this is a way in which she can ensure she is keeping her bisexuality alive (Hartman, 2013; Hartman-Linck, 2014). Whilst this causes their marriage some stress they appear to have negotiated rules in their relationship that bring them both satisfaction, '*we've talked about and agreed'* [Photo interview: 275]. For Elaine's husband, this is partnered sex and a promise of *'be[ing] silent'* [Photo interview: 286]. For Elaine this is her sex drawer, masturbation and non-partnered sex.

Elaine took thirteen photos in which she attempted to encapsulate all aspects of her life. Elaine's narratives predominantly focused on a desire to both be invisible and visible as bisexual. Elaine had recently had a second child and she acknowledged how her bisexuality was somewhat on-hold particularly in the current context of bringing up children in a monogamous different-gender marriage. The overall theme that emerged from Elaine's photo interview was 'This is me…if you can find me!'

7.5 Sam

Table 7.4: Sam's pen sketch

Age range	Ethnicity	Location	Gender of partner	Pen sketch
32-38	White	Bristol	Male	Throughout data collection Sam was in a monogamous relationship with her boyfriend Ken. Sam has a relationship history that includes both same and different-gender relationships. Sam works in education. Sam considers herself to be openly out as bisexual and has disclosed this information to her family and friends. Sam is also out as bisexual at work. Sam considers herself to be an activist for LGBT+ rights and she contributes to bisexual specific events which she further believes outs her non-heterosexuality. Sam does not have any children.

7.5.1 'Struggling towards a good life'

Sam clearly put a considerable amount of time and thought in the selection of the photographs. Each photograph represented something important in her personal life. Sam took ten photographs and the interview lasted just over an hour. Sam was careful to not include pictures that could identify people in her life. Instead she preferred to utilise existing pictures of people in the public domain to represent the point or sentiment she wished to express. See for example, the photograph Sam referred to as 'friendships' (see figure 7.27).

Figure 7.27: Friendships.

The overall theme to emerge from Sam's photo-interview is one of 'struggling towards a 'good life''. The term 'good life' here refers to the way it is used by Ricoeur (1992) where he includes in his definition of the ethical intention, *'…aiming at the 'good life' with and for others, in just* *institutions'* (p. 172). Sam's narratives are underpinned by a desire to be part of a community she considers to be fair and to have friends with whom she can engage in reciprocal acts of kindness and support. The discussion of Sam's narratives is organised into four sections titled, community, everything changes, looking bi, and bi or car. These are presented below.

7.5.2 Community

Sam's photograph of a bridge (see figure 7.28)

Figure 7.28: Bridge.

represents 'community'. She associates the bridge with the local community within which it is located, she describes the area as having a *'coffee culture'* [Photo interview: 51] and presents an image of sitting outside at a table drinking coffee and watching the world go by. The area is populated by a mix of students and families. There are two aspects of the bridge that Sam narrates, firstly, its physical location and secondly, its appearance having been painted in the colours of the rainbow. Both of these are interesting to Sam – the location because it represents an environment within which she feels safe and secure, and the physical appearance, because the rainbow colours remind Sam of her younger 'hippy' self rather than their association with LGBT+ communities. A theme that runs through Sam's photo-interview is her desire to 'belong' and be 'included on her own terms', and the area that she now lives in goes someway to providing that. To illustrate the inclusiveness that Sam associates with the area, she says,

> *'There's a guy who cross-dresses …. he works in the shops in that area … he's accepted for who he is and … everybody fits there…' [Photo interview: 59-65]*

Here Sam is drawing on a stereotypical view of a male who dresses in female clothes as someone who is likely to be discriminated against in some places to support her claims for the inclusive culture of the neighbourhood. Sam's feeling of belonging to a community is in sharp contrast to Amelia who feels more isolated in relation to her sexuality. As well as feeling part of a broader community that is accepting of different expressions of sexuality. Sam has several friends who also identify as bisexual,

> *'… so erhm, I think, erhm, friendships have been really important and … a, a surprising number of my friends are bisexual… but, but probably wouldn't be particularly out about it …. We've learnt over the years that we are all kind of thing…' [Photo interview: 116-123]*

So for Sam a sense of belonging goes beyond the community and includes closer friendships. Sam acknowledges that to a certain extent her view of the area is not accepted by all of her friends, '*other people say the area isn't inclusive because it is quite family based'* [Photo interview: 84-85]. However, for Sam it is a place where she feels at home,

> *'There aren't that many places in my life, regardless of sexuality or just me… where I've felt like I belonged, and my community that I live in now is one of those places and it does feel like it's ok. And it does feel really safe and comfortable.' [Photo interview: 37-44]*

Throughout the data collection process Sam references how she does not feel that bisexual communities or spaces are necessarily inclusive of bisexual people who choose monogamy. She says,

> *'That's how I feel in the bisexual community more widely; that I should apologise for being monogamous and I feel cross that I feel that way!' [Diary: 74-76]*
>
> *' . . . I felt really guilty when I think of BiCon . . . . I felt bad that I didn't feel that I fitted in with that' [Telephone interview: 417-419]*
>
> *'. . . my experience of any bi collective is that it tends to be very particular bisexual people that are attracted to go there [Telephone interview: 39-41]*

BiCon is a space where the majority of attendees identify as bisexual (Bowes-Catton, 2015). The assumption that because of this shared sexual identity one will find a comfortable 'home' with which they will finally 'fit-in' is clearly not Sam's experience. Sam recognises that the commonality of finding people of the same and different-gender attractive is only a small part of their shared identity. Therefore she feels a sense of disconnect between herself and those who attend BiCon. It is clear that feeling a sense of community and belonging is important for Sam. She appears to feel this in the environment with which she lives. It is possible, given how she feels a sense of disconnect from wider bisexual communities, that she has forged her own community in a place where all manner of gender and sexual expression can be found and accepted. Klein, (1993) argues that bisexuals are *'among his kind when he is among human beings'* (p. 107). In effect, Klein (1993) highlights how bisexuals can 'belong' in any space or place where there are people, thus bisexual specific communities are not necessarily going to provide a sense of connection for all.

Cass's (1979) model of identity formation would position Sam as reaching a stage of *'identity pride'* in that she clearly feels a sense of community and acceptance in her surroundings. Whilst

Sam acknowledges her own disconnection from wider bisexual communities she does feel it is important to educate others in respect of non-normative sexual identities. Sam is partly able to achieve this through her paid work, and her activism. The final stage of Cass's (1979) model represents *'identity syntheses'*, this is thought to highlight those who have reached the point at which their sexual identity is an integral part of who they are, as well as an acknowledgement that sexuality is just one part of an holistic self in which a multitude of identities intersect (Crenshaw, 1993).

Throughout data collection Sam references that she is content in her different-gender relationship and whilst she discussed her process in relation to psychologically adjusting to being in a monogamous relationship with a man, she is clear that she wishes to stay in this relationship constellation. Sam's need for a sense of belonging and 'fitting-in' can be best articulated by drawing on Finn's, (2012) use of the metaphor of *'the home'* (p. 127). Finn (2012) refers to this as synonymous with one's relationship. Associated with one's relationship and home/environment is a feeling of both comfort and stability. The place where Sam lives and the person she lives with (her boyfriend), represent predictability, order, and security. For Sam this is important in relation to fulfilling her need for acceptance in a community. Sam makes a distinction between her sexuality and other aspects of her identity which is a point elaborated on below.

7.5.3 Everything changes

Although Sam expresses a sense of stability about the place where she lives there are a number of ways in which change appears in her narratives. One significant change was in the dynamics of a friendship after Sam has 'come out' to one of her friends at university. She says,

> *'…I was … sitting with a friend at, at, university and erhm, after we'd been talking about bisexuality and stuff and like my leg would brush hers and she'd jump a mile, whereas before it would've been no big deal whatsoever. It was … like it's crossed a boundary, it's changed the …*

you know, it's changed the dynamics of the friendship and it's not the same anymore…' [Photo interview: 134-146]

HPA provides additional insights into the previously mentioned Template analysis sub-theme of 'FOBO – hurting the relationship' and reveals the tangible shifts that Sam experiences as a result of disclosing her sexuality to a friend. To borrow from Amelia, taking it from an imaginary 'what if' to a real 'something'. Sam does not necessarily frame these changes as negative, although she does acknowledge the relationship as *'not being the same anymore'* she sees the outcome of change as an opportunity to conceptualise her life in different ways. The HPA theme of 'everything changes' is particularly salient for Sam as she draws on events and situations where she has experienced awkward and unpleasant responses to her disclosure that have led to her reconceptualising particular relationships. This is somewhat different from Elaine's experience of disclosure to her friend Emma, where she experienced disclosure as a force for strengthening their relationship. The quote above reflects a temporal aspect to friendships in the sense that friendships can and do change over time, particularly if a person is understood to have somehow changed from the person they were thought to be. Diamond (2008) has shown that women's sexual identity can shift and change. For example, women in relationships with men have been seen to choose labels such as, bisexual or lesbian as they feel it accurately reflects their current sexual identity. Viewed in this way, it appears that identity is not static and as such this demonstrates the instability of certainty. Ricoeur (1992) discusses how people understand the world through narratives. A sudden disruption of an established narrative that appeared linear leads to a reformulation or reinterpretation of the previous narrative in order to configure it into an understandable story once more. It is plausible that Sam has engaged in this very same process in an attempt to understand her friends' response to her disclosure.

Sam narrates her experiences of being with a man and contrasts it with her experiences of being with a woman.

> *'…when I was in a relationship with a woman, one of the things that I actually found erhm, just slightly, slightly novel, and that I had to adjust to, was that I felt like I became more blokey in how I behaved, like I was taking the man's role and I think all that stuff's bollocks really, but it was something I had to work through, like my reactions to my girlfriend were more that she was like needy and insecure and I was kind of backbone and, you know, being kind of offish and really sort of weird 'cos it makes you realise what a fragile premise it all is.' [Photo interview: 195-208]*

Not only do relationships change over time and are impacted on by knowledge of the other, but in Sam's case the context of the relationship changed the way in which she behaved. Sam is aware of social stereotypes and it is gender role stereotypes she is referring to as being *'bollocks'* [Photo interview: 201]. Nevertheless, when she is with a woman Sam sees herself taking on male gender role stereotypical behaviour. At the time of the photo interview Sam had one previous significant relationship with a woman, so of course it may be different for her in another relationship. However this does raise some questions for the concept of 'character' that Ricoeur (1992) uses in his discussions on identity. Ricoeur understands that personality although relatively static trait wise, does involve the capacity to respond to the context and environment as Mischel, (1968) postulated. The cultural ways in which girls and boys are gendered orients them into specific ways of behaving (Butler, 1990, 2006; Burr, 2003). The role requirements of individuals assumes a certain amount of knowledge of the role that one is not currently occupying and as such Sam suggests an almost parody-like imitation of the male/female relationship. Those who hold non-normative sexual identities have repeatedly referenced the lack of role models in mediums such as film and TV (Beirne, 2006; D'Erasmo, 2004; Russo, 1987). When bisexual people are represented they tend to support and reinforce existing negative stereotypes such as bisexuals as confused or in transition, or bisexuals as people to fear (Hayfield, et al, 2014; Callis, 2013; Alarie & Gaudet, 2013; Barker et al., 2012; Wan-Hsiu, 2010; Rodriguez-Rust, 2002; Barker et al., 2008; Bryant, 1997). The difficulties in respect of understanding the roles individuals are assumed to occupy in same-gender relationships in particular, is made more difficult due to this lack of non-normative representation of the ways in which queer people live out their intimate relationships. When lesbian lives are portrayed in the media a palatable version is transmitted. For example in dyadic relationships the focus tends to be on the emulation of heterosexuality, where one assumes a typical masculine role so is read as butch, whilst the other adopts a feminine role and is read as femme (Walters, 2001). Although the L Word has to some extent problematised this conceptualisation (Warn, 2006; D'Erasmo, 2004), research has highlighted how this has been replaced by a representation of women who occupy same-gender relationships as hyper feminine hairless bodied women (Wolfe & Roripaugh, 2006; McCroy, 2004). Wolfe and Roripaugh, (2006) discuss how the choice in terms of representing queer lives is limited to either *'assimilationist visibility'* or *'marginalised visibility'* (p. 45). Both of these representations are problematic in that they do not reflect the authenticity of what it is like to live one's life engaged in a same-gender relationship. The impact that being in a relationship with a woman had on Sam's behaviour was not something that she experienced in a positive manner at the time,

> *'… I didn't like myself when I was like that with my girlfriend.' [Photo interview: 255-256]*

Sam has been able to reflect on her same-gender relationship and her experiences and says,

> *'…and I think I just learned a shit load from being with a woman…I think it made me stand up more… and just erhm, I think in the past maybe I'd been a bit, I don't know, but I think it did … change my outlook, I think it makes my relationship … now more equal' [Photo interview: 220-238]*

In her current relationship with a man, Sam is very aware of gender role stereotypes and actively seeks to avoid falling into them.

'I try to be aware of those kind of gender stereotypes and to be aware of not, trying not to live up to them' [Telephone interview: 239-240]

Again implicit in Sam's quote above is a redemptive aspect in that she has learnt from her same-gender relationship how to behave in her current different-gender relationship (McAdams, 2007)

Sam presents a photo of a church (see figure 7.29)

Figure 7.29: Church.

to illustrate a significant turning point in her life. Sam entered into a short lived marriage at the age of 21. Sam sums it up when she says,

'... so it was all a bit of a disaster from before we actually got married really…' [Photo interview: 826-827].

At the time it was an act of rebellion on Sam's part, but in retrospect she demonstrates a form of commitment to feminist and LGBT+ communities by expressing a sense of regret at the whole process of getting married in a church. The relationship and marriage had ended within a year and although the process was difficult Sam narrates it very positive terms. Again this is reminiscent of McAdams, (2007) redemption sequence, in respect of Sam's acknowledgement that the marriage was 'a *bit of a disaster'* [Photo interview: 826], thus bad. However reflecting on that time she is able to articulate how the experience of her marriage ending was a pivotal time in her life and how she gleaned something positive from it.

> *'...and then I had a mass kind of early mid-20s crisis/reaction to splitting up and that was when I really started actually being me, that felt like a massive turning point and it felt like I stopped living life through my relationships' [Photo interview: 868-871]*

One of the consequence of the marriage breakup was that Sam went to university where she took a course in women's studies which proved to be another important event in her life.

7.5.4 Looking bi

In her narration of the photograph of a gym (see figure 7.30)

Figure 7.30: Gym.

Sam suggests that there is social pressure in contemporary society on individuals to '*attend to our bodies*' [Photo interview: 499] and she goes on to say that *'...your body conveys something about your identity'* [Photo interview: 421-422]. Sam believes that there are stereotypes available to heterosexual and gay/lesbian individuals in terms of dress and body type, but this is not the case for bisexuals,

'…we're still all encouraged to be very fussed about bodies and there still isn't a place that bisexuality fits in all of that.' [Photo interview: 438-440].

Sam problematises the extent to which it is possible for her (and others) to express bisexuality through her body and the way she dresses. This is a point Sam reiterates later in the interview,

'…it's very difficult to express bisexuality through appearance I think, you can't, you can't really do it. You can wear purple, pink and blue but that's not really gonna mean anything to many people…' [Photo interview: 598-604]

Sam relates the way she tries to present her bisexuality through dress and appearance to what she refers to as her 'hippy' days. This was a period in Sam's life when her style of dress may be considered alternative, she had piercings and in some ways Sam considered herself to be outside mainstream society. A view reinforced when she says, '*…and I'd always not felt normal.*' [Photo interview: 635]. One of the strong similarities between 'hippy' and 'bisexual' for Sam is that they both felt authentic and somehow real aspects of her identity that complemented each other.

'I think if there is a way to look bisexual it probably is that kind of alternative hippy wearing purple, having things pierced kind of look, and it felt to me very authentic… my bisexuality felt authentic initially in relation to how I felt about my attraction to other people…' [Photo interview: 619-626]

One of the challenges that Sam faces in her desire to express her bisexuality through her appearance is the stereotypical forms of dress that are associated with a heteronormative binary division of men and women - men wear trousers and women wear dresses. Research has shown how there are no recognisable specific bisexual appearance markers in wider society (Hayfield, 2013; Hayfield et al., 2013: Eves, 2004), As such the ability to demarcate one's bisexual attractions away from appearance markers that signify lesbian or heterosexual specific ways of dressing or looking is problematic. In recognition of this issue Miller, (2006) suggests that the only legitimate way in which to signify one's bisexuality is to 'do sexuality' although again one will be misappropriated as straight or lesbian. Thus it appears that gender performance (Lorber, 1999) is both restrictive and supportive as the message that is predominantly read is one of monosexual. At the time of the interview Sam had no clear answer to the problem of expressing her sexual identity through her appearance, but she continues to search for an answer,

> *'But I have to try a little bit to express something about it (her bisexuality)' [Photo interview: 664-670]*
>
> *'. . . have you seen the bisexual badges. . . . there's one that's bi and monogamous and that's for sale at BiCon and, you know…and I have a bi and monogamous badge' [Telephone interview: 475-482]*

For Sam the desire to express her bisexuality is also related to broader issues such as a lack of available and socially acceptable stereotypes of bisexual women that she can draw on. She wants to be alternative and can draw on stereotypical 'hippy' ways of presenting but as yet has failed to do that with her bisexuality. Sam sees two aspects to the concept of 'being different'. First there is the sense of being different and not fitting in anywhere, and secondly, there is a sense of being different as being 'cool'. This dialectic of difference as problematic and difference as positive is something that has changed over time for Sam as she says she has become, *'…more comfortable with your difference*'. [Photo interview: 788-789]

> *'. . . now I am happy and confident to be me and to embrace my own sexuality and what it means to me instead of what I think other people will think of me'* [Diary: 89-91]

The Template sub-theme of 'bisexual look' which is expressed as the difficulties associated with the identification of a bisexual identity based on appearance alone, is enhanced by HPA, and shows how despite Sam's acknowledgement that there are no specific bisexual appearance styles that exist in the same way as lesbian appearance styles do, Sam's choice of clothing is her own version of 'bi'. Sam selects appearance styles that enable her to feel confident and comfortable in a world that does not necessarily recognise her sexual identity through her appearance specifically. For Sam her appearance does not influence her potential to conceptualise community as existing all around her.

7.5.5 Bi or car?

One of the themes that emerges in Sam's narratives is that bisexuality is only one part of her identity, albeit an important part, but there are other equally important aspects. She uses a photograph of some old library books (see figure 7.31)

Figure 7.31: Books.

to illustrate the fact that one part of her identity is an interest in old cars. She says,

'… but it (bisexuality) isn't the only thing that makes me who I am, there's so many other things that contribute to that. There's my job, there's my friends, there's, you know, my other hobbies, there's where I live, there's like lots of things. It's like a big melting pot of my identity and it doesn't feel like my bisexuality is the only thing I need to bring forward to show people…' [Photo interview: 513-518]

This sentiment is expressed in previous data accounts,

'My bisexuality does not feel like a 'side' of me, or a 'part' of me, but neither does it feel all-consuming or the only aspect of identity that is important to me' [Diary: 22-24]

'. . . you know, I'm not just my relationship or my bisexuality' [Telephone interview: 612]

Sam contrasts her relationship to her bisexuality with her view of lesbians' relationship to their sexuality,

'…they live in lesbian shared houses with lesbian friends, they go to lesbian clubs, it becomes like everything to them…' [Photo interview: 521-524].

Whilst Sam does not have a problem with that lifestyle, she says,

'…my bisexuality can't be everything.' [Photo interview: 527].

Sam's analysis of lesbian life is rather extreme and she appears to not be considerate of the ways in which all women's lives are multidimensional (Monro, 2015; Ross et al., 2012; Choo & Ferree, 2010; Caldwell, 2010; Taylor, 2009; Crenshaw, 1993) although she does draw on an established lesbian community, Sam's bisexual identity is in part tied into her current relationship with a man which superficially provides her with a 'heterosexual' privilege. A fact which is recognised by Sam herself who acknowledges that being with a woman would mean that her sexuality would become a more visible part of her identity.

Sam narrates one of the problems she encountered when she first started going to gay clubs,

> *'…so then when you start going out to gay clubs and stuff, then it becomes different, then it becomes like you have to prove yourself…like, you say your bisexual but you've not had sex with a woman so how can you say you are? Or you say you're bisexual but you've had sex with a woman and enjoyed it so why aren't you a lesbian? Or you've had sex with a woman but now you're having sex with a man so you're heterosexual again, yeah, and it was a phase and all that crap…. And I went through quite a long period feeling, like I had to prove something to other people about what it meant that I was bisexual…' [Photo interview: 1145-1169].*

This feeling of having to prove her bisexuality to others is something that Sam objects to because she is '*relatively out'* [Photo interview: 1175) about her sexuality. In her eyes this discriminates against people who identify as bisexual and as she says, *'…they don't have to prove their heterosexuality'* [Photo interview: 1185]. Unfortunately for Sam the problems associated with being bisexual went beyond having to prove it. She narrates the time in her life she met her current partner. Sam was working in an environment where several of her friends and colleagues were lesbians and she had a good social life with them. However, when her group of lesbian friends found out she was with a man their behaviour and attitude towards her changed completely.

> *'I was like completely shunned by all those people that I'd thought were friends and that I thought I fitted in with, because I was with a man. And I understand that, I do understand that, but it also makes me feel sad and I found it very hard and felt very rejected and I felt very like I'd done something wrong when erh, I kind of hadn't, I'd never lied to them.'*
> *[Photo interview: 1227-1233]*

For Sam once her bisexuality expressed itself through a relationship with a man she was effectively excluded from a community she had once participated in.

> *'. . . when I first came out and I went out on the LGBT scene . . . I felt I belonged and then I got together with a man, and I felt like I didn't'*
> *[Telephone interview: 1038-1040]*

The HPA identified the Template themes of 'queer hostility' and 'queer hostility if dating a man'. The former is defined as the belief that self-identified gay men and lesbians are wary of bisexuals and hold-binegative beliefs, and as a result, are hostile towards bisexuals. The latter, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, refers to participants understanding that if they are in a different-gender relationship they will be negatively judged by lesbians specifically. The HPA provided understanding into the specific ways in which these two themes impacted on Sam's life leaving her feeling rejected and let down. Furthermore HPA illuminated the way in which communities can negatively support and perpetuate suspicion in respect of bisexual identity. The activist work that has been carried out in a bid to establish lesbian communities is vast. (Shaw, 2009; Henderson, 1999; Guess, 1995; Phelan, 1989; Kitzinger, 1987; Zimmerman, 1984). Plummer, (1995) argues that for a narrative to be produced and re-produced the story has to be cohesive. The lesbian narrative is one of oppression and inequality, as such they have sought to actualise their lived experience as authentic. Consequentially society has afforded equal rights to those who claim lesbian identities [52](Alarie & Gaudet, 2013; Israel & Mohr, 2003). Research has proposed that immersion in the lesbian community can strengthen one's non-normative identity (Hanley, & McLaren, 2015; Kelly, 2007). For example research has shown how beauty and thinness norms are reconceptualised in the lesbian community (Hayfield, 2013; Taub, 1999: Rothblum, 1994; Dworkin, 1989) highlighting the potential protective esteem enhancing factors that are to be found in the lesbian community. To claim a lesbian identity is to say that one does not desire sexual relationships with men. It is this marker that is significant and sets lesbians apart from women who do desire sexual relationships with men. However the stability of sexual identity in women specifically has been shown to be much more fluid than originally assumed (Diamond, 2008a). However the narrative remains dominant in that lesbians do not desire men sexually. Therefore bisexual women occupy the fringes or borderlands of the lesbian community in that they share lesbian's sexual desire for women but also they reject their dislike for sex with men (Rust, 1993). It is this 'same but different likes' agenda that fuels the fire of mistrust of bisexual women as people who do not fully embrace lesbianism in all its assumed forms (Dyar, et al., 2014; Zaylia, 2009; Rodríguez-Rust, 2000; Hartman, 2006). Accusations of heterosexual privilege are levelled at bisexual women in a bid to further demarcate lesbian identity from bisexual identity. The resulting hostility bisexual women are subject to is palpable (Hartman, 2006). Research has shown the power and influence of the pink pound (Adams & Tiesdell, 2013; Florida & Mellander, 2010; Black, Gates, Sanders, & Taylor, 2002) and how lesbian specific commercial services have emerged. In effect one need never utilise the services of a man again as advertisements offering the services of female undertakers to lawyers to taxi drivers are easy

[52] However lesbians do still live in fear of attack and discrimination despite the legal rights they have secured in the UK.

to identify. The commodification of lesbian capital reinforces Sam's articulation that lesbian identity can be all-consuming for them.

Sam also expresses a sense of exclusion from what she perceives as the bisexual community.

> *'…my first experience of the bisexual community weren't particularly positive and erh and ..I didn't feel like I fitted into that either. It seemed to be quite dominated by the idea of a set to non-monogamy.' [Photo interview: 1352-1358]*

The HPA provides further insight into the Template sub-theme of 'queer hostility if dating a man' as previously discussed and defined above. Sam has experienced hostility emanating at her from the lesbian community because she is in a different-gender relationship. HPA broadens this theme and exposes how Sam also experiences hostility being levelled at her from within the bisexual community also. The HPA accentuates how this hostility manifests itself somewhat differently within the bisexual community. Sam suggests that BiCon specifically is dominanted by an orientation towards the practice of consensual non-monogamy and it is because she is in a monogamous relationship that she feels she does not fit in and not necessarily because she is in a different-gender relationship. This exclusion from not only the lesbian community but also what Sam perceives to be the bisexual community is especially challenging. Sam is not interested in having polyamory as an identity or lifestyle. The challenge of maintaining more than one relationship is not something she wants to undertake. Thus Sam's inability to find a 'fit' in lesbian and bisexual communities further illustrates the previous point related to the importance of identifying a community whereby she feels a sense of connection with those around her. Upon acknowledgement of the ways in which a 'fit' is not to be found in either community Sam forges one for herself.

Sam took ten photographs of objects that related to aspects of her personal life. Sam ensured that the photographs she took were symbolic of aspects of her identity. She was cautious to not include identifiable individuals in any of the photos. Sam's narratives are predicated by an appetite to be part of a community that she views as supportive and just. The overall theme to emerge from Sam’s photo-interview is one of ‘struggling towards a ‘good life’’ in that it was important for her to secure a place or community with which she felt a sense of belonging. Whilst this has been at times testing for Sam she appears to be in a place where she feels content and comfortable with the choices she has made and with who she is.

7.6 Paula

Table 7.5 Paula's pen sketch

Age range	Ethnicity	Location	Gender of partner	Pen sketch
25-31	White	Staffordshire	Female	Paula was in a monogamous relationship with her boyfriend Wayne at the time of submitting the diary. However she ended the relationship soon after and was single at the time of the first telephone interview. At the time of the photo-assisted interview Paula was in a relationship with a woman called Kathryn. Paula has a previous relationship history that includes same and different-gender relationships. Paula was training to be a teacher at the time of the first interview but by the time she took part in the photo interview she had secured a teaching job. Prior to Paula securing a teaching job she had not disclosed her sexual identity to those she undertook her teacher training with or the majority of her family. Paula has just recently disclosed her bisexuality to her parents. Paula does not have any children.

7.6.1 'This is me … if you don't like it … tough!'

Paula took and returned eight photographs which was fewer than all the other participants', and she was the only participant to include a photograph of herself. The photo-interview lasted just over an hour. Paula's photos have not been carefully constructed as a whole series unlike most of the other participants', but together they convey the message, 'this is me, here I am'. Some photos are metaphors in that they represent or stand for a set of ideas, beliefs or concepts, whereas others are more clearly linked to a story. At the time of the photo-interview Paula was in a same-gender relationship. Her relationship was relatively new having spent some time being single after the breakdown of her different-gender relationship. 'First time events' occur throughout Paula's narratives in the photo-interview. Each event is accompanied by a detailed story which provides an interesting account and contributes to Paula's presentation of her bisexual identity. The overarching theme that emerged from her narratives was, '*This is me … if you don't like it … tough*! Unlike some of the other participants' at the time of the photo-interview Paula was quite up front and 'out' in relation to her bisexuality. Paula's narratives about the photographs can be organised into four broad themes, community and friendship, stereotypes and tensions, and monogamy and sexual attraction, and finally performativity. Each of these themes is discussed below.

7.6.2 Community and friendships

Paula describes two distinct and separate friendship groups she is involved in: the rugby club and the comedy club. In the first photograph title 'drama' (see figure 7.32)

Figure 7.32: Drama.

Paula reflects on the relationship between 'acting' and 'real life' – which resonates with her street performances which she considers to be a 'safe' environment to explore issues. The photo represents a period in Paula life when she was still a virgin (at university) but was acting the role of a bisexual man who had lots of sex. The director said to her,

> *'… you've got to come on stage like you've just had lots of sex'. [Photo interview: 68-69]*

Paula was out as bisexual at university and as well as being part of the rugby team she was also part of a comedy/drama group with five men (see figure 7.33).

Figure 7.33: Comedy.

This was a group with whom Paula got on and felt at home with,

'…. it was like a really comfortable, kind of flirty, funny environment…' [Photo interview: 374].

Paula positions her relationship with the other members of the group when she says,

'… because I was the only girl and I was in charge, they were like, aw, Paula, she's more of a man than we are, she's got, she's got a tripod, she's such a man, she's got balls…' [Photo interview: 357-360]

The photograph of the group represented more than just her friendships with the five men but also her third year at university, an important period in her life,

'. . . . a lot of things happened in my third year, erhm, to do with relationships and confidence and sexuality and all that kind of stuff.'
[Photo interview: 389-393]

In a similar way to other participants' Paula bought Diva magazine (see figure 7.34)

Figure 7.34: Diva.

to help her explore aspects of her sexual identity, but also so that she could contribute to conversations with her lesbian friends at university. However, she also narrates concerns, prior to being more open about her sexuality, about actually buying the magazine in places where she might be known. It also provided Paula with a sense that she was indeed part of a larger community,

'...it was almost like if I've got a copy of Diva then, you know, I must be part of a community.' [Photo interview: 1013-1014]

However, Paula expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of content directly relevant to bisexual women in Diva.

Identity models often stress the importance of community and friendship for those who are going through the process of identity development (Edwards & Brooks, 1999; Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Martin, 1991; Troiden, 1989 Degges-White et al., 2000; Chapman & Brannock, 1987; Van de Meerendonk & Probst, 2004; Levine, 1997; Brady & Busse, 1994). In the narrative presented above it appears that this stage in her life is a time when she was delving into new experiences and examining her thoughts and feelings in relation to the impact that these experiences had on her. Paula's purchase of Diva magazine, clearly points to her attempt to connect and fit in with her lesbian friends at University. All of the participants' who participated in this research were aware of Diva and had bought the publication at some point in their life. For Paula Diva represents a doorway into a world she is not that familiar with. However much like other participants' have referenced, Diva does not capture wholeheartedly the lives of bisexual women.

7.6.3 Stereotypes and tensions

Paula took a photograph of a slogan in Diva magazine which states, 'some people are bi, get over it'. (see figure 7.35)

Figure 7.35: Slogan.

The slogan has been derived from an original and well known phrase which had 'gay' rather than 'bi' and was used in campaigns to promote equality for the LGBT+ community. Paula uses the slogan in the photograph to narrate her feelings and negative experiences of being bisexual.

'I saw it in Diva a few months ago …and I just remember thinking that's so true because you know, people are kind of more accepting of gay people than they are of bi people…erhm… because they don't understand bi people and I would get a lot of flak for it at uni … erhm… so like oh God, make up your mind Paula, seriously… and I'd be like but, I'm bi, you know…erhm…I fancy men and women… so end of basically…' [Photo interview: 551-565]

There is no doubt that the original slogan, 'Some people are gay get over it' had a significant impact in the way that gay sexuality is presented in the media. However, there is perhaps a case to be made that in some ways it contributed to the invisibility of the sexualities located under the B and T (and others) of the LGBT+ community. Diva's subsequent inclusion of the 'bi' version of the slogan goes some way towards Paula feeling as though her identity is being accurately expressed.

Paula experienced the consequences of negative stereotypes of bisexual women, in particular, the belief that bisexual women are promiscuous. She says,

'I would get a lot of people thought that …erhm…I was very promiscuous and I would sleep with anybody… and erhm when a lot of the rugby boys found out that I was bi it was like …ooooh…ooooh you know and really joking about it...' [Photo interview: 567-572]

Although Paula acknowledges that,

'…a lot of the girls on my team would sleep with anybody, I wasn't one of those…' [Photo interview: 574-575]

The pervasive sexualisation of bisexual women by men has been noted in the literature for some time (Callis, 2014; Platt & Lenzen, 2013; Sue, 2010; MacDowell, 2009; Balsam, & Mohr, 2007; Angelides, 2001). Accusations of bisexual women performing their sexuality for the sole purposes of attracting men have been levelled at them in an attempt to delegitimise their identity (Ponterotto, 2016; Lannutti & Denes, 2012; Carr, 2011; Fahs, 2009; Mulvey, 1975). The abuse that bisexual women receive from those who disbelieve their claims of authenticity has been shown to be damaging to their self-esteem and mental health more generally (Vrangalova et al., 2014; Katz & Farrow, 2000; Shokeid, 2002). The 'heteroflexible' (Essig, 2000) assumption attributed to bisexual women has contributed towards their further marginalisation. The irony Paula points out in respect of her lesbian team mates being the ones who are more likely to *'sleep with anybody'* [Photo interview: 574] is illuminating. Rich, (1980) refers to compulsory heterosexuality as the assumed natural sexual position for women. Because bisexuality infers attraction to people of the same and different-gender, the 'one drop rule' (Davis, 1991) although more commonly associated with men, could be used to position women as lesbian. However this is not the case as bisexual women who have had singular same-gender experiences are thought to retain their heterosexual essential identity (Barker & Langdridge, 2008), further supporting Rich's (1980) claim that heterosexuality dominates the field in respect of sexual orientation and identity in women. However over the years since being out as a bisexual woman Paula has developed a sense of confidence and defiance about her sexuality, which she has been able to take into her current same-gender relationship. Paula is aware of a tension between lesbian women and bisexual women and when talking about her partner she says,

> *'...you know, she's really quite accepting of it 'cos a lot of lesbians won't go out with a bi girl.' [Photo interview: 627-629]*

Research has highlighted the way in which bisexual women are negatively perceived by the lesbian community (Hartman, 2006; Shokeid, 2002; Rust, 1995). Paula's narrative shows that she too is cognisant of such disapproval. According to Rust, (1995) the hostility emanating from lesbians is borne out of a belief that dating bisexual women only leads to heartbreak in that they will leave them for a man. Walker's (2014a; 2014b) research investigating heterosexually identified women who have sex and relationships with women on the *'downlow'* (Ford et al., 2007: 209) could be viewed as supporting this fear. Nonetheless Paula appears to understand that irrespective of proffered critiques of such beliefs, it is a fact, and one she no doubt has to alleviate in her current relationship. The HPA complements the previously discussed Template analysis theme of 'queer hostility' and extends it by revealing how despite the prevailing belief that lesbians are hostile towards bisexual women, some are not. My interpretation of what Paula discusses in the above quote is that she feels lucky to have found a lesbian who is willing to date her and that the hostility she may have experienced from the lesbian community did not result in her lesbian partner refusing to date her because she identifies as bisexual. The self-confidence Paula has developed about her sexuality is reflected in the fact that a few months before the photo-interview despite previous discussions related to her fears of being out, she told her parents that she was bisexual. Her parents were very accepting of her sexuality and it has helped Paula talk openly about those aspects of her identity. In the previous telephone interview Paula says,

'I'm almost on the verge of actually like properly telling my parents
[Telephone interview: 993-994]

Now that she is out there is a palpable sense of relief,

'...I think just because people know and people talk about it now and you know I feel like I can talk about it more and yeah just feel a bit more comfortable about it I suppose.' [Photo interview: 640-646]

When Paula disclosed her sexuality to her parents it was important to her to make it clear she was bisexual and not gay,

'…I'd said to them, oh, you know, erh, I'm dating this girl but I'm not gay. And I wanted to make it very clear that I wasn't gay…' [Photo interview: 679-681].

Paula stresses the importance of informing her parents of her bisexuality and not letting them labour under any illusion that she is a lesbian. Paula is clearly taking what she considers to be an activist stance here in that it is illustrative of the overall theme of her narrative of '*This is me … if you don't like it … tough*! Paula has done the identity work (Stein, 2003; Orne, 2011) and appears to be in a place whereby she can attest to how she sees herself in the lives of those people with whom she considers important. Paula clearly believes that it is crucial to not mislead anyone in relation to how she sees herself.

Paula expresses a sense of alienation of bisexuals by the lesbian community when talking about the reasons for buying Diva magazine she says,

'I suppose it (buying Diva) made me feel more part of a community than some of my friends did at uni who were gay erhm they were like …you're not really bi… you're not really interested in women, you're just doing it because you are …at uni.' [Photo interview: 1033-1038]

A similar, but rather more subtle, tension is narrated in Paula's experiences at Gay Pride in Brighton when she was talking to one of Orla's[53] friends,

> *'…I was getting on really well with her and they made a comment about me being gay and I went oh actually no I'm bi …erhm and knowing that, like, I wouldn't say they actually changed towards me but erhm, I dunno, it just, felt a little bit different after that point.' [Photo interview: 1153-1161]*

This is clearly not evidence for any form of active discrimination, but it does point to an underlying tension between bisexual and lesbian women in Paula's world. An equally plausible explanation would be that it was Paula who felt uncomfortable as a result of disclosing her sexual identity and the attitude and behaviour of Orla's friends had not changed. Paula laments the potential that her feelings related to others not showing inclusivity towards her, or her thoughts about not being taken seriously by her gay friends may well be rooted in her own insecurities she says,

> *'. . . .It's difficult to feel totally included. It's probably all in my head' [Diary: 115-116]*

[53] Orla is a friend of Paula's – they were sexually involved at University although not in an exclusive relationship.

HPA presents a complementary alternative and offers an alternative comprehension into the aforementioned Template analysis theme of 'queer hostility'. HPA draws attention to the interpretative processes that are in play when people are engaged in interactions and reveals Paula's uncertainty with regards to which direction the hostility she experiences in the exchange presented above is coming from. Paula acknowledges the possibility that it is she who perhaps emanates hostility upon self-disclosing her bisexuality to her lesbian friends and not necessarily them who have an issue with her sexual identity. As discussed earlier the inescapable stereotypic messages that are populated in relation to those who claim attraction to the same and different-gender are endemic. Thus it is not surprising that irrespective of whether Paula's thoughts related to her insecurity are *'all in my head'* [Photo interview: 116] she clearly feels them.

7.6.4 Sexual attraction and monogamy

Narratives related to who Paula finds attractive are peppered throughout her data accounts. Paula regularly presents story-like descriptions of her sexual desire for women in her life.

> *'Our mortgage advisor, is a women in her late 40's but is quite the MILF[54]. . . she's petite as well. Quids in' [Diary: 32-38]*
>
> *'I think women are more, more like beautiful' [Telephone interview: 116]*

[54] Stands for 'mother I would like to fuck'.

'. . . . quiet at work today. . .when Sue prances about in her snug uniform like that, I have trouble keeping my eyes anywhere else but on her' *[Diary: 169-171]*

The photo of Paula and Orla (see figure 7.36)

Figure 7.36: Paula and Orla.

represents the story of the first girl Paula slept with,

'…I suppose I had a very sort of, I wouldn't really say I had a relationship with Orla, it was one of those sorts of erhm, she was very, she was a very sexual person erhm, she was very flirty erhm, she would often pull somebody on her way, when she was out, when we were out, you know, on the sports nights at rugby at uni … and I think that night I was probably her, her fall back person as it were…erhm…but she was probably the first girl that I was either … I dunno… either loved or I idolised or something like that… erhm and it was just like, just a really big, I dunno, it was, it was quite an important night…' [Photo interview: 207-221]

The episode was not entirely straightforward and it would appear that the event was asymmetrical in terms of the extent to which there was a desire to repeat it. Paula wanted to but the other person, Orla, did not. Paula had a friendship with Orla throughout their time at university and was sexually attracted to her. After Paula had slept with Orla she saw her a couple of days later at a party flirting with other women and thought,

> *'…hold on a minute, you were paying me attention one minute and, and now you're like flirting with other people, what's that all about?' [Photo interview: 319-321]*

Clearly Paula felt jealous even though she was aware of the '*incestual'* [Photo interview: 299] nature of women's sports teams at university. By this Paula was referring to her view that women's sports teams at university tend to be settings within which women will have sexual relationships with other members of the team. Paula presents it as if this is a taken for granted assumption about the nature of women's sports teams,

> *'...you know, they kiss each other and they sleep with each other and whatnot and I suppose because a lot of people thought well, you know, a lot of people knew that erhm I was bi and I suppose it just, I suppose she (Orla) also assumed that I sort of knew, you know, what the crack was with things like that…' [Photo interview: 301-309]*

The HPA offers additional insights into the previously mentioned Template analysis theme of 'experiencing gender differences in relationships' as Paula intimates a naive understanding related to lesbian relationships and culture operating somewhat differently to heterosexuality. Paula's narrative points to her reflections of not understanding the lesbian dynamic in relation to sex and commitment. Accessing *Diva* magazine is one way in which Paula attempts to understand a world she is on the fringes of.

The narrative associated with a photograph of Eva Longoria (see figure 7.37)

Figure 7.37: Eva.

is another 'first' for Paula. She says,

> *'...my first real like celebrity, famous person crush I suppose, erhm, you know, yeah there's be loads of like being with a girl I suppose…I'd been out with loads of blokes and things in the past you know, I'd go, oh yeah he's nice looking, he's hot… erhm… but she was like the first real person who…erhm… you know, I had an on-going thing for.' [Photo interview: 479-486]*

For Paula this is important because it is the first time she had felt an immediate and intense attraction to a woman, which is expressed when she says, *'...I've never really gone… Wow…Hot!'* [Photo interview: 526]. It could be argued that Paula's attraction to a celebrity was translated into 'reality' when she met Orla.

Paula talks relatively briefly about monogamy and her current relationship and narrates an internal dialogue she has about the issue and the concerns she has,

'…I was thinking the other week I was like, okay, so you know, I am really in love with Kathryn, she's like the first person I actually see a future with erhm, but then it kind of almost, there's like a little voice in the back of my head going okay but you're never ever… you'll never you know, sleep with another man or woman… and l'm like then the other voice goes, well… why do I need to? …I've never been in a relationship where I see a future where I actually want to see the person every day… where I actually want to have sex with this person every day … and I've found this person and I don't want to cheat, she's been cheated on in the past…' [Photo interview: 1258-1283]

Ricoeur (1992) would suggest that Paula is justifying her monogamy in two ways. Firstly, she sees maintaining her monogamous relationship as an 'obligation' and a 'promise'. The consequences of breaking her promise would be even more destructive to her partner because of her history of having been cheated on. Secondly, the monogamy is justified in terms of sexual attraction, Paula wants to have sex with her partner *'every day'*. [Photo interview: 1276]. Despite these justifications for maintaining the monogamy she has with her girlfriend, Paula still has the other voice which challenges her obligations and interferes with her attention in the pursuit of the good life. In relation to sex with men Paula says that it is not the sex *per se* that she misses but rather the closeness and flirting. One of the consequences for Paula of being in a same-gender relationship is that her circle of friends is predominantly women. So there is no evidence from Paula's photo-interview that because she is with a woman the desire for a sexual relationship with a man is in anyway increased.The Template analysis identified a number of instances where participants who were in different-gender relationships expressed a desire for sex and/or intimacy with a person of the same-gender (be that with someone with whom they had a previous relationship with or an unknown person). The HPA offers an extension of the Template analysis theme of 'desiring the different gender' which refers to participants expressing a desire to sexually connect with a person who is of a different gender to their current partner. HPA offers a valuable insight into Paula's same-gender relationship and shows how she conceptualises a future in which she will not partake in sex with anyone else. Paula's internal dialogue in the above quote reveals her belief that that she will have no future hankering or desire for sex with anyone other than her current same-gender partner. My interpretation of the way in which Paula conceptualises her future relates to the infancy of her current relationship in that Paula's current same-gender relationship is relatively new and according to Anderson, (2010) individuals are less likely to entertain thoughts of sex with other people in the early stages of an intimate relationship. However Paula clearly puts some thought into what a monogamous relationship means for her in terms of not engaging in 'flirting' with other people. The assumption that monogamy is entered into without consideration (Gramsci's, 1971; Anderson, 2010) is not applicable in Paula's case as she clearly attends to considerations related to a potential future whereby she no longer engages in sex with anyone else other than her current partner.

7.6.5 Performativity

Paula's narrative associated with a picture of herself (see figure 7.38)

Figure 7.38: Self.

demonstrates a relationship between clothes and behaviour. The photograph represents a night out with her course mates at university when they dressed up fancy dress as characters from films to raise money for charity. Paula and her female friend went as Danny and Sandy respectively, from the film Grease. Paula wore a white tee shirt and leather jacket. She says, *'I suppose I picked that one 'cos I …would kind of experiment a little bit about being more masculine, about dressing more masculine, and yeah, I dunno… I just felt like really cocky and really confident all night, and not … and quite you know, like bring it on sort of thing, you know I had a beautiful girl on my arm which I was just like Wow! This is awesome… it was just a really confident, really fun evening…' [Photo interview: 737-751]*

Paula's experience with theatre, drama and comedy is associated with a personal interest in performativity and the relationship between clothes and emotions. So she is able to express in more detail than some of the other participants' that,

'. . . .different clothes make you feel like a different character' [Photo interview: 800-801]

The HPA reveals a pragmatic example of how the previously stated Template analysis theme of 'the look' and Template sub-theme of 'chameleon' are connected. 'Chameleon' is conceptualised as the ability to adapt or change one's appearance and attitude depending on context, environment, and intended audience. The HPA shows how both these Template themes work together to both influence and change Paula's behaviour and attitude to enable her to express particular aspects of her identity if she so wishes. Paula directly references that the people she is around also affects how she feels about herself and her subsequent expressions.

'. . . .It's because I can be a different person depending on who I'm with' [Diary: 105-106]

Paula contrasts the impact of the leather jacket with the experience of putting on tracksuit bottoms to be part of the rugby club group. There are implicit and explicit expectations of ones presentation in particular situations. Clearly Paula is mirroring the way in which her peers dress in the context of being a member of a female rugby club. As such Paula ensures that she fits in by performing appropriately through her appearance. This compliance with social norms and expectations is also evident when she talks about dressing differently when going out with straight work colleagues. Thus, this goes beyond a straightforward dress code it blurs the boundaries between dress and sexuality and behaviour. One interpretation here is that we can consider 'dress' as a 'context' that has an impact on behaviour. In some ways this has a resonance with Mischel's (1968) theory of personality that shifts the focus away from intra-psychic factors towards the setting within which the behaviour is taking place. Paula is happy and confident in the way in which she can use clothes to meet the requirements of social norms across different settings and also understands the impact that different clothes can have on one's feelings and behaviour. This is rather different from the experiences of Sam who struggled with the impact that taking on a more masculine role had on her behaviour and emotions.

The overarching theme that emerged from Paula's narratives was, '*This is me … if you don't like it … tough*! Paula took only eight photos although she was the only participant to include a photo of herself. Paula's photo's expressed a strong message of *'this is me, here I am'*. Paula presented a confident articulation of who she was through a narrative of predominantly 'first-time events'

7.7 Concluding comments

The hermeneutic phenomenological analysis (HPA) performed on the five photo-assisted interviews highlighted similarities and differences in respect of the kinds of issues and difficulties participants' faced as a result of identifying as bisexual and being in or desiring a monogamous relationship. Whilst a number of participants echoed and affirmed many of the threads of discussions included in the previous diary and telephone interviews such as expressing FOBO and considerations of their appearance , the task of taking photographs and narratively accounting for them deepened and extended my understanding of their lived experience. The HPA facilitated the process of each interview being ideographically organised into a narrative structure that was framed into an over-arching theme. This echoes McAdams (2007) view that people tend to construct their experiences using a consistent narrative that they feel reflects their experiences. Participants spoke about their historical conceptualisations of their identity and referenced their current understanding in terms of where they were in relation to the acceptance of their sexuality and the extent to which they were comfortable in disclosing their identity to others. These narratives were reminiscent of a number of sexual identity models that articulate acceptance of one's non-normative identity as a process. As such participants' narratives point to almost discovery-like stories of acceptance and exploration. Each participant's narrative paints a picture of how they view their sexual identity both in relation to the past and currently. In both her diary and telephone interview Paula discussed her fears of being out to her parents however at the time of the photo-assisted interview she had disclosed the information to them and expressed more comfort and confidence now that they knew about her bisexual identity.

Models of sexual identity like the ones proposed by Cass (1978), Weinberg et al., (1994) and Brown (2011) all point to how acceptance of one's non-normative sexuality is a process of internal and external discovery culminating in acceptance and pride. The seeking-out of others who hold the same attractions as oneself is shown to be important in relation to positively affirming one's own sexual identity. Whilst my participants have all in one way or another sought out LGBT+ spaces and events in an attempt to find acceptance and belonging, it served to provide participants with questions and personal dilemmas in relation to who they were and what they might attain from these lg'B't 'others'. Community appeared important to participants, however they located community in different ways and by differing processes. Participants lamented a desire to 'fit-in' with the lesbian community more specifically and this appeared to be something they all had trouble with in the past, as well as for some currently. Both Elaine and Sam narrated how they engaged in behaviours when they were relatively young in order to seek out a space where they could feel more at ease with themselves. For Elaine the library and reading as well as diary writing represented both a place and a way in which she could express herself. For Sam wearing 'hippy' clothing and having piercings meant that she could in-part express her alternative 'self'. Having said that, all participants referenced how fitting-in proved to be problematic for them. Participants discussed how they were greeted with suspicion from the lesbian community and as such felt a sense of exclusion from LGBT+ focused events and communities. Those who had experience of BiCon talked about not fitting-in there either. Assumptions that they may have had prior to attending BiCon about community and acceptance were somewhat side-lined because of the fact they were in a monogamous relationship. However despite their sense of not fitting-in participants have fashioned their own personal communities where they feel a sense of connectedness. That does not mean to say that they are accepting of feelings of hostility and suspicion emanating at them from lesbians. Participants referenced the way in which this had hurt them in the past and currently. However the majority of participants reframed the experience as redemptive (McAdams, 2007). In-spite of participants' previous experiences of prejudice and discrimination some appeared to have reached a place in their lives where they knew who they were and were comfortable in embracing their bisexual identity. However, some participants appeared more comfortable than others for example, both Caitlin and Amelia could be seen to question their fit more so than Sam and Paula. However like Elaine they all discussed how there were particular individuals in their lives with whom they could be open with if they need to be, and how this internal coming to terms with oneself had grown overtime. Of all the women who participated in this research Caitlin was the one who would be classed as relatively new to her same-gender attractions. Caitlin clearly struggled more than the others in terms of her own sense of sexual identity acceptance. Whilst Caitlin was clear in her attractions to people of the same and different-gender she appeared to actively avoid a future same-gender relationship. In fact, Caitlin expressed a desire to not ever want her bisexuality to be 'out' or known to important others in her life.

Building on the previous chapters findings in relation to appearance the HPA provided a more detailed conceptualisation related to why participants were concerned with how their self-presentation was read by others. Whilst participants' bisexual identity was invisible in the context of a monogamous relationship they all understood the power of clothing, hairstyles and other signifiers that marked them out as monosexual. As discussed, all participants utilised photographs that represented a search for a 'fit' or a sense of belonging within communities. Adopting particular styles of clothing or 'looks' appeared to do more than just signal to others their attractions, it also acted as visual markers of their membership to an identity group. In Elaine's case it was clear that prior to having children she consciously engaged in appearance selections that marked out her attractions if not her sexual identity specifically to other people. However she utilised a number of photographs to illustrate the impact having two small children to care for had influenced her current appearance choices. She openly acknowledged how her life had more or less been subsumed under her role of mother, and as such she did not have the physical time to frequent social spaces to affirm her same-gender attractions. Elaine could also be seen to pay less attention to what her appearance said about her sexuality currently. However as discussed in the analysis Elaine could foresee a future when her children were more self-sufficient and she would have more time to focus on her sexual identity and as such would attend to her appearance in more depth when that time came.

The HPA afforded another important insight into the lives of my participants by revealing the way in which they all included pictures that signified the importance of their current partner. Participants spoke directly about the importance of their relationship. In the diaries and interviews they did not directly discuss their current partner. They tended to either not refer to them at all or only spoke about them if asked. However it appeared that in one guise or another participants illustrated their monogamous relationship through a photographic image. For example Amelia included a photograph of her partner's torso in an attempt to demonstrate how important he was to her and that he should be represented in an array of people, objects or things that were meaningful to her sexual identity. Sam included an image of a bridge to illustrate how she occupied a community that was inclusive of her relationship and partner and where she felt she belonged. Paula utilised an image of a well-known affirmative bisexual phrase to illustrate how her girlfriend was accepting of her bisexuality. Elaine included a photograph of her wedding ring to signify the importance of the promise she made to her husband as well as the compromises she agreed to, in particular, the agreement that she would avoid drawing attention to her bisexual identity in a bid to protect her husband. Although Caitlin was not currently in a relationship she too included a photo of her previous girlfriend[55]. Asking participants to present photographs that say something about their sexual identity have led to them all choosing images that signify the importance of their partners and their relationship. Assumptions related to bisexuals being overly concerned with sex and their resulting assumed inability to be loyal clearly does not relate to my participants'. The implications of a number of these findings are discussed in chapter eight in more detail.

[55] Although I did not include this particular image in the analysis.

Chapter 8: Discussion and concluding comments

8.1 Introduction

The title of this thesis incorporates the phrase 'between a rock and a hard place' in an attempt to capture the struggles faced by participants in this research to find an identity in a world where their bisexuality is misunderstood. Participants find themselves in a paradoxical situation; they believe in monosexual relationships but their sexual identity is not monosexual. This chapter discusses some important consequences of this paradox for the participants. The chapter begins by discussing ways in which the Template Analysis and Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis contributed to the interpretation of the data. This is followed by a discussion of the key contributions of the research to the area of bisexuality studies. The third, main section in this chapter presents my reflections on the research process. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the implications of the research and recommendations for future research.

8.2 Drawing together TA and HPA

This research used two different but complementary approaches to analysing and interpreting the data. This section discusses the ways in which the Template Analysis (TA) and Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis (HPA) contributed to the interpretation of the lived experiences of the monogamous, bisexual women who took part in this research. The TA of the diary and telephone interview data provided me with a broad overview of participants' experiences as well as affording insights into specific aspects of their day-to-day lives. The photo-assisted interviews were designed to provide an alternative way of collecting data in a participant centred manner. The data were analysed and interpreted using Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis (HPA) which was developed specifically for this research. It is argued here that these two approaches provide complementary views on the participants' experiences. In the section below, I present the key findings of the research presented in this thesis and highlight the contributions of the different approaches.

8.2.1 Fears of being out (FOBO)

One of the key findings from the TA was the identification of the complex nature of participants' fears of being out (FOBO). Although a number of participants considered themselves to be open and 'out' in respect of their sexual identity, they all in one guise or another discussed having a FOBO to someone in their life. These fears ensured that participants carefully managed particular relationships or social encounters in an attempt to avoid direct or indirect disclosure of their bisexuality, or in Pippa and Caitlin's case, the specific gender of their partner. Participants were concerned that disclosure would negatively impact and/or change the impressions other people had of them. Disclosure was often framed as pointless because they intended to remain in their current monogamous relationship. The utility of disclosing the gender of their partner or their attractions to people of the same and different-gender was conceptualised as both unproductive and unnecessary.

Despite a number of participants considering themselves to be 'out, by virtue of their active associations within the LGBT+ and bisexual communities, they reported presenting a non-bisexual 'self' or identity to specific significant people in their lives (such as their parents). The

TA revealed that the maintenance of this identity appeared to be dependent upon a process of careful supervision and surveillance of their social environment; where they went, what they said, and what they did, particularly in the company of people with whom they wished to hide their sexual identity from. In situations where participants wanted to avoid presenting as bisexual, they drew on either a lesbian or heterosexual social imaginary. This strategy was possible because of their status of being in a monogamous relationship. In effect, participants 'freeze' time and allow others to make inaccurate inferences based on the gender of their current partner, regardless of the gender of past or potential future partners. This strategy enables participants to protect both themselves and significant others from having to engage in difficult and/or stressful conversations that potentially fracture their relationship/s and/or life in general.

The HPA analysis both extended and revealed more nuanced information related to FOBO, providing a richer, cohesive insight into the thoughts and considerations of a sub-set of participants. The HPA elicited a robust and complete account in respect of participants individual FOBO, often charting a developed and/or ongoing narrative that was ideographic in orientation. In addition, the longitudinal nature of the data collection process provided insights into the temporal nature of relationships that may not have been possible in a cross-sectional study. For several of the participants, there was a change in the specific anxieties they reported and evidence of a growing confidence in relation to disclosing their sexual identity to those from whom they had previously kept it hidden. An example of this is evident in Elaine's accounts of her experiences. Throughout the diary and initial telephone interview, Elaine spoke candidly about her apprehension in relation to particular people in her life discovering her sexual identity. She talked about taking great care to avoid situations whereby she would potentially have to openly express her sexual identity. Whereas in the photo-interview, Elaine uses the image of a pair of boots (see figure 7.2.3) to narrate an episode when she was particularly apprehensive about disclosing her bisexuality to her best friend. Elaine's narration of the episode concludes with her relating it to a more recent event when she was in the company of a group of people, including her best friend, and feeling confident and unrestrained in relation to referencing her attractions to people of the same and different-gender.

The ideographic nature of HPA also provided additional information about the different ways in which participants experienced FOBO. For example, 'imaginary others' played an important role in Amelia's ability to say and act in ways that she desired. She narrated how she created potential scenarios in relation to disclosing her sexual identity, especially to lesbians. In contrast to Amelia, Sam's FOBO was rooted in her experiences of relationships changing as a consequence of disclosing. For Sam, the process of disclosure was inevitably followed by 'everything changes' in a negative way. However, Sam is able to use these experiences in a way that is positive and life-enhancing and is relatively unconcerned by the process of expressing her sexual identity to others. On the other hand, Amelia continues to try and manage her FOBO through the creation of imaginary scenarios.

8.2.2 Invisibility

One of the key findings that the TA revealed was the overwhelming acknowledgment amongst participants that being in a monogamous relationship contributed towards their invisibility as women who are attracted to people of the same and different-gender. Whilst this particular finding has been previously identified (see Hartman-Linck, 2014; Rodriguez-Rust, 2002; Roberts et al., 2015), the way in which participants utilise specific clothing and appearance styles in order to potentially render visible their attractions to people of the same and different-gender has not been explicitly discussed in previous research. However, Hartman-Linck (2014) does identify a number of strategies her participants used to keep their bisexuality alive in the context of their monogamous different-gender relationships, such as reading lesbian focused literature and the display of LGBT+ imagery in their home.

In the present research, the TA identified how participants experienced invisibility in different ways depending on the gender of their partner. For example, the appearance choices made by participants appeared to be influenced by the gender of their partner. Those in same-gender relationships chose feminine appearance signs and signifiers that, by their own admission, marked them out as being assumed heterosexual. Participants in different-gender relationships acknowledged that their appearance choices marked them out, more often than not, as lesbian. Whilst the TA elicited a generalised group response to the way in which they managed their feelings of invisibility, which echoed many of Hartman-Linck's (2014) findings, the ideographic focus of HPA enabled me to examine this finding in more depth. Both the TA and the HPA showed Elaine to be concerned with what her appearance said about her, however the HPA provided additional insights in how clothing and appearance concerns can be superseded by the intersectional nature of life. In particular, the birth of Elaine's second child appeared to have impacted on her desire to transmit a message that signalled her attraction to the same-gender. Elaine was much less concerned after the birth of her second child with selecting clothes and styles that might possibly reveal her same and different-gender attraction. Elaine acknowledged that certain important life events had a real impact on her priorities. However the HPA revealed an on-going negotiation in respect of what the future might hold with Elaine foreseeing a time in which her children would not be so needy of her attention, in the event of this she would once again be in a position to consider her appearance and explore what sexual identity messages she wished to express to others.

Prior to data collection, Caitlin was in a same-gender relationship. Caitlin discussed how she was assumed lesbian by those who knew about the gender of her partner and, as a result, she was subject to a number of homophobic insults and abuse. The HPA revealed how Caitlin intended to manage a future time in which she could potentially be in a same-gender relationship by *'moving to the outer Hebrides'*. The HPA draws attention to the impact that Caitlin's feelings of identity invisibility would have on her if she were to be in another same-gender relationship. Caitlin, however, does not express any feelings of invisibility in relation to being in a different-gender relationship suggesting that, for her, occupying a same-gender relationship brings with it the kind of invisibility that signals potential danger.

8.2.3 Search for Community

The TA revealed that desiring community acceptance and striving for a fit in bisexual specific and/or wider LGBT+ space, such as Pride, is something that all participants have attempted to do at one time or another. A number of participants discussed how discovering the magazine *Diva* enabled them to access a community that they had little or no previous knowledge of. Whilst a number of participants identified issues with the publication, in relation to the magazine recapitulating unhelpful stereotypes of bisexuals, and focusing predominantly on lesbians, they did express the view that the magazine was key to facilitating their understanding in respect of their same-gender attractions. Nevertheless, the TA revealed that participants were aware that being part of the LGBT+ community did not necessarily afford them the same level of legitimacy and acceptance as other letters in the acronym, such as ‘lesbian’. The TA revealed that the majority of participants, irrespective of the gender of their past or current partners, were able to identify times when they experienced hostility in the LGBT+ community and were made to feel unwelcome in lesbian space particularly. Participants who were in same-gender relationships acknowledged how the lesbian community expressed hostility towards bisexual women and how they were generally untrusting of them. A number of participants had sought out bisexual specific communities in order to find support for their marginalised identities, however the TA revealed they too experienced a lack of fit or disconnect in these communities specifically because they occupied a monogamous relationship. The HPA provided insight in respect of how participants pragmatically responded to the realisation that they did not find a ‘fit’ or sense of belonging in these communities. Sam narrated the importance of community through a photograph of a rainbow coloured bridge (see figure 2.8) she presented. Sam discussed how she had experienced disappointment and marginalisation within bisexual communities, specifically because she occupied a monogamous relationship. The HPA revealed the way in which Sam reconceptualised her thoughts in relation to community and belonging, highlighting the ways in which she established and forged her own sense of community in particular places or amongst friends who did not necessarily identify as LGBT+. The same pattern can be identified with the remaining participants, in that the HPA showed how they all fashioned their own support networks and communities that were gleaned from those around them. The HPA revealed how participants appeared to adopt a selective approach to the creation of their personal communities, including only those who they felt they could be themselves with, and who accepted both their sexual identity and choice of relationship practice.

8.3 Key contributions of the research

I undertook this research with three aims in mind; firstly, to explore the lived experience of bisexual women who identify as monogamous. Secondly, to explore the ways in which bisexual women in ‘same-gender’ and ‘different-gender’ relationships construct their identity. Thirdly, to explore the ways in which women who identify as bisexual and monogamous maintain their identity. Some of the findings reported in chapters six and seven were consistent with previous research and have contributed to the growing body of literature that focuses on bisexual experience. However, other findings point towards aspects of the lives of bisexual women that merit further exploration. This section presents the key theoretical, methodological and practical contributions that this research makes to qualitative research in general and, more specifically, in the field of sexual identity.

8.3.1 Theoretical contributions

This research makes a positive contribution to the growing body of research that is focused on bisexual identity and experience. More specifically, there are three important theoretical contributions that arise from the present research. The first of these is concerned with the ways in which the gender of one's partner impacts on decisions made in relation to appearance and presentation. The second focuses on the way in which desire and sexual attraction are influenced by the gender of one's partner. The third contribution addresses the role that a sense of community played in the lives of the monogamous bisexual women in this research.

8.3.1.1 Gender of partner and appearance

One of the major findings to emerge from this research is that the gender of a bisexual monogamous woman's partner has an impact on her personal identity. More specifically, it appears to be the case that, a) women in different-gender relationships appear to utilise more strategies related to displaying their same-gender attractions and keeping their bisexuality alive than those in same-gender relationships or those who were not in a relationship. Women in same-gender relationships did not express a need to do this. b) Women in same-gender relationships chose feminine appearance markers that they understood were more likely to signify a heterosexual identity compared to women in different-gender relationships who chose 'traditional' lesbian appearance markers. Those women who were not in relationships appeared to select appearance markers according to the mood or context they were in.

Empirical research has systematically found that the gender of one's partner is significant in relation to the visibility of bisexual women's identity (Barker & Langdridge, 2008; Deschamps, 2008) particularly if the relationship is a monogamous one (Hartman, 2013; Hartman-Linck, 2014; Rodríguez-Rust, 2000). Heterosexual and homosexual individuals continue to be understood as monosexual and so retaining and maintaining their sexual identity is in some ways more straightforward than individuals who identify as bisexual (Tabatabai & Linders, 2011). Bisexuals have to overcome the problem of being defined by the gender of their partner and the assumption of monosexuality that contributes to the invisibility of their sexual identity (Callis, 2014). Hartman (2013) (see also, Hartman-Linck, 2014) reports research which identified how bisexual women in relationships with men often utilised strategies of bisexual maintenance to in effect, keep alive their bisexuality. However, it was apparent from my research that women in different-gender relationships made more of a conscious effort to do this than women in same-gender relationships and women who were not in a current relationship. The present research was consistent with Hartman's (2013) findings in that participants demonstrated a high level of awareness of matters relating to sexuality and bisexuality in particular. However, unlike Hartman's (2013) participants, women in the present research who were single or in same-gender relationships did not express an explicit need to utilise other strategies of bisexual maintenance, such as engaging in fantasy or different-gender role-play, compared to participants who were in different-gender relationships. Thus, the strategies adopted by bisexual women in the present research to maintain their sexual identity were related to the gender of their partner in a rather more complex way than previously considered.

Hartman (2013) argued that her participants were more concerned with what she calls 'limited' displays in contrast to 'wide' displays. Displays in this context are understood to relate to a target audience, with the latter being more associated with a large audience such as unknown people in a public setting, and the former a smaller or more intimate audience, such as for oneself only or within a relationship or in the home. Hartman (2013) suggests that bisexual women are less concerned with the accuracy of decoding or readings of other people in a 'wide' context and are instead more interested in bisexual displays in a limited setting making the performance more meaningful to them personally. In contrast, participants in the current research who were in different-gender relationships were more concerned with how their display was interpreted in 'wide' settings. It was important for participants in different-gender relationships in this study that their displays were decoded correctly, in other words, that their bisexual identity was visible to others. Several participants in the present research expressed fears of being out to specific individuals in their lives (for example, parents and close family), but were less concerned about being out to people outside that small group. It could be argued that this meant being interpreted correctly in ‘wide’ settings took on a greater importance for these participants. The ‘wide’ setting provided them with an opportunity, and the freedom, to express their bisexuality in the knowledge that the small group of people they did not want to disclose their sexuality to were unlikely to be present.

Ricoeur (1992) explores the relationship between the possibility of solicitude and the essential solitude of an individual’s experience in the world; the relationship between a subject and what is external to them. He argues that one of our basic human needs is the desire to be recognised by others, but points out that if our self-esteem resides solely in the views and opinions held by others it is constantly under threat. Nevertheless, the acceptance and support of others is an important aspect of the development and maintenance of our identity (Ricoeur, 2005). It is argued here that participants’ concerns about ‘being out’ to significant others in their lives reflects the *‘dialectic of identity confronted by otherness’* (Ricoeur, 2005: p.103). Participants’ identity and self-esteem is dependent upon the acceptance and support of others who are significant in their lives. The consequences of rejection by these significant others poses such a threat to identity and esteem that participants appear to be unwilling to take the risk.

Some of the differences in findings between the present research and those of Hartman (2013) and Hartman-Linck (2014) could be attributed to the selection criteria applied to participants. For example, Hartman (2013) and Hartman-Linck (2014) recruited participants who had been in a ‘long-term’ monogamous relationships for a minimum of twelve months, and who had not engaged in sex with anyone other than their partner in the past year. The rationale for this was that it reduced the possibility that there would be sexual reasons for a desire to be visible as bisexual. In the current research participants were given no such criteria to meet in that respect. The selection criteria was that potential participants understood themselves to be in, or desire, a future monogamous relationship; in other words selection was based on a self-expressed belief rather than a behavioural measure. In addition, no guidelines were expressed in terms of how long they should have been in their current relationship for. Some participants articulated that their current relationship was relatively new and others commented that they had been in their relationship for over a decade. In terms of fidelity rates, research has shown that some couples experience and act on a desire for sex outside of their relationship relatively early in the relationship, whilst others much later, often after embarking on marriage and a family (Nelson, 2010; Anderson, 2010; Northrup et al., 2013). Thus, it is relatively difficult to make assumptions based on when, and indeed who, is most likely to have a desire for sex and/or a relationship outside of the context of their current relationship. The notion that because you are in a monogamous relationship you no longer find others attractive or indeed do not wish to be found attractive by others is erroneous (Nelson, 2010).

A further difference between Hartman (2013) and Hartman-Linck's (2014) research and the present research is that they carried out their data collection using focus groups whereas the present research collected data from participants on an individual basis. Research has highlighted a number of difficulties participants often face when engaged in talking-based methodologies (such as not feeling confident in articulating or expressing views or experiences (Browne, 2016; Hitchins, 2012)). Thus, it is imperative that researchers adopt strategies to ensure that participants feel comfortable in disclosing information to ensure that the 'best' data can be generated (Lavis, 2010). Longhurst (2003) suggests that focus groups are particularly helpful for researchers who *'wish to orientate themselves to a new field'* (p. 120). Given that empirical research exploring bisexual women in monogamous relationships is relatively sparse there is no doubt many advantages to using focus groups to develop our understanding of this particular group of people. The commonalities that participants may share alongside the shared interest in the topic under investigation can highlight a sense of synergy in participants when they are engaged in focus groups discussions (Johnson, 1996). However, there are a number of criticisms levelled at the use of focus groups such as, an over-dominance of contribution from specific members of the group. Participants who are more vocal can often set the tone and trajectory of discussions, making it problematic for others to feel as though they can contribute (Hollander, 2004). Focus groups have also been accused of inhibiting the type of talk that takes place (Hopkins, 2007; Hollander, 2004). Some researchers reference that disclosure of personal information is more likely in a non-face-to-face setting. Woodyatt, Finneran, and Stephenson (2016) compared on-line (OL) and in-person (IP) focus group discussions and found that the OL, non face-to-face discussions resulted in more depth of disclosure, particularly in relation to the disclosure of personal information, demonstrating that the physical presence of others can sometimes impede what is said. The focus group method of data collection used by Hartman

(2013) and Harman-Linck (2014) involved face-to-face interactions between the researchers and participants. The current research involved no physical face-to-face communications between myself as the interviewer/researcher and participants. This key difference could have contributed towards the current research findings.

In relation to monogamy focused research, there is sound evidence that the concept of monogamy has a privileged status (Green et al., 2016; Gotta et al., 2011; Finn, 2010). It is considered to be an important social norm in Western society despite being understood to be problematic to maintain for a number of people (Gross, 2005; Anderson, 2010). The expression of desiring sex or attention and attraction outside of one's monogamous relationship is often met with stigma and shame (Vrangalova et al., 2014; Moss, 2012; Klesse, 2011; Barker & Langdridge, 2010). Therefore, it could be argued that the focus group approach used by Hartman (2013) was susceptible to the social pressures inherent in any group setting and inhibited participants from expressing views that appeared to be inconsistent with perceived social norms and their expressed status as monogamous in a long-term relationship.

The appearance choices women make are influenced by the sexual identity assumptions that other people make of them, by virtue of the fact they are in a monogamous same or different-gender relationship. It is crucial to recognise the importance of appearance and the ways in which clothing and appearance signifies identification (Clarke & Spence, 2012) and also, how shared appearance assists in the creation of communities (Hayfield et al., 2013). Hayfield et al., (2012) found no relationship between the appearance choices made by bisexual women and the gender of their partner, whereas Huxley et al., (2011) reported that bisexual women in different-gender relationships were concerned with maintaining an attractive 'sexy' aesthetic. According to Huxley et al., (2011) individuals achieved this by wearing specific clothing and applying make-up that was regarded as feminine. Earlier work carried out by Taub (1999) found that a number of bisexual women in her research who were in different-gender relationships, selected feminine appearance styles that they understood marked them out as heterosexual. Participants in Taub's (1999) research articulated a sense of pressure in respect of adhering to heterosexual beauty norms and standards. Taub (1999) also noted that participants who were in same-gender relationships did not report feeling any pressure to do this.

The research presented in this thesis shows how individuals in same-gender relationships selected feminine styles of clothing and hairstyle in a bid to disrupt and resist conformity to a stereotypical lesbian appearance. In contrast, those who were in different-gender relationships were more likely to adopt masculine or androgynous appearance signifiers in a bid to signal their non-heterosexuality and keep their bisexuality alive (Hartman-Linck, 2014). A different approach was taken by individuals who were not in a relationship who altered their appearance depending on the context they were in. If they wanted to attract a person of a different-gender, they would select feminine styles of appearance, and a more androgynous style if the intention was to attract a person of the same-gender. This is similar to Taub's (1999) findings who also identified participants purposefully selecting masculine or androgynous styles to signify their non-heterosexuality.

Taub's (1999) research indicates that bisexual women do change their appearance according to the gender of their partner, particularly those who are in different-gender relationships. My research extends the findings above and shows evidence that the appearance concerns of bisexual women in monogamous relationships are influenced by the gender of their partner. In contrast to the findings reported by Taub (1999) and Huxley et al., (2011), the current study found that bisexual women who are in different-gender relationships often purposefully select appearance styles that are considered masculine or androgynous. This choice of appearance seems be based on a desire to resist and counter the label of 'heterosexual woman'. The absence of a recognised bisexual appearance, noted by Hayfield (2011), means that bisexual women have to express their identity by resisting and countering heterosexual appearance norms rather than opting into an already established stereotype. A similar pattern of resistance was also identified in bisexual women in same-gender relationships. Appearance choices were made to resist a stereotypical lesbian style by the use of feminine clothes, make-up and hairstyles. This enabled the women to subvert the stereotypical lesbian aesthetic and assumptions about their sexual identity, based solely on the gender of their partner. The women in this research all understood the ways in which one's sexual identity is interpreted through the gender of one's partner and found ways to subvert and resist inappropriate labels of heterosexual or lesbian.

Ricoeur argues that, in groups, ideology can operate through a form of collective memory in which 'stories' become sedimented and expressed in simplified slogans and stereotypes (Kaplan, 2003). Over time, groups, as well as societies, develop forms of rhetoric and rituals which combine to constrain our ability to think about different ways of interpreting our social environment. It is argued here that the monogamous bisexual women in this research have to deal with the oppressive nature of two different ideologies. Firstly, there is the ideology of heteronormativity which continues to operate at a societal level to oppress members of the LGBT+ community. Secondly, they are confronted by lesbian groups, both formal and informal, where there is a set of ideologies, not just relating to dress and appearance, but also relating to bisexual women. The stereotypes and representations of bisexual women in lesbian communities tend to be overwhelmingly negative. This means that bisexual women are in one sense doubly disadvantaged. They not only have to deal with the challenges and consequences of living in a heteronormative society, they also have to deal with the stereotypes and ideology evident within the lesbian community.

8.3.1.2 Gender of partner and desire for the 'other'

Identifying as bisexual presents challenges similar to those who identify as monosexual but it also brings different challenges in relation to monogamy and desire (Weinberg, et al., 1994; Mark et al., 2014), the most obvious being that sex with a person of a different gender to one's partner is forsaken. Whilst the rule of no sex outside of one's current relationship applies to all those engaged in monogamous practices, for bisexuals the assumption is that one requires sexual engagement with people of the same and different-gender in order to identity as bisexual (Moss, 2012). However, in the current research participants continued to resolutely identify as bisexual despite their monogamous status.

The second significant contribution is concerned with the impact that the gender of one's partner has on one's desire for sex and intimacy outside of the current relationship. This research shows that women in monogamous different-gender relationships often express a desire for sex and intimacy with a person of the same-gender. This declaration is in no way indicative of unhappiness or wishing to leave their different-gender partner. In contrast, the women in this study who were in same-gender relationships did not express a desire for sex or intimacy with a person of a different-gender. There is a dearth of research exploring this particular area and the literature reviews presented in Chapters 2 and 3 only identified one small scale study carried out in Finland (Lahti, 2015). Lahti's (2015) research involved five bisexual women and their partners. Two of the bisexual women were in a relationship with a person of a different gender, two were in a relationship with a person of the same gender, and one was in a relationship with a transgender man. In Lahti's (2015) research, the bisexual women in different gender relationships described strategies they used to manage their desires for intimate relationships with other woman. Whereas, the bisexual women in same-gender relationships did not report desiring an intimate relationship with a different gender. There are a number of methodological differences between Lahti's (2015) research and the research reported in this thesis. For example, Lahti (2015) interviewed her participants with their partner, whereas, in the present study, participants were interviewed alone. Lahti (2015) speculates that norms and beliefs that operate within lesbian communities is one of the primary reasons why bisexual women in same-gender relationships do not articulate a similar desire for sex and/or relationships with men. In particular, the assumption that bisexual women will leave their female partners for men is pervasive within lesbian communities and consequently expressing a desire for intimacy with a man would be perceived as a form of betrayal. Although it is likely that lesbian norms and beliefs influence the extent to which bisexual women in a same-gender relationship express desires for male intimacy, I suggest that female/female relationships are experienced as different to other relationships (Jensen & Rauer, 2016; Besag, 2006). Female friendships offer a sense of connectedness and support that are not found in their friendships with men. For example, females are more likely to disclose sensitive and personal information to their female friends more so than to their male partners (Seiffge-Krenke, 2003). Thus, perhaps participants in different-gender relationships desire a connection with women that they are unable to replicate in their relationships with their male partners. Walker (2014b) carried out research exploring how women negotiated their same-gender relationships and desires in the context of their assumed monogamous different-gender relationships. Her participants were interviewed using e-mail and disclosed how they experienced something different and unique from their same-gender unions that they did not experience in their different-gender relationship.

It is argued here that the current research extends Lahti's (2015) findings and highlights how, despite the cross-cultural and social differences between Finland and the UK, bisexual women in monogamous different-gender relationships experience a desire for sexual intimacy with a person of the same-gender. This supports the suggestion that bisexual women experience their bisexuality according to the gender of their partner. It is unclear why this is the case, but it is an important issue that merits further research.

8.3.1.3 Community

The research reported in this thesis has highlighted the importance of community to monogamous bisexual women and the challenges they face in finding one that is accepting of them (I briefly discussed this in section 8.2.3). Individuals in this research actively sought out spaces and places they perceived as being part of the larger LGBT+ community in order to acquire information and support for their bisexual identity. This was done in a variety of ways including attending LGBT+ social spaces, organised events, such as Pride, and purchasing lesbian focused literature and publications (such as *Diva* magazine). However, there was a sense of disappointment on the part of monogamous bisexual women in terms of how they are accepted into these communities and in particular lesbian orientated communities. Identifying as a bisexual woman in lesbian oriented space, often resulted in a degree of hostility from non-bisexual women. This sense of rejection from more established LGBT+ communities led to a search for spaces that are specifically oriented towards bisexuality (such as BiCon). However, it seems to be the case that being monogamous attracts a degree of prejudice in many bisexual spaces and groups. For monogamous bisexual women the positive aspects of being in places where their sexual identity was in the majority were outweighed by a sense of prejudice and non-acceptance. The current research suggests that polyamory, or consensual non-monogamy, is the dominant relationship style in some bisexual spaces. Such spaces are not supportive of those who choose monogamy as a relationship style.

Previous research has shown how those who identify as LGBT+ benefit from spending time with other sexual minorities as they are assumed to share the same issues and concerns as well as contribute towards developing a sense of identity (Cass, 1979; Brown, 2002). Participants in the current research report how they have struggled to feel as though they are accepted in spaces that are promoted as being inclusive of bisexuals (such as Pride). More specifically, they explained how in lesbian orientated spaces they are not welcome and treated with suspicion. This finding is consistent with previous research which has acknowledged the feelings of isolation and judgement bisexual women face from lesbians (Hequembourg & Brallier, 2009; Dyer et al., 2014; Callis, 2014). Rust (1995) carried out a large scale quantitative survey with both lesbians and bisexual women and identified that a) bisexual women felt lesbians negatively judged them, and b) lesbians negatively judged bisexual women. Hartman (2006) went on to carry out interviews and focus groups with both men and women who self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer. Her findings showed support for the view that lesbians are suspicious of those who do not claim a monosexual identity.

A number of participants in the current research, who were in different-gender relationships, referenced feeling ostracised after disclosing their bisexuality to monosexually oriented individuals, in particular, lesbians. For example, Sam discussed how she felt no longer welcome in lesbian space and that she felt ostracised by a number of her lesbian friends after she disclosed her different-gender relationship. Hartman (2006) claims that, in the face of lesbian rejection, bisexuals develop their own communities of queer-identified people from which to glean support from. In the current research, participants expressed feeling a sense of disconnection from the more accessible LGBT+ spaces and they actively sought out bisexually orientated events and places, such as BiCon, to access support for their identity. Whilst some participants commented on the positive aspects of occupying such bisexual oriented spaces or communities where their sexual identity was in the majority, the fact they were either in, or desired, a monogamous relationship led them to once again experience a lack of fit. Having acknowledged this issue participants in the current research continued to reference a need to access individuals by whom they feel accepted. Participants discussed how the lack of support for their relationship practice in these spaces resulted in them feeling, at times, not ‘bisexual enough’. Thus, it appears that participants in the current research did attempt to engage in the queer communities Hartman (2006) discusses. However, the lack of support for their relationship practice led them to instead find support and community from those around them by whom they were accepted and could be themselves with, for example partners and friends. It appears from the current research that community of support for bisexual women can be found amongst people who do not necessarily identify as LGBT+ *per se.*

Participants articulated how they felt their monogamous relationship constellation was not afforded the same respect and legitimacy as non-monogamous relationships especially when they were part of an existing bisexual community. Ricoeur (1992) articulates the importance of community and a connection with others in his discussion of ethics where he defines ethical intention as '*…aiming at a good life lived with and for others in just institutions'* (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 172). For Ricoeur (1992), it is not just the mere presence of others that is important, but a relationship with others based on the concepts of reciprocity and solicitude. Ricoeur's (1992) definition goes beyond interpersonal relationships and reminds us that we are all, in some way or another, individuals who are members of institutions. It is the way in which these institutions operate and the impact they have on us and the ways in which we engage with them that is important. Some of the struggles participants narrated, in relation to finding a community within which they felt accepted and welcomed, can be interpreted within Ricoeur's (1992) concept of the 'ethical aim'. Participants were continually looking for a 'just institution' where their bisexual identity was accepted and welcomed. Some LGBT+ communities appear to be resistant to an inclusive approach that welcomes monogamous bisexual women and are even more antagonistic towards bisexual women in relationships with men. Ricoeur's (1992) ideas seem to go some way towards explaining this situation within a philosophical framework but his writing is less helpful when it comes to exploring ways of bringing about change.

Clandinin and Huber (2010) focus on the importance of stories and the ways in which they can contribute to the building of communities. If we develop our understanding of the ways in which beliefs and narratives become embedded in institutions and influence individuals, we may be able to overcome prejudice and certain forms of biphobia. According to Connelly and Clandinin (2006), *'People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful'* (p. 375). We can see then, that the stories about bisexual women that are both told and interpreted, impact on the way in which participants view themselves. In keeping with Ricoeur's (1992) sentiment in relation to agency, whenever an action is performed there is someone who is at the receiving end of that action. In effect, there is a consequence to action. In this context, and in light of the largely negative stereotypic messages transmitted in society about bisexual people, it is plausible that such conceptualisations of bisexuals and bisexuality would be damaging to participants' self-esteem and consequently impact on the way in which they feel they 'fit' in the world. Bearing in mind that, in contemporary Western society, monosexuality and monosexual relationships are the norm. Participants are therefore caught between a 'rock and a hard place' because they do not hold a monosexual identity yet they do desire a monosexual relationship which is stereotypically understood to be incompatible with their sexuality. Thus, participants inhabit a world where their sexuality is misunderstood and is considered less authentic and valid than a monosexual sexual identity.

My findings have shown that participants are unable to find a place or 'fit' within the lesbian or wider LGBT+ scene as well as the heterosexual world. I suggest this renders them in the sexual borderlands, or caught in the liminal space (Anzaldua, 2009; Callis, 2014), between straight and lesbian communities and this contributes to their feelings of 'not belonging'. I suggest that, in response to this, participants do two things. First, they undergo the process of internal acknowledgement and acceptance of their sexual identity. Participants are assisted in this by accessing knowledge and information about lesbian culture and ways of expression. Participants have their own unique experiences of the 'lesbian world' to different degrees and so they seek to forge a community of their own. I do not mean a bisexual specific community, as I suggest that the current one in existence is also a place where monogamously identified bisexual women also experience a lack of 'fit' in the holistic sense. Clearly, some of my participants continue to attend bisexual focused events as the opportunity to be among other bisexually identified others is attractive. A number of participants, including those who continue to access events such as BiCon, acknowledge how their monogamous status leaves them feeling on the fringes of the bisexual 'community'. Second and in keeping with Ricoeur's views in relation to agency people are orientated towards an ethical aim in life and this for Ricoeur, means that they endeavour to lead a '*good-life'*. Ricoeur goes on to say that, *'. . the practical manifestation of this aim. . . is the unending work of interpretation applied to action and to oneself that we pursue the search for adequation between what seems to us to be best with regard to our life as a whole and the preferential choices that govern our practice'* (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 179). Ricoeur understands that a person's morals and values are historically and culturally co-constructed and, as such, these things are expressed when we make decisions and choices about what we want for ourselves and the way in which we wish to live our lives. Monogamy is the current most preferred and validated relationship constellation in Western society (Finn, 2010) and participants clearly feel the pull of this practice. However, my analysis shows that they do think about the consequences of practising monogamy, as well as the implications of it on their bisexual identity specifically, and so do not unquestionably just enact it. Furthermore, once they choose to engage in a monogamous dyad, it is clear that they feel an obligation towards keeping their 'promise' as the aim is to lead a *'good life'*. For Ricoeur (1992), leading a good life involves others as a life led in isolation is not considered fruitful. Thus, according to Ricoeur (1992), leading a life that is intersubjective and is with and for others, in this case a monogamous relationship can be seen to be a best 'fit' for participants as they consider the practice to be the one that is right for them.

Previous research (see, Barker et al., (2012), Bowes-Catton, (2015) and Monro (2015)) has raised concerns about diversity and representation in bisexual communities, and has pointed out that they are heavily populated by white, middle class, educated people. This research extends those concerns to include choice of relationship style, monogamy, as an aspect of one's bisexual identity that can result in prejudice and exclusion from established bisexual spaces. The problems faced by the monogamous bisexual women in this research, in terms of finding a supportive and accepting bisexual community, resulted in the construction and creation of their own 'personal community' (Spencer & Pahl, 2006). This community was made up of people who were not necessarily close relations or shared their sexual identity, but who instead accepted them without prejudice or expectation.

8.3.2 Methodological contributions

The research reported in this thesis has contributed to the continued development of social science research methodology in four areas; multi-method longitudinal approaches, telephone interviews (standard and photo-assisted), the development and application of HPA, and combining the use of cross-case and within-case approaches to analysis. Each of these is discussed below.

8.3.2.1 Multi-method longitudinal approaches

The research was designed to collect data using a combination of written, oral and visual methods at different points in time. Although the use of multi-methods and a longitudinal approach is not unique in qualitative research, it is still relatively uncommon (Frost, Holt, Shinebourne, Esin, Nolas, Mehdizadeh, & Brooks-Gordon, 2011). More particularly, the literature review carried out in the early stages of this thesis failed to identify many examples of its use in research exploring bisexual identity (see Bowes-Catton, 2015). On a practical level, the different methods of data collection generated data that were complementary rather than conflicting. The diaries provided a day-by-day account of events and experiences that often represented a dialectic between the mundane and significant. The relevance and significance of some events only became evident in the subsequent interviews. The diaries also provided me with an insight into aspects of the participants' lives prior to the interviews. In some ways I felt I 'knew' the participants before I spoke to them, which was beneficial in terms of developing a rapport with them. In addition, the first part of the telephone interview was based on issues that arose out of the participants' diaries. This had the benefit of ensuring that the interview started with issues that were familiar and relevant to the participant. The notion of shifting the research agenda to the participant continued in the photo-assisted interview. Although none of the methods of data collection used in this thesis are new, I would argue that their use together has generated data that would not have emerged if only a single method of data collection had been used. The methods were complementary and each stage built on the previous one in a way that shifted the research agenda towards the participant. In addition, the longitudinal dimension of the data collection enabled the temporal aspect of participants' sexual identity to be explored.

8.3.2.2 Telephone interviews (standard and photo-assisted)

Telephones, in one form or another, are a reasonably well established technology in contemporary Western society and they are widely used by most people over the age of ten years old (Fehske, Fettweis, Malmodin, Biczók, 2011). As such, they are are culturally ingrained into our everyday practices of communication (Naik, Kadam, Patil, & Gore, 2017; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). Telephones have been used to gather anonymous sensitive qualitative information (Fenig et al., 1993; Trier-Bieniek, 2012; Oakley, 2008) concerned with sexual identity and relationships (see Fileborn, Hinchliff, Lyons, Heywood, Minichiello, Brown, Malta, Barrett, & Crameri, 2017) although to a much lesser degree than the use of face-to-face interviews (Gillham, 2005). The accessibility and ease of use of the telephone meant that I was able to recruit participants from all across the United Kingdom; from London to Scotland to

South Yorkshire. I believe the data collected from this geographically diverse set of women would not have been possible had I arranged to meet them face-to-face due to the time parameters of the current research. Conducting participant interviews over the telephone was, at times, challenging, particularly in terms of feeling confident that both the participants and I heard each other correctly. However, these difficulties were outweighed by the benefits of easy access to participants who were geographically distant, and the relative anonymity of the telephone interview process.

The use of visual methodologies in tandem with oral methodologies have become an increasingly popular method with which to generate qualitative data in the social sciences (Reavey, 2016; Samuels, 2004). Using the telephone to facilitate discussions related to participant generated visual images has been less widely used (see Drew, Duncan, & Sawyer, 2010). Carrying out photo-assisted interviews over the telephone did present specific practical challenges, such as ensuring we were both talking about the same image. However, there were also significant benefits to the method. As with the standard telephone interviews it contributed towards participants feeling a sense of security in that they retained their physical anonymity (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). This contributed to participants feeling safe enough to disclose aspects of their personal lives that perhaps other face-to-face methods of interviewing may have inhibited (Novick, 2011). Whilst there is a growing body of empirical research in the social sciences that utilises telephone interviewing in the generation of qualitative data (see Sweet, 2002; Fileborn et al., 2016; Spencer at al., 2017) the use of the telephone as a tool to explore the lived experience of bisexual women in monogamous same and different-gender relationships has not previously been carried out. In summary, this research has demonstrated the utility of telephone interviews, and in particular, photo-assisted telephone interviews, in research into sexual identity.

8.3.2.3 Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis (HPA)

One of the significant methodological contributions of this thesis is the development and application of a new method of data analysis and interpretation. HPA provided the basis for insights into the lived experiences of participants that would have been difficult using other approaches. This is by no means the first approach to data analysis and interpretation that has drawn on Ricoeur's work. For example, Langdridge (2007) developed a method of analysis drawing specifically on Ricoeur's philosophy which he named, Critical Narrative Analysis (CNA). Langdridge (2007) focuses his model on Ricoeur's earlier work (see Ricoeur, 1970, 1981) on the hermeneutics of suspicion and acknowledges that the application of CNA is typically a very time consuming and lengthy process. Given the time parameters of the current research, I chose to develop a practical approach to data analysis that was faithful to Ricoeur's later work which focuses on identity (see Ricoeur, 1992) and was centred more specifically on two key areas; 1) the relationship between language and action; 2) on the cultural, ideological and temporal dimension of lived experience. It aims to make the relationship between text/discourse and action explicit and use this as the basis for subsequent analysis and interpretation. The HPA model allowed me to bring these key ideas from Ricoeur into my analysis, in particular through the central role it gives to emplotment. This is enacted in the analysis especially through the steps of reinstating discordance and then restoring concordance (as discussed in detail in 5.4.3). Using the model did enable me to reflect on some of its strengths and areas that require further work. The advantages of the model are: a) it is structured and relatively straightforward to work with, b) the analysis and interpretation can be carried out within a reasonable time scale, c) it is based on a recognised philosophical position. On the other hand, there are aspects of the model that require further work: a) Clarification of the status of hermeneutics of suspicion and faith in the model. b) The status of discourse/text where the relationship to action and events is not transparent. c) Some of the ideas and concepts require additional clarification if the model is to be used more widely. The next stages in the model's development will be to use it in further research and try to encourage other qualitative researchers to use it. I believe the model has considerable potential in the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data. In summary, HPA is an approach to analysing and interpreting data that can make a significant contribution to qualitative research in the social sciences and I intend to develop it and use it in future research.

8.3.2.4 Using cross-case and within-case analysis

The research reported in this thesis used three different methods to collect data and two different approaches to analyse the data. The use of mixed methods research is reasonably well established in psychology (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), but it typically involves the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. The use of different approaches to the analysis of data in the same study is less common in psychology as a whole, and relatively rare in the field of sexual identity. However, there is a growing body of researchers who are advocating the benefits of analytical pluralism, that is, using more than one analytical method to a single data set (see for example, Frost & Nolas, 2011). Although the current research did not use different methods on the same data set, it did involve using data from the same participants and both methods of analysis were concerned with the same research questions. I would argue that although it might not meet the precise definition of analytic pluralism, the methods used in this thesis are certainly consistent with its spirit and ethos. Clarke et al., (2015) suggest that the combination of methods relying on different epistemological and ontological assumptions can be problematic. This was addressed in this thesis by using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach throughout the analysis. The combination of TA and HPA was undoubtably successful in the analysis and interpretation of the data, and has provided an approach capable of exploring cross-case and within-case dimensions of a dataset. The next stage in the development of this approach will be to explore the use of TA and HPA on the same data set.

In summary, this thesis makes a significant contribution to the research methodology literature in general and specifically in research exploring sexual identity. Firstly, it documents the development of a new approach to the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data (HPA). Secondly, it demonstrates the utility of telephones as a research tool. Thirdly, it has shown the benefits of adopting a multi-method longitudinal approach, and finally, it has contributed to the growing body of research that uses analytical pluralism through the successful combination of cross-case and within-case approaches to data analysis and interpretation.

8.3.3 Practical implications of my findings

One of the main practical implications of my findings relates to the positive and negative ideologies which seem to be evident in communities and organisations. Communities can be understood as ‘place and/or practice bound’ (Weeks, Heaphy, & Donovan, 2001) and are recognised as important sites where stigmatised and marginalised groups share a sense of ‘belonging’ (Homfray, 2007; Formby, 2012). Communities that promote themselves as bisexually orientated and/or friendly clearly offer people a space and place where their attractions to people of the same and different-gender are acknowledged and understood (Bowes-Catton, 2015). Participants in the current research could relate to this assertion and a number of them expressed a wish to continue to access LGBT+ and bisexual specific orientated communities and spaces for support and social reasons. However, participants also highlighted the ways in which these communities could be oppressive and dismissive of their relationship practice. My findings show that participants experience a ‘lack of fit’ in broader LGBT+ communities due to their identification as bisexual, but also, they feel a lack of acceptance in bisexual specific communities because they are in monogamous relationships.

The benefits of feeling a sense of belonging in LGBT+ communities has been documented (see for example, Paternotte & Tremblay, 2015; Plummer, 1995; Rust 1995). However, there has also been a growing recognition that even communities set up specifically to support minority groups can be discriminatory. This position has been raised specifically in relation to transgender people (Hines & Sanger, 2010; Davy, 2011), but the present research seems to indicate it might be more widespread. It is not easy to explain why this situation might come about. One possible explanation lies in the work of Ricoeur on ideology and utopia discussed in Chapter 1. Communities such LGBT+ and BiCon emerge as a form of resistance against the various prejudices and discriminations they face in wider society. However, as these communities establish themselves they develop particular ideological positions that strengthen over time (Toft & Yip, 2017). These ideological structures have the potential to create their own set of prejudices and stereotypical views of minority groups within their own community. In this research, participants discuss their personal experiences of hostility and marginalisation in communities and believe that this is a direct consequence of their bisexual identity and/or because they choose to enter into dyadic monogamous relationships. It is important to acknowledge that organisations and communities are not always supportive of people whose relationship arrangement does not reflect the intimate relationship configuration of the majority. It is vital that communities pay attention to the ideological and cultural power dynamics embedded within the ways they operate and acknowledge the diversity of people who access them (Formby, 2012).

In summary, it is important that organisations and groups which have been set up to support members of the LGBT+ community avoid privileging certain identities and relationship practices. In order to do this they have to have systems and processes that facilitate a continuous review of their own culture and practices. This could be done in a variety of ways, such as, ensuring those responsible for organising events are diverse in terms of their own relationship practices. In addition, implementing creative feedback mechanisms that enable members of communities (past and present) to anonymously raise issues and concerns about community activities, and community directions, may assist in this endeavour. On the basis of the findings reported in this thesis, it is important to ensure that there are no 'invisible' privileged positions that marginalise others.

8.4 Reflecting on the research process

The overarching aim in this section is to convey the growth that I feel I undertook during the process of engaging with my participants. Therefore, in this section I present my reflections on the research process and my role in it. Firstly, I present my reflections on the process of data collection and interpretation. This is followed by a discussion of the ethical principles that underpinned my commitment to participants including reflections on the valuable lessons and insights gleaned from the experience of interacting with participants. I then present some consideration of my 'insider' status and discuss how this was both helpful and challenging in relation to both the collection of data and to me personally. The final section examines my relationship with the participants throughout the research and the potential sensitive nature of the topic under study.

8.4.1 Collecting and interpreting the data

From the outset, I considered it important to engage with the data using a combination of cross-case and within-case approaches. This enabled me to explore common themes across the data set as a whole as well as looking at the lived experiences of individual participants. Template Analysis enables researches to make explicit use of *a priori* themes which can be used in different ways. In this thesis the *a priori* themes were developed from research reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2 and provided me with a starting point for the process of interpreting the data. They also provided a way of relating my own personal experiences as a bisexual woman in a monogamous relationship to the research process. However, I was mindful of the suggestion that when one uses *a priori* themes, one comes to the data with ideas that are already formed. Whilst this is not necessarily a barrier to collecting and interpreting data (Van Manen, 1997), it is important to ensure, as far as is possible, to avoid overlooking important aspects of the data (King & Brooks, 2016). Starting the process of analysing and interpreting the data was a task I found particularly challenging for a number of reasons, in particular, the sheer volume of data was rather daunting. Using a small number of *a priori* themes provided a way of engaging with the data in a structured and meaningful way. My Template Analysis began with three independent *a priori* themes which eventually became subsumed under other themes or were disregarded because they were not evident in the data. This reflected the iterative process of interpreting the data and developing a Template that evolved over time. In the analysis and interpretation of the data reported in this thesis the *a priori* themes were incredibly helpful in the early stages, but the iterative process produced alternative themes and concepts as the analysis progressed.

Once the iterative process has started it can be difficult to take the decision to stop and feel confident that the Template has developed to a point that it has sufficient credibility and validity. As a relatively inexperienced researcher, my decision to stop the iterative process was based on a combination of my own judgement and the discussions I had with my supervisors. My own judgement and decisions were influenced by Ricoeur's (1992) views on the nature of attestation which are central to his discussions on the nature of self and identity. He argues that selfhood is something that is dependent on attestation, that is, the personal testimony of oneself and others. The interpretations of the data reported in this thesis are supported by my arguments and are open to challenge by others. So, the decision to stop the development of the Template was taken when I had confidence in attesting to the way in which it represented the data.

The decision-making processes of individual researchers is an issue raised by Lavis (2010) in relation to the impact it can have on the interpretation of data. It is important to acknowledge that I bring my own epistemological frame of reference or 'life-world' (Husserl, 1980) to the analytic and interpretive process. Throughout the process of developing the Template I became increasingly aware of my own personal preferences in relation to analysing and interpreting the data. I felt comfortable with the process of developing a hierarchical structure and the ways in which it facilitated the organisation and interpretation of the data. In particular it enabled me to conceptually visualise my codes in a pragmatic and interpretive manner. I considered other approaches to representing the data such as the use of mind maps (King, Bravington, Brooks, Hardy, Melvin & Wilde, 2013). However, my exploratory uses of these were not very productive and it became clear to me that using a hierarchical coding strategy was more closely aligned to the ways in which I conceptualise the world.

In order to explore ideographic aspects of the data I developed a method which I labelled Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis (HPA). HPA is rooted in Ricoeur's expression of hermeneutic phenomenology, and his articulation of the ideological, cultural and temporal dimension of lived experience as well as his focus on the relationship between language and action. Ricoeur's ideas provided the analysis with a pragmatic and within-case focus that complemented the more cross-case approach of Template Analysis. One of the strengths of the current research is that I collected data at different points in time and in different ways which enabled me to explore the temporal dimension to lived experience. One of my concerns from the outset was that using Template Analysis throughout would potentially constrain the interpretive process. Using HPA was advantageous because it enabled me to look at the data through a different lens and explore alternative ideas during the interpretive process. In summary, I found the use of different approaches to data analysis within the same research process to be productive. I developed a better understanding of the data and the two approaches were both effective in terms of generating insights and contributing to answering the research questions.

8.4.2 Commitment to participants

The ethical principles of beneficence, autonomy, and non-maleficence need to be upheld particularly in relation to interviewing women who have effectively allowed me into their private lives (Robertson, 2000). Autonomy is paramount in respect of carrying out research on sensitive topics because it is vital that participants can trust the researcher and the research. Participants will be more at ease if they know what is expected from them at the outset and it is only when they are fully aware of the research aims that they can fully consent to the process. This underpinned my rationale for ensuring that I was as transparent as possible throughout data collection. Beneficence plays a part in the research process because it is important to understand the significance of the research in that it hopefully contributes towards a deeper understanding of bisexual women in monogamous relationships. I am mindful of how the research process results in what Ricoeur (1981) refers to as the *'appropriation of meaning'* (p. 158). For Ricoeur the process of researching or engaging with others in a bid to better understand participants' lives is always a fusion-like experience. Whilst it is certainly not appropriate for the researcher to project themselves into the text, it is insightful to acknowledge the way in which participants stories can open up the researcher's world (Tan et al., 2009).

Having not met participants I initially had only my perceptions of them to go on. Receiving their diaries was both exciting and a wake-up call for me. Exciting because this was real and participants that I had recruited were sending me their diarised thoughts. It was a wake-up call in the sense that some of the assumptions I held about participants were often incorrect. For example, on a number of occasions I engaged in email dialogue with a participant more often than the others[56]. Due to the fact we had informally discussed a number of things as well as laughed about commonalities we shared and I felt I could relate to her. When her diary arrived I remember thinking that someone else must have written it because she came across differently, less comedic[57] and at that point I realised I had a preconceived idea in respect of who this

[56] Because I had to rearrange the agreed interview time and subsequently she had to re-rearrange it because she had double booked.

[57] By no means do I intend that in a negative way or as a slight against my participant. It is no doubt inevitable that when one engages in conversation with someone else over a period of time one builds up a picture of that person. The diary arrival offered a different kind of picture to the one I had mentally constructed. This represented one of

participant was when in fact, the arrival of her diary led me to reconceptualise my perception somewhat. Having reached the end of data collection I experienced a strange sense of 'what now'. Instead of the elation I was expecting to feel I felt strangely deflated. After some consideration, I realised it was because I was facing the dilemma of saying goodbye to participants.

The British Psychological Society (BPS) provides researchers with an ethical framework with which to follow and I endeavoured to be mindful of that throughout the data collection process. However, I was unable to locate any guidance in relation to perhaps feeling this way after I had collected my data and I struggled with this a little. The way in which I dealt with this was to discuss it with more experienced colleagues who encouraged me to avoid shutting the door to participants. I was pleased to hear this as I felt it was important to let participants know that if they wanted to contact me they could. Unlike other researchers who have discussed boundary crossing in respect of the researcher respondent relationship such as research participants assuming the researcher is a 'friend' (see Walby, 2010) I experienced no such issues. Throughout the data collection process I felt comfortable and safe. I negotiated times with participants in respect of the interviews and more often than not attempted to fit in with whatever suited them. In respect of the diaries, participants completed them in their own time and space. I was careful to follow each of my interviews up with an email thanking them once again for their participation and a request to keep in touch. I am pleased to say that a number of my participants

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my many moments of clarity throughout this research project in that it reminded me to not judge a book by its cover.

have sporadically kept in touch since the interviews[58] and this in part enables me to feel like I did not say goodbye in as much as I said *au revoir*.

Having said the above, there were times when my assumptions related to what participants were willing to record were wrong. This became more apparent to me in the 'doing' of stage two of the data collection process (telephone interview). In the diaries participants wrote in great detail about their bisexual identity and how on a day to day basis they thought about their sexuality. This provided me with plenty of illuminating insights into their world which I thought I could investigate further with them in the telephone interview phase. My assumption was that if they had written about it in the diary then it was highly likely that they would speak about it in more depth if probed in the interview. While on the whole that was the experience, on occasion there were times when participants were not willing to discuss a diary topic/entry in any more depth than they had already discussed. One participant wrote in quite some detail about the people with whom she was currently having sexual contact. However, in the subsequent interview she was less inclined to open up about her diary entrants despite me framing questions in different ways. My attempts to probe did not seem to deliver the same quality of information. I remember feeling frustrated at my inability to glean further insight into many of the points she initially raised. It was through the process of reflection that I came to understand the real power of utilising different methods of data collection. Clearly for this particular participant the diary provided her with a comfortable platform with which to express and document her sexual relationships. Thus the fact that she was unwilling to embellish those entries in the interview but

[58] Some have enquired into where I am up to etc. positively encouraging me that I can do it. Others have emailed to tell me what is happening in their lives and relationships.

instead choose to discuss other topics and subjects added depth and value to her data which positively contributed to the research generally.

The scheduling of telephone appointments with participants was at times particularly challenging. Clearly it was important that we arranged a mutually convenient time where we could both engage fully in the phone conversation without distraction. One participant could only do a set day and time as she had small children to look after and wanted to speak to me away from them and her partner. Other participants were fine to speak to me during the day, whilst others preferred to speak to me in the evening. On occasion some of my participants and I had to reschedule the interview for one reason or another. This was not a problem because it was relatively unproblematic to arrange another mutually convenient time and date. Had I arranged to conduct face-to-face interviews and travelled to various locations I think the rescheduling would have been much more challenging.

In considering the things I would do differently if I were to carry out this research again I am left with a long list of procedural instances. For example I arranged a mutually convenient time to call my participants and had initially assumed that I would be able to borrow or purchase some technical equipment from work that would enable me to record the telephone conversations without any major interruption. However in part this proved not to be the case so I ended up recording all the interviews on a Dictaphone through my iPhone speaker. This meant that there were on occasions a few issues with sound quality which impacted on the conversational flow. However, thankfully it did not impede the interview process too much. I have since been informed that there was in fact a much easier way in which to carry out recorded interviews over the phone which involves informing telephone services and they effectively record it as an MP3 player. If I were to carry out telephone interviews in the future I would utilise this option as it would have been less intrusive.

Reflecting on the process related to giving participants research information, I feel it would have been more productive to have provided participants with more direction in terms of the kinds of things they could have included or incorporated into their diary submissions. Although as I discussed in chapter 4 a number of the hand-written diaries contained smiley emoticon type images. I think on reflection I could have provided more guidance to participants than I actually did. I envisaged the diary-writing to be completely self-directed with participants choosing whatever they felt was worthy of inclusion. One of the benefits of utilising diaries in social science research is the perceived control it affords participants (Jones & Woolley, 2015). However, the diary task was as Bell (1998) argues *'solicited'* (p. 72) in the sense that what participants include is underpinned by the information given to them at the start of the research. Reflecting on the kinds of emails I received from participants during this particular phase of the research process (which were along the lines of *'I hope I am doing this right'*) led me to reassess whether I gave participants sufficient instructions related to the kinds of things they could include (such as drawings or song lyrics). Diary writing invokes images of predominantly textual entries and whilst this was very much desired I feel if I were more directional and sanctioned the inclusion of other styles of data inclusion would have provided more creative data submissions (Elliott, 1997). Following on from this, perhaps the information I initially provided to participants did not fully emphasise the monogamy element of my research call-out. I should have anticipated women focusing on the bisexual identity aspect of the advert. I conclude this because I ended up withdrawing one participant's data because it became apparent in the interview that she was in a polyamorous relationship. Whilst this was not a major concern in itself it did become clear through the dialogic process that she did not desire to be in a future monogamous relationship. Although she briefly commented on being in a previous monogamous marriage she rarely referenced it in relation to the impact it had on her bisexual identity. Although in her diary she intimated that she was involved in more than one sexual relationship, it was not apparent that she viewed her relationship as a polyamorous one, or that she was not looking for a monogamous relationship in the future.

8.4.3 Being an 'insider'

There is debate within the literature in relation to the advantages and disadvantages of occupying either an 'insider' (emic) or 'outsider' (etic) status or position in research (West, Stewart, Foster, & Usher, 2013; McCormack, 2014; Hartman, 2011; Bridges, 2001; Walby, 2010). An insider is a researcher who is considered to be part of the community under investigation. Therefore, an outsider by comparison is someone who would not consider themselves to be part of the group under study (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015; Reissman, 2000). Had I seen a call for bisexual women in monogamous relationships to take part in some research, I would have felt that I met the criteria to participate. This affords me the status of an insider because I consider myself to share the essential selection criteria with them. In relation to my own sexual identity I felt it was important to be honest with participants. I disclosed both my bisexual identity and my relationship status to participants. Often this disclosure occurred as a natural outcome of our conversation at other times as a response to being asked directly. As I discussed in chapter 4 there are a number of potential advantages and disadvantages in relation to holding either position in research. For example, being an insider affords the researcher particular kinds of knowledge about what is being studied that an 'outsider' is assumed to not to have. 'Insiders' are understood to share experiences with their participants making it more likely for them to be in a position to explore topics or phenomena that outsiders are thought to be unfamiliar with (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015; Tang, 2007).

Research has demonstrated how individuals are more likely to empathise with each other if they have common experiences (Fox, Rodham, Harris, Taylor, Sutton, Scott & Robinson, 2009). The ability to empathise with participants is no doubt important, particularly in relation to fostering positive relationships with participants. However, one need not be a shared member of a group in order to carry this out. Those who hold outsider positions are able to adopt an empathic stance towards both the research and their participants'. Writing from his position as an outsider in respect of his research, Sparks, (1994) suggests that as a *'phenomenological stranger'* asking his participant *'dumb'* (p. 170) questions, he is able to engage in a reflective and collaborative process. He suggests that due to having no direct insider knowledge of his participant's life world[59] he is able to probe areas of discussion which are unfamiliar to him in order to glean a better understanding.

In relation to minority and marginalised identities, Kelly, Burton, and Regan (1994) suggest that real understanding is difficult for researchers who do not share these identities. They argue that the reality of occupying an identity that is stigmatised, positions those who have no real-world lived-experience of it, as ill-informed, rendering it much too *'inaccessible'* (p. 29) for them to understand. In relation to members of the LGBT+ community Bridges (2001) suggests that researchers who occupy outsider statuses are more likely to be considered with suspicion. Members are more likely to express concerns related to for example, researcher trustworthiness. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) highlight how research insiders occupy a paradoxical position. On the one hand they have access to personal knowledge of the area under investigation. Whilst on the other hand, they can exhibit a bias in respect of any subsequent analysis and interpretation. Kanuha, (2000) argues that, *'for each of the ways that being an insider researcher enhances the depth and breadth of understanding a population that may not be accessible to a nonnative scientist, questions about objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of a research project are raised because perhaps one knows too much or is too close to the project and may be too similar to those being studied'* (p. 444). Holding an 'insider' or 'outsider' epistemology can therefore, present many challenges and it is important to be mindful of the ways in which one's insider status in particular can impact on the research. It is important also to understand that groups and communities, are not homogenous and as such, a full insider understanding is unlikely. Inherent

[59] Sparks (1992) references his outsider status in respect of his research. He researched a white, lesbian, physical educator whilst being mindful of his position as a white, heterosexual man.

in each person's life is a plethora of intersectional identities and identifications[60] in operation. Thus, an insider holistic identification and representation will be difficult to achieve. Bridges (2001) argues that there is merit in both insider and outsider positions in respect of researching communities as each position potentially brings something unique to the research table.

In relation to the current research it is more accurate to suggest that I am a 'part-insider'. D'Cruz and Jones (2004) suggest that the complexities surrounding inside and outside positions in research can result in researchers legitimately claiming part inside and outside statuses. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) support this view and argue that occupying dialectical positions are not helpful in research. Instead they postulate a 'space between' both positions, leading to the acknowledgement that researchers can be the same, and different, at the same time. In the current research, I often felt that the only commonality I had with many of my participants was the fact we were in monogamous relationships. When participants spoke about being in a monogamous relationship, or desiring a monogamous relationship, I could relate too many of their views and experiences. The same however, cannot be said in respect of participants discussing their bisexual identity. Often, participants spoke about their bisexuality in ways I could not relate to at all. For example, some participants discussed seeing beyond sex and gender in respect of attraction. Often, they professed to notice other qualities related to personality traits before they noticed what gender a potential partner was.[61] For some participants being a man or woman bore no relationship to the extent to which they found them attractive. I found this difficult to relate

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[60] Such as class, race, sexuality, religion, etc.

[61] Although this was not always accurate as my analysis discusses how at times some participants talk about desiring the other gender sexually.

to, as the potential to not see sex and gender is a little alien to me. This realisation highlighted how my insider status did not necessarily afford me the same level of understanding as all of my participants all of the time.

A number of qualitative researchers actively choose to 'mesearch'[62] (Nash, & LaSha Bradley, 2012; Yoshino, 2006) demonstrating the potential attraction and value in sharing identity positions with participants'. Whether 'mesearching' or not, it is clear that the researcher has an important role in the process as they are there to do justice to the participants and the research (Tang, 2007). Reinharz (1988) captures the importance of having some understanding of the people whose experiences you are interested in exploring when he says, *'to listen to people is to empower them. But if you want to hear it, you have to go hear it, in their space, or in a safe space. Before you can expect to hear anything worth hearing, you have to examine the power dynamics of the space and the social actors. Second, you have to be the person someone else can talk to, and you have to be able to create a context where the person can speak and you can listen. That means we have to study who we are and who we are in relation to those we study. Third, you have to be willing to hear what someone is saying, even when it violates your expectations or threatens your interests. In other words, if you want someone to tell it like it is, you have to hear it like it is'* (p. 15). That being said, from a hermeneutic perspective all interpretative accounts have value (Ricoeur, 1992). Thus, issues in relation to researcher 'insider' and 'outsider' positions can ultimately become somewhat peripheral.

[62] This refers to researchers researching aspects of themselves in research – effectively studying the "me" into the research project.

8.4.4 My relationship with the participants

Given the potential sensitive nature of the current research it was important to foster authenticity for both myself and my participants. Thus prior to contacting participants I decided to answer any questions they may have had of me spontaneously as opposed to constructing a script or attempting to deflect them in any way. I approached the dialogic process with flexibility in terms of what I was prepared to disclose to participants. In the process of speaking with my participants I found they gave me ample opportunity to talk about my relationships and bisexual status. It felt natural to just be myself with participants. Prior to any data collection a number of participants enquired over email into why I was interested in the topic and I felt that it was only right and proper that I answered them honestly and genuinely as I was hoping to secure a reciprocal relationship exchange and this underpinned my reason to disclose my bisexual identity to participants. However, I understand that the disclosure of one's sexuality can at times change the dynamics of the researcher respondent relationship (Walby, 2010). That being said there was never a point in my interactions with participants when I felt negatively judged in any way. I always felt accepted by them and I hope they felt the same way. However, I found myself on a number of occasions experiencing a range of unexpected feelings when reading and listening to participants talk about their experiences. Reading their diaries was a real peep-hole into their everyday lives. There were occasions when I felt I was almost spying on them because the level of detail in respect of their emotions was quite detailed. I realise now that I was unprepared for feeling like that. During the process of writing the thesis up I realise how naïve and self-centred I was when I began this research. In one sense I acknowledge that I was labouring under the misapprehension that bisexual women in monogamous relationships were similar to me. By similar, I mean 'dealt' with it like me, understood their bisexuality as I did, and were as out as I was. Talking to my participants has been one of the most eye opening things I have ever done in that I have learnt so much about myself. I can honestly say that speaking with each and every one of my unique participants has taught me to appreciate the diversity of bisexual experience.

In addition the privilege participants afforded me as the researcher was powerful and important. One of the important things a researcher must convey to participants is what Bridges (2001) describes as a, *'spirit of gratitude'* (p. 379). One of the ways in which I felt I could transmit my gratitude to participants was to actively pay attention to what they were saying. I did this by regularly verbally mirroring back to participants what they had said in order to be clear that my summaries were as accurate as possible. This was useful because sometimes I misinterpreted what they said, or I did not quite hear them accurately[63]. Doing this also encouraged participants to provide more clarity in respect of the point they wished to make. It was vital that I engaged in this clarity seeking as the act of engaging in dialogue with participants meant that it was the most appropriate way in which to ensure that I had heard the message as they intended it. In keeping with Ricoeur's (1981) view that once speech becomes text in the form of such documents as transcriptions then the *'psychosocial circumstances of the dialogue'* (Tan et al., 2009, p. 7) are somewhat lost or at best changed. Ricoeur suggests that once discourse is committed to text then such things as sentiment may not be accurately preserved. This coupled with the researcher or interpreter's lifeworld results in a distancing from the text. As such Ricoeur argues that all interpretations will be somewhat different even subsequent interpretations done by the same person. Therefore endeavouring to ensure that I had recorded participants' intentions through their live discourse to the best of my ability was vital considering the above. That being said Ricoeur highlights how the text remains unique to the participant and as such through the process of interpretation connects with the interpreter's unique world culminating in a *'new picture of understanding'* (Tan et al., 2009, p. 8). When the 'formal' audio recorded interviews had finished I engaged in dialogue with all participants in relation to various points we had discussed. As previously mentioned in chapter 5 participants spent time talking in general about what they thought about the interview process as well as disclosed further points they preferred not to have audio recorded. I relished the opportunity to do this because I was mindful of the

[63] Due to the interviews being carried out over the phone there were a number of times when the line was poor and I couldn't quite catch what they were saying. Thus I continually went back and forth double checking I had heard it right.

question; ‘what am I giving to participants?’ (Bridges, 2001). It became apparent quite early on that those who were selected to participate felt positive in respect of having an opportunity to give voice to their experiences and as such they expressed the sentiment that taking part was rewarding for them[64]. To hear participants say such positive things about taking part in the research was rewarding for me and energised my conviction that my research was important.

8.5 Concluding comments

In section 8.3 I presented the key findings to emerge from the current research. Here I identify three areas that I consider important for future research to consider. Firstly, the gender of bisexual women’s partners and the potential impact it has on identity and desire, is an area that requires additional exploration. Diamond (2008a, b) focused on the fluid and flexible nature of female desire, but the present research suggests that the gender of one’s partner plays a role in desiring the ‘other’. It is not clear from the current research the extent to which lesbian norms and culture play a role in constraining the ways in which bisexual women express their desires. Secondly, one of the challenges faced by the participants in this research was finding ways of keeping their bisexuality alive and visible. It seems to be the case that partner’s gender influences the strategies they are able to use in the maintenance of their bisexual identity. This is related to the previous point in some ways, but would be worthy of investigation in its own right. Thirdly, one of the limitations of the present research, and I would argue, the majority of research into bisexuality, is that the participants tend to be white, well-educated and middle

[64] Some participants in the interview told me how excited they were to hear the research call and that they had been hoping to be given the opportunity to take part in research focusing on them as bisexual women in monogamous relationships. This was incredibly satisfying for me to hear.

class. There is a real need to extend this type of research to include less well represented groups of women. Previous researchers, such as Bowes-Catton, (2015), Barker et al., (2012) and Hayfield (2014) have all made the same plea. However, recruiting participants from minority ethnic groups and different societal strata is far from easy and will continue to be a challenge for the foreseeable future. One of the successes of the current research was using the telephone as a means of interviewing participants. It had the considerable advantage of enabling participants to retain a sense of anonymity which was important to several of them. Perhaps one of the ways of recruiting ‘hard to reach’ participants is to make more use of alternative forms of data collection that facilitate participant anonymity. As is the case with most research carried out within the social sciences the present research has generated more questions than it has answered. The three areas for future research suggested above do not constitute an exclusive list, rather they reflect my interpretation of the research findings and reflect the avenues that my personal research will follow in the future.

Research into sex and sexuality is often considered to be controversial and throughout the course of my journey from the initial ideas to its embodiment in this thesis I have experienced a range of responses to it from colleagues and other people. Some of these were positive, some could be portrayed as bemused and others were either overtly or covertly negative. I am sure these experiences are similar to many other researchers who are doing or have carried out research into sexuality. Manning, (2013) speculates on issues related to the assumption that research exploring sex and sexuality is somehow considered shocking. He questions what it is about these kinds of research that causes such aversion given that it is a natural and normal part of everyday life. Manning (2013) points out the fact that sexuality research is under-represented in mainstream journals and presents a range of strategies that researchers could adopt to raise the profile. If researchers researching sexuality do not engage with the ‘political’ process of raising its profile and moving it into the mainstream of academic research it will continue to flounder as an overlooked and side-lined topic. I intend to contribute to this process by sharing this research in as many forums as possible. In my view the exploration of ordinary lives of bisexually identified women in monogamous relationships is both valuable and important. Not only does it shed light on the relationship between sexuality and everyday lives it also contributes to our understanding of being in the world and negotiating one’s sexual identity in amongst multiple identities.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Call out information for potential participants

Diva magazine: Monogamous Bisexuals

Hi

My name is Sarah Jane Robinson and I am looking to recruit participants for research I am undertaking – The research hopes to explore bisexual women's sexual identity in relation to monogamy. Specifically how bisexual women maintain their bi identity when engaged in a monogamous relationship (with a man or woman)

If you are willing to take part or would like more information, please email me: s.robinson@hud.ac.uk

Alternatively you can write c/o my department at Huddersfield: Sarah Jane Robinson, Department of Behavioural & Social Sciences, Division of Psychology and Counselling, The University of Huddersfield, Queensgate HD1 3DH

Critical sexology advert

I am looking to recruit participants who would be interested in participating in my PhD research.

Overall, this research aims to develop our understanding of women who define their sexuality as ‘bisexual’. More specifically it aims to:

1) Explore the lived-experience of bisexual women who identify as monogamous

2) Explore the ways in which bisexual women in ‘same-gender’ and ‘other-gender’ relationships construct their identity.

3 Explore the ways in which women who identify as bisexual and monogamous maintain their identity.

The women I require don’t necessarily have to be in a current intimate relationship they can be single. However they need be able to speak about desiring a monogamous relationship and identifying as bisexual. It would also be preferable if currently single participants desired a monogamous relationship in the future.

Participants will be asked to keep a diary for four weeks. They will be asked to include details of specific events that they feel are related to some aspect of their sexual identity. This will be the first stage in developing an understanding of the everyday lives of the participants.

Following on from this I hope to conduct an interview which will seek to explore any issues that may have arisen out of the participants’ diaries.

Following the interview participants will be supplied with a disposable camera and instructed to take photographs of people, places and objects that are meaningful in relation to their sexual identity. Participants will be requested to take at least 12 photographs within a week of receiving the camera. They will be supplied with a stamp addressed envelope to return the camera after they have completed the task. When the photographs have been developed the participants will take part in a photo-assisted interview

If this research is something you feel you would be interested in please contact me for more details.

SJ

Appendix 2: Participant information sheet

Dept of Behavioural Sciences & Social Sciences

Division of Psychology & Counselling

Participant’s Information Sheet

Participation

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. This means that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time and also to withdraw any information that you have previously provided up to the writing up of the thesis without any adverse implications for yourself.

The Study

The proposed study will explore the ways in which bisexual women narrate their identity in the 21st Century. Paying particular attention to how bisexual women negotiate both their personal and working lives in the hope that one can contribute towards the existing body of knowledge concerned with bisexual women.

Participants will be required to:

Keep diary/journal for 4 weeks

Participants will be asked to keep a diary/journal for four weeks. They will be asked to include details of specific events in their everyday lives related to their sexual identity. This will be the first stage in developing an understanding of the everyday lives of participants.

Take part in an initial interview

This will be the first interview with participants. The interview will provide contextual information about the participants' lives. The interview will also explore any issues that may have arisen out of the participants' diaries.

Photo-assisted interview

Following the previous interview participants' will be supplied with a disposable camera and instructed to take photographs of people, places and objects that are meaningful in relation to their sexual identity. They will be supplied with the cameras approximately 6 months after the initial interview and requested to take at least 12 photographs within a week of receiving the camera. They will be supplied with a stamp addressed envelope to return the camera after they have completed the task. When the photographs have been developed the participants will take part in a photo-assisted interview

Risk of Harm

There is a minimal risk of psychological harm to the participant, but in the event of participants becoming distressed due to the nature of the research the researcher will advise the participant on appropriate sources of psychological support.

Benefits

The research provides an opportunity to develop a better understanding of the impact of a bisexual identity on individuals' everyday lives. Individuals who self-identify as bisexual appear to be under-represented in the LGBT+ community and this research may provide some insight into the challenges faced by bisexual women in the 21st Century. These insights may also provide the basis for influencing policy decisions and the ways in which bisexual women are represented in the media and the LGBT+ community.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Data collected through the interviews will be coded to ensure that the identity of the participant is not revealed to anyone other than the researcher. Supervisors will have access to the coded interviews where the participant will be identified by a pseudonym. Some of the tapes may be transcribed by a professional transcriber and in such cases the transcriptions will be edited by the researcher to ensure that the identity of the participant is not revealed in the transcripts.

All data related to the research will be held in a secure container and will be destroyed within 5 years of completion of the PhD process.

The anonymity of the participants will be protected by the use of a coded pseudonym in the interview transcripts and any publications arising out of the research. One method used in the collection of the data requires participants to take photographs of places and objects. This may result in photographs that are linked to identifiable places or objects. Before any such images are used in publications (including the PhD thesis) participants will be contacted to ensure that they consent to the use of the image.

Dissemination of Results

The researcher will make the findings/analysis available to the participants should they request it at any point during the research process.

Contact Details

Sarah Jane Robinson

Dept of Behavioural Sciences & Social Sciences R2/38

The University of Huddersfield,

Queensgate,

Huddersfield, HD1 3DH

Tel: + 44 (0) 1484 47 2101

Email: s.robinson@hud.ac.uk

Tel: Mob – 07530307953

Supervisor Details:

Prof Nigel King

Behavioural Sciences,

University of Huddersfield, Queensgate,

Huddersfield,

West Yorkshire

HD1 3DH

Tel: 01484 47 3639

Email: n.king @hud.ac.uk

Appendix 3: Consent forms & diary instructions

Title of Project: Sexual identity in the 21st Century: problematising the binary

Name of Researcher: Sarah Jane Robinson

Please tick box

1 I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 1st March 2011 for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ◻

2 I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason ◻

3 I understand that data collected about me during this study will be anonymised before it is submitted for publication ◻

4 I agree to take part in this study. ◻

______________________	___________________	______________________
Name of participant	Date	Signature

Researcher	Date	Signature
Name of supervisor	Date	Signature

Photograph Consent Form

I understand that (participant's name)   is taking part in research being carried out by Sarah Robinson at Huddersfield University. I also understand that the research is concerned with experiences of bisexual women. One aspect of the research involves participants taking photographs of people, places and objects that are significant in their lives. The photographs will then form the basis of an interview between the participant and the researcher. The photographs may also be reproduced in publications that arise out of the research.

The photographs which contain identifiable persons will be held for a period up to five years after the completion of the research after which time they will be destroyed.

I agree to the photograph being taken and used in the research please sign (1). This means that your photographs will be seen by the researcher and other staff directly involved in the research.

I agree to the photograph being used in publications that may arise out of the research please sign (2) as well. This means that the photograph will be seen by anyone who reads the publication.

1) I agree to my photograph being taken and used in the research being carried out by Sarah Robinson.

Name (print name):…………………………………

Signed:……………………………………………….

Date:…………….

2) I agree to my photograph being used in publications that may arise out of the research.

Name (print name):…………………………………

Signed:……………………………………………….

Date:…………….

(This form should be returned to Sarah Jane Robinson in the pre-paid envelope with the camera)

Hi **********

Thank you again for agreeing to take part in my research. Can I ask that you send back to me your completed diary (after a period of 4 weeks) & your signed consent form.

I will take a copy of the consent form & send it back to you as soon as I receive it back.

If you want to word process your diary that is fine with me otherwise I am happy for you to hand write in the book provided.

I guess what I am looking for is for you to write down anything that you feel is relevant in your everyday life in relation to your sexual identity. It may be an actual experience that day or a feeling you have. This diary will form the underpinnings of my first interview with you.

It might also be that you don't fill your diary in everyday - having said that the more you do engage with it I am hoping the more understanding it will give me about you.

I hope this is clear – If not please feel free to contact me

s.robinson@hud.ac.uk

01484 472101

07530307953

Best wishes

Sarah Jane Robinson

BISEXUAL DIARY

First date of diary entry . . . .

Last date of diary entry . . . .

If you have any questions about your diary, please feel free to contact me:

Email: s.robinson@hud.ac.uk

Office: 01484 472101

Mobile: 07530307953

INSTRUCTIONS

Thank-you for participating in this research – I have provided a few brief guidelines below for you to bear in mind whilst you complete the diary.

- I am interested in bisexual identity in the context of a monogamous relationship. I guess what I am looking for is for you to write down anything that you feel is relevant in your everyday life in relation to your sexual identity. It may be an actual experience that day or a feeling you have. This diary will form the underpinnings of my first interview with you.

- It might also be that you don't fill your diary in everyday - having said that the more you do engage with the diary the more understanding I am hoping it will give me about you.

GOOD LUCK

Appendix 4: Participant's pen sketch at each data collection point

Participant’s biographies at data collection points (DCP’s)

Key:

Data Collection Point 1 – The diary

Data Collection Point 2 – The telephone interview

Data Collection Point 3 – The photo-assisted interview

Name	Age Range	Ethnicity	Gender of partner at data collection points (DCP’s)	Location	Pen Sketch
Elaine	32-38	White	1. diary	Norfolk	Elaine was in a monogamous relationship with her husband Mark throughout all the DCP’s

			Male 2. phone interview Male 3. photo interview Male		At the time of DCP1 and DCP2 - Elaine had a young daughter called Poppy. At the time of DCP3 Elaine had given birth to their second child – a son called Noah Elaine has never had a same-gender relationship – although she references how she has fallen in love with women. Elaine is semi-out to a select number of people in her life – although she is not out to her husband's family or the majority of her own family - apart from her mum. Elaine belongs to a church and regularly attends church services. At the time of DCP1 and DCP2 Elaine was on sick leave from work due to stress and depression brought about by the traumatic birth of her daughter.
Connie	32-38	White	1. diary Single 2. phone interview Female	Warrington	At the time of DCP1 Connie was single although engaging in casual sexual relationships with people of the same and different-gender. For example, 'The Couple' are a married husband and wife with whom Connie is engaging in three way sex with. 'Work Chick' is a woman at work who has intimated to Connie that she wants sex with her. 'Festival Chick' is a woman Connie met at a festival who she is having a no-strings type relationship with. 'Work Colleague Play Buddy' is a man Connie works with, with whom she had a

					previous sexual relationship but no longer does although they remain flirtatious with each other. At the time of DCP2 - Connie had embarked on a monogamous same-gender relationship with Ida. Connie is out as bisexual to her family and the majority of her friends. However she acknowledges that she is ambiguously out at work as not heterosexual but not necessarily out as bisexual. Connie did not have any children.
Sarah	39-45	Black	1. diary Single 2. phone interview Male	Berkshire	At the time of DCP1 Sarah was separated from her husband Dave, however by DCP2 - Sarah had reunited with her husband. Sarah originally is from the United States and she identifies as African/American. Sarah has two young children with her husband. Sarah references that she has never had a relationship with a woman although she has had sexual experiences with women in the past. Sarah participates in voluntary work for a LGBT+ organisation. Sarah is out as bisexual as part of her activism but she is not out to her family or to her husband's family.

Lucy	32-38	White	1. diary Male 2. phone interview Male	West Midlands	At DCP1 and DCP2 - Lucy was in a monogamous relationship with Nick. Lucy has a previous relationship history with includes both same and different-gender sexual relationships. Lucy is not out as bisexual to members of her family or to her partner's family. Nor is she out at work. However Lucy considers herself a bisexual activist and contributes to a number of bisexual specific events. Consequently, Lucy considers herself to be out amongst that crowd of people. Lucy did not have any children.
Honor	18-24	White	1. diary Single 2. phone interview Male	York	At DCP1 Honor was not in a relationship and considered herself single. However by DCP2 - Honor had embarked on a monogamous relationship with a man called Drew. Honor has a previous relationship history that includes both same and different-gender relationships. Honor is out as bisexual to her family members and the majority of her friends. Honor did not have any children.
April	25-31	White	1. diary	Sheffield	At DCP1 and DCP2 April was in a monogamous relationship with Andrew.

			Male 2. phone interview Male		April has a previous relationship history which includes both same and different-gender relationships. April's work in the area of education. April is not out to her father but is out to her mother. April considers herself to be an activist and contributes to a number of bisexual specific events which she believes outs her bisexual identity to others. April did not have any children.
Kate	25-31	White	1. diary Female	Birmingham	At DCP1 Kate was in a monogamous relationship with her girlfriend Winnie. Kate has a previous relationship history that include both same and different-gender relationships. Kate's previous long term relationship was with Sean with whom she remains good friends with. Kate is not out as bisexual at work and is aware that they presume her to be a lesbian by virtue of her having a female partner. Kate considers herself to be an activist and she takes part in a number of LGBT+ focused events.

					Kate did not have any children.
Sam	32-38	White	1. diary Male 2. phone interview Male 3. photo interview Male	Bristol	At DCP1 and DCP2 and DCP3 Sam was in a monogamous relationship with her boyfriend Ken. Sam has a relationship history that includes both same and different-gender relationships. Sam works in education. Sam is out as bisexual to her family members as well as to her friends and work colleagues. Sam considers herself to be an activist and she contributes to a number of bisexual specific events which she believes outs her bisexual identity to others. Sam did not have any children.
Alex	25-31	White	1. diary Male 2. phone interview Male	Manchester	At DCP1 and DCP2 Alex was in a married monogamous relationship with her boyfriend Brad. Alex has a relationship history that includes both same and different-gender relationships

					Alex is originally from America and has been living in England for a number of years. Alex is not out to her family and is not out at work. Although some of her friends are aware she identifies as bisexual. Alex considers herself to be an activist and she contributes to a number of bisexual specific events which she believes outs her bisexual identity to others. Alex did not have any children
Amelia	32-38	White	1. diary Male 2. phone interview Male 3. photo interview Male	Scotland	At DCP1, DCP2 and DCP3 Amelia was in a monogamous relationship with her boyfriend Josh. Amelia has a step son called Alec (Josh's son). Amelia has never had a sexual relationship with a woman. Amelia is not out as bisexual at work although is out to her boss. Amelia is not out to members of her family, however she has disclosed her bisexual identity to a select number of trusted friends.

					Amelia considers herself to be an activist, and she contributes to a number of bisexual specific events which she believes outs her bisexual identity to others. Amelia's work brings her into contact with young people.
Caitlin	39-45	White	1. diary Single 2. phone interview Single 3. photo interview Single	South Yorkshire	At DCP1, DCP2 and DCP3 Caitlin was not in a relationship and considered herself single. Caitlin has a relationship history that includes both same and different-gender relationships. Caitlin considers herself to have only recently acknowledged her attractions to women and she has only just recently adopted the sexual identity label of bisexual. Caitlin was adopted as a small child. Caitlin is not out a bisexual to any of her family members, she is also not out at work or to the majority of her friends. However she is out to a select number of trusted people. Caitlin did not have any children.

Cora	18-24	White	1. diary Female 2. phone interview Female	Essex	At DCP1 and DCP2 Cora is in a monogamous relationship with her girlfriend Emma. Cora has a relationship history that includes both same and different-gender relationships. Cora is out as bisexual to her family as well as at work. However she acknowledges that she is assumed to be a lesbian because she is in a same-gender relationship. Cora did not have any children
Eve	32-38	White	1. diary Female 2. phone interview Female	London	At DCP1 and DCP2 Eve was in a monogamous relationship with her long-term girlfriend Stephanie Eve has a relationship history that includes both same and different-gender relationships. Eve's work brings her into contact with lesbian and bisexual women issues. Eve is out as bisexual to members of her family as well as out at work and to her friends. Eve did not have any children

Jacky	18-24	Mixed Race	1. diary Female 2. phone interview Female	Cambridge	At DCP1 and DCP2 Jacky was in a monogamous relationship with a transsexual woman called Catherine. Jacky has a relationship history that includes both same and different-gender relationships. Jacky identifies as mixed race Jacky considers herself to be active in LGBT+ community Jacky is semi-out to members of her family, however she is not out at work. Jacky was engaged in therapy to help affirm her sexual identity. Jacky did not have any children.
Paula	25-31	White	1. diary Male 2. phone interview Singe 3. photo interview	Staffordshire	At DCP1 Paula was in a monogamous relationship with her boyfriend Wayne. However by DCP2 she had split up with her boyfriend and was single. By DCP3 Paula had embarked upon a same-gender relationship with Kathryn and was no longer single. Paula has a previous relationship history that include same and different-gender relationships.

			Female		Paula had a previous non-sexual relationship with her close friend Vanessa, however she feels they were more than 'just friends' although they never had sex. At DCP1 and DCP2 Paula was training to be a teacher. At DCP 1 and 2 Paula was not out as bisexual to members of her family. At DCP1 and 2 Paula was not out at work, but by DCP3 she was out at work and to members of her family Paula did not have any children
Pippa	46-52	White	1. diary Female 2. phone interview Female	Scotland	At DCP1 and DCP2 Pippa was in a monogamous relationship with her girlfriend Leighanne Pippa has a previous relationship history that includes both same and different-gender relationships. Pippa is divorced from her ex-husband John with whom she has a 21 year old daughter called Una Pippa is not out to members of her family or to any of her work colleagues, however she is out to friends. Pippa regularly frequents the LGBT+ scene

Rebecca	32-38	White	1. diary Female 2. phone interview Female	Hertfordshire	At DCP1 and DCP2 Rebecca was in a monogamous relationship with her girlfriend Michelle. Michelle also identifies as bisexual. Rebecca was planning her upcoming marriage to Michelle which was to be a traditional style white wedding. Rebecca has a previous relationship history that includes both same and different-gender relationships. Rebecca has a step son Will (Michelle's son) Rebecca is out as bisexual to her family members, however she is not out at work and acknowledges that she is assumed to be a lesbian.
Sian	25-31	White	1. diary Sian 2. phone interview Male	London	At DCP1 and DCP2 Sian was in a monogamous relationship with her boyfriend Bill Sian is divorced from her ex-husband Neville Sian has a previous relationship history that includes both same and different-gender relationships. Sian is not out as bisexual to her family members or to any of her work colleagues.

					Sian considers herself to be an activist and she contributes to a number of bisexual specific events which she believes outs her bisexual identity to others. Sian did not have any children
Zoe	46-52	White	1. diary Female 2. phone interview Female	Wolverhampton	At DCP1 and DCP2 Zoe was in a monogamous relationship with her long-term girlfriend Alison Zoe has a previous relationship history that includes both same and different-gender relationships. Zoe works in the area of education. Zoe is out as bisexual to her family members and to her work colleagues – although she acknowledges that some people will assume she is a lesbian. Zoe is divorced from her ex-husband Michael with whom she has three grown up children with. Zoe considers herself an activist and regularly takes part in LGBT+ events as well as more focused bisexual events.

Appendix 5: BiCon 2016 - Code of Conduct

Code of Conduct BiCon 2016

The highlight of the bisexual year!

By signing for your BiCon pass you agree to abide by this code of conduct.

WHY DO WE NEED A CODE OF CONDUCT?

People come to BiCon with different experiences and ideas of how to behave and how they expect others to behave. This Code of Conduct outlines what everyone, including organising team, workshop facilitators and volunteers, can expect from others and what is expected from all of us during BiCon.

The organisers will try to deal fairly and respectfully with any issue brought to us. We may also make reasonable requests that are not specifically included here.

People are responsible for themselves, their actions, and their own health.

You do not have to stay in any session you feel uncomfortable in. You can leave at any time.

PASSES

People attending BiCon should wear their pass to all events; if you don't, you may not be allowed into BiCon spaces until you get it.

Passes are numbered and non-transferable. If you give your pass to another person you are defrauding BiCon. A fee may be payable to replace lost passes.

HARRASSMENT: NO MEANS NO. ASK EVERY TIME.

No one at BiCon should be put under any pressure to join in with things they do not want to do.

This includes:

- any sexual behaviour
- hugs or touching
- taking part in a activity
- disclosing information
- discussing topics which are sensitive or personal
- or even having a chat.

It is fine to ask someone once if they would like to do something. For example, “Would you like a hug?” If they refuse, continuing to ask is pestering them and will be viewed as harassment. If someone asks you to leave them alone, do so.You can ask the conduct team to tell someone to leave you alone.

In public, “no”, “stop”, “don’t do that” or similar words and phrases will be taken at face value by the BiCon organisers and volunteers, regardless of context.

PUBLIC BEHAVIOUR

BiCon should be a place where people feel free to express their sexuality, but it is not a sex or fetish party. We ask that overtly sexual behaviour be kept out of the public areas. Please keep public behaviour within what is normally publicly acceptable.

BiCon is supportive of breastfeeding, it is illegal to discriminate against breasfeeding mothers. Please do not make negative comments if you see someone feeding their child.

Apart from the above exception BiCon attenders should remained fully clothed in all public areas. All nipples, genitalia and bums must be securely covered by clothing. Some sessions are counted as private areas and will be clearly marked as such.

Consent includes any audience. Remember that may include not just attendees, but venue staff and the general public, who may challenge you if they are uncomfortable.

Everyone at BiCon deserves to feel safe and no one deserves to be shouted or sworn at or made to feel threatened.

We don’t allow animals on-site, except for pre-registered assistance animals.

Please abide by the smoking zones which will be clearly marked and explained in the handbook. It is illegal to smoke anywhere indoors including on-site accommodation, including out of windows.

DISCRIMINATION, RESPECTING DIFFERENCE

BiCon should be a safe space for all attenders, regardless of ethnicity, class, gender, disability, religion and belief, age or lifestyle. Bigoted behaviour of any kind will not be tolerated.

Don’t make negative comments or assumptions, or stereotype people on the basis of their skin colour, physical features, race, accent or religious belief. Negative comments about any aspect of a person’s culture or race, or fetishisation of cultural markers and physical features should be avoided. An example of this could be, “that’s such an exotic name” or “your dreadlocks are amazing, can I touch them?”

People who attend BiCon may define their gender in a range of different ways which we understand aren’t always easy to spot. If you are unsure of the pronoun someone uses we encourage you to ask them or avoid gendered language by using “they” instead of “he” or “she”. If you ask someone or are corrected about pronouns, please try to use them correctly. We accept people’s self-identified gender for all purposes at BiCon including single-gender spaces.

People are welcome to attend BiCon regardless of how they define their sexuality.

Please remember that everyone is at a different stage of awareness about various issues and don’t assume people are being malicious.

SAFER SPACES

Some spaces within BiCon are restricted to certain groups of people, e.g people aged 18 or over or those with a particular identity. These should be clearly marked in the session guide and handbook.

BiCon supports safer spaces and recognises their value. Please do not breach safer spaces you are not eligible to be in, but if you are eligible, don’t be afraid that you aren’t ‘enough’ of whatever group to go. If you are unsure of your eligibility you can ask to speak to someone wearing a purple sash for advice.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Please respect people’s privacy, and be aware that not everyone at BiCon may be ‘out’ about their sexuality or other aspects of their lifestyle such as BDSM or non-monogamy. Ask permission before identifying anyone publicly. ‘Public’ includes write-ups on personal websites or on social networking sites such as Facebook.

Do not take any photographs or recordings of people without their express permission. It is your responsibility to make sure everyone in shot is happy to be photographed.

If you give permission for your photo to be taken, assume it may end up online linked to you by name as people may not remember your preferences after BiCon.

If you believe someone has taken your photograph without your permission you may ask them to delete the image or ask the desk or a volunteer to do so for you.

Members of the press should identify themselves to the desk and at any sessions they attend.

GETTING HELP TO DEAL WITH OTHER PEOPLE AND INCIDENTS

If you want support in challenging anyone’s behaviour or anything they’ve said, please come and talk to the desk or the organisers who can assist you or speak to the person for you.

The organisers very much want to know about things that make people at BiCon less likely to attend another bi event. If anything happens that makes you uncomfortable or unwelcome – even if you do not want us to do anything about it, or feel it is your fault – please let us know.

BREACHES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

If any of this happens to you at BiCon or you have witnessed inappropriate behaviour, we want to know so we can improve your experience.

You can tell us

- in person, there will be someone in a sash/on a desk
- through the organisers post box – write something and post it in
- by text
- by email 2016@bicon.org.uk.

Things we can do to help

If something has happened that makes you uncomfortable we can talk to anyone else involved. We are happy to do so, even if you haven't communicated this to them, since that is not always easy to do. We will listen to what you think would help. You don't have to know what would help.

Examples of things we can do

- communicate to others that there is a problem.
- ask for an apology
- ask them to leave you alone
- require them to not be where you are
- exclude them from the rest of BiCon
- pass their detail to future BiCons

These will be implemented at the discretion of the BiCon team.

Breaches of this Code of Conduct or reasonable requests will, in most cases, be met with a warning from a member of the organising team. The organisers decision is final.

If warnings are ignored, or in the event of serious misconduct, we reserve the right to ask anyone to leave all or part of BiCon. If you are asked to leave you will not receive any refund. We reserve the right to pass on details of complaints to future BiCon organisers.

Appendix 6: Demographics of participants

Demographics of Participants

Key:

DCP: Data Collection Point

S-G – Same-gender relationship

D-G –Different-gender relationship S – Not currently in a relationship

Pseudonym	DCP 1 Dairy	DCP 2 Tel Int	DCP 3 Photo Int	Age Range	Ethnicity	R/Ship status& sex of partner	Location
Elaine	✓	✓	✓	32-38	White	D-G (DCP 1, 2 & 3)	Norfolk
Connie	✓	✓		32-38	White	S (DCP 1) S-G (DCP2)	Warrington
Sarah	✓	✓		39-45	Black	S (DCP 1) D-G (DCP 2)	Berkshire

Lucy	✓	✓		32-38	White	D-G (DCP 1 & 2)	West Midlands
Honor	✓	✓		18-24	White	S (DCP 1) D-G (DCP 2)	York
April	✓	✓		25-31	White	D-G (DCP 1 & 2)	Sheffield
Kate	✓			25-31	White	S-G (DCP 1)	Birmingham
Sam	✓	✓	✓	32-38	White	D-G (DCP 1, 2 & 3)	Bristol
Alex	✓	✓		25-31	White	D-G (DCP 1 & 2)	Manchester
Amelia	✓	✓	✓	32-38	White	D-G (DCP 1, 2 & 3)	Scotland
Caitlin	✓	✓	✓	39-45	White	S (DCP 1, 2 & 3)	South Yorkshire
Cora	✓	✓		18-24	White	S-G (DCP 1 & 2)	Essex

Eve	✓	✓		32-38	White	S-G (DCP 1 & 2)	London
Jacky	✓	✓		18-24	Mixed-race	S-G (DCP 1 & 2)	Cambridge
Paula	✓	✓	✓	25-31	White	D-G (DCP 1) S (DCP 2) S-G (DCP 3)	Staffordshire
Pippa	✓	✓		46-52	White	S-G (DCP 1 & 2)	Scotland
Rebecca	✓	✓		32-38	White	S-G (DCP 1 & 2)	Hertfordshire
Sian	✓	✓		25-31	White	D-G (DCP 1 & 2)	London
Zoe	✓	✓		46-52	White	S-G (DCP 1 & 2)	Wolverhampton

Number of participants in age range

Participant age range	Number of participants
18-24	3
25-31	5
32-38	7
39-45	2
46-52	2

Appendix 7: Early versions of the diary & interview templates

Template for diary data – version 2

1 Word on the street

- 1.1 Mother of assumptions
- 1.2 Little pictures in people's heads
  - 1.2.1 Pushing little pictures
  - 1.2.2 Resisting little pictures

2 What is the message?

- 2.1 Bib n tucker
- 2.2 Not singing the same tune

3 Out/Not Out as bisexual

- 3.1 Out for activism
- 3.2 In/out in/out shake it all about
- 3.3 That's not me
- 3.4 Personal definition
- 3.5 Fears of being out

4 Negative experiences related to sexuality

- 4.1 Death by a thousand cuts
- 4.2 Biphobia
- 4.3 Homophobia
- 4.4 Internalised 'phobia'
- 4.5 In Visibility Cloak

5 Elevated Status

- 5.1 Being taken seriously

5.2 Bi enough

5.3 ‘Proper’ lesbian

5.4 Shame the name

6 Monogamy

6.1 Pride in relationship status

6.2 Reasons for monogamy

7 Sex/Attraction

7.1 Desiring other gender

7.2 Desiring the ‘person’

7.3 Gay/Bi-Dar

7.4 Love

7.5 Experiencing gender differences in relationships

8 I know who I am

8.1 Identity certainty

8.1.1 Identity Play

8.1.2 Missing Out

8.2 Support to identity

8.2.1 Support gap

8.2.2 BiCon

8.2.3 Space & time

8.2.4 Role model/reflections

8.2.5 There I am (not)

9 Letting Self/Others Down

9.1 Guilt feelings

9.2 Judgement

Interview Template – version 2

1. Word on the street (Level 1)

1.1 Mother of assumptions (Level 2)

    1.1.1 Its black or white (Level 3)

    1.1.2 Little pictures in people’s heads (Level 3)

        1.1.2.1 Bisexual types (Level 4)

        1.1.2.2 Trendy to be bisexual (Level 4)

1.2 Role model reflections (Level 2)

    1.2.1 Media reinforcement of stereotypes (Level 3)

    1.2.2 Anything is better than nothing (Level 3)

        1.2.2.1 Boxed in & up (Level 4)

        1.2.2.2 Personal definition (Level 4)

1.3 What is the message? (Level 2)

    1.3.1 Queer ‘look’ (Level 3)

    1.3.2 Straight ‘look’ (Level 3)

    1.3.3 Bisexual ‘look’ (Level 3)

        1.3.3.1 Breaking out of the ‘look’ (Level 4)

        1.3.3.2 Chameleon (Level 4)

2. In/out/in/out shake it all about (Level 1)

2.1 Fears of being out (FOBO) (Level 2)

    2.1.1 FOBO – to parents (Level 3)

    2.1.2 FOBO – hurting the relationship (Level 3)

    2.1.3 FOBO – past it (Level 3)

2.1.4 FOBO – relationship permanency (Level 3)

2.1.4.1 Judgement (Level 4)

2.1.4.2 Dorian Grey (Level 4)

2.2 Out - head first (Level 2)

2.2.1 Out – to educate (Level 3)

2.2.2 Out – to support others (Level 3)

3. Enduring the pain (Level 1)

3.1 Queer hostility (Level 2)

3.1.1 Prove yourself (Level 3)

3.1.2 The clique (Level 3)

3.1.3 Fitting in (Level 3)

3.1.3.1 Queer hostility – if dating a man (Level 4)

3.1.3. 2 Interloper (Level 4)

3.1.3.3 Bi-enough (level 4)

3.2 Straight assumptions (Level 2)

3.2.1 Straight sexualisation (Level 3)

3.2.2 Double the chance (Level 3)

3.3 Negative experiences related to sexuality (Level 2)

3.3.1 Bi-negativity (Level 3)

3.3.2 Internalised ‘bi-phobia’ (Level 3)

3.3.1.1 Death by a thousand cuts (Level 4)

3.3.1.2 Bisexual burden (Level 4)

3.3.1.3 Hidden by relationship (Level 4)

4. We are monogamous (Level 1)

4.1 My monogamy (Level 2)

4.1.1 Monogamy ‘fit’ (Level 3)

4.1.2 Monogamy works (Level 3)

4.1.2.1 I don’t want anyone else (Level 4)

4.1.2.2 One is enough (Level 4)

4.2 Monogamy struggles (Level 2)

4.2.1 Keeping the peace (Level 3)

4.2.1.1 Keeping bisexuality alive (Level 4)

4.2.1.2 Health & Wellbeing (Level 4)

4.3 Sex & attraction (Level 2)

4.3.1 Bisexual sexual horizons (Level 3)

4.3.2 Suited to women more than men (Level 3)

4.3.2.1 Desiring the other gender (Level 4)

4.3.2.2 Experiencing gender differences in relationships (Level 4)

5 The holes & highs (Level 1)

5.1 Identity certainty (Level 2)

5.2 Wobbles (Level 2)

5.2.1 Space & time (Level 3)

5.2.2 Support to identity (STI) (Level 3)

5.2.2.1 STI - places to go (Level 4)

5.2.2.2 STI – friends & family (Level 4)

5.2.2.3 STI – on-line (Level 4)

5.2.2.4 STI – partner (Level 4)

5.3 Support gap (SG) (Level 2)

5.3.1 SG – from partner (Level 3)

5.3.2 SG – friends & family (Level 3)

6 BiCon (Level 1)

6.1 BiCon attractions (Level 2)

6.1.1 BiCon off-puts (Level 3)

6.1.2 BiCon tension (Level 3)

6.1.3 BiCon ‘look’ (Level 3)

Appendix 8: Photo guidelines

Photo guidelines

What you are being asked to do?

You are being asked to take twelve photographs of people, places and objects that are meaningful to you in relation to your sexual identity.

Why are you being asked to do it?

The photographs will form the basis of an interview with me as part of the research process. During the interview I will be asking you to talk to me about the content of the photographs and discuss how the people/places/objects represented in them are important to your sexual identity.

Important issues to consider

If you are taking photographs of people for the purposes of this research you must get their permission first. In order to confirm that they are willing to have their image included in the research they must sign a consent form.

If you have any concerns whatsoever about taking photographs of them do not take them. Sometimes there are significant places, people or objects that are not appropriate to photograph. What you can do in such cases is to take a photograph of something that **represents** the significant place, person or object. For example if the significant person is an ex-partner or someone you do not want to see in person, you can take a photograph of something they gave you, or a place that symbolises them.

The quality of the photograph is not important in this exercise. What is important is what the person, object or place represents to you and why it is significant for you and your sexuality.

Photography and the law

The law relating to photography in the UK has some grey areas! But there are some important facts to be aware of. Firstly, if you are on a public right of way – such as a public pavement, footpath or public highway – you are free to take photographs for personal and commercial use so long as you are not causing an obstruction to other users or falling foul of anti-Terrorism laws or even the Official Secrets Act (this one is unlikely, but please do not take pictures of police officers). Secondly, property owners have no right to stop people taking pictures of their buildings, so long as the photographer is standing in a public place (e.g. the road outside).

However, if you are standing on private property and the landowner/occupier objects, then they have every right to request that you stop immediately and ask you to leave if you refuse.

Many museums, art galleries, football grounds, concert venues and similar places ban photography as a condition of entry. The same applies to all private property open to the public in general – e.g. offices, shops, even your local fish and chip shop – with the owner or occupier having the right to demand that you stop taking photos and leave the premises. Most shopping centres and malls stand on private land with many gaining a notorious reputation for speedily dispatching security guards demanding that you stop taking photos. They are quite within their rights to stop you taking photographs as it is private land. (1)

Finally, if you have any doubts or concerns then do not take the photograph!

(1) This is based on information available at:

http://www.urban75.org/photos/photographers-rights-and-the-law.html

If you would like to read more about photography and the law there is a lot of useful information on this website.

Appendix 9: Diagramatic representation of Sam's 'everything changes' theme

Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis: Sam – Working with lesbians

DEVICE TO LOOK IN MORE CRITICAL DEPTH THE WAY IN WHICH SAM EMPLOTS THE EVENT

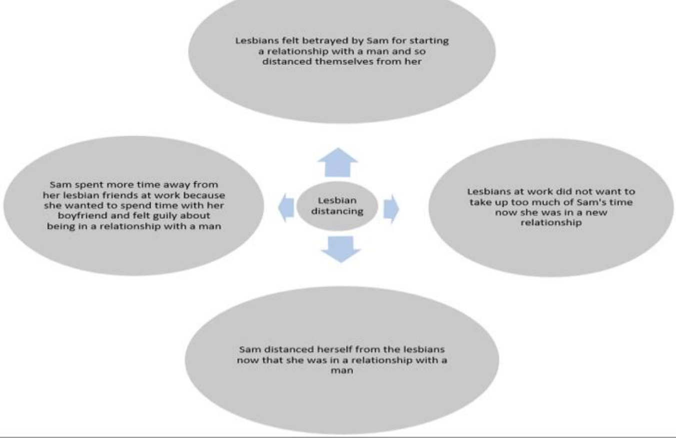
Key: Data Collection Method: DCM

Photo Interview Extract: PIE

Telephone Interview Extract: TIE

HPA Stage		DCM
1) Identify the event • Something that has happened that involves the participant or that the participant talks about) • Emploted to have a B/M/E – However **the 'story isn't presented in its entirety**	A) At the time in my workplace it was like invasion of the lesbians, there were loads of lesbian people working there…at the time and it wasn't, er, it wasn't just that I'd opened my eyes to it, like genuinely just loads of lesbians started working there and erm…and I got on really well with them and I had a really lovely time and I felt very welcomed and very confident and, and that was all fine as long as I didn't say the 'B' word…and then when I got together with a man, which to be honest was erm, a bit of a hit round the head, I wasn't really expecting that…but it was like, that was it, it was like completely shunned by all those people that I'd thought were friends and that I thought I fitted in with because I was with a man. And I understand that. I do understand that. But I also, it also makes, make, it make me feel sad and I found it very hard and I felt very rejected and I felt very like I'd done something wrong when er, I kind of hadn't, I'd never lied to them.	PIE: pg. 1200 1233
	B) And they welcomed me into their fold and, and then, and you know I guess understandably didn't want anything to do with me when I was with a man again.	PIE: pg. 1245 1247
	C) Identifying with feminist politics and stuff I understand it's a political thing…actually if you're not, you're either with them or you're not seems to be er, something which still resonates and if you're not one of them then you're not really, you're, you're not really allowed in their world	PIE: pg. 1272 1283
	D) I just like to get on with everyone, I don't want to have to stamp my feet and stand my ground to keep a friendship, I'd rather just let it go if someone's pissed off with me and it felt like everyone was pissed off with me for being with a guy so I just kind of let it go.	PIE: pg. 1290 1301
	E) When that was happening as well, just…you know, and I was having to really think where I was and work it all out for myself and kind of try and keep these people happy that were, but it felt like they weren't happy with . . . so it was like managing a lot of stuff and I, I couldn't really manage it all so I just kind of let it go a bit really.	PIE: pg. 1313 1322
2) Reinstate discordance • Take the 'plot' out & **present the sequence of events** one after the other) • Disentangle them from interpretation (it makes no meaningful sense on its own once the plot has been taken out	A) 1) Sam outlines that there are a number of lesbians that are employed at her place of work 2) Sam expresses that she gets on well with the lesbians with whom she works 3) Sam met a man and began a relationship 4) Sam experienced the lesbians distancing themselves from her 5) Sam expressed not lying to the lesbians [about her relationship]	PIE
	B) 1) Sam expressed feeling accepted by the lesbians 2) Sam expressed not feeling accepted by the lesbians when she disclosed her relationship with a man	PIE
	C) 1) Sam expresses that she identifies with feminist politics	PIE
	D) 1) Sam lets it go [not sure what she means by this]	PIE
	E) 1) Sam expresses her awareness that they [the lesbians] were not happy with her [upon disclosure of her relationship with a man] 2) Sam lets it go	PIE
	(Event - without interpretation) 1) Friends with lesbians at work 2) Begins a relationship with a man 3) Lesbians at work distance themselves	
3) Restore discordant concordance • **Adopt a questioning stance** • Put the narrative back together	Time of change at work when all of a sudden a number of lesbians began working with her (narrated as a fact & not just an awareness) Genuine friendships established with the lesbians Feelings of fitting-in with the lesbians Felling of being 'welcomed into their fold' (WHY USE THE WORD 'FOLD') Begins a relationship with a man Experiences being 'shunned' by the lesbians Feels the lesbians are 'pissed off' with her having a relationship with a man Positions some understanding of the lesbians response as a political 'thing' (WHY DO THIS) Unwilling to do what she sees as 'stamp feet' to keep a friendship (narrated as a childish thing to have to do) Narrates that she did not lie to the lesbians but articulates all is fine as long as the 'b word' is not mentioned (WHY SAY THIS) Sam 'lets it go' in order to manage it all (WHAT IS THE MESSAGE) **(highlights temporal aspect to friendship)** **Disruption of an established narrative leads to reformulation & reinterpretation** (Ricoeur) Acting (relationship with a man) = Suffering (change of relationship/s) (Ricoeur) Obligation (relationship) = Good-life (to manage life)	
4) Explore narrative accounts • **Concerned with a range of possible events** • Look across accounts & ask yourself what is the consistent plot being used	**'Everything Changes'** theme (The way in which Sam thinks about disclosure)	

ARE THERE ALTERNATIVE WAYS IN WHICH SHE COULD EMPLOT THE EVENT?



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