



Bisexual (Un)belonging: Exploring the Socio-Spatial
Negotiation of Plurisexual Individuals in LGBT+ and
Queer Spaces

Robin Rose Breetveld

Submitted to the University of Kent for the Degree of Doctor in Philosophy
at the School of Social Policy, Sociology, and Social Research, as part of the
Division for Law, Social Sciences, and Journalism

Wordcount: 78,275

January 2023

Approved with Minor Corrections October 2023

[This page intentionally left blank]

Bisexual (Un)belonging



Exploring the Socio-Spatial
Negotiation of Plurisexual Individuals
in LGBT+ and Queer Spaces

by Robin Rose Breetveld

Abstract

Bisexual and plurisexual individuals are discursively marginalised, stigmatised, and erased due to their identity position within the normative construction of sexuality and gender, leading to poor mental health and feelings of falling outside of the wider LGBT+ community. The thesis addresses the gap in the literature between sociology, sexuality scholarship, and sexual geographies by conceptualising the complex nature of plurisexual (un)belonging, engages with plurisexual socio-spatial identity negotiation, and seeks out queer sites of belonging in order to combat the discursive and epistemic disposition plurisexuals face. Plurisexual lived experiences are prioritised through a queer feminist epistemological framework, innovative artistic and visual methods, semi-structured interviews and (auto)ethnographic accounts. The research unpacks the experiences of marginalisation, gatekeeping, and unbelonging within hierarchal LGBT+ spaces, alongside the experiences of safety and belonging as produced through intersectionally inclusive queer spaces. The thesis provides insight into new approaches to plurisexual theorisation and community connection by putting a spotlight onto an otherwise invisible demographic.

Keywords: Belonging, identity negotiation, bisexuality, plurisexuality, bisexual marginalisation, biphobia, queer spaces, community, artistic and visual methods, queer theory, intersectional feminism.

Author's Declaration

I, the author, hereby declare that the work within this thesis has been carried out in accordance with the University of Kent's Regulations and Code of Conduct required for Postgraduate Research Degree programmes; and thus, conducted with permission of the Ethic board in overall coordination with the School of Social Policy, Sociology, and Social Research within the Division of Law, Social Sciences, and Journalism. Any work within the thesis which is does not belong to the author and/or is the author's intellectual property through previous publication and/or collaboration, will be stated as such and referenced accordingly. Any and all visual material falls under the author's creative and intellectual ownership in accordance with intellectual property policy through the university's Open Access repository (KAR), and the thesis holds a CC-BY Attribution 4.0 International Creative Commons Licence and a Free Art License 1.3. Any views expressed in the thesis are my own.

SIGNED: ...R.R. Breetveld.....

DATE: ...01/04/2024.....

Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my stepdad Bert Piët (1952 - 2018), whose unconditional love and unfaltering wisdom created a foundation that I will build the rest of my life on.

First and foremost, my everlasting gratitude goes out to the participants of this study. Your generosity of time and trust, as well as your valuable insights have been the cornerstone of this thesis, and it would not have existed without you.

My sincerest thanks to my supervisors, Dr Erin Sanders-McDonagh and Dr Marian Duggan, who have provided me with their advice, insight, and wisdom: your practical, emotional, and intellectual support has been invaluable. Thank you for showing me what kind of academic I want to be.

This thesis would not have reached its conclusion without the everlasting love and support of my family, friends, and colleagues. I am extremely grateful to my mother Ank Piët-Kromkamp (who – despite the hardship and the distance – was always there to remind me about what is important), my siblings Vincent Piët, Isabella Neves, and Rebecca Piët (for showing me that family is a matter of heart, not blood), and my father Oscar Breetveld (whose perseverance and drive is nothing but inspirational).

My thanks goes out to Stacy van Klaveren and Isabel van den Houte (the beautiful women from the Felis Flora Trifecta, who I owe so much love, wisdom, and belonging too), Marijke Buijs (for hating everyone, but somehow not me), Caitrina van Veen and Ellen Schuurman (for being the aunt and father to my platonic motherhood), Jolie Keemink and Vicky Anis (for being family, even when trialled by fire), and to Lisa Wilson (for our shared love of art, as well as the shared custody of our singular brain cell).

My gratitude goes to Kayleigh Flaxman, Vicky Gatward-Warner, Tim Gatward-Warner, and David Atkins (For a home, a hearth, for theatre, and love; and for indulging me to run around with knives as a sad-but-bad-girl in our Dungeons & Dragons campaign).

Appreciation goes out to the amazing people who I get to call my colleagues and friends, with a special thanks to Trude Sundberg (my nibbling, for the boundless care and all the gender-envy), Anna Segal (my goblin, my bug, my support), Keli Warriner, Eva Dogg Sigurdardottir, Gianna Maria Eick (for the countless hours of productive zooming), as well as Joe Warriner, Emma Cooke, Triona Fitton, Katie Blythe, and David Nettleingham (for all the encouragement and laughs). My sincere thanks to my other SSPSSR peers and colleagues in Canterbury and Medway alike for the encouragement, compassion, challenge, and faith – amongst which a tremendous thank you to Simon Shaw and Chris Shilling. Equally, I have a gratitude of gargantuan proportion towards former and current members of the wonderful SSPSSR admin team; Meher Basit, Kalliopi Glezakou, and Nicky Allen (for the laughs, the treats, and the threats).

My gratefulness goes towards Alexander Duncan-Beck, and my Woolf friends; as well as Brigitte Breed; Janine Kerkhoff, and my Dalton friends – who are all scattered across the globe but are always in my heart. Including love and gratitude to the friends who are no longer with us, Gitta Scheenhouwer and Jessica Small respectively.

A deserved thanks goes out to Diana “Bumble” Zhang and Kalle Da Silva Goncalves (for ruining my plans, perpetually), to Keiran Wilson (for his endless kindness), and my thespian friends of University of Kent Players (how I have loved sharing a stage with you). An honourable mention goes to my neighbour’s cat Benji (for being my personal serotonin dealer).

Tremendous appreciation goes out to Keila Barnard (for teaching me self-love at this stage in life), and to anyone who has not been mentioned: please know that this does not take away from your significance and your impact in my life. For this you have my sincere gratitude.

Lastly, a special thank you to Matthew Mercer (et al.), Rebecca Sugar (et al.), Dana Terrace (et al.), and Julia Lepetit (et al.), for igniting passion, endless comfort, and providing escapism.

Your support has meant the world to me and always will. Thank you.

Table of Content

Abstract	III
Author’s Declarations	IV
Acknowledgements	V
List of Tables	VIII
List of Figures	IX
List of Abbreviations	XIII
Glossary	XIV
Chapter 1. Introduction. The Need to Belong: Bisexual Citizenship & Exploring Sexual Spatialities	1
Chapter 2. Literature Review. Bisexuality Un/Defined: Exploring the Theorisation of Multi-Gendered Attraction & The Discursive Marginalisation of Bisexuality	31
Chapter 3. Methodology. A Queer Feminist Framework	65
Snap Shot Ethnography I: London Pride 2018	133
Chapter 4. Conceptualising Plurisexual Belonging: Divisive Diversity	148
Snap Shot Ethnography II: Vauxhall’s Butch Please	190
Chapter 5. Hierarchies vs. Strategies: Navigating Plurisexual Identities in Un/Safe Spaces	197
Snap Shot Ethnography III: vFd Dalston	242
Chapter 6. Knowing Your Place: The Artistic Queer Space & The Power of Narrative Ownership	264
Snap Shot Ethnography IV: Vauxhall Revisited	317
Chapter 7. Conclusion. The Complex Praxis of Plurisexual Belonging & The Queerness of Validation	324
Bibliography	336
Appendix	373

List of Tables

Table	Name	Page
Table 1	Table A. Participants and Demographics (based on their self-described categories)	77-78
Table 2	Table B. Example Coded Transcript	119-120
Table 3	Table C. Appendices Content List	373
Table 4	Appendix A: Thematic Analysis	374
Table 5	Appendix B: Ethnographic Observations and Methods	375
Table 6	Appendix C: Participant Contact	376
Table 7	Appendix D: Participant Consent Form	377
Table 8	Appendix E: Participant Information Sheet	378
Table 9	Appendix F: Participant Debrief Sheet	380
Table 10	Appendix G: Final Interview Guide	381
Table 11	Appendix H: Initial Interview Guide	382
Table 12	Appendix I: The Kinsey Homosexual-Heterosexual Rating Scale	384

List of Figures

Images	Name	Page
Image 1	Thesis Cover Page	II
Image 2	Chapter 1. Fieldwork image: Glitter station	1-2
Image 3	Chapter 2. Fieldwork image: Leather sale	31-32
Image 4	Chapter 3. Fieldwork image: vFd daylight	65-66
Image 5	Chapter 3. Timeline figure	74
Image 6	Chapter 3. Fieldwork image: DSS Rules (or: Queen with a gun)	82
Image 7	Chapter 3. Researcher position 1	100
Image 8	Chapter 3. Researcher position 2	101
Image 9	Chapter 3. Poem: Pink to Sea	113-115
Image 10	Snap Shot Ethnography 1: Pride 2018, BiPride march	133
Image 11	Snap Shot Ethnography 1: Waving flags	134
Image 12	Snap Shot Ethnography 1: Walking through London	135
Image 13	Snap Shot Ethnography 1: Corporate floats	136
Image 14	Snap Shot Ethnography 1: Looking at onlooker	137
Image 15	Snap Shot Ethnography 1: Leg (or: Being held up by TERFs)	138
Image 16	Snap Shot Ethnography 1: Gathering in the park	139
Image 17	Snap Shot Ethnography 1: Hairspray	140
Image 18	Snap Shot Ethnography 1: Posing for a photo	141
Image 19	Snap Shot Ethnography 1: Purple wings of bisexuality	142
Image 20	Snap Shot Ethnography 1: Proudly celebrating together	143
Image 21	Snap Shot Ethnography 1: Together with pride	144
Image 22	Snap Shot Ethnography 1: Crowd amongst pillars	145
Image 23	Snap Shot Ethnography 1: Marching 1	146
Image 24	Snap Shot Ethnography 1: Marching 2	147
Image 25	Chapter 4. Fieldwork image: Lads	148-149
Image 26	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 1. Vauxhall 1	190
Image 27	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 2. Lonely in crowd	191
Image 28	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 3. Awkward wave	191
Image 29	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 4. Coke	192

Image 30	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 5. A very safe space	192
Image 31	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 6. Reserved spot	192
Image 32	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 7. Who, me?	193
Image 33	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 8. Striking up conversation	193
Image 34	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 9. It is hard to converse in a club	194
Image 35	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 10. Conversation 1	195
Image 36	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 11. Conversation 2	195
Image 37	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 12. Conversation 3	195
Image 38	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 13. Attention grabbed	195
Image 39	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 14. Focussing on the stage	196
Image 40	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 15. Organiser Butch Please	196
Image 41	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 16. Tucking hair	196
Image 42	Snap Shot Ethnography 2: Panel 17. Frown	196
Image 43	Chapter 5. Fieldwork image: Dalston Superstore stalls	197-198
Image 44	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: Stratford Int. train station	242
Image 45	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: Kingsland Road Hackney 1	243
Image 46	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: Kingsland Road Hackney 2	244
Image 47	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: Kingsland Road Hackney 3	245
Image 48	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: Kingsland Road Hackney 4	246
Image 49	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: Graffiti Freddy Mercury	247
Image 50	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: Lit glass panel	248
Image 51	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: vFd light box	249
Image 52	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: vFd corridor	250
Image 53	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: vFd genitalia art 1	251
Image 54	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: vFd genitalia art 2	252
Image 55	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: vFd mind your head	253
Image 56	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: vFd concrete basement	254
Image 57	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: vFd smoking area closes 11 pm	255
Image 58	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: vFd smallest of courtyards	256
Image 59	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: vFd peaking light through door	257
Image 60	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: vFd PLEASE NO SHOUTING!	257

Image 61	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: vFd unisex toilet penis mural 1	258
Image 62	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: vFd unisex toilet penis mural 2	259
Image 63	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: vFd backlit crowd	260
Image 64	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: vFd Master of Ceremony	261
Image 65	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: vFd performance shadows	262
Image 66	Snap Shot Ethnography 3: Kingsland Road Hackney 5	263
Image 67	Chapter 6. Fieldwork image: Spoken Word London stage	264-265
Image 68	Chapter 6. Fieldwork image: Femmetopia	274
Image 69	Chapter 6. Fieldwork image: Performance Space	274
Image 70	Chapter 6. Fieldwork image: LAC Performer	289
Image 71	Chapter 6. Fieldwork image: SWL Master of Ceremony	289
Image 72	Chapter 6. Fieldwork image: Audience members Spoken Word London	289
Image 73	Chapter 6. Performance image: Protect Black Girls	291
Image 74	Chapter 6. Performance image: Love & Fucking	294
Image 75	Chapter 6. Performance image: Grief Overrides Trigger Warnings	295
Image 76	Chapter 6. Performance image: Queer Fear	296
Image 77	Chapter 6. Performance image: Authenticity	300
Image 78	Chapter 6. Performance image: True Merit	301
Image 79	Chapter 6. Performance image: Trans* Experiences 1	302
Image 80	Chapter 6. Performance image: Trans* Experiences 2	302
Image 81	Chapter 6. Performance image: Faitheism	305
Image 82	Chapter 6. Performance image: A Hot Mess	306
Image 83	Chapter 6. Performance image: "But"	307
Image 84	Chapter 6. Performance image: Fuck You, London	312
Image 85	Chapter 6. Performance image: Angry Dyke Stereotype	313
Image 86	Snap Shot Ethnography 4: Panel 1. Ordering drink 1	317
Image 87	Snap Shot Ethnography 4: Panel 1. Ordering drink 2	317
Image 88	Snap Shot Ethnography 4: Panel 2. Dressed for the occasion	318
Image 89	Snap Shot Ethnography 4: Panel 3. Definitely not coke	319
Image 90	Snap Shot Ethnography 4: Panel 4. Trans Pride	319
Image 91	Snap Shot Ethnography 4: Panel 6. Taking in the scene 1	320

Image 92	Snap Shot Ethnography 4: Panel 7. Queer Joy	321
Image 93	Snap Shot Ethnography 4: Panel 9. Realisation	322
Image 94	Snap Shot Ethnography 4: Panel 10. Well... Whaddaya know	322
Image 95	Snap Shot Ethnography 4: Panel 11. Friends	323
Image 96	Chapter 7. Fieldwork image: Yellow bar	324

List of Abbreviations

AFAB	Assigned Female at Birth
AMAB	Assigned Male at birth
BAME	Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic
BDSM	Overlapping acronym for Bondage, Discipline, Dominance, Submission, and Sadomasochism
Bi+	Bisexual and other plurisexual identities
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and other identifications
MSM	Men who have Sex with Men
NB	Non-Binary
NL	The Netherlands
PoC	People of Colour
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
WSW	Women who have Sex with Women
WoC	Woman/Women of Colour

Glossary

AFAB	Individuals who are assigned the female sex at birth who may or may not identify as a woman.
Allosexual	Umbrella term to indicate individuals who experience sexual/and or romantic desire (see also Asexual).
AMAB	Individuals who are assigned the male sex at birth, who may or may not identify as a man.
Asexual	Sexual identification for individuals who experiences little to no sexual and/or romantic desire.
BDSM	The consensual practice of erotic, sexual, or non-sexual power relations and play, often associated with lifestyle and/or community (see Abbreviation).
Biphobia	The marginalising, discriminatory, and violent prejudice against bisexuality and bisexual conduct.
Bisexual	Sexual identification for individuals who are sexually and/or romantically attracted to more than one gender.
Bottom surgery	Surgical procedure performed to remove and/or alter genitals to take on the functions and characteristics of genitals of another sex. Commonly known as Sex/Gender Reassignment Surgery, the procedure is often associated with transgender individuals (See also Top Surgery).
Cis	See Cisgender.
Cisgender	Individual whose biological sex aligns with their socio-culturally assigned gender identity (e.g., a person born a female who identifies as a woman).
Cishet	Term to indicate the combined gender and sexuality categories of cisgender and heterosexual: individual whose biological sex aligns with their socio-culturally assigned gender identity who also identifies as being sexually and/or romantically attracted to people of the “opposite” sex and/or gender as constructed through the gender binary.

Demisexual	Sexual identification for individuals who experience sexual and/or romantic attraction to others as primarily formed through emotional connections.
Enby	A term to describe a non-binary individual (See Non-Binary).
Gay	Sexual identification for individuals who identify as men who are sexually and/or romantically attracted to other men (also known as homosexual, Achillean, etc.).
Gender	The social construction of culturally (re)produced perceptions of gendered attributes (e.g., social roles, forms of labour, and taste).
Genderism	An ideology which revolves around the maintenance of the gender binary as the only valid form of gender identification and/or expression.
Gender binary	A social construction which aligns biological sex with the culturally (re)produced perceptions of gendered attributes (e.g., social roles, forms of labour, and taste) as an either/or categorisation between “men” and “women”.
Gender dysphoria	A term to describe a sense of varying discomfort associated with an individual’s gender identification and/or expression.
Gender euphoria	A term to describe a sense of varying comfort associated with an individual’s gender identification and/or expression.
Gender expression	The material embodiment of physical, social, or culturally constructed gender identification (e.g., clothes, body hair, vocal pitch).
Gender identification	Internal conceptualisation and definition of an individual’s own gender. The self-identification of gender is, as is the self-identification of sexuality, a topic of social political debate related to rights and social justice (see also Transgender; Non-Binary; and Cisgender).
Gender fluid	A gender identification for individuals who identify with multiple gender identifications. These multiple gender identities may or may not be experienced simultaneously and may or may not vary over time.
Heterosexual	Individual who identifies as being sexually and/or romantically attracted to people of the “opposite” sex and/or gender,

predominantly as constructed through the gender binary, but not exclusively (e.g., a sexual and/or romantic relationship between a man and a woman).

Heteronormativity	The conceptualisation that societal structures facilitate and perpetuate that heterosexuality is the standard social, cultural, and political form of sexual/romantic expression.
Homophobia	The marginalising, discriminatory, and violent prejudice against homosexuality and homosexual conduct.
Homonormativity	The conceptualisation that homosexual sexual/romantic relationships are only considered socially, culturally, and/or politically valid if they replicate the heterosexual script.
Intersectionality	A feminist theoretical framework of analysis which focusses on the complex nature of varying marginalised identities and characteristics an individual might be ascribed to all at once; and how this impacts an individual's social world and/or political power (e.g., class, gender, sexuality, religion, etc.)
Intersex	A term used to describe physical conditions which relate to atypical reproductive anatomy, and/or sexual anatomy or characteristics, which may be internal or external (e.g., chromosomes, genitals, hormones, etc.). Individuals who are born intersex may identify as intersex instead of, or alongside, their gender identification.
Kink	Non-normative sexual preference, activity, and/or behaviour, commonly associated with BDSM (See BDSM).
LGBTQAI+	Umbrella term for individuals or groups of persons who identify with non-normative sexualities and/or gender identities. commonly associated with lifestyle, community, and/or (identity) politics (See Abbreviations).
Lesbian	Sexual identification for individuals who identify as women who are sexually and/or romantically attracted to other women (also known as a gay woman, a sapphic, etc.).
Misogyny	The marginalising, discriminatory, and violent prejudice against women, femininity, and feminism; a form of sexism.
Monogamy	The practice of, and/or desire for, consensual relationships with a singular sexual or romantic partner (see also Polyamory).

Mononormativity	This term could indicate two different concepts. The first being the common use of the term, whilst the second is the term used within this thesis: 1. The social, legal, and institutionalised maintenance of monogamy as the normalised type of relationship dynamic. 2. Term that groups heteronormativity and homonormativity into a singular (but far more complex) category that indicates the social, legal, and institutionalised maintenance of monosexuality as the normalised type of sexual and romantic attraction.
Monosexism	The assumption that monosexual sexual identification is the only valid sexual identification (see also Monosexual; Plurisexual; and Biphobia).
Monosexual	Umbrella term to describe sexual identities that are only attracted to a singular gender (e.g., homosexuality and heterosexuality).
NB	See Non-Binary.
Non-Binary	Umbrella term for gender identities which do not fall into the gender binary of man and woman. While Non-Binary is part of the Transgender umbrella, non-binary individuals may or may not consider themselves transgender. Commonly used non-binary pronouns are the gender neutral They/Them.
Pansexual	Sexual identification for individuals who are sexually and/or romantically attracted to individuals regardless of gender.
Plurisexual	Umbrella term to describe sexual identities that are categorised by multi gendered sexual and/or romantic attraction (e.g., bisexual, queer, demisexual, pansexual, omnisexual, etc.).
Poly	Individual who identifies as someone who practices polyamory (See Polyamorous).
Polyamorous	The practice of, and/or desire for, consensual relationships with more than one sexual or romantic partner.
Queer	Umbrella term to describe sexualities and gender identities which fail to assimilate and/or purposefully do not ascribe to heteronormative and/or homonormative social, cultural, or political practices. Also used as a self-describing term for gender and sexuality. Commonly associated with community, subculture, and socio-political activism.

Queer theory	A critical theoretical framework of analysis which focusses on the deconstruction of essentialist conceptualisation of sexualities and gender identities (e.g., “sex equals gender”) and aims to dismantle heteronormative power structures through activism.
Queering	Queering is the socio-political act of subverting heteronormative and homonormative practices. Commonly considered a form of (scholarly) activism.
Top surgery	Surgical procedure performed on the chest to remove or alter breast tissue. The procedure is often associated with AFAB transgender and/or non-binary individuals (See also Bottom Surgery).
Trans	Umbrella term for individuals or groups of persons whose gender identification does not align with their assigned biological sex and/or gender at birth. The umbrella term includes binary (e.g., trans man, trans woman) as well as non-binary transgender identifications (e.g., non-binary, gender fluid, agender). The use of the term can be contested as the manner in which it is used could imply an invalidation of identities (e.g., “transwoman” or “transgender man” could imply these individuals as being less than a man or woman, never truly embodying a gender). However, language constantly shifts and terminologies are subjected to time, politics, and trends. The thesis actively uses the terminology provided by participants and authors, which reflect these timely and personal circumstances, but will use the term “trans” as the default.
Transgender	See trans.

Chapter 1. Introduction





The Need to Belong: Bisexual Citizenship
& Exploring Sexual Spatialities

1.1. Recalling Everyday Practices of Bisexual Marginalisation

2009

‘What?! What do you mean bisexuals don’t need to come out of the closet!?’ A deafening silence. My eyes flickered towards the room to find the entire second-year Social Work class staring at me, consumed by that silence. Though in hindsight I’m not surprised; they had never heard me raise my voice, simply because I never did, let alone to a lecturer. I’d asked him a question about the assignment as, in order to get acquainted with working with clients who might not always be straight, the Gender & Sexuality Module laid out an interview assignment where students had to interview someone who identified as lesbian or gay on their coming out process. When I had walked up to his table to ask if we were also allowed to interview bisexual individuals, he retorted with an incredulous tone ‘Why would you want to interview bisexuals? They do not need not come out of the closet.’ My response had slipped past the barriers of my filter, amplified on its way out of my mouth, and echoed through the classroom. Looking at the blank stares of my peers, the terrible thought dawned on me: did I just out myself? This period in my life was the one time I had decided to be purposefully cautious, to keep a low profile for a while. I had received an unrelated violent threat from a classmate at this programme before (based on ethnic heritage), and whilst I was not too taken aback, I was also not keen on providing anyone with ammo about something regarding my identity I had significantly more affinity with. Therefore, they did not know. Well, minus a minor exception: at the back of the class, I could see my best friend’s eyes widen. She knew the significance behind my tone and volume. Maybe other people now knew as well. I looked back at the lecturer, sitting behind

his desk at the front of the classroom. He seemed less shocked by my outburst than my peers (and I), but he stared at me nonetheless. It had only been a few seconds, I needed to act, ASAP. With incredible speed and improvisation skills I am still impressed by to this day, I managed to swallow my emotions, lower the pitch of my voice and dampen the volume as I quickly blurted out ‘- *because* I have seen many bisexual people having to come out of the closet, and in fact, the bisexual individuals I have spoken to told me that they actually get discriminated against by straight as well as gay people.’ I gestured with both hands, feigning a look of passionate intrigue: ‘Which is why I think they would make excellent people to interview for the project. Surely, navigating that kind of behaviour makes for a more complicated coming out process?’ The silence carried on in the room, and I could feel my jaw clench behind my fake smile. The lecturer, still staring, suddenly shrugged as he hands me back my module outline ‘Sure.’ And prompted me to follow the regular layout regardless. I thanked him and scurried back to my seat under some puzzled looks and a playful remark or two. I laughed it off and said I did not think it was fair to only be allowed to interview a lesbian or a homosexual, and did not explain it further. No one pressed me on it, but I remember the piercing stare from my best friend.

That day was the first time I was met with this kind of approach from an academic perspective, and whilst I insisted that I did not feel personally harmed or hurt by the lecturer’s blatant disregard of such a complex lived experience, it stuck with me – both as a student and as a Lecturer Assistant at that very same programme a couple of years down the line. If I was not hurt, then why wouldn’t the unease this incident caused cease to cling to me? I used it as a personal anecdote towards keeping an inclusive approach to teaching

ever since, and while I even managed to get that particular module outline amended in my teaching role, I never felt any vindication.

2011

It was a rare night where I, a notorious homebody, was convinced to go out to a bar. Moreover, not just a bar: it was an *actual gay bar*. Although I had identified as bisexual for a whole decade, I was still wet behind the ears at 22 and had only stepped foot into a gay bar once before. While I do not remember the circumstances of that initial visit, I can imagine it was by accident. I was set to go out with a friend, whom I'll call L., and L. was one of my then-boyfriend's childhood friends who had come out as bisexual sometime prior (after years of identifying as gay). I will forever remember the timid exasperation in his voice when he confided in me and said, 'Does this mean I have to come out of the closet to everyone again?' I had told him no and that he owed no one any explanation about his identity, and to only do it if he thought it would give him peace of mind. L., who was playfully flamboyant around me, was just about appalled that I did not frequent the gay spots in town, and I told him I did not feel the need. Which in hindsight was a terrible lie, but I can also see why I – with all my insecurities – had set myself up to believe this. It is hindsight that shows us what we missed out on in the absence of validation, after all. When we were in the city centre of Den Haag (The Hague), we went to what L. referred to as a Hagueish gay staple; a tiny pub adorned with rainbow flags (and comically large boomboxes) called Café 't Achterommetje. Which in true Dutch pub naming custom was a clever play on words: "The Around Back Pub" is situated just around the back of a street in an ally, whilst implying something far more sexual. The place was pretty quiet, but a few patrons were scattered around, with one

particular gentleman by himself at the bar. We had to take two whole steps into the small space to find ourselves at the bar. We ordered drinks, clinked our glasses (with the appropriate culturally mandated eye contact), and chatted away. All whilst the man – who was sitting almost beside us – stared at us whilst nursing his pint. Unprompted and amid our conversation he said: ‘You don’t belong here, you know.’ L. and I froze up. In a split second, I analysed any and all obvious potential reasons for his remark, some worse than others, as I surely hoped the stranger was not referring to L. being a black Dutch Caribbean man. L. cocked his head: ‘Pardon me?’. The patron, an older white man with a heavy non-regional Dutch accent, held his gaze as he repeated himself and added: ‘You straight people. This is not a place for you.’ The shared sigh of relief between L. and I was for the lack of racism and the lack of racism alone. The bar was practically empty – nothing to do except accepting this situation. I turn towards him, my body tense and my vocabulary too proper ‘Neither of us is straight-’ ‘You’re a lesbian?’ his voice a little slurred and a little incredulous. ‘No, I...’ I feel L. position himself firmly next to me, ‘WE... are both bisexuals. So, we have just as much right to be here as you.’ L. hums in agreement and follows up: ‘And how would you even know we are straight? What makes you say that?’ The man frowns, ‘you’re not together?’ L. laughs: ‘I know we’d make a hot power couple, but no.’ I pipe in, ‘And even if we were a couple. We are still part of the community. Would it matter?’

L. and I ended up talking to the man for quite some time and he eventually warmed up to the idea we were not actively trying to undermine his hard-fought right to a safe space. I understood his position, and I made that clear. But that pin-prick in my chest, that overly familiar feeling of having to justify *who you are* and *what you are* as a bisexual person ... It was as if I could feel my nervous system take notes as if it had collected a brand-new anxiety

to add to the already substantial list: the anxiety around the justification as to *why you are there*.

2016

In the Templeman Library at the University of Kent, I sat flicking through the pages of a core text for my MA Gender and Crime module. The Master's degree had not even seen the end of its first term, but it had impacted me in ways I hadn't deemed possible. The initial anxiety (the kind that accompanies the act of leaving your life overseas for a year) had settled swiftly, as within the first week it was replaced by excitement and genuine delight. It had been quite some time since I had been this happily engaged with studies, or even generally this academically challenged – and that module was no exception. For whatever reason, the lecturer had not been taken aback by my unbridled eagerness when she agreed to become my dissertation supervisor. I sat in the library by myself – as close to the Sociology and Criminology section as possible – and took this moment to work on a small presentation for the module; reading an article on the discrimination of LGBT individuals in South Africa. An hour prior, I had completely stripped that aforementioned library section of its LGBT content, and it had become increasingly clear that the Templeman had very little work on bisexuality. Incredulously I sat there, going through books, writing notes, looking for articles and websites on my laptop (a tactically placed sticky note that read “please don't steal this, I'm poor” was stuck to the cover just in case I had to leave it unattended in my hunt for books – I remember my British friend laughing that my attempt at deterring theft was honesty). Indeed, I was discouraged to find there were very few works available on bisexuality in comparison to a cornucopia of gay and lesbian academic literature. There

seemed to be a gap, a dearth almost, of research and accounts of lived experiences. The authors frequently used neglectable numbers in their LGBT samples, glossed over the topic, overfocussed on other sexualities, or outright did not engage with bisexuality at all – let alone from an inclusive perspective. Staring into the space between the ceiling and my laptop I frowned and sighed. I'm no stranger to talking to myself, and I said to no one in particular: 'Why is there barely anything there? What am I to do with this?'. To which my internal voice retorted with something incredibly simple (perhaps coated with the sweet naivety of early onset academic excitement): 'Then why don't you do it?'

I had found my topic for my MA thesis. The more I read the more I realised I did not know all that much – countless pieces of work consumed, digested, framed. My MA thesis on biphobia was the start of a domino effect that would lead to a successful PhD Scholarship to research bisexuality, later on reframed as plurisexuality, and the feelings of belonging of bisexual individuals. Whilst not driven by my own experiences with academic and spatial marginalisation, it was my research that clued me in on the patterns and the recognition. While these are only two examples from my own countless experiences, I did not feel welcome in LGBT spaces for quite some time – nor did I ever feel that academic vindication. Though I knew that if I could create a study that would explore the social, spatial, and emotional elements of bisexual identity negotiation, I hoped it would prove to be a start, and that social impact could follow.

These reflections indicate a longer personal history with biphobic experiences. However, these experiences are more than isolated anecdotal incidents, as people who self-identify

with plurisexual identities, specifically the bisexual identity, suffer tremendously at the hand of discriminatory and marginalising practices in epistemic, spatial, and social areas.

1.2. Background: The Necessity of Bisexual & Plurisexual Research

There is an urgency to conducting bisexuality and plurisexual research, as research has indicated that bisexual/plurisexual are amongst the most marginalised subgroups within the LGBT+ community due to their reports of poor mental health (Barker 2015), higher rates of victimisation (Flanders et al. 2019), the lack of insight into lived experiences due to bisexuality erasure, deeming it the invisible sexuality (Yoshino 2000; Monro, Hines & Osborne 2017), and the relationship of these issues towards belonging (McInnis et al., 2022) through double discrimination (Roberts, Horne & Hoyt 2015; Ochs 2015) and minority stress (Brooks 1981; Feinstein et al., 2012; McConnell et al., 2018; Ramirez & Galupo 2018).

Previous research has shown that bisexual individuals experience significantly worse mental health than their lesbian, gay, and heterosexual individuals, and evidence strongly suggests this to be directly related to negative attitudes and stigma towards bisexuality alongside a lack of community support (Persson & Pfaus 2015; Flanders et al. 2016; Ross et al. 2017; Maimon et al. 2019). Hall et al. (2019) found that internalised stigma leads to disproportionate depressive symptoms – these internalised stressors are also referred to as ‘internalised homophobia’ or ‘internalised homonegativity’ (McLaren & Castillo 2020, p.2). This internalisation can be classified as self-stigmatisation based on the individual’s identity and traits in relation to the socio-cultural behaviours of the sexual hegemonic group (Luthanen 2002; Herik, Gillis & Cogan 2015; McInnis et al. 2022). The relation between internalised homophobia and mental health has been explored amongst various groups

within the LGBT+ community, such as on a general LGBT+ community level (Herek, Gillis & Cogan 2009), specifically amongst lesbian and gay individuals (Feinstein, Goldfried & Davila 2012; Ardiya & Hutahaeen 2020), amongst LG and B individuals (Newcomb & Mustanski 2010), and amongst bisexual individuals (Bostwick 2012). Mohr & Rochlen (1999), Israel & Mohr (2004), McLean (2008), and Flanders et al. (2019) are among the scholars who have linked negative experiences on the basis of sexual identity (such as bi-negativity and biphobia) as imperative to internalised stigma amongst bisexual individuals. McLaren (2016) recognised the inconsistency within their research and concluded that ‘internalised homophobia’ was the incorrect measure for assessing depression amongst bisexual women, indicating the need to tailor research to fully comprehend bisexual stressors (see also McLaren & Castillo 2020a, 2020b; Brown-Beresford & McLaren 2021). Equally so, researching the negative experiences of the LGBT+ community – in particular those with a focus on internalisation and mental health – can lead to a debilitating stigma towards LGBT+ individuals. This type of research can potentially feed into a pathologising and victimising narrative where queer lives are perceived as living solely in ‘deficit’ (Quinlivan 2002), and LGBT+ individuals as ‘wounded’ (Youdell 2004) and ‘suffering’ (Airton 2013, see also Formby 2019). This rhetoric requires equal critical engagement to balance the narratives around the socio-psychological issues faced, whilst simultaneously ensuring that the LGBT+ community is not innately perceived as *only* ‘vulnerable’ (Cover 2012, p.xi) and ‘tragic’ (Monk 2011, p.181; Formby 2015, 2019), not to further the harm of hermeneutical injustice onto plurisexual individuals.¹

¹ See also Chapters 3 and 7.

Kathleen Bennet (1992) introduced the term biphobia to allude to the prejudice faced by bisexual individuals, alongside the rejection of the bisexual lifestyle. Bennet wrote this work in the wake of the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, a period in which bisexuality –in particular bisexual men – became known as individuals that “polluted” the virus-free heterosexual population (Eprecht 2008; Monro 2005; 2015). Despite a lack of empirical evidence, this became a pervasive stigma and instigated the negative discourse around the sexual health of bisexuals, equally feeding into the prejudice that bisexuals are promiscuous (Klesse 2011). Welzer-Lang (2008, p.82) has since defined biphobia as ‘any portrayal or discourse denigrating or criticising men or women on the sole ground of their belonging to this sociosexual identity, or refusing them in the right to claim it’ (see also Barker et al. 2012; Monro 2015). It should also be noted that biphobia is not something which is experienced on its own, as it can be simultaneously experienced alongside homophobia/lesbophobia, and other types of lesbian and gay-oriented prejudices and stigmas (Klesse 2005; Mulick & Wright 2011; Wright et al., 2011; Monro 2015). Bi-negativity, unlike biphobia, mostly revolves around the attitudes towards bisexuality – specifically the stigmatisation and stereotyping that lead to bisexual individuals being ‘perceived more negatively than gay, lesbian, and heterosexual individuals’ (Eliason 2000; Dyar & Feinstein 2018, p.95). This form of invalidation, hostility, and rejection faced exclusively by individuals who identify as being attracted to more than one gender has severe consequences on the sense of self of the individual (Brewster & Moradi 2010; Dyar & Feinstein 2018). Dealing with bi-negativity leads to a detrimental development of the sense of self and increases the chance of mental health issues, such as suicide ideation/attempted suicide, (Complex-)Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, and anxiety (Barker et al. 2012; Roberts, Horne & Hoyt 2015; Monro

2015). Flanders et al. (2016, pp.158-163) reported that bisexual stressors are exhibited on micro, meso, and macro levels: ranging from 'internalised biphobia' and 'concerns about identity', and sexuality disclosure² (micro), the fear of seeing their identity erased and negative romantic experiences (meso), to experiences with structural 'cissexism' and 'heterosexism' (macro). Research on bisexual erasure has noted that due to the prevalent conceptualisation of bisexuality as an unstable sexual identity, significant issues arise in the effort to indicate one's own bisexual identity: 'Three major themes of bisexual demarcation emerged including the enduring nature of bisexuality, defining bisexuality, and defining the self as a bisexual being' (Dyar et al. 2015; Gonzales, Ramirez & Galupo 2017, p.493).

Antibisexual attitudes and self-stigmatisation are linked to poor mental health and, importantly, to negative feelings of belonging (McLaren & Castillo 2020a, 2020b; McInnis et al. 2022). Moreover, belonging is a complex concept amongst the wider LGBT+ community due to contesting experiences of "connectedness" (Formby 2017). As mentioned by Ochs (1996) in her titular chapter, 'Biphobia: It goes more than two ways', bisexual individuals experience double discrimination as they have to navigate marginalising and discriminatory practices from the lesbian and gay community as well as the heterosexuals (see also Mulick & Wright 2002, 2011; Weiss 2003, 2011; Welzer-Lang 2008; Swan & Habibi 2018, Maliepaard & Baumgartner 2020). Welzer-Lang (2008, pp.82-84) researched biphobia amongst a lesbian and gay community sample, and categorised the biphobic responses into four distinctive types:

² See also Gonzales, Ramirez & Galupo (2016) and Arena & Jones (2017).

1. 'Strict and definitive biphobia', a direct and active prejudice against bisexuals framed through the stigma of promiscuity, hypocrisy, and general "non-existence" (see also Klesse 2011).
2. 'Liberal biphobia', a soft-power display of biphobic attitudes framed as resistance and concern. Particularly regarding active bisexual community participation, as well as the reluctance to accept bisexuals within the community unless they provide proof of their support of gay and lesbian rights – showing a conditional acceptance (See also Rust 2000).
3. 'Refusal of recognition', where bisexuality is not considered a valid sociosexual category of identity, framed through refusal and denial, whilst actively considering lesbian and gay categories as legitimate (see also Yoshino 2000).
4. 'Linking bisexuality to psychological suffering', is a form of biphobia in which bisexuality is viewed as a pathology, emphasising the perceived lack of committal to the bisexual's social and sexual choices (see also Garr-Schultz & Garner 2019).

In particular, the refusal to recognise bisexuality as a legitimate sexual identity has social as well as epistemic origins that contribute to the pervasive discourse that renders bisexuality invisibility (or as wilfully ignored, see Breetveld 2020). Yoshino (2000) explores three different categorisations of bisexual erasure prevalent within both the LG as well as the straight community: '(1) class erasure, (2) individual erasure, and (3) delegitimization (p.395)'. As elaborated by Yoshino: as a strategy, Class Erasure does not recognize bisexuality as a legitimate sexual identity; the strategy of Individual Erasure acknowledges the

bisexual category as a whole, but excludes an individual who self-identifies as bisexual from the category; and the third strategy, Delegitimization, accepts individual bisexuality as a stable identity in its own right, but proceeds actively stigmatise, marginalise, and discriminate against it. The preceding works of Ault (1996) and James (1996) were influential for Yoshino's conceptualisation of erasure, as their critique of the dichotomous bisexual and monosexual divide is evident in his exploration of the reasons of bisexual erasure. Yoshino (2000) posed another three categories: (1). To maintain monosexual identity stability, (2) the maintenance of binary sexual attraction as a distinctive difference between monosexual identities, and (3) to maintain hegemonic monogamy. The politics of difference are built around the hetero vs homosexuality divide, and either side is invested in its maintenance; heterosexual subjects enjoy socio-political privilege, whilst the socio-political struggle of lesbian and gay subjects is based on their complex relationship with (and conforming to) heteronormativity (Rubin 1984, Ahmed 2006, Puar 2007, Welzer-Lang 2008). James (1996, p.218) states, as reiterated by Yoshino (2000), that bisexual erasure maintains the monosexual identity as it embodies the 'contested middle ground' of the homosexual/heterosexual dichotomy in the politics of difference (see also Callis 2009, 2014). In other words, it is contested because:

If bisexuality exists, you can never fully "prove" you are hetero- or homosexual. This can lead to a position in which straight people might lose privilege, or lesbian and gay people might lose the rights for which they have had to battle – a potential loss of political positioning, which in turn requires a [defensive position] (Breetveld 2020, p.157)

Yoshino's (2000) second explanation, the biphobic discrimination based on eroticism, leans into the embedded discourse on sexual morality which demands a binary conceptualisation of desire and non-desire (in the same manner it demands a binary understanding of the moral rights and wrongs related to these non/desires)³. Moreover, according to Yoshino (2000), it is imperative within this dichotomous contract between monosexual subjects that desire is innately driven by sexual/gendered differentiation. In other words, when eliminating 'the importance of singular sex/gender [attraction from this contract] the concept of (mono)sexual stability falls apart' (Breetveld 2020, p.157). Lastly, the notion of bisexuality being a threat to the institution of monogamy stems not only the above-mentioned discourse on morality and hetero/homo normativity; it also plays into the socio-medical stigmatisation of promiscuity (Rust 1992, 2000; Klesse 2011; Barker et al. 2012; Monro 2015; Van Alphen 2017). Rust makes the excellent point that there is an insatiability stigma that frames bisexual individuals as never being capable of experiencing satisfaction through monogamous relationships (a monogamous relationship only offers one gender – whilst a bisexual always desires two partners, a cisgender man and a cisgender woman)⁴:

The (re)iteration of this binegative stigma not only undermines the normalisation of bisexuality as a whole, but also sustains the notion that bisexuals are not capable of loving, fulfilling, and (if desired) monogamous relationships (Breetveld 2020, p.157).

³ See also Foucault (1978) and Weeks (2017)

⁴ This reference was written from a binary gendered framework and does not represent the complexity of multigendered discourse.

It is through the (re)production of these discourses that bisexual individuals are at risk of discrimination, marginalisation, or violence on various levels. Statistics have indicated that bisexuals (across genders) are at a higher risk of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), domestic abuse, and sexual violence. These statistics are reported on international levels, as this prevalence of violence is recorded in the USA (Bermea, Eeden-Moorefield & Khaw 2018; Canan et al. 2019; MCASA 2020; Coston 2021), Canada (Statistics Canada 2018), The Netherlands (Rutgers 2017; CBS 2020), and the UK (Bradley & Potter 2018; SafeLives 2018; Head 2020).

Increased chances of violence, poorer rates of mental health, substantially lower levels of identity disclosure, and double discrimination are all significant contributors to feelings of unbelonging. Given these things, finding supportive sexual minority communities is vital to developing a positive bisexual identity, and connections with other bisexual people in particular provides support to those who are socially isolated. Increased visibility and greater legitimacy of bisexuality in society is key if plurisexual people are to find supportive peers and communities. However, this leads to the question as to why there is no evident socio-spatial community engagement of plurisexual individuals. Butler (2005) argued that LGBT+ rights are, at its very core, about existentialism rather than about law and reform:

‘when we struggle for rights we are not simply struggling for rights that attach to my person but we are struggling to be conceived as persons (p.69).

Therefore, sexual citizenship poses the following questions: who is recognised as having valid identities and how is this validation constructed?

Geographies of sexualities and spatiality studies construct sexual citizenship through socio-political and spatial power relations. In particular, in the 1990s the scholarship created a nexus between the 'relationship between bodies, spaces and desires', and opened up discussions regarding the 'epistemology, philosophy and methodology of human geography, challenging many taken-for-granted assumptions about subjectivity, power and representation' (Hubbard 2008, p.640). This meant that theoretically, the scholarship shifted from working on gentrification and the "gay ghettos/gaybourhoods" in metropolitan cities, towards a deconstructed understanding of queer spatial theory through a post-structural lens (see Browne, Lim & Brown 2007; Hubbard 2008; Maliepaard 2018). From this post-structural perspective, discussions on the hegemonic structures of power and its influences on space and place, become discussions of sameness and Other-ness (Browne & Knopp 2003; Hubbard 2008):

Power might be understood as myriad entanglements of resistance and domination that mutually constitutive of one another. Power is not something that happens to us; we are always engaged in these entanglements. Power operates how we interact with one another, how we regulate eachothers behaviour and consequently make the spaces that we inhabit (Browne, Lim & Browne 2007, p.5)

In particular, the socio-spatial dynamics that divided the public and the private sphere intervened with the spatial negotiation, movement, and access of queer subjects. Which social and sexual practices were or were not deemed appropriate to exist in the public eye are routinely reproduced through hegemonic power structures (e.g., the church, parliament,

prisons, etc. See Foucault 1979; Hubbard 2008; Weeks 2017) and it is through these restrictions that social politics are played out. Hubbard (2012) takes on the work of Perreau (2008) Mort & Nead (1999) and Foucault (1978) to explain the relationship between the sexual subject and the city as far more complex than a presumed binary opposition of the city as being both being the enabler as well as the suppressor of sexuality: 'To map the urban geographies of sex is to expose the ways in which sexuality is subject to discipline and power. To put this in simple terms: each time sex takes place, and occupies space, it territorialises a particular understanding of sexuality (p.xv).' From this perspective it becomes clear that these sites of sex and sexuality have been actively creating discourse, and continue to do so, through spatial negotiation. It is evident how landscapes of sexuality and sexual citizenship are by proxy shaped through landscapes of morality. To see who has a *right to the city* is shaped by this hierarchy of sexual subjectivities (Harvey 1973). Moreso, these hierarchies as replicated into the very essence of the urban space. As Hubbard (2012) explains the concepts of morally just behaviour is (re)produced in the types of spaces and places in the city. Is a place "'high' or low', 'central' or 'peripheral', 'core' or 'marginal', 'public' or 'private'? When acts are considered 'in place' they evoke feelings of belonging; when out of place they can provoke moral panic (p.33).' The segregation of sexually immoral spaces has both overt and covert histories as well as contemporary engagements: to contain and regulate, there have been designated urban areas in which these *unnatural* or deviant sexual behaviours were legally condoned (e.g., contemporary red-light districts in Amsterdam and Berlin or legislatively tolerated, see Sanders-McDonagh 2019) (e.g., many indoor sex work sites in the UK are known to the police but are targeted, see Hubbard 1997, 1999; Weeks 2012) Urban spaces also allowed for the emergence of covert spaces of

clandestine sexual commerce or social spaces where the “deviants” could mingle (Browne & Brown 2006):

Space is a fundamental dimension for the gay community. Social prejudice, legal repression, and political violence have forced homosexuals throughout history to be invisible (Castells 1983, p.145)

Commerce played a notable role in the disparity between American gay spatial politics and those played out on English territory. Due to the ‘vicious homophobia of the Thatcher government’ it was near impossible to gain the same level of political and spatial power until the conservative market approach played into the possibilities of catering to a new (homosexual) crowd (Cooper 1994; Browne, Lim & Brown 2007). This, however, has been indicated to have been a significant contribution to the gendered segregation and male white middle-class homosexual dominance of (commercial) community spaces (Skeggs 1999, 2004; Binnie & Skeggs et al. 2004).

Notably, hegemonic power structures do not have to be innately institutionalised to create socio-spatial power imbalances. Clare Hemmings’ *Bisexual spaces: a geography of gender and sexuality* (2002) was a pivotal piece of work which, unlike other research in that timeframe, had a primary focus on bisexuality as constructed through queer theory. Hemmings concluded that due to the identity positioning of bisexuality it complicates the existence of bisexual spaces. Due to the gendered performance and sexual coding of LG and straight spaces, bisexuality becomes inherently invisible, undermining the structure that only validates monosexual identities (Butler 1990; Hemmings 2002; Halperin 2009; Maliepaard 2015b). Ultimately, this further complicates bisexual belonging, as the much-

needed community support, validation, and recognition are structurally undermined on social, spatial, and political levels, leaving them with a need to belong but no place in which they can.

1.3. Current Scholarship & Gap in the Literature

While the literature on bisexual (spatial and social) belonging exists in a smaller capacity, there is significantly more literature dedicated towards lesbian and gay belonging (Casey 2013), or belonging as conceptualised through a broader LGBT+ community (Kertzner et al. 2009; Hahm, Ro & Olson 2017; McInnis et al., 2022). There has been growing scholarship on connectedness and wellbeing amongst community spaces and groups, indicating a shift where the objective is to gain insight into communal support to improve mental health, rather than focussing mainly on the aspects of discrimination (Formby 2017; Ceatha et al. 2019). Notably, there is some work related to intersectional belonging and with a focus on bisexuality/plurisexuality, such as amongst sexual and ethnic minority women (Harris et al. 2015), nonbinary gender identities and plurisexuality (Nelson 2020), bisexuality and disability (Caldwell 2010; Toft 2020), and bisexuality as intersecting with a biracial identity (Dworkin 2002; Galupo, Taylor & Cole 2019; Williams et al. 2022) but as noted by Monro (2015), there is quite a way to go for stand-alone intersectional bisexuality literature.⁵

1.3.2. Plurisexual Belonging: A Gap in the Literature

Unlike other bisexuality scholarships, sexual geography has less of a contested relationship with queer theory, Browne (2006) emphasises the nature of queer geographies as a

⁵ Whilst this thesis should not be considered a “stand-alone” piece that engages with intersectionality and bisexuality, the tension with the need for a stand-alone scholarship is grappled in the analysis.

scholarship that allows to “queer” the gendered and sexual identities alongside and through spatialities. Knopp argues that the epistemological prevalence of queer theory amongst sexual geographies ‘highlight[s] the hybrid and fluid nature of sexual subjectivities, and it reimagined the geographical dimensions of these accordingly’ (2007, p.22) The work of Maliepaard (2015a, 2015b; 2017, 2018, 2022) on bisexual spaces is a great example of the possibilities when engaging with queer theory and bi/plurisexuality. However, Maliepaard (2015b) recognises the complexity of bisexual identity conceptualisation (as constructed through binary identities, see also Hemmings 1995, 1997, 2002; Callis 2009; McLean 2003; Breetveld 2020), as well as his own sociological limitations as a social and cultural geographer – resulting in an academic request towards social theorists to take on the substantial task of (de)constructing bisexual queering (2015b). Recognising the gap between social theory and sexual geographies, this thesis aims to analyse the tension of the epistemological position that bisexual and plurisexual scholarship holds within queer theory, and bridging the gap between bisexual/plurisexual scholarship, queer theory, and sexual geographies by recontextualising binary oppression and marginalisation through a monosexual and plurisexual framework.⁶

Therefore, engaging with literature on the intersections of sexualities scholarship (with a particular focus on bisexuality scholarship and queer theory), geographies of sexuality (in particular the socio-political construction of sexual citizenship and space), as well as literature on belonging (with a focus on communities and sexual identities), a lived-experience research focus has been taken into account.

⁶ These terms will be explored within the chapter shortly.

1.4. Research Overview

The thesis seeks to address the way in which bisexual and plurisexual individuals experience and navigate feelings of belonging in social spaces which are designated for them yet are considered inaccessible due to marginalising and discriminatory practices within these spaces. Moreover, due to the complex position of bisexual and plurisexual identities on a discursive, epistemological, and social level, it was imperative to address their conceptualisation of belonging. Furthermore, due to the experiences of socio-spatial marginalisation and the complex identity positioning, the thesis also aims to gain insight in the identity navigation of bisexual and plurisexuals within these spaces. Lastly, to move beyond theorisation and towards plurisexual validation and the recognition of bisexuality, the thesis is led by and through lived experiences. Therefore, the following question has been formulated:

- How do plurisexual individuals experience feelings of belonging in social spaces designated for sexual minorities?

In order to unpack the main question, the following sub-questions were developed:

1. How do plurisexual individuals conceptualise their feelings of belonging?
2. How do plurisexuals negotiate socio-spatial identity marginalisation?
3. How do queer spaces shape experiences of plurisexual belonging?

The research is conducted through qualitative methods and approached through queer and feminist epistemologies. The research explores the lived experiences of 15 plurisexual individuals via semi-structured interviews, as well as ethnographic observations conducted

on various sites in London and the South-East of England, which are recorded through visual methods. The spaces were initially selected by researching community groups and venues in this area of interest, but due to the sheer lack of explicit bisexual community spaces and issues surrounding LGBT+ spatial precarity, the ethnography evolved to be participant led: accompanying them to spaces in which they felt belonging.

The scope of the project indicates limitations based on sample size and ethnographic fieldwork within a (mainly) metropolitan area. This does not allow for any generalising conclusions to be made, and the research data should be considered purely from a constructivist ontological standpoint and an interpretivist epistemological perspective. Whilst the participants engaged in various intersectional constructions of identity, once again, no overarching thematic conclusions can be drawn as based on the sample size and demographic makeup.

The methods used within the research are characterised by “queering” visual and sensory methods. To counteract the invisible nature of bisexuality and plurisexuality (as discursively erased identities) the methods engage with the exploration of “unseen” lived experiences through new ways of seeing. By developing innovative queer and artistic methods, I have created an approach that explores the social, spatial, and political experiences of participants through different forms of immersive narration that combines participatory ethnography with auto-ethnography to explore identities, selfhood, and the researcher position. The data of the research is analysed through thematic and interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA).

The thesis contributes to current scholarship through (1) *the recontextualising of socio-spatial debates* and the importance of plurisexual community, as well as (2) *contributing towards the epistemological debate* of bisexuality and plurisexuality studies' place within queer theory, and (3) through the use of *innovative research methods* which are artistic, affective, and narrative driven.

Furthermore, the thesis engages with the terms and concepts of “plurisexuality” and “mononormativity”. Plurisexuality, the term coined by Galupo et al. (2014), is an umbrella term that indicates self-identification of individuals who are attracted to more than one gender (e.g., bisexual, pansexual, queer, omnisexual). In the early stages of the research, I predominantly engaged with the term bisexual in order to navigate potential bisexuality erasure. However, it became increasingly clear (through engagement with theory and through the fieldwork) that many individuals who identify as bisexual also identify as queer or pansexual, or that one individual's understanding of bisexuality was another's perception of the pansexual or queer identity. These complex identity conceptualisations prompted me to adopt a terminological approach that sought out to be inclusive, rather than (accidentally) exclusive. However, when required to approach nuance I specifically engage with varying terminologies to provide the most appropriate identification where needed.

The term mononormativity can indicate two different concepts, the first being the common use of the term, whilst the second is the term used within the confines of this thesis. 1, mononormativity as the social, legal, and institutionalised maintenance of monogamy as the normalised type of relationship dynamic, as opposed to polyamorous relationship dynamics (Ferrer 2018). And 2, mononormativity as a term that is constructed to align with

monosexism, monosexuality, heteronormativity, and homonormativity: the category that indicates the social, legal, and institutionalised maintenance of monosexuality as the normalised type of sexual and romantic attraction. From a conceptual perspective – which is actively pursued in the methodology and analysis chapters – I am aware of the “dangers” of framing heteronormativity and homonormativity into a singular umbrella term, as the generalisation of lesbian and gay lives as being hierarchically similar to heterosexual lives could be potentially harmful and undermining the experiences of homophobia and marginalisation. Therefore, it should be noted the socio-legal complexities have been taken into consideration to avoid “overgeneralising sameness”.

Negating nuance for introductory brevity, the main findings of the research are as follows:

- The research has found that bisexual and plurisexual individuals experience a distinct difference of belonging, safety, and comfort between their perceptions of the LGBT+ community/LGBT+ spaces and the queer community/queer spaces.
- Bisexual/plurisexual individuals have to employ socio-spatial and lingual strategies to navigate marginalising and discriminatory practices of monosexual individuals – in particular within highly divisive and hierarchal LGBT+ spaces.
- Queer spaces offer emotional and physical belonging for bisexual and plurisexual individuals through the spatial production of safety and comfort – as does the self-identification with the term queer as opposed to the term bisexual.
- Queer spaces as constructed through affective political expression, artistic practices, and intersectional feminist ethics/codes of conduct are imperative for the construction of bisexual and plurisexual belonging.

- Recontextualising queer theory as based on power relations of mononormativity – rather than homosexuality and heterosexuality – realigns bisexual and plurisexual scholarship within queer theory, practices, and activism.

1.5. Thesis structure

Chapter 1. Introduction. The Need to Belong: Bisexual Citizenship & Exploring Sexual Spatialities

Chapter 1 engages with the necessity of bisexual and plurisexual research regarding socio-spatial engagement and belonging. Issues around wellbeing due to problematic community relations, discursive identity erasure, and a lack of sexual citizenship structurally disposition bisexual and plurisexual individuals and do not allow for feelings of safety and belonging. The chapter engages with the scope and aim of the project, discusses the classic and innovative methodologies used within the research, and relays the contribution to the fields of sociology, sexuality studies, and sexual geographies.

Chapter 2. Literature Review. Bisexuality Un/Defined: Exploring the Theorisation of Multi-Gendered Attraction & The Discursive Marginalisation of Bisexuality

Exploring the beginnings of bisexual invisibility through the theorisation of sexual identities as imposed through the politics of morality in Victorian England, towards the medicalisation (and pathologizing) of sexual desire, sexual practices, and sexual identities, leading towards a social constructionist approach towards cultural and discursive norms of sexual conduct. Chapter 2 engages in the socio-political shifts as driven by academic development, and indicates the origins of the gaps as previously mentioned in Chapter 1.

Chapter 3. A Queer Feminist Methodology

The methodological chapter engages more deeply with the methods as presented in the project overview in Chapter 1. The epistemological and ontological perspectives shed further light on the methodological choices made for the research. Through feminist and queer theory, the chapter delves into the qualitative research methods: semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observations and the place of auto-ethnography as a queer method, details of the participant sample and its strategy, as well as ethics, and the innovative research methods created and/or applied to the research – adding to the originality of the thesis and providing new methodological opportunities for the scholarships of geographies of sexuality, sexuality studies, and sociology.

Snapshot Ethnography I: London Pride 2018

Snapshot Ethnography I (SSEI) engages with the socio-political and spatial (in)visibility of plurisexual individuals and groups, thematically moving from the troubling epistemic positioning of bisexual and plurisexual scholarship towards the complexity and necessity of conceptualising plurisexual belonging.

Chapter 4. Plurisexual Belonging: Divisive Diversity

The first analysis chapter of the thesis sets the foundations by gaining insight into the conceptualisation of plurisexual belonging. Through the lived experiences of the participants, the complexities of plurisexual belonging come to light as desires for comfort, safety, and validation are shown to intersect with other social markers. It becomes increasingly clear that belonging as constructed on the axis of sexuality, gender, ethnicity, social class, disability, and nationality, means having to make sacrifices. Certain parts of an

identity will have to be devalued, made inauthentic, or hidden in order to experience belonging as a plurisexual individual within LGBT+ spaces or within the LGBT+ community – if at all welcomed. The chapter also provides insight into a clear separation of the experiences of belonging as constructed through LGBT+ spaces/community versus those experienced through queer spaces/community.

Snapshot Ethnography II: Vauxhall's Butch Please

Presented as a proper *ethnographic*, SSEII is a drawn auto-ethnographic account that bridges the conceptualisation of belonging towards the complex identity navigation and socio-spatial dynamics of sexually minoritized spaces. The narration follows me during my first venue observation in the Royal Vauxhall Tavern in London. Introduced to the event Butch Please by my participant Amelia, the Snapshot follows my struggle with feelings of extreme discomfort and unbelonging within the space. Eventually, through a conversation with a patron, the reader – alongside me – learns more about the necessity of a sapphic-only space, along with the accounts of spatial gatekeeping that creates issues of un/safety.

Chapter 5. Hierarchies vs. Strategies: Navigating Plurisexual Identities in Un/Safe Spaces

Continuing on the conditions of plurisexual belonging in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 focusses on the manners in which plurisexuals navigate feelings of unbelonging through identity negotiation. Whilst previous research has indicated various ways in which plurisexuals experience discrimination and invalidation, this chapter categorises these as three forms of *bisexual identity interrogation* and conceptualises three strategies employed by plurisexuals to contest, circumvent, or avoid these confrontations. Furthermore, the chapter also recontextualises the need for epistemic realignment, indicating how the data addresses the

need for a revised approach to queer theory and firmly embedding bisexuality and plurisexuality within the scholarship.

Snapshot Ethnography III: vFd Hackney

SSEIII moves away from bisexual identity interrogation towards a very different experience of spatial hierarchies, leading the reader into a space that meets the desired conditions of comfort, safety, connection, and expression. I accompany participant Cassandra through Dalston (in London's Hackney Borough) towards a space where she experiences belonging, as narrated through a walking interview, auto-ethnographic observation, and photographic visual materials.

Chapter 6. Knowing Your Place: Queer Space & Narrative Ownership

The analysis of Chapter 6 is constructed through the ethnographic observations of the queer artistic venue vFd in Dalston, Hackney (London). The space hosts weekly and bi-weekly artistic events (such as Spoken Word London) that allow for affective socio-political connections between its patrons. This relationality, as produced and reproduced through the inclusive intersectional practices of the space, bridges the gap between diverse identities and hierarchal maintenance. The ethnographic analysis focusses on the maintenance and practices of and in this transgressive space through interviews, observations (with fieldnote drawings), and performance analyses.

Snapshot Ethnography IV: Vauxhall Revisited

SSEIV is technically an outlier as it is not an account of an ethnographic observation, but that of a reflection. It is, much like its counterpart, created through drawings. However, mirroring the shift in experience between the Snapshots, some of the elements of the art

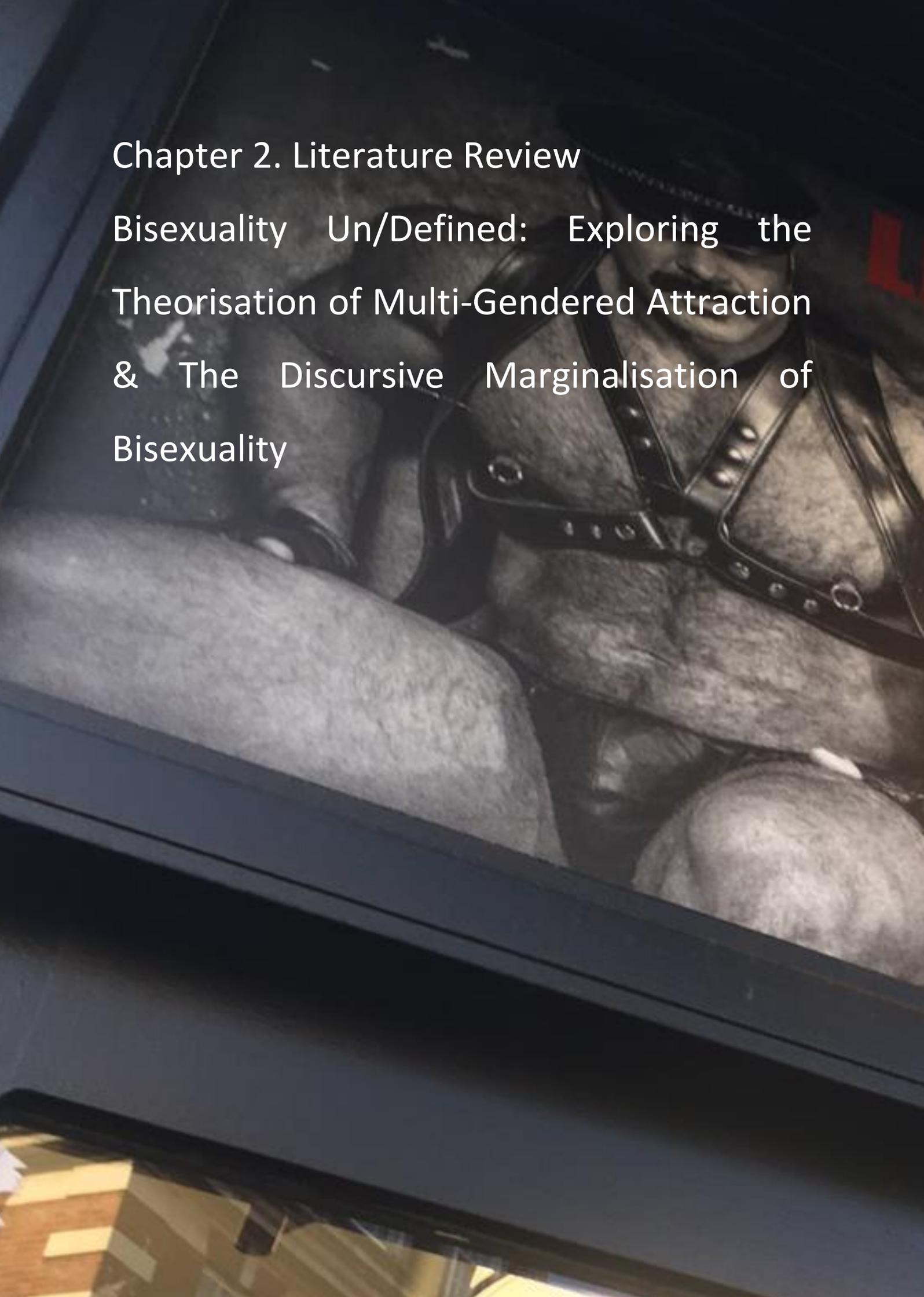
style have changed, whilst other parts remain familiar. Revisiting the site of SSEII's Butch Please in Vauxhall, a realisation takes place and provides the reader with closure regarding a(n auto-ethnographic) journey of discovery, and narratively leading the reader towards the concluding thoughts of the research project. However, SSEIV does not provide an ending, as it reveals how "doing community" is an ongoing process where the act of "taking up space" creates places of belonging.

Chapter 7. Conclusion. The Complex Praxis of Plurisexual Belonging & The Queerness of Validation

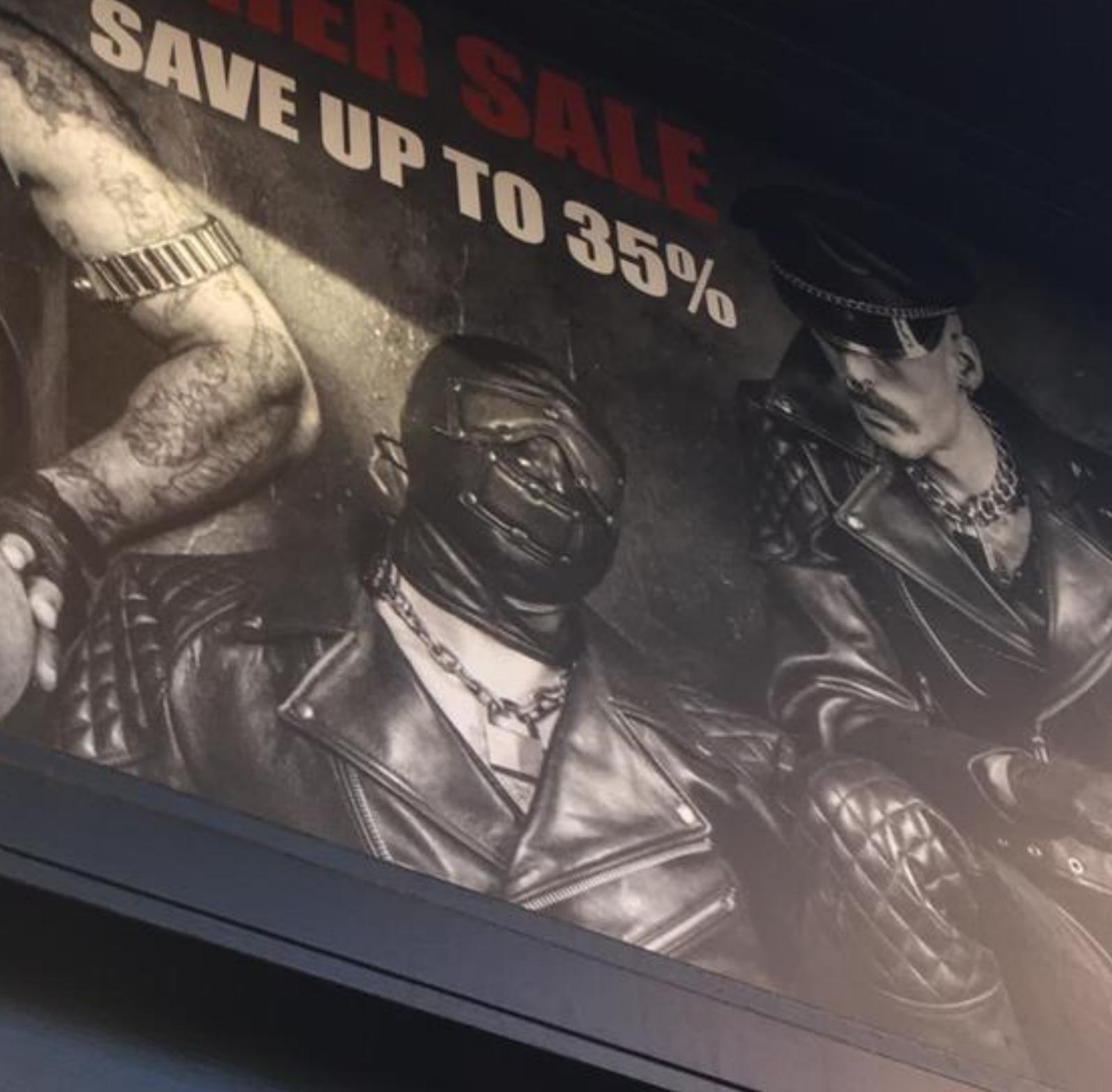
The research project has indicated the necessity of researching bisexual and plurisexual belonging, and addresses the findings, the limitations, the contributions to knowledge, as well as indications for future research.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Bisexuality Un/Defined: Exploring the
Theorisation of Multi-Gendered Attraction
& The Discursive Marginalisation of
Bisexuality



LEATHER SALE
SAVE UP TO 35%



2.1. Introduction

Bisexuality has been discursively and epistemologically dispositioned since its early conceptualisation. With the invention of the binary homo- and heterosexual identities in a morality-driven Victorian England, sexuality became problematised and hidden away in the private sphere (Foucault 1978). By exploring the socio-sexual regulation, the medicalisation of sex and the subsequent pathologizing of sexual deviancy, the discursive displacement of bisexuality becomes embedded in sexuality studies and social discourse.

Even when further reviewing sexuality, gender, and feminist literature, bisexuality remains remarkably unaddressed and even wilfully ignored (Monro, Hines & Osborne 2017). The categorisation and theorisation of sexual identities are representations of the power dynamics between the hegemonic and marginalised groups (Hemmings 2002; Bradford 2008). As explained by Breetveld (2020, p.152) on the innate issue with a binary construction of the bisexual identity:

To define something (in this case, sexuality) is to problematise the undefined (bisexuality): once the undefined is considered a deviation (neither straight *nor* gay), regulation must occur to uphold the power of that which *is* defined (heterosexuality *and* homosexuality).

Whilst bisexuality categorisation does not only derive from discourse, but also from cultural understanding (Barker et al. 2012), it is indicative of the pervasive paradigm that renders bisexuality invisible, ignored, and rejected as a valid sexual identity (Erickson-Schroth & Mitchell 2009), which ultimately leads to an intrinsic sense of bisexual unbelonging (McInnis et al. 2022).

2.2. Inventing Homosexuality: Victorian Shame & The Maintenance of Morality

2.2.1. The Social Reorganisation of Victorian England

The sexual citizen exists – or, perhaps better, wants to come into being - because of the new primacy given to sexual subjectivity in the contemporary world. The claim to a new form of belonging, which is what citizenship is ultimately about, arises from and reflects the remaking of the self and the multiplicity and diversity of possible identities that characterise the late, or post-, modern world. The would-be sexual citizen, despite obvious traceable precursors in a complex past, is a new presence because of the ever-accelerating transformations of everyday life, and the social and political implications that flow from this. (...) [the sexual citizen] is a harbinger of a new politics of intimacy and everyday life.’ (Weeks in Featherstone 1999, p.35)

To understand contemporary sexuality discourse within Western society, I will first direct my theoretical exploration towards England in the Victorian era, as much of contemporary England’s discursive and cultural understandings of sexuality is still heavily influenced by its past. Current sexuality debates are intersubjectively constructed around the production and reproduction of hegemonic thought (Heidegger 1962; Husserl 1963), and to understand why marginalised sexuality exist in the periphery, we should turn to those discursive power dynamics (Sedgwick 1990; Ahmed 2006, MacDowell 2009).

Victorian England was a time and place marked first and foremost by change: the rise of the industrial era shifted not only the economic position of the United Kingdom, it irrevocably changed its political, social, and spatial frameworks (Weeks 2012; Platt 2005). The subsequent

rearrangement of the public and the private sphere came with a new social order and desire for restriction; an order that instilled the English people with a pervasive sense of moral repression and sexual shame (Hubbard 2006). Through the repression of sexuality, there were increasingly more socially reorganised concepts such as that of child- and adulthood as well as “the family”. To exemplify: in response to the lethal working conditions in Victorian factories and child labour, the role of children shifted from being crawlspace-sized workforces to a category of people who required support, growth, and protection (Cossman 2007; Weeks 2017). This can be seen through the legislative changes in the mid-1800s to early-1900s regarding child labour¹, furthering education², and protection from sexual violation³ cemented the cultural position of children and young persons as vulnerable; requiring physical, emotional, sexual, and *moral* safeguarding (Weeks 2017). Weeks (2012; 2017) emphasises that these political shifts were partially aimed at public social issues and presented as to enhance “the greater good”, whilst playing out distinct classist dynamics. A prominent example was the criminalisation of incest, which was documented to be a contributing factor of overpopulation within single-room dwelling working-class families in the already overpopulated urban areas and leading to issues of physical wellbeing (Weeks 2017). However, as Weeks points out, this type of sexual and social regulation was equally an attempt of the middle classes to uphold the sanctity of marriage and virtuous religious practices. While perhaps not immediately recognisable as politics of sexuality due to its focus on health and space, this example shows the pervasive force of morality on sexual citizenship.

¹ Factory Act 1833 (Parliament.uk, n.d.) abolishing child labour in the United Kingdom.

² The 1870 Education Act (Parliament.uk, n.d.) established compulsory education at 10, to be subsequently raising that age threshold by extending law and reform in the decades to come.

³ Whilst incest was already considered a reason for divorce since the 1857 Matrimonial Causes act, it was not until the Punishment of Incest Act 1908 that incest was made a criminal offense for which men (as the law did not include women) faced imprisonment for sexually assaulting underage family members (Weeks 2017).

It, if anything, shows the dichotomous nature of the Victorian moralistic ideology: sex and sexuality is perceived as morally wrong when it threatens the social and sexual practices of the hegemonic group. Dichotomies of the public vs private domain, procreative sex vs deviant sex, sexual repression vs sexual freedom, sexual taboo vs sexual openness, homosexual vs heterosexual: those who deemed themselves “morally just” aimed to secure their respectability to a great extent, marking significant changes in the social, political, and spatial landscapes (Foucault 1978; Hubbard 2012).

2.2.2. Managing Sex and Sexuality: Defining Difference

The conceptualisation of sexual histories has been heavily influenced by the deconstruction of the Western hegemonic canon; epistemologies of the marginalised have created a gateway to understanding knowledge as created through hegemonic forces and allowed for the production of other knowledge (ethnic, gendered, sexual, etc.) to shape current contemporary thought. By forgoing the concept of a singular truth – a perspective which dominated Westernised academic development and philosophical thought – an important ontological shift happened: the conceptualisation of discourse allowed for the social hegemonic practices and institutions of Western societies to be perceived as culminations of history and culture. Once separating the one-size-fits-all “facts” and “truths” from sexual history, the multitude of sexual narratives came into play (Foucault 1978; Caplan 1987; Weeks 1993, 1998, 2011, 2017; Callis 2009; Halperin 2009; Breetveld 2020). Foucault’s (1978) work on *The History of Sexuality* uses this deconstruction to show a crucial socio-legal development in the Victorian era. During this period there was a separation between sexual practices and the rigid conceptualisation of sexual behaviour as an innate human condition (Weeks 2017). This period marks the differentiation between the concepts of sexual acts, sexual desire, and

sexual identity. Weeks (2012) refers to the Victorian moral ideology as near synonymous with sexual repression, which is an important factor for the separation of these elements of sexual citizenship. Indeed, the association of anal sex between men as *wrong* was already socially and culturally embedded in English society as a punishable offence for centuries⁴. However, the concept of sodomy was more broadly understood as *unnatural* sexual acts in a way which surpassed the sole focus of men having sex with men: The Buggery Act also listed penetrative anal contact between men and women, as well as men with beast, as *buggery* (Weeks 2012). English Victorian society began to establish that the conditions for proper and moral sexual activity revolved around the “natural” procreative kind and was designed to be an act of privacy. Thus, sex was hereby considered solely as a functional activity between a man and woman in marriage, not for purposes of pleasure (Foucault 1978; Weeks 2017; Houlbrook 2005). However, it was the avid willingness to uphold good morals which is truly indicative of this new period of sexual regulation. Social institutions which embodied morally sound behaviour (e.g., the state, family, the church) exercised oppression to manage morality, regulate procreation (specifically that of the working class), and smother any signs of sexual transgression. Defining *difference* had become the key to developing sexual normativity (Houlbrook 2005). This is where we see the dichotomy between normative and deviant sexuality emerge as the binary divide of heterosexuality versus homosexuality:

The nineteenth century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life- form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious

⁴ The Buggery Act of 1533 was the recognised first law against sodomy as established by the English Parliament. Prior, these offenses were dealt with in courts known as ecclesiastical courts, which were Church mandated and regulated tribunals under the Crown (British Library n.d.)

physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality [...] The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species (Foucault 1978, p.43).

Thus, the homosexual was invented, and with the new order came new approaches to regulate and maintain it. As mentioned previously, the categorization of sexual acts, sexual desire, and sexual identity became the primary indicator of sexual deviancy. Deviancy can be found in the act (e.g., anal penetration), the desire (e.g., men wanting to have sex with men), and the manner in which a person considers their selfhood (e.g., a homosexual). This resulted in law and reform regarding the management of sexual misconduct – targeting mainly sex workers⁵ and homosexuals – and conceptualising a new sexual “rights-and-wrongs” that moved away the persecution of the act of anal sex alone. The social implications of the reform swiftly progressed into the discursive stigmatisation of the homosexual identity (Hubbard 2000).

2.2.3. Theorising Homosexuality and Stigma

Goffman’s (1963) work on deviance illustrates how the stigmatisation of sexual deviancy led to the ostracization and marginalisation of those *associated* with homosexuality. There are three different types of differentiations which lead to the stigmatisation of groups and individual people: 1. Differentiation based on physical ability, 2. Differentiation based on individual characteristics, with a focus on morality, and 3. Differentiation based on a group,

⁵ The Contagious Diseases Act, first introduced in 1864 to reduce STI’s - and immoral values - in the British armed and naval forces. It was further extended in 1866 and 1869, and to be abolished in 1886 (Hamilton 1978).

usually ethnicity or “race” (Goffman 1963, pp. 4-5). Stigmatisation makes individuals undesirable; it spoils an identity. Stigmatisation, which will be explored more throughout this chapter in relation to homosexuality and bisexuality, is a practice of social rejection through in- and exclusion of the “unspoilt” hegemonic group(s). As mentioned by the emphasis above, it is not only those who identify as homosexual who are deemed sexually deviant and socially transgressive, as there is an important contextual layer in the perception of homosexuality. Judith Butler’s (1990) pivotal work *Gender Trouble* provided insights into gendered identities as constructed through performativity – which can be conceptualised as pervasive discursive practices. Performativity innately labels individuals based on their gendered embodiment: the heterosexual matrix, as built upon Rubin’s (2012) work on hierarchies of acceptability, conceptualises the imagined (albeit very much experienced) grid in which gender performativity is (re)produced in relation to sexuality (Barker 2014). Butler argues that the conflation between sex, sexuality, and gender, accounts for the assumptions that classify certain expressions of masculinities and femininities in relation to a person’s gender, as being innately homosexual and/or heterosexual (Butler 1990; Callis 2009; Tredway 2014). A classic example given is the man who embodies feminine gender traits is innately considered homosexual, whilst the man who embodies masculine gender traits is assumed to be heterosexual. The maintenance of these assumptions creates “gendered troubles” to any and all individuals, regardless of sexual and gender identity, expression, and desire, as these practices and assumptions perpetuate issues of (perceived) power along with the deservingness of higher hierarchal statuses. The perceptions of sexual identities are, as pointed out by Barker (2014) as rigid and fixed, leading to power dynamics and – circling back

to Goffman (1963) – stigmatisation of those individuals who transgress these frameworks of gender and sexuality.⁶

2.3. The Medicalisation of Sex: The Discursive Origins of Bisexual Invisibility

2.3.1. The Possibilities of Pathologies

The medicalisation of homosexuality – a transition from notions of sin to concepts of sickness or mental illness – was a vitally significant move, even though, like the legal penalties, its application was uneven. Around it the poles of scientific discourse raged for decades: was homosexuality congenital or acquired, ineradicable or susceptible to cure, to be quietly if unenthusiastically accepted as unavoidable (...), or to be resisted with all the force of one's Christian will? (Weeks 2012, p.129)

The relationship between gender and sex has been an ongoing discussion for decades and is currently a tense ontological debate in regard to socio-legal in- and exclusionary practices (Comella 2015). However, it is the relationship with biological sex where the discursive construction of the bisexual identity begins. The Victorian era's moral maintenance, alongside its technological advancement, led to a yet another social reframing. Sex had become medicalised, and with that, the pathologies of sex, desire, and identity sprung from the cultural repression of all things sexually pleasurable (Foucault 1978). As stated above, sex had become functional – and with functionality came deviancy. When sex has mere procreational purposes, it means that any form of non-procreational sexual activity was transgression and

⁶ See also Chapter 2.6.2. for a continuation on the subject.

became taboo, leading to stigmatisation and marginalisation of those who engaged with such morally violating sexual practices (Wilson & Rahman 2005; Callis 2009; Weeks 2017).

Moreso, with the medicalisation of sex, and its subsequent pathologizing, comes a discourse of innate mechanisms of human evolutionary trajectories as well as discourses of health (Weeks 2011; Monro 2015). However, such a complex social practice comes with a seemingly simple solution: where there is a pathology, there is also the potentiality of a cure. Moreso, if this was a period rife with the conceptualising sex and sexuality as problems that required regulation, medicalisation offered a sense of order in a world marked by “immorality” and change. Foucault (1978) refers to this discursive development as a sign of the period in which there were desperate attempts to gain control over a world that was seeing significant changes (e.g., significant shifts in colonialism, nationalism, and the economy). As such, the development of sexology was a response to these changes, as sexology aimed to create insight and categorisation in a time of instability. It is important to note that there are significant developments regarding plurisexual theorisation coming out of this period of sexuality studies which will be reaffirmed later in this chapter; as some theories have had long-lasting effects on the academic engagement with plurisexuality and its discourse, as its impact can still be felt in contemporary nature.

2.2.2. Biological Bisexuality & The Illness of the Mind

Emerging from the medical model of sexuality comes the first mention of bisexuality, which was later picked up by psychoanalysis, which dealt with the pathologies of the psyche. These mentions are, if anything, brief and offer a significantly different ontological perspective from current-day bisexual conceptualisation. Early sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (2011) stated that sexuality developed in the earlier stages of pregnancy. According to von Krafft-

Ebing, the foetus developed from a physical intersexed position into either a man or a woman and their brains should – if all was well – develop in such a manner that sexual attraction was heterosexual by default. However, von Krafft-Ebing argued that the homosexual’s brain was “inverted”, as homosexual brains did not develop accordingly to the physical sex (in other words, a homosexual had a male body with a woman’s brain).⁷ Von Krafft-Ebing, though it could be possible for the foetus to develop into a “bisexual” – an individual whose brain or body did not develop alongside the physical shifts from intersex to male or female, but remained in its intersex state (von Krafft-Ebing 2011). Ergo, people who could identify as intersex and/or plurisexual in our contemporary times, were then considered to be hermaphrodites: their female parts felt attracted to males, and their male parts felt attracted to females. Von Krafft-Ebing referred to those with bisexual (or plurisexual) attraction as ‘psychical hermaphrodites’ (Jackson 2006; Callis 2009; von Krafft-Ebing 2011; Oosterhuis 2012).

Sexology would not be complete without mentioning Sigmund Freud (1937), whose work on sexual behaviour through psychoanalysis crafted new pathologies: from medicalised sexology to the psychological mind. Freud’s oeuvre focused heavily on the topic of sexual deviancy and he strongly argued the stark divide between normal and transgressive sexual expression and identification: ‘The defining feature of sexual abnormality in his mind was deviation from genital-centred, intercourse-orientated heterosexuality based on love and monogamy’ (Freud in Seidman 2015 p.7). To Freud’s credit, he also broke away from the essentialist approach of sexology, as he hypothesised (through psychoanalysis) that sexual behaviour was not restricted to the physical but had a significant social element to it (sex as a ‘matter of the mind

⁷ Von Krafft-Ebing’s theory on Sexual Inverts was shared with Havelock Ellis (Breetveld 2020)

and the body, and the mind is shaped by social dynamics' see Seidman 2015, p.12).⁸ Though this perspective is an ontological outlier, as Freud maintained theories on sexual deviancy and behaviour as being inherently based on the transgression of biological sex and psychological pathologies (See Freud 1975). Freud's perspective on bisexuality repeats some of the previously mentioned concepts: he considered bisexuality as constructed in the womb (building upon the previously mentioned inversion theory), but he argued that bisexual behaviour was expressed in adult life as a lingering psychosexual effect that stemmed from childhood. In other words, to Freud, homosexuality and bisexuality were innately biological and psychological developmental issues, and should be considered a deviation from the normative management of sexual pleasure and reproduction (Seidman 2015; Weeks 2011, 2017). In particular for bisexual behaviour (note: not tendencies) in adults, it was indicative from the Freudian perspective that the individual had not "matured" into either healthy heterosexual behaviour or pathological homosexual behaviour. The conceptualisation of bisexuality as an "in between state" was a recurring theme within sexuality theory between the late 19th and mid-20th century (Storr 1999; Callis 2009; Elia et al. 2018; Breetveld 2020). Moreso, these early conceptualisations of bisexuality have had long-lasting effects on bisexuality discourse and plays a pivotal role in the lack of stand-alone bisexual scholarship (Callis 2009, Monro 2015; Monro, Hines & Osborne 2017).

⁸ Seidman (2015, p.12) on Freud (1937): 1. '(...) sexuality is understood as pertaining to more than genital intercourse for the purposes of reproduction. Sexuality is a drive for pleasure. (p.11)' 2. '[he] insists that normal sexuality includes a wide range of desires and acts beyond procreation. By framing sexuality as a diffuse drive for bodily pleasure, Freud approached sexuality as a social phenomenon (ibid.)' (Though it should be noted that this is based upon the psychoanalytical perspective that sexuality is shaped through family structures – which are inherently social. 3. '[he] proposed that sex is as much about fantasies and wishes as about physical sensations. We attach to our physical or sensual behaviour a desire for power or for love' (ibid.)' [sic].

Furthermore, when relating it to previously mentioned research, Welzer-Lang's (2008) work on the expression of biphobia in the LG community indicated that one of the bi-negative stigmas was the notion that bisexual individuals are mentally ill, showing the perpetuation of the pathologizing of bisexual identities, acts, and desires. Before the development of more nuanced approaches towards bisexual conceptualisation, there is evidence towards an ontological shift within sexuality scholarship. One which, at first glance, appears to be a win for a far more positive perspective on the concept of bisexuality.

2.4. On a Scale from Gay to Straight: Measuring Orientation & Modelling Desire

2.4.1. Tipping the Scales: Quantitative Sexuality

Particularly influential for bisexuality research was the work of Alfred Kinsey (Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin 1948). However, this influence has had positive and negative connotations for bisexuality research, as it simultaneously allowed for sex and sexuality to move away from its taboo, it also led to a paradox: by purposefully stepping away from the earlier sexologist theorisation that pathologized sex, and creating a broader framework on sexual expression and conduct, bisexuality was included within the conceptualisation. However, it was theorised as part of the sliding scale between homosexual and heterosexual – all the while simultaneously *not* addressing bisexuality as an autonomous sexual identity alongside homo- and heterosexuality (McDowell 2000; McDowall 2009; Monro 2015; Elia et al. 2018). This paradox within the Kinsey Scale has embedded itself firmly into bisexuality discourse, which still can be felt to this day. According to Kinsey et al. (1948), with a focus on male sexuality, and Kinsey et al. (1953) with a focus on female sexuality, sexuality in all accounts is based on the frequency of sexual conduct alone; fully disregarding desire or identity. This has had tremendous implications on the conceptualisation of bisexuality as a sexuality which is

legitimised only through the frequency of sex acts with both sexes. (Rust 2000; Callis 2009)

This is not only problematic in regards to identity development, sexual subjectivity, and the conceptualising of different forms of intimacy, the Scale values are vague in the sense that they do not conceptualise an identity continuum but a measured set of conceptually weak categories (Swan 2018).⁹

In response to the Kinsey Scale lacking insight into the complexity of sexual desire and identity, Klein (2007) identified seven categorical values to measure sexualities. Klein, who founded the American Institute of Bisexuality, focussed on attraction, behaviour, fantasies, emotional and social preference, lifestyle and self-identification (American Institute of Bisexuality 1978; Swan 2018). Moreso, Klein conceptualised sexuality as carrying the potentiality of change: viewing it as a process rather than the sum of its categorical values. On the matter of values, Swan's work critically addresses the issue with the KSOG's value system. While it informs itself to be significantly more defined by the complexity of social factors and the relation to preference and self-identity, it is unclear what values weigh most importance. One person's self-identification might be the most "valued" element of their personal identity due to political reasons, whilst another person might consider their social relations as seen through the homosexual-heterosexual lifestyle category to be the main account of their bisexual identity. Swan shows that Klein (1993) has not shown the weight of his value system, making the assessment either incredibly complex (if participants can identify the importance themselves) or possibly underwhelming or even externally labelling (if

⁹ See Appendix.

participants cannot indicate nuance within in this process). However, Swan does note the following:

KSOG is still useful to research in that it recognizes behaviour, affect, and self-identity as key components of sexual orientation. Rather than using the entire grid, research could benefit from studying these three (2018, p.25).

This indicates the progressive shift in measuring sexual identity, however proves to show how difficult it is to create any form of encompassing tools of measurement. Moreover, despite these shifts, as also seen in the paragraph below, many models, methods, and instruments have been created since Kinsey et al. (1948)'s pivotal, albeit inherently flawed, work.

2.4.2. Variability & Fluidity

There are many other relatively known instruments for bisexual identity measurement, such as Storms' (1980) Erotic Response and Orientation Scale; Shively & De Cecco's (1977) Sexual Identity Model; Savin-Williams' (2014) Assessment of Sexual Orientation; and van Anders' (2015) Sexual Configuration Theory (see also Swan & Habibi 2018). However, one of the more notable contestants towards measuring relationship patterns is the theoretical recognition of sexual fluidity. Whilst this makes it infinitely more complex to measure sexuality, sexual fluidity as researched through longitude studies are significant critique to take into account. Diamond's (2010) work in particular has been insightful in the conceptualisation of sexual fluidity in women. Diamond notes that sexual fluidity is a natural but not innate element of sexuality. Whereas theorists previously considered bisexuality the logical step towards identifying as a lesbian, Diamond's nearly two decades long study provides insight into a non-linear change; seeing as women who identified as bisexual once, could identify as a lesbian

five years down the line, and perhaps as “unlabelled” five years after that. These shifts, rather concerning this as progression and regression of identity categorisation, would be best served when seen as a plasticity around love and desire and are not to be measured through the rigid categories of lesbian, gay, or bisexual which are commonly found within sexuality studies. Furthermore, there is a body of work that aims to deconstruct the rigidity of bisexual categorisation through sexual fluidity (Ross, Daneback & Mansson 2012; Hunt & Hunt 2018)

Before segueing back towards interpretivist ontological approaches, it is important to note that (with perhaps an exception for sexual fluidity) the paradigm remains the same: there appears to be a pervasive desire to apply types of measurement to the bisexual identity. Those measurements are frequently framed in relation to partner choices as well as sexual and/or romantic engagement. This is indicative of how, despite the critiques, there is a need to categorise and quantify an identity as complex as bisexuality.

2.5. Redefining Sexuality: A Socio-Cultural Phenomenon & Its Socio-Spatial Implications

2.5.1. Ontological Shift: Social Constructionism & Sexual Scripts

Simon & Gagnon (1973, 1987, 2003) conceptualised the sexual script theory, a foundational analysis of sexual conduct as produced by discursive socio-cultural practices. Simon & Gagnon drew upon various theoretical frameworks – of which feminism and symbolic interactionism – to allude to the “scripted” nature of sexual conduct (behaviour, acts, identities). The theory makes three distinctions within scripting: firstly, ‘cultural scenarios’ (what you can and cannot do as sexual conduct based on the socio-cultural discourse in your spatial-temporal setting), secondly, ‘interpersonal scripts’ (scripts that indicate patterns of social and sexual interactions with others), and lastly, ‘intrapsychic scripts’ (a reflexive understanding of one’s

past, present, and future sexual conduct and desired experiences - ergo, plans and fantasies) (2003, p.491). Building upon Sexual Script Theory, Laumann et al. (1994) added Sexual Choice Theory to their research, creating an overarching understanding into the socio-sexual organisation (of American citizens) in the mid-90s. Firstly, by distinctly stepping away from essentialism and taking a social constructionist view on sexual organisation, they indicated that sexual scripts (as discursively constructed through culture, space, and time) create these patterns of sexual conduct – including the “deviation” of these patterns. The deviation of sexual scripts is equally based on culturally appropriate behaviour (which is again, established through socio-historical construction). However, due to the addition of sexual choice theory within their work, Laumann et al. (1994) indicate that there are no *exact* replications of sexual scripts based upon cultural indication alone, as scripts are amended by categorical (as even within a homogenous cultural setting there are numerous differences based on social difference such as class and gender) and individual (intrapsychic) desires and experiences. This allows for a singular spatial-temporal setting to contain an incredibly diverse variety of scripts. Moreover, Laumann et al. (1994) emphasise that the production, reproduction, and amendments of these scripts can occur in the origination of a singular individual towards a reproduction on a mass level (e.g., through means such as religion, media, politics, etc.) which can lead to widespread changes of cultural scripts overall - ergo, a collective change in what is considered normalised behaviour within a society.

2.5.2. The Cultural Construction of Community, Identity, and Belonging

The conceptualisation of community, a sense of belonging, and identity as related to spatiality has already been hinted at throughout the literature review. Whilst the vast majority of theoretical engagement can be found in the analysis chapters, it is important to – at the very

least – lay some groundwork to convey the complexity of these concepts before continuing onto the socio-spatial shift of LGBT+ communities.

Alongside the sociological conceptualisation of sexuality as a social construct, there is also the anthropological and cultural sociological school of thought that focuses on the conceptualisation of belonging and identity as innately related to community (Formby 2017; Weeks 2017). May (2013) argues that belonging is defined through the creation of self-identification (ergo, seeing oneself in something, or someone, else), which, according to scholars such as Cohen (1987) and Delanty (2010) relies too heavily on an us-versus-them dynamic, and an innate insider-outsider construction that focusses on community membership/non-membership (Guibernau 2013; Formby 2017). However, this can equally be countered by accounting for sociological research into belonging, community, and identity construction within marginalised groups (Weeks 1996; Formby 2017). Weeks (1996) particularly views communities as a space that provides a ‘vocabulary of values’ (p.72). This “vocabulary” allows for the construction of belonging and identity through these shared values, shared lived experiences (such as trauma through stigmatisation, see Goffman 1963), and a shared political consciousness (see also Malluci 2006). This construction occurs whether this community is “real” in spatial materiality (or through ‘lived space’, see Anderson 2006, p.6), or as shaped through the “imaginary”, where the existence of shared experiences, identity, and values exists outside of material, spatial, and social interactions (Bell & Valentine 1995; Weeks 1996; Anderson 2006; Formby 2017).

In other words, it is theorised that sometimes community, identity, and belonging are experienced by a “constructed togetherness” in a social space (including cyber), and

sometimes the knowledge of the existence of likeminded individuals outside of one's own social world is enough to feel less alone.

2.5.3. The Rise of the (Condoned) LGBT+ Scene: Claiming Space & Carving out a Place

The epistemological construction of sexuality as reaching beyond the physical, medical, and unmanageable developed hand in hand with the condoning of social, spatial, and political rights for LGBT+ individuals. As introduced in Chapter 1, the social geographical/urban sociological concept of “gayborhoods”, “gay ghetto’s” and “gay villages” represented – despite their North-American focus – a crucial historical development for increasing acceptance and representation of the LGBT+ community (Castells 1983; Knopp 1995; Hubbard 2012; Formby 2017). These urban areas often symbolised hubs of safety, hope, and socio-political possibilities for LGBT+ individuals in an oppressive world (Hubbard 2012; Ghaziani 2014). Ghaziani (2014) outlines four key principles through which these densely populated urban areas can be classified: a concentration of LGBT+ inhabitants; LGBT+ owned or LGBT+ friendly commercial spaces, organisations, and community spaces; a geographic centre that is easily identifiable; and a distinct LGBT+ informed cultural expression. Though it should be noted that the “clustering” of LGBT+ residences does not always apply to the UK context, according to Ghaziani (2014), due to distinctly different urban spatial formations and transport systems (as per his example, Soho, London). However, this does not undermine the experiences of “safety in numbers” and innate identification these spaces bring (Formby 2017); as these spaces innately present themselves as areas in which LG individuals can seek out one another and not ‘face [the] unique challenges in not being physically identifiable to one another’ Ghaziani 2014, p.216). However, many theorists criticize the socioeconomic availability of property and economic engagement, along with the critique on the inner-

community representation within these gay spaces. Castells (1983) and Valentine (1993) point out how these areas are overrepresented by gay men; however, Valentine (1993) and Bell & Valentine (1995) do specify the issues of Castells' (1983) argument that lesbians are underrepresented because women are not innately spatially dominant. In particular, it is argued that the commercialised elements of these gay scene spaces are not as accessible due to economic gender inequalities, the lesbian preference for informal spaces with a community focus, and a focus on networked "underground" lesbian spaces, as opposed to mainstream gay spatial ownership and nightlife economies (Bell & Valentine 1995; Skeggs 1999; Skeggs et al. 2004; Lim, Browne & Brown 2007; Formby 2017). Moreso, Bell & Valentine (1995) equally argue how the representation of rural LGBT+ spatial experiences and politics are under-researched in the urban-focussed field of sexual geographies, which is still felt within social geographic and sociological scholarship today (Formby 2017). Furthermore, Campkin & Marshall's (2020) longitudinal research into London's LGBTQ+ nightlife shows that despite indicating evidence as to the crucial role LGBTQ+ venues play in community building, the maintenance of heritage and culture, interpersonal development such as belonging, and commercial value, that those spaces occupy precarious situations and are in dire need of economic protection. While the maintenance of these precarious community spaces matters, it becomes increasingly more complex when taking into account the lack of existing spatial diversity. The construction of bisexual spaces is significantly less visible, recognised, and simply put, do not exist to the same degree as gay, or even lesbian, spaces do (Hemmings 2002; Halperin 2009; Maliepaard 2015) – if at all¹⁰. This is argued to have a strong relation to

¹⁰ Between September 2017 and October 2023, there are no reported spaces in London exclusively catered toward bisexual individuals, unless accounted for in "umbrella access" (e.g., under the acronym LGBTQ+) or through host venues, not solely dedicated to LGBTQ+ engagement.

the validation of the bisexual identity, as well as its recognition and expression as produced through discursive power (Breetveld 2020).¹¹

2.6. Contested Feminist Paradigms: Discourse & Discord in Sexual Scholarship

2.6.1. On The Side of Bisexuality: Rooted in Epistemic Injustice

In the light of the contemporary classic article “Whose Side Are We On?” by Howard Becker (1967) it is important to acknowledge the complicated relationships between the hegemonic production of power, the rejection of this epistemic monopoly and the complexities of ethical forms of research. The discourse generated through the dynamics of knowledge production, its dissemination, and its consumption, relates not only to how academia conceptualises valid data, methods, and analysis – it also relates to the reasoning behind the research. Becker (1967) requests reflexivity from academics in order to question if research is done for self-centred reasons, such as academic advancement, or if it is done through hermeneutically ethical considerations, which allow for the researcher to engage with a community *for* the community’s socio-political progression. Moreso, when engaging with marginalised communities from ethical ideals – such as the amplification of voices that are usually unheard or ignored – Becker poses the question if this practice maintains the hegemonic structures by adding to them; as generating data alone does not create change. The feminist, decolonial, and queer epistemologies have been generated mainly to diverge from the white, middle-class, Western, Eurocentric, and cishet¹² dominated fields of academia (Fricker 2007; Lorde 2007; Monro 2015). In particular, practices of critically engaging with the types of knowledge that are being produced, disseminated, and validated (data as generated through controlled

¹¹ See also Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

¹² See glossary.

trials and homogenous samples versus data collected through accounts of intersectional lived experiences), as well as the positionality of the researcher (reflexively looking at the researcher's own social position and power-dynamics), have heavily shaped the processes of contemporary research. When looking into critiquing research done on/for/by marginalised sexual subjects, we can turn towards the pivotal work of Ken Plummer. As written by Breetveld (2020) on Plummer (1995) and the dynamics of voicing and silencing sexual subjects:

[He] refers to the narrative power of sexual experiences, and how remaining silent about these experiences (such as being closeted, or perhaps being discursively silenced) is not just a process of pain, but also a process of potential. There is potential within silence if one utilises it as a survival strategy, and there is potential within breaking a silence. When sexual subjects are explicitly given a voice, they are given the opportunity to turn the narrative around – to redirect it from a *story* into a *device* for identity politics (p.153).

Allow me to re-use the following quote from Plummer (1995, p.110) to elaborate:

The private pains increasingly become public ones; the personal sufferings become collective participations; the pathological languages turn into political ones.

When researching sexualities, in particular the research into bisexuality and other plurisexual identities, there is a significant element of epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007). Looking into my previous work on bisexual marginalisation as through the process of epistemic injustice, it

becomes clear that contemporary sexuality scholarship has, up until very recently¹³ created knowledge and discourse on bisexuality which only perpetuated and invalidated the bisexual lived experience (Breetveld 2020).

The epistemic foundation of bisexuality research provides a clearer view of the theoretical issues presented to the discourse, and subsequent discord, within academic discussion: various scholars have critically addressed academia for its lack of engagement with bisexuality scholarship (Angelides 2001; Hemmings 2002, 2007; Callis 2009; Monro 2015; Monro, Hines & Osborne 2017). In particular, the persistent discourse surrounding the epistemic position of bisexuality within academic settings has been criticised by queer and bisexuality scholars alike as being painted with the same brush as other sexuality studies (Burril 2008). According to Elia & Elisason (2012, p.4), this further marginalises bisexuality scholarship:

Although bisexuality studies has grown in prominence as an academic sub-field within sexuality studies over the past several years, it has mostly existed in the shadows of gay and lesbian studies and more recently it has been in the shadow of transgender studies as well.

The lack of autonomous bisexuality scholarship tends to situate bisexuality as an addition to LGBT studies or queer theory, rather than be considered a stand-alone academic field. While the lack of bisexuality research within LGBT studies could be seen as an unfortunate side effect of monosexism, we see how queer theory is widely considered to be a scholarship that could potentially render bisexuality further invisible. Angelides (2001) mentions the following:

¹³ See also more discursively positive recent publications such as Monro (2015), Swan & Habibi (2018), and Maliepaard & Baumgartner (2020).

In spite of occupying an epistemic position within this very opposition, the category of bisexuality has been curiously marginalised and erased from the deconstructive field of queer theory (p.7).

Monro (2015) in particular states that due to queer theory's innate deconstructive nature, as it is grounded in post-structuralism, deconstruction can become an active factor in the epistemic erasure of bisexuality. However, there are also approaches that consider bisexuality and queer theory to exist together.

Hemmings (2007) critically addresses how bisexuality can both *add* to the binary conceptualisation of sexuality (that which lies between heterosexual and homosexual or is constructed by the attraction to only cisgendered men and cisgendered women) as well as being conceptualised as something which *subverts* the binary understanding of sexual attraction (due to the non-rigid, fluid, deconstructed understanding of attraction). According to Hemmings (2002; 2007), this complex axis of conceptualisation is an important factor as to why queer theory has not adequately engaged with bisexuality in the past. I believe that these issues actually enforce the importance of seeing bisexuality as being an important aspect of queer theory and queer research; one that can add to the latter, as well as simultaneously stand alone as an important autonomous scholarship:

This ontological critique not only shows the importance of the disempowered status of the bisexual subject, but also highlights the position of [the] bisexual identity. Bisexuality *is* the space that defies the discursive divides of sexuality, power, and knowledge (Breetveld 2020, p.156)

2.6.2. Feminism, LGBT Studies, Queer Theory & The Affective Turn

It is particularly difficult to make a clear differentiation between feminism, LGBT studies, and queer theory, as there are clear similarities, associations, and theoretical links that undermine my ability to write a clear-cut categorical subchapter. Between feminist contributions to gender and sexuality studies, LGBT studies as a field of marginalised sexualities, and queer theory as a response to the post-structuralist desire to deconstruct hegemonic power structures there is quite an overlapping narrative to unfold. Here follows an encompassing yet concise (attempt at a) chronological overview.

The phenomenological “truths” of sexuality and gender were constructed through narratives and concepts that kept the hegemonic position of academic power intact. The epistemologies of the marginalised were a response to the wilful hermeneutic ignorance and discriminatory practices of the literary canon of the social sciences (Pohlhaus 2017; hooks 2020). The production of hegemonic knowledge through the white, middle-class, cisgender, heterosexual male perspective ensured that any other social and sexual subject was perceived as a second-class citizen and an invalid subject (Sedgwick 1990, Ahmed 2006, Breetveld 2020). To produce othered knowledge as a form of resistance and tool for socio-political change, the perspectives on sexuality and sexual subjectivities began to shift. Feminist, queer, racial, and decolonial epistemologies have allowed for new narratives and lived experiences to take a prominent role in the construction of sexuality scholarship. The academic scholarship on bisexuality and plurisexual identities has had to navigate the pervasive discourse of morality and sexology.

Simone de Beauvoir’s ‘The Second Sex’ serves as the first Western canon conceptualisation of the social construction of gender (Butler 1986). De Beauvoir’s focus on gender dynamics

and power and states that womanhood a social process: 'one is not born but becomes a woman' (Butler 1986, p.35). Moreso, De Beauvoir conceptualises the male gaze, as according to her, women are perceived to be 'for-others' – others being men – and are fundamentally bereft of agency and freedom in their being and their becoming. However, it is De Beauvoir's relationship with bisexuality which is of specific interest. A bisexual woman herself, De Beauvoir writes only about lesbians through clinical detachment and leaves a prevalent lack of interaction with the topic of bisexuality and multi-gendered attraction – particularly since contemporary research shows how bisexual women are sexualised "for-others" (Alarie & Gaudet 2013). Fraser (1999, p.46) took on De Beauvoir as a case study on the bisexual identity and wondered 'whether it is possible for an identity without selfhood to be produced through discourse', which is subsequently also an argument against queer theory as an innately discourse driven scholarship (Halperin 2009).

In 1980, Adrienne Rich wrote on compulsory heterosexuality, a concept which has now been linked to heteronormativity. In '*Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*' Rich argued that heterosexuality, and its associated gendered roles, was a framework which coerced women of all sexualities to conform. The coercion to abide by the hegemonic power structures came with an exchange; heterosexual obedience ensured social privileges associated with heterosexuality and its institutions. Moreso, abiding by the compulsory elements also saved women from being stripped away from what little power they could claim and endure further marginalisation. Rich (1980) particularly noted that it shows that there is little innate or naturalistic about heterosexuality as it is, in fact, an unstable social framework. As said by Barker & Scheele (2016): 'if heterosexuality was just natural, it wouldn't need to work so hard to shore itself up, and it wouldn't be so threatened by the

alternatives to it'. However, Rich failed to acknowledge the structural oppression of other sexualities under compulsory heterosexuality. A similar criticism was made towards the work of Monique Wittig (1980), who made the point (much like Rich) towards the obligatory nature of the heterosexual contract. In particular, Wittig explored how the enforced heterosexual framework shaped affective responses, thought patterns, and linguistics. A very important element of Wittig's work is her theorisation of lesbians; if womanhood can only be made sense of through the context of heterosexuality due to the pervasive entanglement between gender and sexuality, then lesbians were, in fact, not women. Adding to the critique as addressed above; where Rich and Wittig write about women, in particular lesbian cisgendered women, they leave gaps in the complexity of marginalisation as a whole and notably fail to make a particular case for (or against) the role of bisexuality.

During this same time period there was yet another pivotal piece that changed sexuality and gender theorisation. Gayle Rubin's (1984) essay "Thinking Sex" was written during the height of the 1980's "sex wars", a battle between feminist paradigms fought so ferociously, that they are easily compared to the contemporary debates on gender criticism (Butler 2021). Feminist theorists went head-to-head as to whether or not feminists should, or should refrain from, framing sex and sex work as a concept and practice that undermined women's rights. The binary views of sex-negativity and sex-positivity created critique on both sides, a sex-negative approach of patriarchal oppression, and a sex-positive approach that viewed sex-negative feminism as oppressive to marginalised others based on gender, sexuality, and social class. Rubin (1984) emphasised and critiqued the following social sexual framework of the 1980s: essentialist views of sexuality as innate and static; how institutions produce and reproduce sexual hierarchies through sexual morality; the latter leads to the issues where deviant

sexuality is considered the slippery slope of moral decay and how this creates discourse where proper social behaviour relies on the policing and maintenance of sex; the over-reliance on conceptualising sex as a primary social conduct; and the marginalising practices of sex-negative feminists (1984).

However, at the same time, another prominent feminist fight was being fought. Building upon the ongoing struggles of black American feminists, it became increasingly clear that many marginalised voices were left unheard or were silenced, and the realities of their non-singular identities diminished – in societal discourse and within academia alike (Lorde 1984; Barker & Scheele 2016; Pohlhaus 2017; Tuana 2017). The axes of oppression and marginalisation were too intently focussed on gender and sexuality as the primary markers of difference, and many black feminist activists and scholars countered these narrow perceptions of marginalisation. Audrey Lorde (2007), who described herself as a ‘black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet’ (Poetry Foundation n.d.) challenges white feminist scholars by voicing her discontent over their small worldview:

The failure of academic feminists to recognize difference as a crucial strength is a failure to reach beyond the first patriarchal lesson. In our world, divide and conquer must become define and empower (p.2).

The lack of engagement with black feminism, and the academic canon as a whole, is laid out by bell hooks (2020), who said that ‘to be in the margins is to be part of the whole, but outside the main body’ (p.ix). However, as an activist, hooks explicitly strived towards the acknowledgement of social, political, racial, and queer differences and wrote extensively about the power shaped by, and from, the marginalised position (2015).

A new era within feminist discourse emerged through the work of Kimberle Crenshaw (1989). Crenshaw, an Afro-American law and critical race theorist, coined the term intersectionality; a concept that highlights how oppression is significantly more complex than perceived only as gendered, and how its institutionalisation is felt through varying unequal power relations (e.g., the social construct of race, social class, sexuality, gender, religion, and so forth). However, these intersections are not theorised as marginalising elements that “stack onto one another”, but create intricate power dynamics which should be considered situationally as well as relationally. Noteworthy, it is through this contextualisation that a lack of hierarchies is implied, e.g., depending on the socio-cultural and legal relations. During this period, we can begin to see the need for the representation of lived experiences of marginalised groups become deeper and deeper embedded within academia.

The queer sociological turn, however, came through the pivotal works of Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990) and Eve Sedgwick’s (1990) *Epistemologies of the Closet*. The work of Butler provided insight into a plethora of gender production, reproduction, discourse, and negotiations of compulsory heterosexuality alongside gendered expression. On the conceptualisation of *The Heterosexual Matrix*, Butler explores these negotiations, based upon the work of Rich (1980) a decade prior:

‘(...) to designate that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized. I am drawing from Monique Wittig’s notion of the “heterosexual contract” and, to a lesser extent, on Adrienne Rich’s notion of “compulsory heterosexuality” to characterise 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' (Butler 1990, p. 151)

It should be noted that during this timeframe, the term heteronormativity was coined by Warner (1991) based on the work of Rich (1980) and Rubin (1984) and begins to take embed itself within gender and sexuality scholarship. Moreso, this is equally a moment in which we can begin to tie various sociological theories together.

As seen in Chapter 2.2.3., Goffman's (1963) theory on stigmatisation can begin to explain the discursive discontent with sexual deviancy. However, conceptualising responses towards transgression becomes even more apparent when approaching sexual and gender performative practices through a queer (Sedgwick 1993), bisexual (Hemmings 2002; Pennington 2009) and plurisexual lens (Lynch & Maree 2017; Nelson 2020) with a focus on more "complex" identity constructions that play with – or break – the discursive notions of dichotomous socio-sexual identities and expression. Building upon Butler (1990), Sedgwick (1993) argues how performativity, rather than an innate discursive passivity bleak of socio-political agency, is a constant transformative process of breaking and redefining boundaries, expressions, and identities – particularly, constructing performativity as an affective response to the notion of shame. Through this theorisation of shame, Eve Sedgwick pioneered¹⁴ the distinct connection between queer theory and affect theory (Tomkins 2008), allowing the sociological concept of emotion to embed itself within the socio-political exploration of queer lives. Sedgwick said that 'shame is the affect that mantles the threshold between

¹⁴ As part of the epistemological "affective turn" in the mid-1990s, that led to a wider acceptance of the power of emotions within the social sciences, as opposed to an emphasis on the social power of linguistics.

introversion and extroversion, between absorption and theatricality, between performativity and – performativity’ (1993, p.38; 2003). This conceptualisation embodies the relation between performativity and stigma; particularly the impact felt by experiencing a “social death”¹⁵ – either through internalised suppressive shame or external oppressive shame – and how these transformative powers can inform social action. Tomkins’ (2008 p.359) proclamation ‘how can loss of face be more intolerable than loss of life?’ focusses on the negativity of embodied shame, as produced by the fear of stigmatisation, but the sociological theorisation of shame can also be considered a productive force when experiencing feelings of social displacement and rejection (Probyn 2004). In particular, the works of Halberstam (2005; 2011) on queer failure and Ahmed’s (2004; 2006; 2010) queer phenomenology exemplify the relationship between the queer inability to meet Western normative socio-sexual and gendered requirements, the feelings of shame and rejection that accompany this failure, and the affective (and creative, see Bunch 2013) transformative powers produced by and through queer subjects – all the while keeping the ontological critique of the post-structuralist contributions on power (see also Hemmings 2005).

Returning to Sedgwick (1991) however; Sedgwick, despite her influential work, has been heavily criticised for her lack of bisexuality engagement for ‘bypassing bisexuality as a topic of inquiry even while writing against binary, biological models of gender and sexuality (Doan 2010; Callis 2009, p.213; Halperin 2009). This critique of Sedgwick has more or less been applied to the works of various queer theorists, such as Foucault and Butler, for either

¹⁵ See Timár (2019) ‘Here the performance of shame (...) seems to yield, as its effect, a feeling of a monistic, separable and objectified embodied self that is felt in a self-annihilating mortification of excommunicability. Therefore, the performance of shame supposes the submission to a decree of social death in the hopes of overcoming it. Shame is thus the affect of self-individuated social life that relies on the idea of social death. I suggest that we read shame in Sedgwick’s Tomkins as an ideal of the auto-affectation of the embodied self with no internal alterity, in isolation, as such, and also, in limbo, suspended between life and death.’

perpetuating the epistemic invisibility or not engaging enough with the socio-politics of identity and difference through over analysis and a lack of lived engagement (Feldman 2009; Monro 2015).

2.7. Conclusion

The literature discussed within this chapter indicates a long history of discursive, socio-medical, and sexual marginalisation of the bisexual identity. Especially when related the literature from Chapter 2 to the literature addressed in Chapter 1, the correlations between the epistemic and the social marginalisation become evident rather quickly. The regulation of bisexuality as an epistemic “knower” is questionable at best: bisexuality is constructed as a complex identity that exists in a “non-space” (if it is constructed at all); it is an identity that is meant to be sexually, morally, and spatially regulated; it is an identity that indicates a pathology, an illness to be cured; and it is an identity which is validated (again, if at all) through quantitative measures, rather than an identity constructed through experiences and feelings.

Seeing the links between these epistemic malpractices and the biphobic and bi-negative socio-spatial interactions, it also quickly turns into an epistemological minefield: it appears to be remarkably easy to fall into the traps of furthering bisexual marginalisation, rendering the identity or scholarship invisible once more, and perpetuate the problem. Therefore, Chapter 2 functions mainly as a stepping stone that indicates the direction the research is aiming to take (or is indicative of picking plurisexual hills that I as a researcher must be willing to die on).

Returning to the aim as framed within Chapter 1 of consolidating the differences between the scholarships and engaging with bisexuality/plurisexuality, queer theory, and spatiality studies,

it is through Chapter 2 that the thesis begins to pick its epistemological battle and the willingness to apply this from a methodological standpoint.

Chapter 3.

A Queer Feminist Methodology

can
copy
te

Home of queer A
enquires info.v
VFD 66 Stoke Newin

arts & Community

fdalston.com

gton Road N16 7XB

3.1 Introduction

A queer methodology, in a way, is a scavenger methodology that uses different methods to collect and produce information on subjects who have been deliberately or accidentally excluded from traditional studies of human behavior. The queer methodology attempts to combine methods that are often cast as being at odds with each other, and it refuses the academic compulsion toward disciplinary coherence (Halberstam 1998, p.13).

This chapter lays out the methodological foundation of the thesis, focussing on the epistemological approach, methods, and critically reflexive aspects of the study. While the methods developed and shifted throughout the research period, the focus on lived experiences have been central throughout the entire process. There is a gap in bisexuality/plurisexuality studies, and throughout the entire research process I have believed that shedding light on the experiences of this group of individuals could and should be an ethical and empowering form of research. Conducting research that focuses on the lives of this academically marginalized group may help to combat the stigmatisation of plurisexual individuals, both in scholarship and within a broader societal context.

Plurisexuality is the umbrella term for individuals who identify with a sexual orientation that revolves around the romantic and/or sexual attraction to more than one gender. This term, seemingly antithetically, is used as a category throughout this thesis – with the innate tension derived from the categorisation of an inherently fluid and undefinable identity

and/or practice. Throughout the research it will become evident that this is not done “to order that which is queer” (in identity or theory), but to give space to interpretation and self-identification. I argue that there is a hegemonic socio-political and spatial discourse where certain identities (e.g., bisexual) are discriminated against more than other multi-gender attracted identities (e.g., queer). The reasoning behind self-identification of individuals attracted to more than one gender is not only complex, it is also incredibly personal and relies on various identity negotiating strategies. Therefore, the research refers to this group of individuals collectively as plurisexual, whilst continuously affirming the validity of self-identification and of queerness as a practice, a theory, and a reclaimed identity.

In light of the strain between bisexuality and queer theory (Callis 2009; Monro 2015), there is also a methodological debate which requires addressing: the relationship between queer(ness) and research methods in the social sciences has been tense – and sometimes contested (Nash & Browne 2010). The concept of queer methodologies, types of queer methods and how I have applied them will be explored throughout the chapter. In order to contribute to plurisexuality scholarship, and sexuality scholarship as a whole, developing a clear epistemological perspective has been essential. Focussing on my own epistemological stance on the tension between queerness and methods, as well as my own positionality within the research, has been crucial throughout the research.

This chapter will firstly explore the ontological and epistemological position taken within the research, then continue towards the research design, sampling and recruitment, the qualitative research methods (semi-structured interviews, ethnography, and auto-

ethnography), the innovative methods developed for the purposes of the research, the thematic analysis, the ethical considerations (an overview of the ethics application and process), and provide insight into the reflexive nature of the project by focusing on the researcher positionality.

The research began with an investigation of theory and its application, followed by the fieldwork stages. By employing qualitative methods, the project gathered rich data that explored the nuanced and detailed social-spatial experiences of participants, including observations which provide important insights into lived experience within specific community spaces. Once in the field, the use of more innovative, artistic research methods emerged, and the research data consists of both written narration as well as artistic fieldnotes (drawings) and photographic data. The thematic analysis uncovered various experiences of in- and exclusion, spatial negotiation, and performative affective politics.

3.2. Epistemological and Ontological Position

Before delving further into queer methods, it should be noted that the keystones for these queering practices were birthed first and foremost from feminist methods. Feminist epistemologies began challenging the hierarchies that are inherent to positivist ontologies. Feminist epistemologies sought to dismantle the mainstream patriarchal power structures which had been implicit in the creation and maintenance of the positivistic approaches towards social research; forcing the social sciences to reconsider the worth of objectivity (Oakley 1981). More so, queering methods go significantly deeper than what I refer to as “tension”, as it also encounters a paradoxical issue. As discussed by Ward (2016) and Love

(2016), the difficulty of marrying the act of queering with research methodologies lies in the issue that their innate purposes oppose one another: Queering is the act of undermining rigid research structures (by messily creating insight into messy embodied concepts and experiences through the deconstruction of sterile research frameworks) whilst research methods exist primarily to create disciplined orderly insights (by cleaning up and categorising the inherent messiness of embodied social worlds). To find a balance between these juxta-positioned practices, a reflexive account has proven pivotal during the data collection period: Continuous (re)negotiation of method, theory, and research aim.

The research revolves around the importance and relaying of experienced knowledge, embedding itself in intersectional feminist and queer epistemologies. By engaging with these epistemologies, this project considers the 'relationship between knowledge, power, and difference' (Tuana 2017, p. 126). The conceptualisation of knowledge based on "objective normalities", as written by (and through) hegemonic powers, leads to homogenous understandings of experience. Therefore, by separating the Western, gendered, heteronormative "objective truths" to a far more subjective knowledge, a knowledge that is not a one-size-fits-all, but Other. One that is experienced and *lived*. This work roams within *inclusive* feminist paradigms where these forms of knowledge are sought and found beyond mainstream (and positivist) accounts; through both feminist and queer epistemologies (Ahmed 2006; Nash & Browne 2010). As mentioned previously, queer epistemology and sexual scholarship suffer from epistemic injustices, namely in regard to bisexuality and other sexualities based on gender-inclusive attraction. Its prevalent marginalisation has led to a gap within both research and discourse (Barker et al. 2012;

Monro 2015), as ‘future sexualities scholarship could be enhanced by greater consideration of bisexuality’ (Monro, Hines & Osborne 2017).

3.3. Research Design

To gain insight into the complex concepts of belonging, space, and the plurisexual identity, the research posed the following **Main Question**:

- How do plurisexual individuals experience feelings of belonging in social spaces designated for sexual minorities?

Subsequently, the following **Sub-Questions** were constructed to answer the overarching question:

- How do plurisexual individuals conceptualise their feelings of belonging?
- How do plurisexuals negotiate socio-spatial identity marginalisation?
- How do queer spaces shape experiences of plurisexual belonging?

The questions were formulated to prioritise the understanding of lived experiences. In particular, the question on socio-spatial identity interrogation was influenced in a bottom-up approach, led by the data – which allowed centring the plurisexual experiences with unbelonging through discrimination and marginalisation.

The Timeline graphic (see page 68) visualises the flow of the research project and the stages in which the study design became actualised and finalised – from initial stages that focussed

on theory and design, to the various stages of ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, to analysis, and overall write-up process.

In order to gain rich insight into the lived experiences of plurisexual individuals, I took a fully qualitative approach to this research project. I have conducted 15 in-depth semi-structured interviews (Bryman 2012). The participants were recruited through various methods (online via Twitter, snowball sampling, and during public events such as conferences and London Pride 2018).¹ The participants were recruited through social media (e.g., Twitter), events (e.g., conferences and bisexual events), or contacted via LGBT and/or bisexual organisations in London and the South-East area.² The project employed “semi-purposive” sampling, using only ‘sexual identity’ and ‘location’ as primary markers. From an initial sample of nine individuals, the remaining six were recruited through snowball sampling. To gain in-depth and intersectional insight, other markers were added to the sampling during the snowball stage of the sampling period, including ‘ethnicity’, ‘age’, ‘class’, ‘nationality’, ‘religion’, and ‘gender identity’.

This, however, also leads to a tension between the sample size and the need for an intersectional sample. The limitation of 15 interviews could lead to the over-generalisation of statements during the data analysis. It should be noted that whilst there was no purposive sampling per se, as there were no set criteria (e.g., to only speak to AFAB participants), there was a need for a broad range in order to diversify the project.

¹ For participant criteria, see Appendix.

² For organisation table, see Appendix.

I attended events for the purposes of ethnographic observation and participation over a total (non-consecutive) period of 15 months³ – from the 18th of July 2018 until the 30th of October 2019 – three of which ran bi-weekly and/or weekly ethnographic observations and auto-ethnographic observations in the venue vFd in Dalston (Hackney borough, London). Data was collected and presented through artistic and visual methods such as drawings, poetry, field notes, and photography.

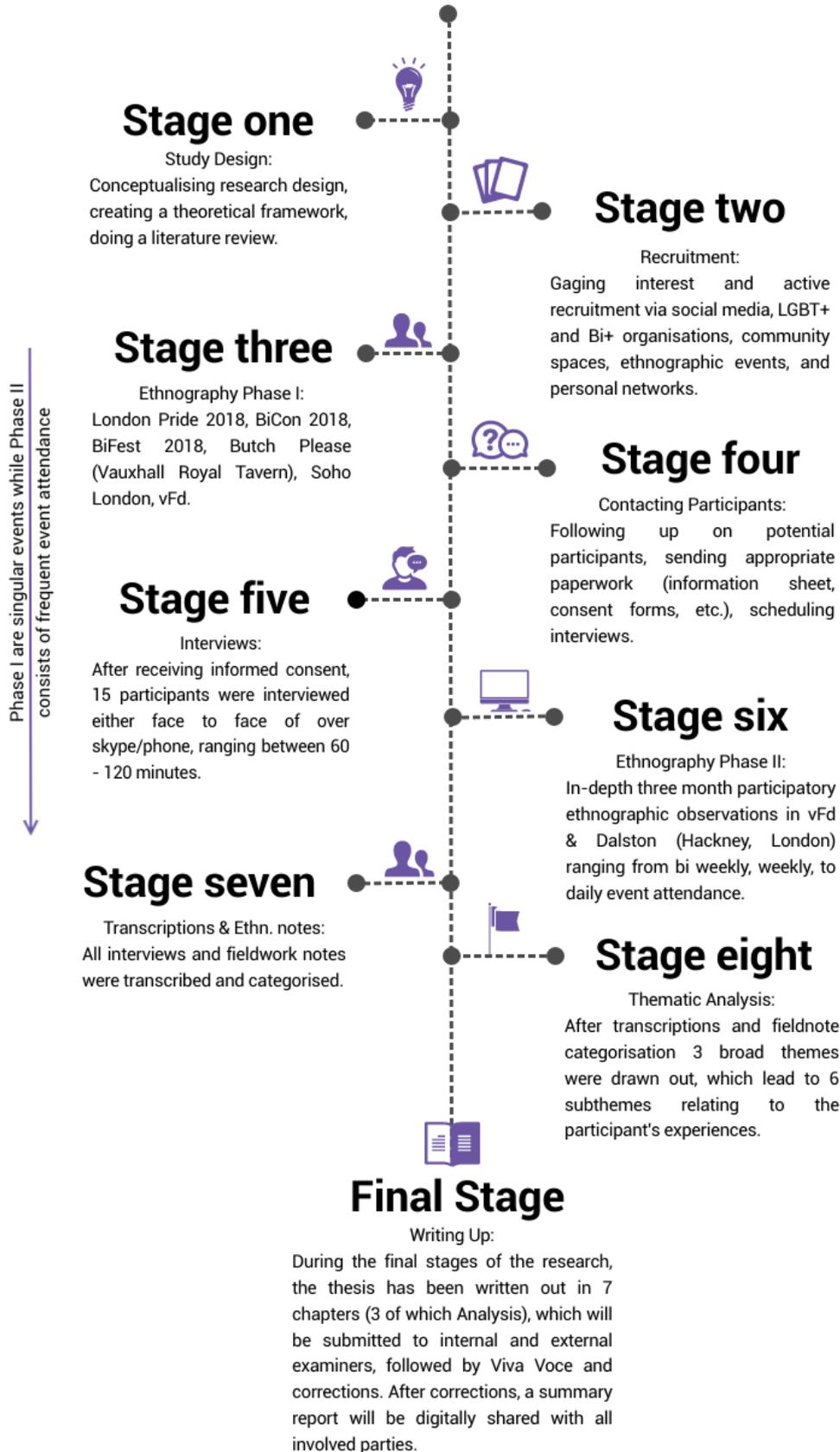
The events and ethnographic sites were initially chosen on my own accord through researching LGBT+, queer, and bisexual communities, spaces, and events, but ultimately became influenced by the participants: meeting with participants in a space of their choosing; being “shown around the neighbourhood” as prompted by the participant; or asking the participants if they engaged with community spaces in which they felt a sense of belonging and if I was allowed to join them on an occasion. This ensured an organic and participant-led socio-spatial engagement.

This methodology was adopted in order to engage with the connection between the arts and the social sciences, as innovative and art-based knowledge provides opportunities to explore far more sensuous and engaging counter-narratives for a wider audience. Unlike many “peer-to-peer” social science research projects, this approach, therefore, allows for both broader dissemination as well as double hermeneutics.

³ For full list of events, sites, and attendance, see Appendix.

Timeline

The flow of the research project



3.4. Sampling

In order to practice a feminist queer methodology, I had to define the boundaries of in- and exclusivity from a feminist standpoint. The current social-political climate regarding gender and sexuality is remarkably divisive amongst feminists, such as the “gender critical views” with contested socio-political approaches to transgender inclusivity (for example the work of radical feminist Bindel, see BBC 2022). My sense of ethical practices and research design required me to explore the full significance of inclusive language for both sexual as well as gendered identification. This research has been committed to the inclusive participation of individuals of all gender identifications and expressions - equally inviting to the participation of individuals of varying plurisexual identification. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitation, that the scope of the PhD and the size of the sample does not allow for any generalisable content regarding trans experiences and identities. While this limited my analytical abilities, the open participation provided rich insight and understanding of a broad range of experiences. In light of these limitations, there will be recommendations for future research design in the concluding chapter.

To return to the matter of sampling through sexual self-identification, various authors (Halperin 2009; Callis 2013; Ochs 2015; Flanders 2017) have stated that due to the complex nature of bisexuality, it is impossible to cover its nuances unanimously with a singular term:

(...) the gendered/ sexed aspect of bisexual sexual attraction is not restricted to cisgender people alone, it should also encompass attraction to nonconforming genders (people who identify as transgender, non-binary,

intersex, etc.) (...) To be aware that one does not erase experiences based on the differentiation between cultural consensus and self-identification is to accept these identifications as authentic – despite a potential terminological disagreement or potential political incoherence. One person’s bisexual identity can be another person’s pansexual (which is another person’s queer, and another person’s heteroflexible, etc.). (Breetveld 2020, p.155)

At the earlier stages of the research, the main descriptor used within the recruitment and writing process was bisexuality/bisexual. However, due to the multiplicity of bisexual identification, the thesis recruited participants as self-identifying as one or more sexual identities based on the sexual and romantic attraction to more than one gender. This meant that the research shifted to identifying to these individuals as falling under the plurisexual umbrella term, which by no means aims to undermine the complex and personal identities of the participants.

Another important element of the sampling and recruitment stage lies in the geographical limitations. By focussing solely on London and the South-East area, the research could be considered inattentive towards the socio-political, economic, and emotional diversity seen in LGBTQ+ experiences through the urban/rural divide (see also Hubbard 2013, Massey 2007). However, due to the existing marginalised status of plurisexuality, alongside the centring of LGBTQ+ spaces in urban areas, the methodological choice was made to recruit in the London metropolis as well as the surrounding areas – to increase the chances of a robust sample. Therefore, it would equally be suggested to engage with rural experiences of plurisexual belonging in future research endeavours.

Table A. Participants and Demographics (based on their self-described categories)

	Participant	Sexual identification	Gender identification	Pronouns	Age	Nationality	Ethnicity	Religion	Location	Class
1.	Victoria	Bisexual	Woman	She/Her	19	British	Mixed Race (Caribbean-White British)	Atheist	South-East	Middle Class
2.	Lilly	Bisexual / Queer	Woman	She/Her	23	British	Mixed Race (Caribbean-White British)	Atheist	London	Working Class
3.	Josh	Bisexual	Male	He/His	29	British	White British	Pagan	London	“Difficult” Working / Middle Class
4.	Delphine	Omnisexual	Cis-Female	She/Her	27	British	White British	Atheist Pagan	London	Middle / Upper Class
5.	Tom	Bisexual	Non-Binary	He/His They/Them	35	British	White British	Catholic	London	Middle Class
6.	Leroy	Bisexual / Pansexual	Male	He/His	43	British	White British	Spiritual	London	Middle / Upper Middle Class
7.	Amelia	Pansexual	Woman	She/Her	23	Canadian	White (Polish-Canadian)	Non-Practicing Catholic / Spiritual	South-East	Working Class
8.	Sebastian	Queer	Trans man	He/His	24	American	White (Scottish-American)	None	South-East	Working Class

9.	Cassandra	Bisexual	Cis-Woman	She/Her	25	British	English - Chinese	None	London	Middle Class
10.	Ash	Queer	Trans / Non-Binary	They/Them	25	British	White British	-	South-East	-
11.	Bobbie	Bisexual	Woman	She/Her	34	British	White British	None	South-East	“Conflicted” Working / Middle Class
12.	Grace	Queer / Bisexual / Pansexual	Woman	She/Her	33	Irish	White Irish	Catholic	London	-
13.	Persephone	Queer / Bisexual	Woman	She/her	29	British	White Other	Non-Practicing Jewish / Spiritual	London	Middle Class
14.	Rosa	Bisexual / Queer	Woman	She/Her	26	British / Spanish	White Other	Non-Practicing Christian / Spiritual	London	“Unsure” Middle Class
15.	Janine	Queer / Bisexual	Female	She/Her	32	British	White British	None	London	Lower Middle Class

3.5. Semi-Structured Interviews

As mentioned previously, the lived experiences of plurisexual individuals can be negatively impacted by the marginalising practices surrounding bisexuality (as the 'invisible' sexuality, in both general societal discourses as within academic development (Callis 2009; Monro 2015; Monro, Hines & Osborne 2017)). Therefore, the in-depth nature of semi-structured interviews makes for one of the most effective data-gathering methods. Particularly when researching sexuality and identity, the interactions, performativity, and relationality that is shared or created through the story-telling method are as valuable an experience as the story itself (Plummer 2004). Initially, the interview guide had twenty-three questions (excluding the questions to establish the participants' demographics) based on the four key themes (1. Belonging, 2. Acceptance, 3. LGBT+ community, and lastly 4. LGBT+ spaces) which were concepts the participants were asked to affectively unpack at the beginning of the interviews⁴. However, it became evident rather quickly (specifically after the first three interviews) that this extensive semi-structured questionnaire was unnecessary, as all the questions were organically answered during the conceptualisation of the four key themes. Taking an iterative approach to research, meant I had the reflexivity and flexibility to rewrite the interview guide. By only having the demographic section as well as the questions around the conceptualisation of the four key themes, a far more organic interview process was created. This open-ended manner of interviewing became pivotal to the interviewing process, as asking the participants to explain to me (the researcher) what their understanding was of, and experiences were with, these concepts meant that personal

⁴ For interview schedule, see Appendix.

affective dialogue became the norm. This allowed for in-depth phenomenological questioning and insight into the intricate differences and similarities between the experiences and social worlds of the participants. Equally, in order to ensure equal power relations, I did not discourage the participants from asking me questions about my identity and research positionality in return. However, rather than seeing this as an unnuanced rejection of neutrality, it required active non-hierarchical investment in the interviewee and interviewer relationship (Oakley 1981; Nelson 2020). This allowed for far richer data. I have been asked, and have discussed, the following topics with the participants throughout the research process: the reasoning behind my research, my own queer experiences (on sexual identity and gendered identity), my own understanding of sexual identities and their associated marginalisation and exclusion, as well as my political stance on feminism and inclusivity (Stanley & Wise 1993; Plummer 2004, 2014; Brown 2007; Archer 2010; Nash & Browne 2010).

The interviews were conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and were mainly in person unless requested otherwise. This created a personal and affective interview experience in a space of the participant's choosing (e.g., a cafe in Soho, a pub in Dalston, a Starbucks in Canterbury, and a university campus in Kent). Three of the fifteen interviews were conducted over Skype, and one over the phone (all requested due to conflicting schedules). The initial interviews were significantly longer (the longest being 2 hours and 10 minutes) but became progressively shorter due to continuous practice of interviewing techniques (the shortest 50 minutes). Initially, notes were taken but this was abandoned after the third interview as it became swiftly apparent it impeded my skills to properly *listen* to the

participants. Transcriptions were made of all interviews and were subsequently thematically analysed.

Moreover, all interviews are embedded in the analysis chapters through a less conventional stylisation:

All bigger quotes are presented with a textbox.

Whilst all shorter citations are represented in italics in the text. This had practical reasons more than anything, as my cultural inability to differentiate between the use of singular and double quotation marks in combination with my ADHD-combined type meant that I was incapable of maintaining continuity of a specific quotation mark style, turning my analysis chapters into a challenging read (for neurodiverse and neurotypical readers alike). After much trial and error and deliberation with my supervisors, I opted that the most presentable option was the one you find in this finished version today.

Dalston Superstore is an LGBTQ+ venue where everyone should be able to have fun in an environment free from harassment.

We have a zero tolerance policy towards homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, racism or any other form of abuse.

If you experience anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, please tell us about it so that we can intervene.

Do not share cubicles for any reason.

Please look after yourselves and each other.

Or else!!



3.6. Ethnography

To tell the story of a life may be one of the cores of culture, those fine webs of meaning that help organise our ways of life. These stories of personal narratives- connect the inner world to the outer world, speak to the subjective and the objective and establish the boundaries of identities (Plummer 2001, p. 395)

To take an ethnographic approach towards sexualities and identities research is to perceive and analyse the “messy” lived experiences of others, as well as those of your own. Ethnographic research is, if anything, a method which explores the messiness of queer identities, queer lives, and queer practices through gendered and sexual embodiments, subjectivities, and positionalities of the observer and the observed alike (Wekker 2006, Adjepong 2019). Specifically, Rooke (2003) refers to queering ethnography as an act which ‘curve[s] the established orientation of ethnography in its method, ethics, and reflexive philosophical principles (p.25)’. Considering ethnography’s roots in imperialistic and inherently racist practices, detaching ourselves as social researchers from the colonial and oppressive framework can be considered a practice that is most welcome when researching the lives of marginalised groups in contemporary society. Specifically, the queering of ethnography leads to an important discussion of reflexivity and affect, when observing the temporal spatial relationships of the participants as well as the researcher position. Nash & Browne (2010) frame this as follows:

Queer researchers are in good company with other scholars drawing on poststructuralist and postmodernist approaches such as some feminist, anti-racist, and postcolonial scholars, in consciously seeking to articulate their ontologies and epistemologies but who are seemingly less inclined to consider the implications of these approaches to methodologies and methods (p.1)

Bringing these elements together, it becomes clear that queer ethnographic practices are – at its core – disrupting the cisgendered, heteronormative, and colonial gaze fixed upon complex matters of belonging, acceptance, and space, and can therefore be positioned as not only a method but also as an epistemology.

Having set my geographical LGBT+ space to encompass the South-East and London, I aimed to collect insight into the experiences of the participants, and that of my own researcher-participant position, through a reflexive understanding of the social, visceral, and embodied positions within these observed spaces. Due to the limitations focussing on this urban region, this work cannot provide insight into the complex lives of plurisexual individuals from more rural areas. However, the marginalisation of plurisexual individuals in LGBT+ spaces is an under-researched scholarly field, and laying the groundwork by gathering data from a metropolitan area is necessary prior to any expansion of the research scale.

The emersion into LGBT+ social spaces is crucial to the understanding of the fluidity of (queer) people's lives (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw 1995). The first ethnographic experience within this research, London Pride 2018, shows the importance of the corporeal experience

(Clifford 1988), with examples of a pride march during a heat wave, and the sharing of glitter make-up (which continued to be experienced for several days post-Pride). Such embodied and sensory experiences were crucial in order to gain rich data: 'As inter-worked systems of construable signs... culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviours, institutions, processed can be causally attributed; is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly – that is, thickly-described' (Geertz 1973, p.14)

3.7 Auto-Ethnography

Beyond using participant observation, the research also focusses on researcher participation. Autoethnography is in its own right a queer method, as it forces (and enables) the internal narrative and reflexive position of the researcher to come to the foreground during the fieldwork process (Nash & Browne 2010; Gardinia & Denzin 2010; Holman Jones & Harris 2019). Moreover, autoethnography refuses to adhere to the 'academic compulsion towards disciplinary coherence' as seen with queer methodology overall and allows for a deeper understanding of social worlds by not only combining a personal narrative with the hegemonic position of theoretical knowledge (Halberstam 1998, p.13; Holman Jones 2010, 2016). As discussed by Adams et al. (2015), autoethnography approaches the importance of experience in a non-hierarchal manner to the importance of institutional and relational power and actually utilises this relationality to convey systemic and interpersonal injustice towards their readers. More so, this thesis takes a stance that autoethnography is an innate part of any ethnographic process, queer or normative, as it is a sign of good reflexive practice – whether this is published alongside the rest of the ethnographic data or not.

Ellis & Bochner (2017, p.vii) relay the importance of creating a narrative connection that exceeds the theoretical, and as they put it, a connection that exceeds the desire to impress your reader with your intellectual prowess: By '[writing] in a revealing and passionate way because they are seeking connection, desiring to evoke something deep in your guts and your heart that will allow one consciousness to reach another, yours to theirs'. By sharing lived experiences, autoethnography reveals a sense of humanity to research that would otherwise be lost in observation: A sense of nauseating anxiety when the researcher is confronted with their own inability to feel like they belong in a space whilst writing on spatial belonging, a spark of rage when observing the experiences from a victimised participant which the researcher cannot express for the sake of the data collection, or a sudden wave of grief when listening to a spoken word performance which the researcher relates their own bereavement - which they will use to explore their researcher position and create a pivotal, reflexive, moment of participation several months down the line⁵.

Autoethnography is more a queer practice than it is a queer method, and this research practices this form in order to share and provide meaning, rather than solve complex social issues (Upshaw 2017). This is also a reason why auto-ethnographies are still a contested methodological practice. Due to its inherently subjective nature auto-ethnographies are, alongside queer theory as a whole:

criticized for being too much and too little. Too much personal mess, too much theoretical jargon, too elitist, too sentimental, too removed, too

⁵ See Chapter 6.

difficult, too easy, too white, too Western, too colonialist, too indigenous’

(Holman Jones & Adams in Nash & Browne 2010)

In Chapter 6 I outline my argument that all ethnographies are – by default – auto-ethnographic due to the innate requirement of reflexive practices and understanding one’s own positionality. Moreover, I am inclined to argue that queer auto-ethnography is a type of ethnography which has fewer reservations than its more normative methodological counterparts in seeing the possibility in the knowledge felt within oneself. Queerness, albeit messy and complex, comes with an intrinsic intimacy of self-knowledge, reflection, and epistemological value.

3.8. Innovative Methods

The thesis’ creative research methods and practices are heavily influenced by a broad range of theorists and researchers, creating an eclectic artistic framework rooted in intersectional queer sociological thought. This framework ranges from visual sociology (see Kara 2015; Rose 2016) and artistic methods (see Berger 1972; Taussig 2011; Causey 2017), the performative arts (see Denzin DATE), the sensory and embodied practices (see Pink 2015), the “queered” (see Nash & Browne 2010), and the dissemination of academic/non-fictional queer histories, theories, and experiences through graphic novelisation (see Barker & Scheele 2016; Kobabe 2019) to reach wider audiences.

To provide credit where credit is due, I was initially inspired by Sarah Pink’s (2015) *Doing Sensory Methods*, which calls for a research practice as conducted through the senses and seeks to reframe types of knowing. Pink (2015) allowed me to consider methods and

approaches that would allow me to capture affective and sensory complexities, nuances, and the messiness of queer lives through the sensory and affective engagement with the socio-spatial. I felt that the complex experiences and feelings related to plurisexual belonging could not be fully conveyed through other (traditional) methods, and I began challenging – through an organic inductive process – the more traditional and less affective focussed methods to develop my own reflexive innovative research approaches.

The following subheadings engage with these various innovative research methods as influenced and constructed through an eclectic framework, that focusses on the exploration of art-based data production, analysis, ethics, and various methods that convey lived and affective experiences in the social world.

3.8.1. Visual and Creative Data Collection and Presentation

Gillian Rose (2016) work on visual methodologies provides a strong epistemically and practical perspective on the relatively young field of visual *sociology*. According to Rose, while there tends to be divide within social visual research between the focus on representation and the affectivity of visual work (2016), many debates revolve around the power relations between the researcher and those researched. Regardless, there is an undeniable ‘social effect of visual materials’ (Rose p.16) within sociological research, brought to the foreground by ‘ways of seeing’ (Berger 1972, p.9) and its creation (Taussig 2011) – the latter can also be referred to as ‘data construction’ (where the generation of data is considered an act of creativity), or the more neutral term ‘data gathering’ (Kara 2015, p.77). Rose (2016) calls for a critical approach to “found” visual material, which I

request of the reader when engaging with my “created” or “constructed” images: engaging with the material and its affect/effect seriously, considering the conditions in which these images were creating and their impact on the social world, and the reflexivity through which the viewer creates their interpretations. After all, Haraway (1991) warns that ‘we might become answerable for what we learn how to see’ (p.190).

Michael Taussig’s *I Swear I Saw This* (2011) focusses on the power of narration through artistic data collection, and argues that notebooks are pivotal in understanding the link between raw undefined data and a finer, more polished, glimpse into social life. The act of producing (or perhaps in this case *creating*) artistic social interpretations is an embodied form of *knowing* that ‘blend[s] inner and outer worlds’ (pp. xi-xii). Through his semiotic playfulness around the meaning of ‘being drawn’ towards someone/something, this concept of drawing engages wonderfully with the works of queer phenomenology (Ahmed 2006), sensory ethnography (Pink 2015), and memory work (Widerberg 2020). Taussig (2011) says that: ‘Drawing is thus a depicting, a hauling, an unravelling, and being impelled towards something or somebody (p.xii).’ The affective resonance to phenomenological thought can be found in the orientation towards a subject: to be compelled to turn towards a subject, to see a subject, and to then practice an embodied skill (Lyon & Back 2012) that both captures as well as extends this momentum of orientation. It is what Taussig (2011, p.7) refers to as *half a story* (an experience, an observation, an orientation), and half an *act of creation* (a transition of story to image). Taussig applies Barthes’ (1982, p.318) conceptualisation of ‘the third meaning’, to argue the narrative difference between a drawing and a photograph. The third meaning refers to the meaning of a piece of visual media that goes beyond its

informational and symbolic intent: the in-between of the message and the interpretation of the message. Barthes' third meaning is a meaning which cannot be defined (yet), yet is *that* which makes the image what it is: something which compels definition. While I consider Barthes' work to be compelling in its own right, it is heavily focused on its application to photography and film images which obscures the embodied creation of fieldwork data (see also Collins 2020).

Influenced by Taussig's (2011) work on fieldnotes, Pink's sensory ethnography (2015), and Ahmed's queer phenomenology (2006), I chose to redirect the concept of the meaning to appease my own sociological understanding (and limitations) as a process of affective liminality: a labour of creation that serves as a visual and narrative dialogue between that what was seen, believed, felt, and now perceived again. The process between the observed subject (that which I was drawn towards), the material (the ink and paper), the interpretation (the research analysis), and the reader (you). The inherent corporeality within this dialogue is in itself a queer embodied process:

Each confirmation or denial brings you closer to the object, until finally you are, as it were, inside it: the contours you have drawn no longer marking the edge of what you have seen, but the edge of what you have become... a drawing is an autobiographical record of one's discovery of an event, seen, remembered, or imagined (Berger 1972, p.3).

Moreover, the presentation of ethnographic data through narrative text is an equally important factor within the thesis. As discussed in the work of Pink (2015), to engage with

the reader not only through the observations and interpretations of the actions of others but engage by connecting to the reader through their senses. An immersive method of writing could be perceived as romanticizing data, but is aimed at taking the reader on a narrative journey. Such data is no more than the interpretivist (and perhaps artistic) allowance of narrowing the gap between the experience of the reader with that of mine (Berger 2007). Again, I must mention that auto-ethnographic experiences (which are queered methods in their own right, see Nash & Browne 2010; Holman Jones & Harris 2017) are inherently part of the multisensory experience of the researcher, and I believe that the act of omitting or diluting such experiences is robbing the reader from crucial affective data. As seen in Chapter 6, the experiences of political performances are heightened by the affective responses within the space, which are created by the thrown-togetherness (Massey 2005; Ingold 2015) of the embodied, temporal, spatial, affective, sensory, and narrative aspects of that performance within that event. The latter can also be witnessed through the auto-ethnographic performance further along in this Chapter (see 3.8.4.).

During the data collection stage, I continuously carried one notebook for writing narrative notes, one notebook for drawing fieldwork sketches, one pen and one pencil, a voice recorder for audio (interviews, personal notes, and to record any audio snippets to create a soundscape), my phone in order to take photographs, and a power bank to charge my phone if need be. Photographs taken were aimed to capture mood and atmosphere, and to maintain the privacy of attendants within a space; any pictures that show specific

individuals were asked for consent to use their photos. Carrying around a significant amount of material to conduct my research proved to be challenging at times.⁶

3.8.2. Snapshot Ethnography

By providing my own accounts alongside participatory ethnographic observations, I give insight into researcher positioning, relationality, and the practice of understanding oneself as an embodied knower (Turner 2000; Pink 2007; Kesselring 2015). More so, I have developed a new type of immersive ethnographic method to lean into the queer practice of acknowledging subjugated knowledge. These Snapshot Ethnographies (SSE's) are short pieces that are not considered analysis, but function as immersive and affective narratives that thematically bridge the analysis chapters with one another. The SSE's are told through visual data, either photographed or created, alongside written narration, and have both ethnographic and auto-ethnographic observations present within the same piece.

SSE's were developed as both a methodological response and a thematic response. The development of SSE as a response to the research finding relates to the issues surrounding "narrative ownership"⁷. Whilst I do not wish to delve too deep into my analysis during this stage of the document, I can provide some insight into the social and affective relationalities that underline this concept: plurisexuals struggle with imposed narratives and seeing their experiences subverted – retold and reframed. Specifically, the entries *Snapshot*

⁶ See SSE:II.

⁷ See Chapter 6.

Ethnography I: London Pride 2018 and *Snapshot Ethnography III: Hackney's vFd* are indicative of immersive narration of my auto-ethnographic positioning as well as highlighting the affective relationalities that were created between me and the participants/transient actors within these moments. These lived experiences are expressed through photographic visuals and thickly described narrations that emphasise both *being* as well as *becoming*. Again, the choice to not engage to a heavy degree of analysis aims to put focus on experiencing emotions, space, and time, through the eyes of the narrator as written *with* their environment. The interview elements alongside the SSE's were conducted mainly through walking interview methods, due to the nature of these ethnographic observations as being either "on the move" or, at the very least, mobile (Peyrefitte 2012; McPherson 2016; Peyrefitte & Sanders-McDonagh 2018; Rose 2020). Through these means, I aim for the reader to grasp not only the messiness of queerness but also to explore the emotional, cerebral, physical sensations and internal narratives which accompany the process in which knowledge comes into being by doing. It is neither pre-analysis or analysis, but cannot be considered "not that" either: this form of immersion prides itself as a shared process of seeing, learning, and feeling queerness, and aims to add to the new ways of experiencing lived-experience methodologies and researching minoritized others.

As a methodological response, SSE's – in particular those with created visual data, rather than taken visual data, as seen with *SSE II: Vauxhall's Butch Please* and *SSE IV: Vauxhall Revisited* – aim to build upon the new ways in which knowledge is produced and perceived. As of 2014, the Research Excellence Framework (REF) recognised the arts as forms of

research⁸ that are of high quality and have a social and cultural environmental impact that goes beyond the academic communities. The dissemination plan of my research has had various iterations, and I (particularly post-viva voce), have taken into great consideration. As it currently stands, I aim to divide the dissemination of my work through two routes parallel to one another; one with a focus on plurisexual theorisation and artistic sociological research methods aimed towards the academic community, and one with a focus towards the general public, through the graphic novelisation of queer intersectional lived experiences (of “queer messiness” and research processes alike) as based on the auto-ethnographies. By engaging with these two dichotomous ways of research output, I aim to explore (and challenge) a wider epistemological counter-narrative of plurisexuality, sociology, and sexual geographies. Moreso, it should be noted that not creating an *entire* PhD in graphic novel form⁹ is a well-considered methodological choice to encourage hybrid forms of knowledge production: I argue that SSE, with visual data either taken or created, are affective invitations for the reader to be immersed into the messy lived experienced of queer lives; engaging with feelings through visual and written narration, allowing for new ways of feeling and seeing.

The works of Meg-John Barker and Julia Scheele, *Queer: A Graphic History* (2016), *Gender: A Graphic History* (2016) and *Sexuality: A Graphic History* (2021), are notable examples of publications that combine visual storytelling and academic work. This is achieved through a creative and artistic perspective on knowledge accessibilities which feed into the discursive

⁸ REF 2021 Unit of Assessment 32 – Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory; and Unit of Assessment 33 – Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film, and Screen Studies.

⁹ Or produced as text-based only.

discussions the academia vs community hermeneutics, and issues of academic gatekeeping. Maia Kobabe's (2019) *Gender Queer: A Memoir* is a visual novel exploring Kobabe's gender and sexuality journey throughout upbringing and adulthood, creating affective understanding into their lived experiences as a non-binary and asexual individual. Another honourable mention is the work of Allison Bechdel (2006, 2008), whose culturally iconic publications reach far back into the 1980s, and does not only provide insight into lived intersectional queer experiences through decades that were rife with social and political change for LGBT rights¹⁰, they also provide personal narratives – either as short comics without a great deal of pre-existing context but as affective slice-of-life snippets, or as deeply personal accounts and histories.

Moreso, it is crucial to emphasise that the illustrations within the SSE's are created through a different creative process than the fieldwork drawings as seen in the analysis chapters. Whilst the fieldnotes were made on paper on site and added as visuals to emphasise ethnographic observations within the analysis chapters, the SSE illustrations offer a graphic narrative that was based on notes and extremely rudimentary drawings created either during or immediately after the ethnography and/or spatial engagement – the latter is constructed through a technique that Casey (in an accidental thematic overlap), refers to as 'mental snap-shots' (2017, p.137). These mental snap-shots are practised forms of seeing, where the ethnographer consciously and reflexively takes mental note of their surroundings, both visually as well as through the senses (e.g., the composition, the lighting,

¹⁰ I might even go so far and argue their worth as a contemporary historic account of intersectional lesbian lives in North America between 1983 and 2008.

the movement, the objects, the people, their poses, the smells, etc.). A form of reflexive multisensory memorising if you will, which allows the ethnographer to take an internal inventory of that which is seen – as well of that which is felt.¹¹ The notes of the ethnographic experience of *SSE II: Vauxhall's Butch Please* in 2019 were returned to in 2022 after the events seen in *SSE IV: Vauxhall Revisited*, which was not ethnographic fieldwork and is therefore framed as a reflection only. The latter came into being after experiencing the same space three years later, allowing me to frame these two narratives as you see in this thesis. The revisited SSE is “post”-COVID pandemic and post-fieldwork; not observed as a researcher, but engaged with from the perspective of a queer person whose experiences throughout their PhD finally allowed the reflection on their past experiences of space and belonging to frame their new understanding, realities, and experiences. Therefore, when revisiting the 2019 notes, I decided to create two connected SSE’s in the same narrative style. They were initially visually “blocked”; creating a rough draft of thumbnails on paper, accompanied by notes on the narrative that aligned each panel prior to drawing them out fully. The illustrations were created on a Samsung Galaxy S22 Ultra smartphone in the phone’s standard provided drawing app PenUp and MS Office program Word. Whilst seemingly visually more engaging than the fieldnotes, it should be noted that these illustrations were not drawn to convey artistic skill, but focussed on visual storytelling only. This can be seen in the style inconsistencies, lack of clean-up, and unpolished final product,

¹¹ Mind you, that this is no mental superpower for those inclined to photographic memories. While an innate visual way of thinking undoubtedly helps with the process, this technique is - if anything - a learned skill which can be honed through practice (see also Casey 2017).

as I argue that “visually perfecting” these graphic SSE’s would undermine my goal of immersion, experience, and knowledge production.

3.8.3. Queering Confidentiality

To be able to choose your own name is not a given, as given names are bestowed upon individuals, without their explicit consent, in traditional Western societies. Therefore, the process of changing your own name (be it through the institution of marriage or to distance oneself from a gendered name that does not reflect one’s gender identity) is extremely meaningful. Several of my participants gave me pseudonyms that had significant meaning, as exemplified by two participants who coincidentally chose names of Greek mythological origin: Persephone, who has been holding on to this name for many years, keeping it for an unborn child as well as Cassandra, whose relationship with her bisexual identity felt akin to that of the curse suffered by the Trojan prophetic priestess (she had to endure that her truth was never to be believed). However, some of my participants gave me pseudonyms that were remarkably close to their actual names or gave me the option to choose my own pseudonym for them. This group of participants prompted me to consider the complex relationship between referents and semantics and ordered me to find names that conveyed a corresponding *meaning* whilst breaking away from any identifiable markers that could undermine my participant’s anonymity.

I will explore and exemplify this by using my own first name, Robin Rose. Robin is (both in English and in my own national Dutch context) a unisex given name which is diminutive of

the Low German¹² name Robert. Robert comes from the words “Rod” or “Hrôth” (which means fame) and “Berth”, “Bert”, “Brecht” (which means bright). The latter, Brecht, is another recognised unisex Dutch first name that has also come to mean “fame and bright”, therefore exemplifying an exact synonymous relation to the name Robin. Brecht is therefore also observed in other Germanic masculine names of similar meaning from Robert/Robrecht to Albert/Albrecht, Rupert/Rupprecht, and Gijsbert/Gijsbrecht. Having indicated the first half, I used the second half of my name to add a feminine note to my renaming process (based on the balance between the unisex Germanic Robin and feminine English Rose) and add the suffix “je” to Brecht. In Dutch, you change a root word to a diminutive by adding a suffix, such as “je” or “tje”, which can also be applied to names (I have friends and family who refer to me as Robje or Roosje, respectively “little Rob” or “little Rose” as a form of endearment). When doing the latter to the name Brecht, it shifts from a unisex name to a feminine name - this is not a gendered rule per se, but nonetheless aids me in this specific example by combining the unisex (or perhaps non-binary) and feminine elements of my actual given name. Therefore, according to this process, I would refer to myself as Brechtje (pronounced “Brehk-tjuh”) in my own research data.

As mentioned, this is a method done for practical purposes: I convey the same meaning of a name whilst changing it in such a way it is impossible to derive its origins, to uphold anonymity. All the while, I am simultaneously focussing on the importance of language and self-identification, as well as noting that there is a multiplicity to the meaning of what someone calls themselves. This is a nod towards the discourse on plurisexual identification,

¹² See Bloemhoff & van der Kooi (2008) for Nedersaksische taal- en letterkunde.

which can have distinctive labels (bisexual, pansexual, queer, etc.) which can overlap in meaning due to cultural interpretations (Barker et al., 2012). If one individual refers to themselves as bisexual yet gives the same meaning to their identity as someone who would refer to themselves as pansexual, it *hints at the complexity of both sameness and difference between identification (name) and meaning* – a complexity akin to the names Robin and Brecht.

3.8.4. The Exposed Researcher Transition

In order to fully exemplify the process behind the development of this methodology I will discuss the engagement with the fieldwork site (VFD Hackney, London) which led to my auto-ethnographic participation at the bi-weekly poetry and spoken word event Spoken Word London. The following theorisation was conceptualised the days after the performance had taken place, based on ethnographic notes, schematic drawings, and a written entree as influenced by Denzin's (2018) performative auto-ethnography. I will, however, provide this theorisation prior to the provision of the affective journey, leading towards the performance. This is to allow both sections to build upon their own strengths, rather than rely on cross-referencing more than is necessary.

29 August 2019

I found myself bending over my notebook, furiously scribbling, desperately trying to word how this felt – in hindsight, I find my choice of the word “exposure” intriguing because of the multiple layers of reasoning. With *exposure* I am referring to:

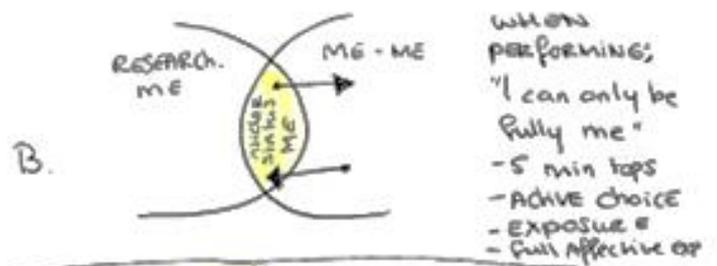
1. Act of exposing oneself within a space to its actors in order to bring depth to one’s relations with, to, and in a space.

2. The act of being exposed to a micro-sociological ecology with its political, social, and emotional facets which influence one’s relations to and in the space.

RESEARCH NEGOTIATION

- Pos. emotionality
- POWER
- EXPOSURE

accept presence
Auto Ethno !!
METHODS
cannot avoid

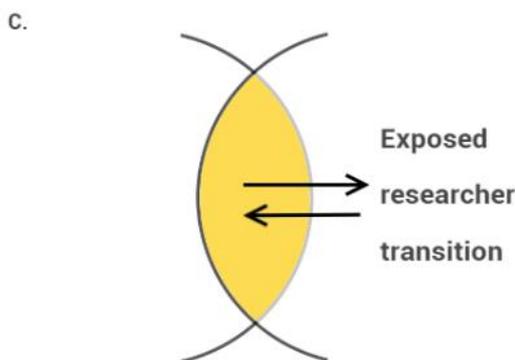
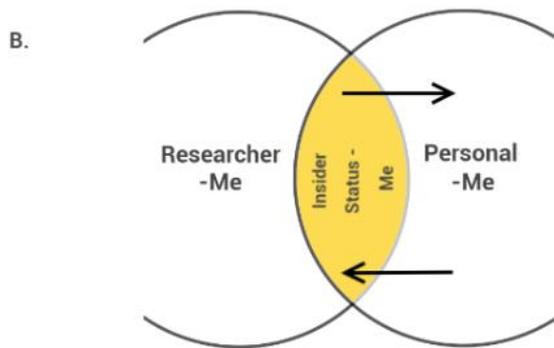
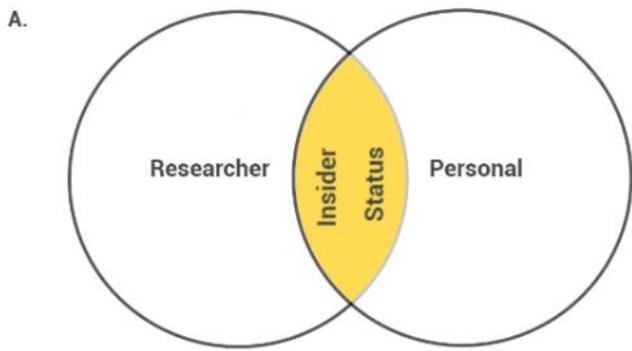


C. EXPOSED RESEARCHER transition

- identity shift
- not filter
- POWER

↳ active choice / AGENCY
to lay oneself bare
to achieve full affective
understanding / Bridge
gaps

- INSIDER vs outsider
- "membership" vs "observe"



And lastly, 3. The sensation of feeling exposed; feelings of vulnerability, exhibition, revelation, and lack of protection that leads to a shift in oneself in relation to the existing and future spatial interactions.

The exposed researcher transition is a transition between positions of identity and power, as the power does not derive from transitioning between the researcher role and the personal role. Whilst the latter is articulately expressed in the notes as the “personal-me” or the “me-me” position, as opposed to the position of “researcher-me”, however still manages to relay an important element of the process as to why auto-ethnography is a queer method: The

ethnographer is never – at any given time spent in the field – fully the researcher or fully embodying their personal identity. This hybrid identity is already bursting with experiences of exposure, it is the next step of this transition - which truly engages with the queerness of this power exchange. To purposefully shift between the two requires an in-depth understanding of your embodied roles; the power dynamic at play; your reflective position; the intimacy of your vulnerability as the exposé; and the ethical considerations you have to engage with to continuously manage the exposure of yourself towards others (transient

actors or participants alike) within the space. The awareness of this process creates an intriguing reflexive safeguarding process – a queer interactive power exchange – which ultimately enables a full relational immersion within the space and with its inhabitants.

This method is seen in action through the following auto-ethnographic section, in **Performing Grief & The Researcher Position**, as seen below. Considering the auto-ethnography took place in the artistic queer space vFd in Dalston, Hackney, it meant that this section was initially included within Chapter 6 as a subchapter. However, upon deliberation during the viva voce it was decided to separate the ethnography from Chapter 6 and include it within Chapter 3. This decision strengthens both Chapter 6's analytical theorisation, as well as highlights the reflexive strength of the ethnographic account. Moreso, I would hereby like to invite the reader to return to this section once they have engaged with Chapter 6 and reread **Performing Grief & The Researcher Position** with the information they henceforth possess of the space. Hopefully, this re-engagement with the performance allows for another perspective on an otherwise "theory-light" yet methodologically engaging ethnography, making it possible to readdress the material's meaning and impact.

3.8.5. Performative Auto-Ethnography: Performing Grief & The Researcher Position

(...) performance autoethnography must always start (...) with a person, a body, a place, and a historical moment. I offer my performing body and my experiences as the raw material for cultural critique. My body carries the traces of my historical moment. I am the universal other. I am the

performative I struggling to disrupt the status quo, resisting hegemonic systems of control and injustice (Denzin 2018 p.xiv; Spry 2016)

During this fieldwork period, I did not only learn through the performances of others, as I was forced to reconcile with my own situatedness, reflexivity, and engagement. The social, political, and emotional elements of my fieldwork did not only generate empathic assimilation, it presented itself with an experience that forced me out of my role – or better yet my performance – of researcher. By exploring the boundaries of reflexive auto-ethnography I aimed to seek out my true intentions with the research, and to grasp what I was truly *required* to learn about myself. It enabled me to creatively shape my own narrative ownership, engage with the relationality by using the artistic platform and allowed me to re-evaluate my own process of space-and-place-making. This subchapter consists of excerpts, writing, and transcripts pre-performance at Spoken Word London, as well as excerpts, writing, and notes post-performance. The process of negotiating my researcher position; my position as a (then) bisexual woman in a queer space; and the push-pull between positionality, power, and exposure of a space which forced me to learn to be my most authentic self.

Fieldnote Excerpt July 2019

‘I am always performing. I’m performing life, but I write my own script.
What do you want to do in this space? You can only know if you eat the
fish.’

What a call-out. The woman in front of me, small in frame but big in stature, her dark skin a deep purple in the pink lights, is staring me down and telling me that if I have not performed here in this space, then how would I understand how it feels to be part of it. She told me about her experiences with ethnographies in university, and that to fully understand the tribe, you have to hunt, and cook, and eat with them. She just looks me dead in the eye and tells me I haven't eaten the fish of this tribe, and she has a point. She has such a point in fact, that I have no ammunition to deflect it.

'I don't.'

'Then perform.'

Yes. Yes, I should.

'I will.'

When confronted from an academic perspective, I felt almost *caught*. My intentions and reservations put me on a spot with this single person perhaps even more than I would have felt confronted with this element by the entire space's patronage. Something about her blatant words had hit me right in a sore spot I had been ruminating on for quite some time. I had several occasions where I sat in the train between Canterbury and London, walking through Hackney, or even prior – in ethnographic elements minimally mentioned in my thesis, with intent to publish in other settings and ways – that I had anxious thoughts of near regret. Below are two excerpts, one of a transcript where I think out loud about my

reservations, and the next, in which I have taken the time to think about my reservations in a more critically reflexive and academic way. Applying Schechner's (2013) perspective of performance studies, I am required to view this type of scholarship as perpetually changing as a practice and theory that has no concrete foundations or goals due to its innately fluid nature. Denzin (2018) highlights in his work *Performative Autoethnography* how spatiality scholarship is critically reimagined through the current affect-focused paradigm; making and opening spaces to work on (and through) emotions, hierarchies, embodiment, and necropolitics.

Transcript audio notes during the train ride home from Hackney July 2019

I don't think... Well, I *know* I don't want with the space what other [queers] might want out of a night like this, but I mean it in more than just the ethnography thing. But okay, I'm not here for a night out, not really, or to enjoy art with friends, or drink a five-pound beer – or maybe even look for someone to hook up with. But... Okay. To what degree am I... part... of this space only to *see* and not to *feel*? Like, I see them, the "real" patrons doing those things. Sure, I feel the poetry resonating with the audience and myself, it's wonderful but then why does this still feel so... I hollow? Like, I am trying to be a researcher, but being nothing other than like... a certified voyeur? I – I never had this [a queer space]. Or like...

looked [for a queer space], so I don't... How much of this feeling is because of my position as a researcher and how much of it is because I am just... incapable? Is that the word? Incapable of placing myself in the space and actually being part of it because I don't really know how to belong in a queer space (...) the people that I talk to, the conversations, they're very interesting. The spoken word is absolutely fucking delightful, but I – I *know* I will have to cross that bridge of participation, right? I have to get in that spotlight and perform because... I dunno, I'm afraid that otherwise all of this will just be for nothing, like, that I'll just not truly get this [sic].

My reservations relate not only to my participation within my observed space, they also lean into an element which I can now only describe as inhibition. There is a lot to unpack in the dynamic between 'I never had' and 'I never looked for' a space like this. In hindsight, I see the relation to the distrust I had with my own queerness; *if I am already unwelcome, then how will I be welcomed when I am even more an intangible, unmanageable, and untouchable body*. Because the truth of the matter is, I had looked for spaces like this, and I had experienced situations in line with those of my participants. The biphobia, the misogyny, the (mis)gendering. Thus, my disregard of looking for spaces is inherently false, but perhaps what I meant was that I had not looked beyond the rejection; I had not persevered but I had accepted. The emotional labour of continuously having to negotiate one's allowance to participate in a space, being allowed to be, weighs heavy on the sense of self. The dynamic of belonging explored through space and seeing the belonging with

oneself explored in a space are not mutually exclusive, but it can be quite confrontational¹³. In order to explore the belonging this space had to offer, I had to commit to the first steps of exposure. All the while, this process had to simultaneously occur with my methodological choices:

Excerpt auto-ethnography 12th August 2019

There is a hill I am willing to die on. Well - there are several, but one in particular stands out in relation to my methods. Although, before I proceed explaining the ontological perspective which forms this landscape worth forgoing any burial rights, I will provide the information that it is at its very core about *reflexivity* and *validity*. I have had discussions about this amongst colleagues over the past couple of years, and whilst I do not find a lot of blatant negative responses, I have seen my fair share of resistance amongst the more positivistically inclined. Which probably only solidates my stance: I am under the firm believe that any form of ethnography is essentially an auto-ethnography in its own right. Now that I am further in my research process, I am beginning to understand that the queering element of auto-ethnography is acknowledging this. When I am in a space with the sole purpose of engaging in it academically, I am more than a researcher. This is not an uncommon stance and the researcher position has been discussed plenty,

¹³ See also Chapter 4 & Chapter 5

relating to dynamics such as the sense of self, the bias, and the language of the insider-outsider dynamic. The part which might remove me from ethnographers with a more avid sense of separation is that I simply cannot grasp the idea of being unaffected or leaving something unaffected in the wake of your presence/in the moment of your *being*. I am not referring perse to an actor-network theorisation (although I truly believe in its merits, and I agree that the material and corporeal world significantly impact these relationships, as seen throughout this chapter), but I equally aim to defer a tad more from the material and more into the affective; perhaps even the ideological. Of course, some spaces strain more than others (tearing at the boundaries of your comfort), and *sinking* is not something I think is fully possible when there as a researcher. There is a lurking anxiety related to being somewhere when presenting researcher-me. There is something more than a tension, there is a friction. To become part of a place means mapping out my own desires of what I want with the space. As a researcher, my motives should be clear; gaining insight into the belonging created in this space. However, that does not account for my sense of friction, my anxiety: If I am here to understand, why do I feel like I do not fully understand what *I want* from this space [sic]?

Thus, to challenge my spatial position and my role as a queer/academic, I realised I had to adjust my own boundaries. As evident through Snap Shot Ethnographies London Pride and Vauxhall's Butch Please, my boundaries have been continuously pushed against throughout the research. Plagued by my own repression, I was required to re-evaluate my own sense of (un)belonging, and that had to be constructed through narrative ownership. Which meant that I had to renegotiate the material and immaterial dimensions of belonging within a space and in/with oneself. However, it was the performative element of belonging and the negotiation of the different parts of my identity – not only with myself but with an audience.

The principles derived are dramaturgical ones. I shall consider the way in which the individual presents him/herself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things he/she may or may not do while sustaining his/her performance before them (Goffman 1959, p.xi)

Performance is of course not the same as performativity, but I believe there is an innate feeding into one another, a two-way street, then most sociologists would feel comfortable addressing, simply because it is about comfort and the lack thereof through a loss of control – as seen with Goffman's quote. The fine line between performance/performativity is critically addressed as an actor/performer divide that examines the Self in relation to "the impressions" we wish to be perceived as (Schechner 2017; Denzin 2018).

Having performed plenty of times before, it was not so much the act of performance I found daunting, it was the act of being perceived as myself. I had gotten the impression rather

early on that there is no space for half-truths in a place like vFd. Spoken word is about unbridled authenticity, equal parts raw emotion as well as play, and any form of inauthentic falsehood is picked up on – felt – by the audience. More so, my experiences with performance have always been me embodying someone else. A soft-spoken but head-strong Jane Austen protagonist¹⁴, a gritty womanizing detective¹⁵, a villainous non-binary revolutionary¹⁶ – all of them *roles*. Roles which were crafted and led to a perception of “me”. A creative me, a crafting me, a playful me that is not *me*, but a role-playing me with a demanding stage presence rather than the essence of me. This kind of spoken word performance relied on conveying the most well-considered recital I could bring myself to do, or even worse, an honest one. This honesty would be complicated by having to navigate that the space would – even after revealing my truest self to an audience – still be a space in which I as a queer feminist researcher had to do an ethnography. The possibility of losing the credibility of my researcher position by revealing too much of my true self sounded terrifying. However, I knew that I had to bridge this gap in experience to finally become part of this space, rather than just be in it. As Schechner (2013) argues:

[The] relationship between studying performance and doing performance is integral. One performs fieldwork, which is subject to the ‘rehearsal process’ of improvising, testing and revising and no position is neutral. The performance scholar is actively involved in advocacy (p.4).

¹⁴ Elinor Dashwood as adapted from *Sense and Sensibility* (Austen 2009)

¹⁵ Sam Spade as adapted from *The Maltese Falcon* (Hammet 2010)

¹⁶ Citizen Chauvelin as adapted from *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (Orczy 2018)

On the 21st of August 2019, I signed up to perform. ‘Don’t worry’, Róisín had said as we walked away from our interview two days prior. ‘I’ll get you on the list.’ She seemed keen to let me experience the spotlight, and I was surprised to find my name on the list that following Wednesday. The surprise was fuelled by a simultaneous hope as well as apprehension at the thought of her potentially having forgotten – or remembered. The performance was written within these two days, and I had only finished the final tweaks on the Canterbury West platform waiting for my train to London. This was when I was still a perfectionist – a once considered inherent trait but later reconceptualised as a coping mechanism that had been replaced by more sustainable ones in therapy during the years after. This meant that the lack of time was actually in my favour; do not give a perfectionist the time to write (either a poem or a PhD), for it will never finish to satisfaction, if at all. A timely trial by fire was the only way in which I could have provided a piece in which to bear my soul without overthinking it more than I had.

The topic in mind was not light-hearted, nor could it be with all of this at stake: as Madison (2010) argues, auto-ethnographers take an ethical and moral responsibility of the impact of their performances. Denzin (2018)¹⁷ explores how critical autoethnographies are focussed on autobiographic moments of irreversible change and how – hinting towards the Sociological Imagination (Mills 1959) – personal problems are constructed through greater social, cultural, and political issues (Alexander 1999; Ellis & Bochner 2000; Denzin 2018). Envisioning a true turning point of trauma and memory turned autobiographical and

¹⁷ See also Ulmer (1989)

deconstructed in order to engage with the full potential of affective assimilation and spatial relationality, I only could imagine myself talking about death.

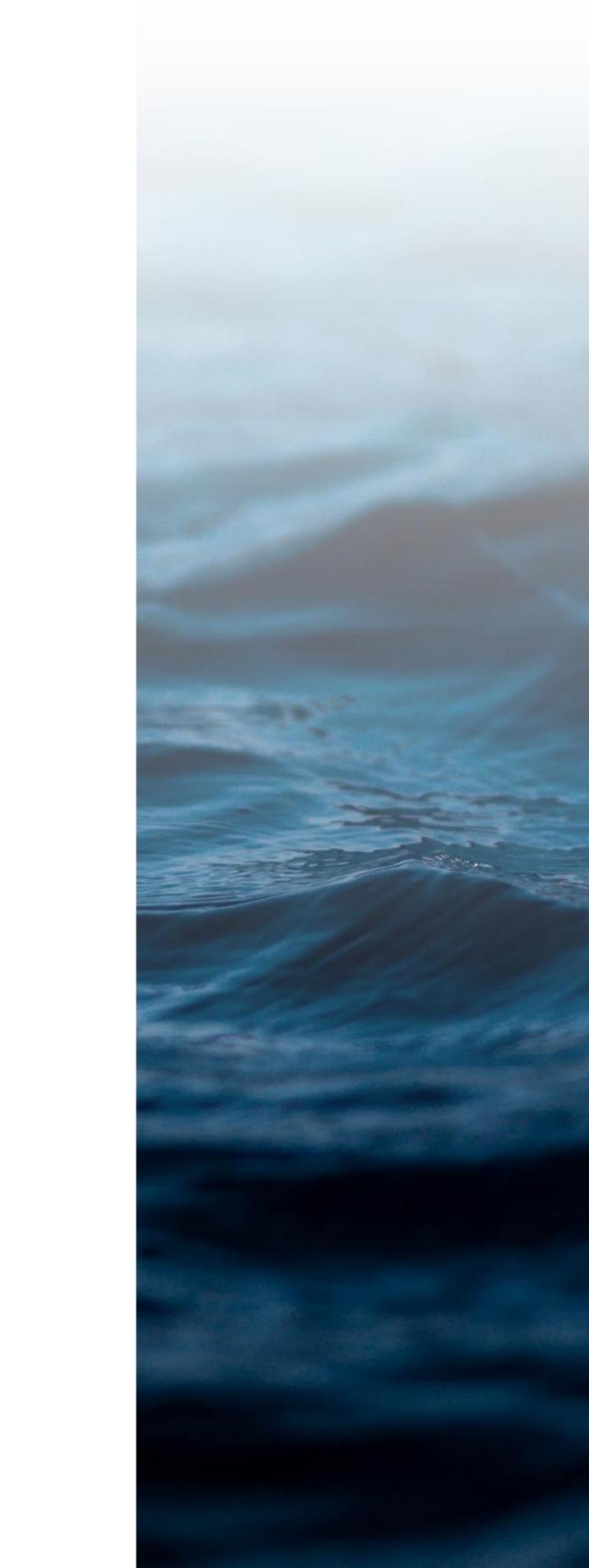
Excerpt personal notes April 2020

Seven missed calls on the 16th of February 2018. My dad has suddenly died. I call him my dad because he was – even if I only met him when I was 12. He did not raise me but taught me everything I now hold as the benchmark of decency and kindness. He was the one true adult in my life that gave me the space I needed to not be one myself. The one parent that allowed me to be a child. He may be gone now, but to use [therapist]’s heart-wrenching words, *he existed and he loved me.*

My performance, ironically titled Captain Cry Baby, was ‘about grief and its implications’, based on the passing of my stepfather and framed through my personal and cultural connection with the sea – which also serves as the place where we as a family scattered his ashes.

One of the few notes I have in from prior to the performance is ‘*Lively!*’ indicating a busy evening. I sat next to someone who saw me go over my notes and asked if I was going to get in the spotlight. When I told him I was, and that I was nervous, he laughed and told me that he was never able to pay attention to the performance before his, not because he did not want to, but because his nerves prevented him from taking in anything else. This turned out

to be a shared experience, as I cannot recall the performance before mine. I was up; Róisín announced me as a first-time performer, and for the crowd to give me some love. Big whoops, claps, and finger snaps accompanied me towards the microphone. The light was bright, but not as intense as some of the audience-eliminating stage lights I had experienced before. Illuminated in pink hues I briefly introduced myself to the crowd: who I was, why I was there, and why I felt like I had to perform to fully understand the space to its fullest potential. My hand-me-down iPhone in hand I glanced at my Notes; the piece I had written. I addressed the crowd 'This is a very personal piece about grief and its implications.' And so I began, taking the room from a vibrant pink to a **sallow deep blue.**



Captain Cry Baby

It has been 551 days since I became a cry baby.
An approximate year and a half have passed and
not a day's gone by where I haven't shed tears,
wept, cried, or bawled

I create tsunamis where once were droughts
and if my tears were made of sweeter water then
at least I could make garden upon garden bloom
but alas

I am glad that I am light enough, even if you
wouldn't say so, to be able to just let go and float
otherwise, I would've drowned already as
swimming for 551 fucking days is goddamn
exhausting.

I should really call myself lucky that I am a child
of the dunes so the sea is where I feel most
welcome

or this would've been one daunting experience
of waves and salt

and I'm not saying it's his fault

He was merely the catalyst of my inability to
captain my own boat

and when it is making water, I cannot shout
women and children first because that is who he
left behind

No man left behind? Well think again - because
when Death boarded my ship and personally
punched a hole through my hull 551 days ago
he made it ruthlessly apparent he takes no
prisoners and I should better know how to
navigate these open waters whilst adding to
them one tear at a time

The final analysis of my performance is presented in my conceptualisation of the Researcher Position (as shown above) as my post-performance notes were written up to provide inside into the intricate dynamics between the roles of researcher and performer within an artistic queer space. Rather than taking on the theoretical angle of a dramaturgical theorist, which I am not, I argue for the critical reflexivity of the performer vs researcher position from a sociological perspective. Whilst the response of the audience was tremendously positive, and it would be a disservice to not mention the immediate interactive reactions – as if evident in this sub-chapter: praise was not the primary focus of this affective engagement. Indeed, the performance served its purpose, and I was able to learn about performing in this unknown spotlight. However, it was the affective reactions during and after the performance which did indeed create a deeper connection to the space, the people, and my own sense of belonging. It was not the applause but the yelps in reaction to a certain word, the finger snaps when something was related to in relation to grief, and the conversations afterwards (and many nights after, as I was remembered on more than one occasion) which truly made a turning point in my conceptualisation of narrative ownership (see Chapter 6). I owned the story of my grief, just as I owned the experience of my positionality as a researcher, and from that moment onward, as a performer. I owned a piece of autobiographical narration that related me to others through art and sheer raw emotion, under a polish of crafted lyrical veneer. I was understood in/through the space, and I understood myself in a way that made me feel like I had carved a bit more place for myself within a space I felt more at home.

3.9. Analysis

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method; specifically, a method of systematic identification which allows to make sense of the meaning and importance of patterns which transverse various datasets (Braun & Clarke 2006, 2012, 2019). This research used thematic analysis to examine the semi-structured interviews and further investigate the themes uncovered from them during the ethnographic field work period. Utilising the flexible nature of thematic analysis, the research took a combined inductive and deductive approach when breaking down the bulk of the data. Braun & Clarke (2006, 2012, 2019) indicate the inductive approach as being a ‘bottom-up’ type of analysis, which allows the data to lead the construction of themes and refer to the deductive approach as a far a more constructed ‘top-down’ type of analysis, as the framework was theoretically informed by socio-spatial, feminist, and queer scholarship alike.

The six analysis phases as indicated by Braun & Clarke (2006) were used (and often revisited, as it is not a linear process and not without limitations – especially if not adjusted throughout). Whilst *familiarising with the data* (1) there was an immersive interaction with the raw audio- and visual files to gain familiarity with the participants and their narratives. During the *coding* (2), *thematic search* (3), *theme review* (4), and *theme definition* (5) phases, the individual narratives were closely analysed for broader relevance and subsequently more coherent patterns to create aggregate data, and consequently end with detailed analysis. Thematic maps were drawn out using visual and written aids: Interviews were printed and through colour-coded highlights, sticky notes, flipchart paper, and writing on window glass with whiteboard markers, three main themes with six overlapping

subthemes emerged. As seen in the figure below, the transcript shows coded sections which were attributed to one of the six subthemes (in bold). Lastly, the *writing up (6)* phase of thematic analysis was dedicated to the production of a compelling narrative based on the data, contested, and related towards previous research and theory. This phase can be witnessed as the finalised analytical chapters.

In particular, the thematic analysis method Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) proved to be very fruitful, as it engages with participants' emotions, identity, and belonging (Smith et al. 2009). IPA allowed for a specific and granular data analysis due to its distinctively refined dealings with transcripts. Smith et al. (2009) commit to 'double hermeneutics' through the simultaneous construction of the insider's perspective (Conrad 1987), as well as a reflexive insight into the researcher's own assumptions, biases, and conceptions through which these interpretations are constructed (Smith and Osborn 2007; Smith et al. 2009, Archer 2010). Through this process, the researcher gains a thick and reflexive interpretation of the spoken word. As Smith and Osborn (2007, p.66) mention:

(...) meaning is central, and the aim is to try to understand the content and complexity of those meanings rather than measure their frequency. This involves the investigator engaging in an interpretative relationship with the transcript. While one is attempting to capture and do justice to the meanings of the respondents to learn about their mental and social world. Those meanings are not transparently available – they must be obtained through a sustained engagement with the text and a process of interpretation.

The following example shows the reflexive nature of thematic analysis as uncovered through IPA:

Example coded transcript (participant Cassandra)	
Transcript	Codes & Sub Themes
<p>C: I don't [...] I prefer queer [as to LGBT]</p> <p>I: Yeah</p> <p>C: Because it means [...] There's a community to that - it doesn't [...] You don't have to align yourself strictly with one or another of these categories</p> <p>I: Yeah</p> <p>C: And it doesn't demand an explanation from you, it doesn't demand you to like tick off who you are on an identity form</p> <p>I: Right</p> <p>C: It's a way of thinking as well it's a way for getting away from normative structures. It is a - is a constant state of questioning</p> <p>I: So it is a political act as well</p> <p>C: It is a political act but I don't think it is just a political act [...] Okay I think [...] The fact that it is confusing it can [...]</p> <p>I: Could you explain to me if for you -</p> <p>C: Yeah</p> <p>I: You think bisexuality falls best within the either</p>	<p>Identity preference (Identity Negotiation)</p> <p>Divergence of acceptance between communities and implications of language and meaning (Community & Identity Negotiation)</p> <p>“Demand” - forced external identification (Identity Negotiation) links to other experiences of Bisexual Identity Interrogation.</p> <p>Multiplicity of language and acceptance as rebellion and exploration (Identity Negotiation & Ideology/Politics)</p>

<p>LGBT or the queer Community</p> <p>C: For me personally it's queer</p> <p>I: Okay</p> <p>C: For me I think because - because it constantly gets misrepresented misunderstood erased hyper-sexualized it constantly refuses a single one analysis or one way of thinking about it understanding it, knowing about it being it [...] Everyone I think identifies with it differently</p> <p>I: Yeah</p> <p>C: I think it's a space of movement [...] It's not a space it's not a singular so queer is fluid [...] Queer is dimensional for me, whereas LGBT is just linear</p> <p>I: I see</p> <p>C: So I feel like my sexuality for me is queer</p>	<p>Socio-political differentiation between LGBT+ and Queer spaces. Negative and rigid forms of externally pressured identification which leads to discrimination, marginalization, and erasure (Un/Belonging, Acceptance, Spatial Negotiation & Identity Negotiation)</p> <p>Queerness as an identity as well as a spatial and affective process (Identity Negotiation, Spatial Negotiation & Ideology/Politics)</p>
--	--

Several overarching themes can be addressed from the transcript sample: 1. Cassandra speaks of the label of queerness as an affective and liberating experience. 2. Cassandra says that LGBT spaces and Queer spaces are different in spatial and affective experience. Through IPA, the initial themes that surfaced through this excerpt were used to uncover more subtle and pertinent phenomenological concepts and affective responses which provided insight into the feelings of belonging of the participants. Moreover, I have

continuously used my reflexive positioning, alongside an interpretive phenomenological approach, to engage with the fieldwork; creating a continuous analytical learning process.

3.10. Ethics

The Ethics Committee of the University of Kent's School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research approved the Ethical Application for this research project in April 2018.¹⁸

Data Protection

Due to the nature of this research, this project initially complied with the General Data Collection Regulation 2016/679. As of August 2018, an update was made to the ethics to adhere to the new regulations regarding data protection, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR.eu). The research has been conducted to the highest ethical standards, reducing harm to participants as much as possible. All personal data collected from the participants have been handled and processed accordingly. Personal external hard drive(s) have been used to store participant details and data. These devices are encrypted with password protection, and are not accessible for other parties. Personal data will be stored for no longer than five years post submission. The above is applicable to both the information gathered through participation observations as well as the audio-recorded interviews. Participation observations notes have been taken in notebooks, which have been scanned and stored on the researcher's external hard drive. The notebooks were locked away in my work locker at the University of Kent prior to the 2020 COVID-19

¹⁸ See Appendix.

pandemic, and participants remained unrecognisable in the notes through a coding system (and any field notes were taken overtly to maintain transparency). When the Government issued civilians to remain indoors and resume work from home in March 2020, all notebooks, data storage devices, and paperwork were taken to my personal residence, where they shall remain indefinitely.

Potential Risk and Safeguarding

There was the potential risk that the research participants could experience emotional distress due to the research's sensitive nature; revolving around sensitive topics such as sexual identity, identity positioning and discrimination. All research was carried out in a mutually convenient suitable location. Research participants were asked to participate at times they deemed non-invasive. I was continuously mindful to not cause emotional distress, and to allow for the participants to decide on their level of involvement with the ability to withdraw. A debrief sheet was provided to all participants with details of local and national organisations they could contact (including LGBT specific services and mental health services) to ensure participants may access help with any issues that they may have found troubling during the interview.¹⁹

Confidentiality and Safeguarding

To inform the participants of the nature of this research, information sheets were provided. Likewise, participants were asked to provide pseudonyms, and full written consent was essential for the interviews to be audio-recorded for transcript analysis. These, and all other

¹⁹ See Appendix.

personal information, have been saved in an encrypted file on one of my external hard drives, without the participant's names nor contact details to maintain and uphold anonymity (Bryman 2004; Silverman 2013). The ethnographic participation-observations took place during (semi) informal meetings of LGBT+ and/or Queer community gatherings (e.g. Conventions, group meetings, Pride Marches, weekly events) over a total period of 15 months, 3 of which in the venue VFD in Dalston (Hackney, London). Consent was asked of key gatekeepers (e.g., group leaders and organisers) to ensure safeguarding. The nature of ethnography does not always allow formal consent to be gathered from those who might only feature in observation for short moments. The sentient actors observed within these spaces have been anonymised in my field notes, and remained entirely anonymous throughout my data. However, to safeguard the process of consent, information was provided to the event organisers prior to the observations. Contact details of both the researcher and the University of Kent have been made accessible via the information sheet in case any problems arose. Due to the nature of the research, the consent of the interview participants was continuously sought throughout the project. This was maintained through a transparent relationship with the participants, by providing general information on the nature of the research; how the project would aid social development and further research, as well as appropriate insight in the collection of empirical data (Bernard 2018, Bryman 2012). All participants shall be informed of the results once the thesis has been processed and passed the Viva Voce. A webpage has been made to share research results; this will be made accessible to all participants. The website can be accessed at <https://bisexualbelonging.wordpress.com/>.

Diversity

In the beginning stages, I took an active reflexive stance at all times, adhering to issues of cultural diversity where relevant. All research participants have been treated equally with full respect of any sexual, cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity. However, all participants were required to communicate in English if they wished to be part of the research project. Due to the inclusive nature of the project, diversity was recognised as a desired trait. This was to ensure a non-homogenous research sample so as to gain insight in the experiences of intersectionally marginalised groups.

However, at the end of the research process, I felt that the sample of the interview participants could have been more actively diversified – in particular after I had concluded the interviews and began my repeated ethnographic fieldwork (weekly to bi-weekly) in vFd (Hackney, London), a space with a very diverse demographic. I continue discussing this limitation in the concluding chapter.

3.11. Positionality

Shared membership, experiences, identities and language, between the researcher and their research population can be considered imperative or detrimental to the research (Adler & Adler 2000; Asselin 2003; Dwyer & Buckle 2009). Whilst the negative perspective relates mostly to a clouded bias (too deeply connected through full membership, see Adler & Adler 1987), the positive focusses on the ability for the researcher to gain access to spaces, as well as significantly more trust from the participants – which subsequently leads to more in-depth data – due to their shared lived experiences and community affiliation

(Dwyer & Buckle 2009). Angrosino (2005) emphasises the growing role and questioning of responsibility towards group membership and the researcher's situational awareness through their own social context (such as their sexuality, gender, ethnicity). However, as Adler (2012) argues, this issue with bias is based on more positivist epistemologies, and potential conflict due to researcher-participant roles. Furthermore, as seen in the section on autoethnography as a queer method and practice, these traditional top-down "objective" research methods can be disfavoured over a reflexive and more subjective (queer) methodology. As Rose stated:

There is no neutrality. There is only greater or less awareness of one's biases.

And if you do not appreciate the force of what you're leaving out, you are not fully in command of what you're doing (1985, p.77).

Boylorn (2017) refers to the importance of insider ethics when conducting intersectional autoethnographic experiences. Whilst this work refers to her status as a 'blackgirl' (p.12), she raises three specific concerns this research wishes to take into account: (1) the unintended contribution on the perpetuation of stereotypes, (2) maintaining a balance between the ethnographer's insider status and their (perhaps pre-existing) relations within these spaces and privacy, and (3) the portrayal and representation of community member's intersectional identities (or perhaps lack thereof). By reflexively considering the researcher position within community spaces through their own identification and biases, the relationship with stereotyping is constantly checked in with during the research process (as a queer, genderfluid, neurodivergent, educated yet financially challenged middle-class, white but ethnically ambiguous West-European immigrant, there are several stereotypes

the researcher can contribute to). Moreover, it is imperative to acknowledge the stereotypes the researcher may perpetuate, as the intersections of an identity can ‘provide predictability because of circumstances beyond [the researcher’s] control’ and whilst these stereotypes may be harmful, some ‘some of them are recognisable’ and should be part of the ethnographic process and research analysis (Boylorn 2017, p.12; 2021). The second concern raised by Boylorn refers to the nature of familiarity. Whilst the community spaces selected did not consist of pre-existing spaces I had interacted with, meant that on the one hand, there were no issues regarding privacy and anonymity, however, familiarity is generated on multiple levels. Familiarity can also pose ethical challenges as created through the power dynamics between researcher and participant (see Nelson 2020), as well as create the complexity of familiarity through auto-ethnographic research: familiar with my own feelings, and how to navigate this. Lastly, there is a complexity in relation to the (un)predictability of diverse identities within ethnographic spaces, in particular the potential “misreading” of individuals within those spaces. To ensure a researcher does not impose, overstep, or claim authority over identities they have no personal experience with, requires reflexivity and care.

When considering the insider-status and ethical practices, the research takes an epistemological stance that prioritises experience over “objectivity”. In order to gain insight into lived experiences of intersectionally marginalised groups, it is experience that is of phenomenological interest and holds narrative power – which will subsequently lead to recognition.

Auto-ethnography as positionality

As seen in the works of Rooke (2010), Nash & Browne (2010) and Heckert (2010), there is a significant focus on the impact of qualitative research on the individual conducting it. Nelson (2020) uses Hochschild's (1912) emotion work, feminist work on power dynamics, and insider-outsider status, to engage in their personal shifts of sexual and gendered identification through introspective and reflexive work.

During the research period I had already established my bisexual identity for over 15 years. However, during the research I noted a struggle and shift in my gender identification. This led me to do a significant amount of emotion work to acknowledge the impressions my work and participants left on me, but also to learn to actively process and acknowledge many of the reflections I experienced and actively repressed since childhood (Hubbard et al. 2001; Dickson-Swift 2007; Nelson 2020). The following is a reflection I wrote during the analysis phase of my thesis, reminiscing on my childhood and my relationship with gender:

I must have been around five when I had my first specific thought of being puzzled about my own gender identification. I did not *always* feel like a girl, nor did I want to look like a girl, or play with girly things – but I also did not feel like a boy. It was both odd and uncomfortable to either conceive these thoughts, or to feel trapped in a singular gender. This only became more evident with the physiological shift of maturation, as it became clear very early on that I was cursed with both a muscular stocky body, *and* an unavoidable weight and width created by breast and hip which I never truly knew how to acknowledge (or allowed to be acknowledged). Whilst I was

rather swift with accepting my sexual identification around the age of eleven, I always pushed the waves of gender discomfort and dysphoria to the side. Though it has to be said I was not actively discouraged to think out of the gendered box, as even at an early age I knew that neither of my parents were particularly traditional with their gender expression. Both psychologists, and rather queer(ed), they had more of an open mind to these matters than their peers – the parents of the children in my class (especially for the 90's). Though in hindsight I can see the *contemporary* flaws in their narratives. My mother had always been a “tomboy”, and “one of the guys”. She would tell me she rarely had women as friends, as they were too soft; and in return I always wondered what was wrong with associating with softness, and equally, if my softness would be a detriment to our relationship. My father, well... My father would always joke about having become “more manly” once he started on the prescribed hormones necessary to elevate the chances of my conception (“that is when I grew chest hair for the first time”). I therefore always questioned if this meant I was indirectly responsible for his “masculinity”. In fact, he joked that the hormones may have been responsible for my bisexuality, all the while my mother referred to it as a genetic trait (she was bisexual, so therefore by proxy I was too). Though the skewed gendered understanding of emotions was most prevalent in my childhood households. The psychologist-parents taught me that crying was the right and strong thing to do, though I can count on one hand the number of times I had seen either of them cry until I reached adulthood. And

unfortunately for me, I *was* very soft (and still am). I do not believe I ever truly stopped crying since I left the womb, I have just experienced intermittent breaks since that event took place. My tendency to be quick to be brought to tears was probably the most “feminine” thing about me. Though once again in hindsight, it was probably the undiagnosed anxiety. Speaking of which, it was the fear of the wrath of my peers that was greater than the potentiality of exploring different forms of expression. This meant that throughout my childhood and adolescence, I would attempt (or I should say *truly* perform) gender. The discomfort always palpable, even when attempting more masculinity: Feeling like I was faking it, no matter which way I went. Up until my late twenties I never felt quite right in my own skin. I felt unresolved, skewed, uneven. Like an unanswered question that I was too afraid to attempt to solve. But it was only when I started this PhD that truly I came into contact with the conceptualisation of non-conforming genders and non-binary gender identification. Exploring this spreading ink drop of a thought that *my* gender could just be as “un-rigid” or “un-fixed” as my sexuality was. Language, pronouns, identification: A terrifying shift in thinking occurred, and with that came a wonderful shift in understanding [sic].

Whilst writing my thesis on plurisexual belonging, I learned to understand my own complex relationship with belonging. I have often noted – and used it as a joke – that I am someone who appears to exist in the liminal space of identities: from a first name which should have a

hyphen to bridge it, I have only been gifted a space between the Robin and the Rose; to being born on the cusp between Cancer and Leo; to a dual sense of home between The Netherlands and the United Kingdom; to being attracted to more than one gender, etc. My list of existing in that overlapping space of a diagram seemed endless. Whilst I accepted all of these identities (not always with ease), my gender identity brought me the most conflict. One of the reasons being, that I (at this point in time) do not consider myself to be trans despite some of the arguments that can be made for a trans identity. Sure, I have experienced gender dysphoria, but I have also experienced gender euphoria. But mostly: I do not feel comfortable calling myself trans if the experiences of other trans people are so much more significantly marginalising than my own. I do not feel comfortable comparing my unintelligibility to the experiences of individuals who have had top and/or bottom surgery, who are on T or HTR, or those who have experienced ostracization due to their identities. So how was I to claim an experience which did not fully seem to fit? An experience too fluid, too slippery, a concept way harder to grasp than anticipated. Not to mention the fear. Fear of people not understanding, not wanting to understand. But I am not in charge of other people's emotion work – only my own. Upon reflection (and quite a bit of therapy) I have learned to harness the fluidity of my identities. I can say I feel significantly more at peace knowing how I wish to present myself: "woman-adjacent" is the best way for me to explain it to people. Genderfluid between non-binary and woman, and I go by they/she pronouns. The multiplicity of identities is not something I simply write about; it is something I embody – it is something that I am. My lived experience is as valuable and imperative to this research as that of my participants, and in order to become *a knower*, you have to be open to know yourself (Breetveld 2020).

This has significantly influenced my research, and while the significant changes of identity (political, gendered, sexual, embodied, etc.) are not uncommonly described by social scientists who research sexual identities (Hochschild 1979; Browne & Nash 2010; Heckert 2010; Rooke 2010; Hayfield & Huxley 2015; Nelson 2020), it is the work of Nelson (2020) which is most informative. Nelson (2020) experienced their own gender identity shift during their Doctoral Research on plurisexuality and non-binary identities, and argues how the (inescapable) reflexive nature of sexuality and gender research forces the researcher to acknowledge their positionality through the navigation of researcher/participant power dynamics, emotion work, research context and research methods (see also Oakley 1981; Ahmed 2004; Dickson-Swift et al. 2007; Archer 2010; Nash 2010). They end their article in a state of “continuity”, as they address how they are still working through some of their emotion work, the work they conducted on sensitive topics, reconciling with their position as a knowledgeable out/insider (see also Formby 2017), all alongside the institutional support (Nelson 2020).

I cannot help but agree with Nelson (2020) and as will become evident throughout my auto-ethnographic entries, I wish to add how my “unknowingness” has also influenced my research. As Formby (2017) notes, the researcher can have a very different understanding of community than the community they research, and with my knowledge mainly being of theoretical nature as opposed to socio-spatial, I was also given the opportunity to learn of the experiences of my participants whilst relationally generating my own affective understanding of belonging alongside them.

3.12. Conclusion

The research methods for this project are eclectic, innovative, reflexive, and most of all, queer(ly scavenged)²⁰ and artistically built. The use of semi-structured interviews; various forms of ethnographic fieldwork; the use of visual, sensory, and artistic methods of data collection and presentation; interpretive phenomenological thematic analysis; and the development of new forms of research approaches, provide insight into the messy and nuanced complexities of lived experiences, queer lives, and plurisexual belonging.

I argue that the elective and innovative nature of these research methods *adds* to queer, bisexual, and plurisexual scholarships, alongside spatiality studies and sociological research – in a multitude of ways. As neither method nor narrative is straightforward in a piece of research that offers intuitive and sensuous counter-perspectives into the lives of individuals discursively situated in liminality.

²⁰ Halbertstam 1998; Murphy & Lugg 2016.

SNAP SHOT ETHNOGRAPHY I

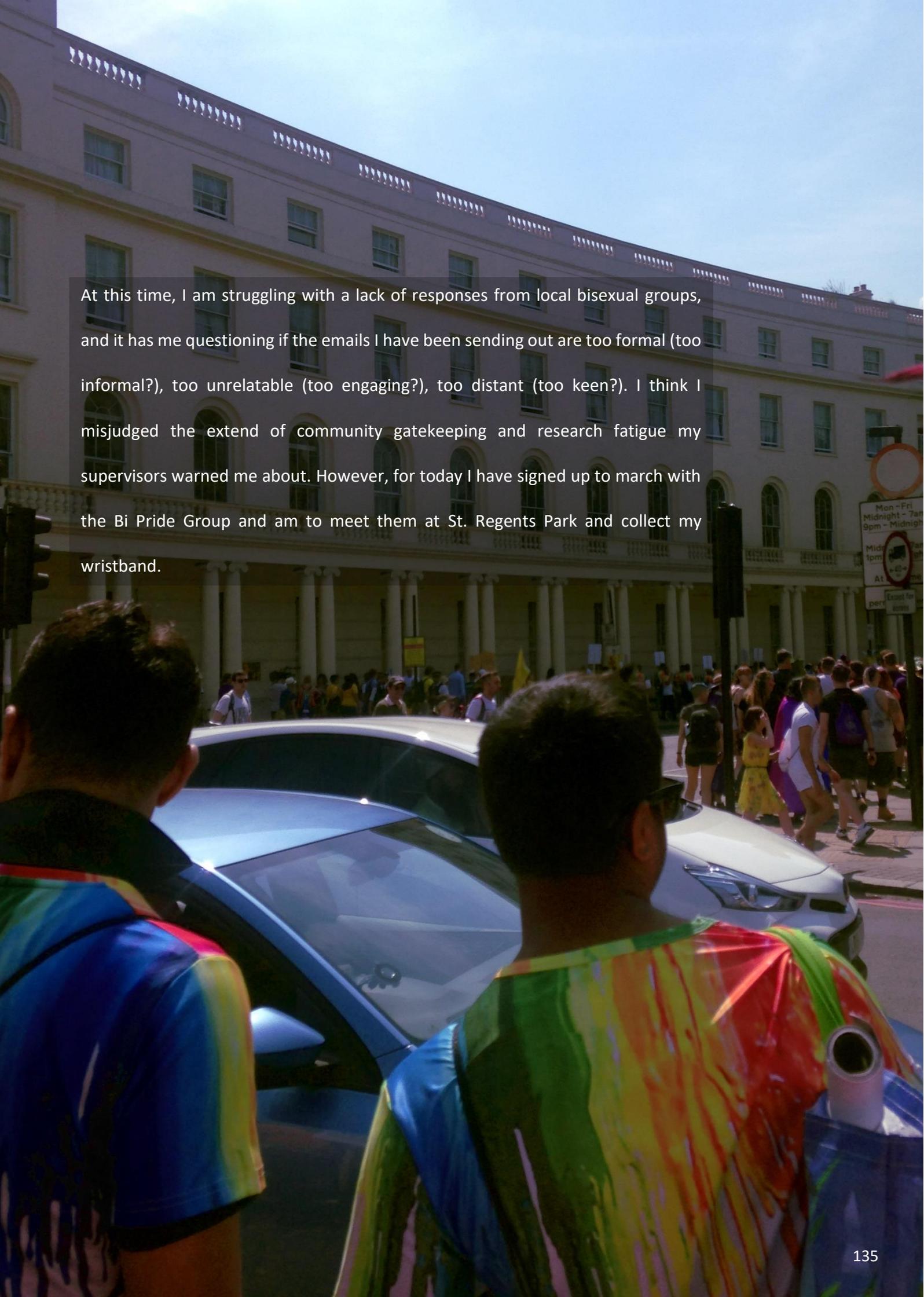
London Pride 2018



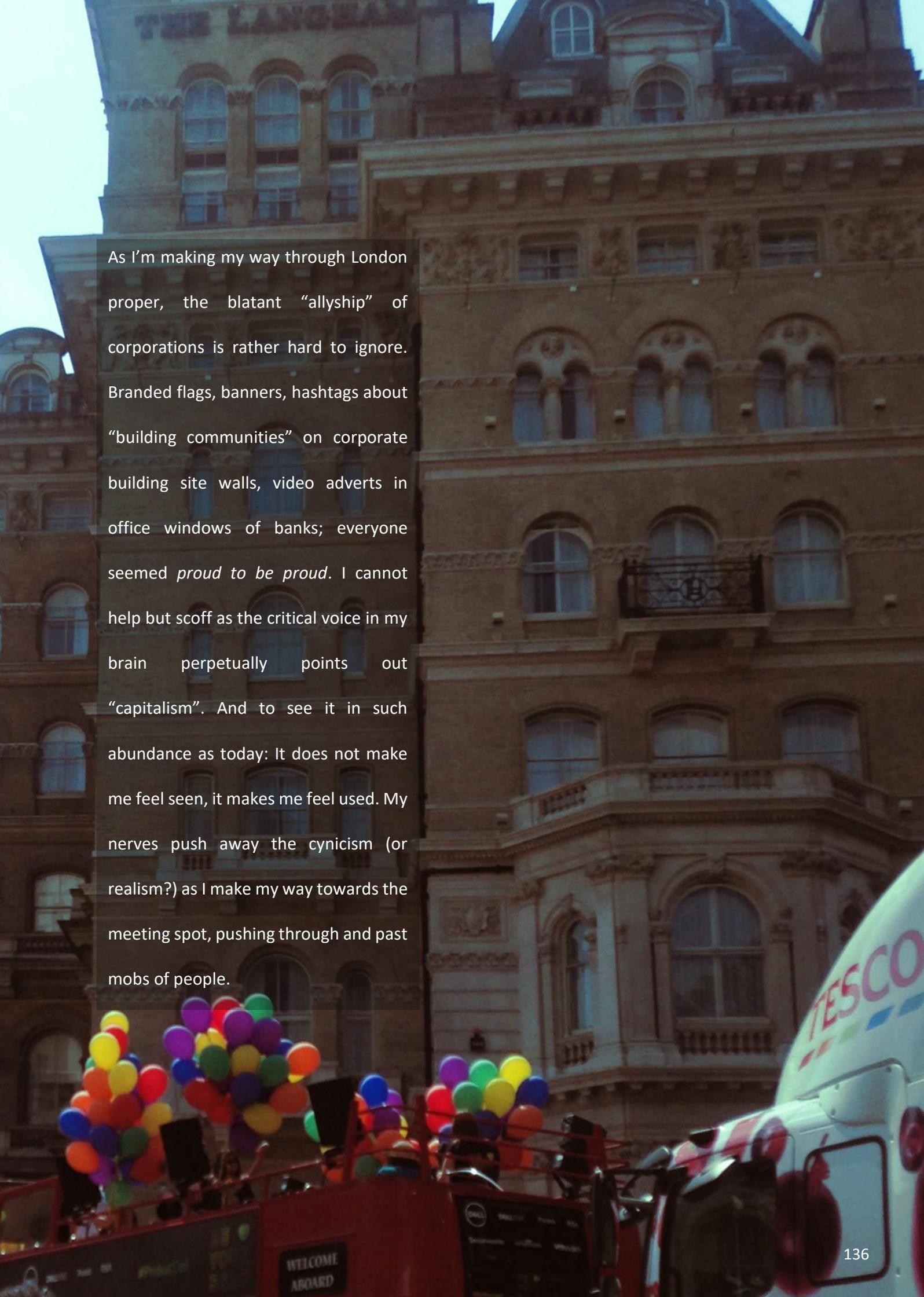
London, 7th of July 2018

Despite the sun not having hit its highest point in the sky, I am already praying that the Factor 30 sunscreen I lathered on would be enough to keep me from imminent punishment. This was my first London Pride, and I am attending it as a researcher. Currently, I am trying to understand how to simultaneously collect data and experience this spectacle the way it was intended. While not my first ethnographic experience, I have been slowly gathering the nerve to talk to heaps of strangers. I am most certainly not a shy individual—far from it—but I have enough self-reflexivity to know I make my best impressions in person rather than in writing.





At this time, I am struggling with a lack of responses from local bisexual groups, and it has me questioning if the emails I have been sending out are too formal (too informal?), too unrelatable (too engaging?), too distant (too keen?). I think I misjudged the extent of community gatekeeping and research fatigue my supervisors warned me about. However, for today I have signed up to march with the Bi Pride Group and am to meet them at St. Regents Park and collect my wristband.



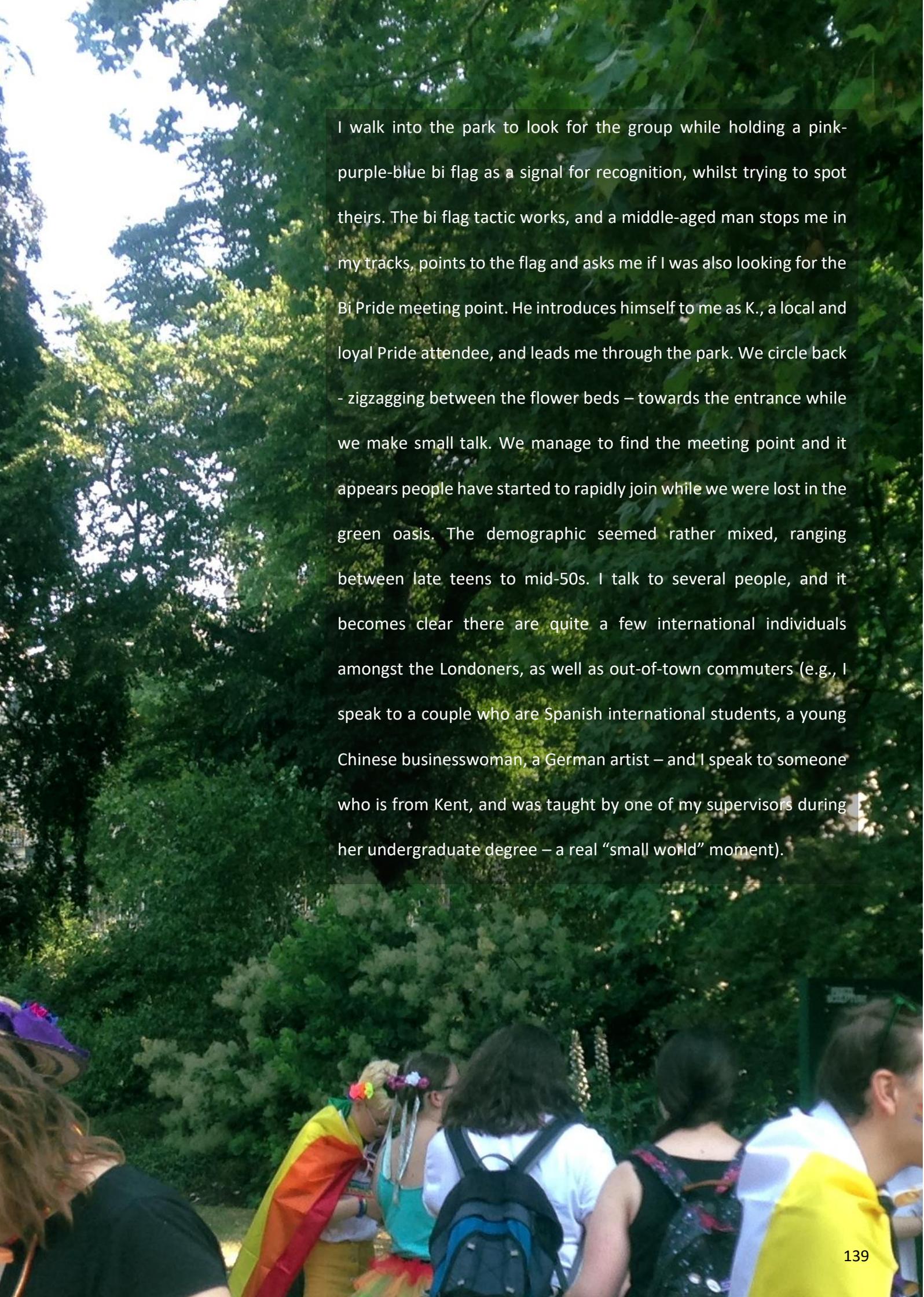
As I'm making my way through London proper, the blatant "allyship" of corporations is rather hard to ignore. Branded flags, banners, hashtags about "building communities" on corporate building site walls, video adverts in office windows of banks; everyone seemed *proud to be proud*. I cannot help but scoff as the critical voice in my brain perpetually points out "capitalism". And to see it in such abundance as today: It does not make me feel seen, it makes me feel used. My nerves push away the cynicism (or realism?) as I make my way towards the meeting spot, pushing through and past mobs of people.



I try my hardest not to stare



at a group of leather daddies with open vests and harnesses to show their hairy chests and pierced nipples. Nor do I keep my gaze too long on the high heels gracefully worn by a drag queen who is scream-laughing at their friend. They are wearing a Union Jack glitter slip on dress and a wig that reminds me of 90s girl band attire. I think to myself, with a blatant hint of annoyance: 'Don't stare, they're just having a good time – do not embarrass yourself just because your idea of a good time is being home alone with a sketch book.' I am hyper aware that I do not have a lot of experience with queer forms of expression, and I cannot tell you if I am impressed or apprehensive by the displays of gender, sexuality, and play. I feel a small tug in my chest, the emotional equivalent of something that yanks on the bottom block of a Jenga tower. I ignore it and pick up my pace.



I walk into the park to look for the group while holding a pink-purple-blue bi flag as a signal for recognition, whilst trying to spot theirs. The bi flag tactic works, and a middle-aged man stops me in my tracks, points to the flag and asks me if I was also looking for the Bi Pride meeting point. He introduces himself to me as K., a local and loyal Pride attendee, and leads me through the park. We circle back - zigzagging between the flower beds – towards the entrance while we make small talk. We manage to find the meeting point and it appears people have started to rapidly join while we were lost in the green oasis. The demographic seemed rather mixed, ranging between late teens to mid-50s. I talk to several people, and it becomes clear there are quite a few international individuals amongst the Londoners, as well as out-of-town commuters (e.g., I speak to a couple who are Spanish international students, a young Chinese businesswoman, a German artist – and I speak to someone who is from Kent, and was taught by one of my supervisors during her undergraduate degree – a real “small world” moment).



I hear 'Have a sit! [sic]' and turn to see someone crouching down onto the grass, hunched over before giving in and sitting down, their head tilted, while several other people spray-dye the person's head in ostentatiously proud colours.

(It is a proper team effort)



I am taken aback when the Chinese woman steps towards me and asks if I would like some glitter on my face. Within a moment of hesitation, someone behind me (who is wearing the pansexual flag as a cape) happily shouts in my ear 'Glitter is mandatory!'. I laugh and give permission for her to provide my bare and dull cheekbones a bright sparkle. Some time is passing and as I am making conversation with the attendees, I am enjoying the shift in energy: from being surrounded by strangers I felt very uncertain meeting to becoming more acquainted with the people, the celebration, and the dire political need for this event to occur. I write down in my phone: 'There is a kindness and familiarity with our similarities; we all like more than one gender, we are all here to march today, and we all just want to be accepted.'

I suddenly realise that one of the attendants has an extravagant
aesthetical contraption added to her soft lilac dress: She has
shimmering purple fabric sprouting from her back, which is connected
to metal rods in each of her hands, which allow her to spread the fabric
with flair to create a set of flamboyant purple wings. Alongside her
feathered headdress, she looks like a bird of paradise. I gasp and
whisper to no one in particular: 'She looks amazing'. The man she
appears to be accompanied by turns around and makes eye contact –
he is also wearing a Pride flag as a cape, a bisexuality one at that. He
grins widely and tells me proudly that 'she has been working on this for
a month.' I enthusiastically concur that 'it was totally worth it'.



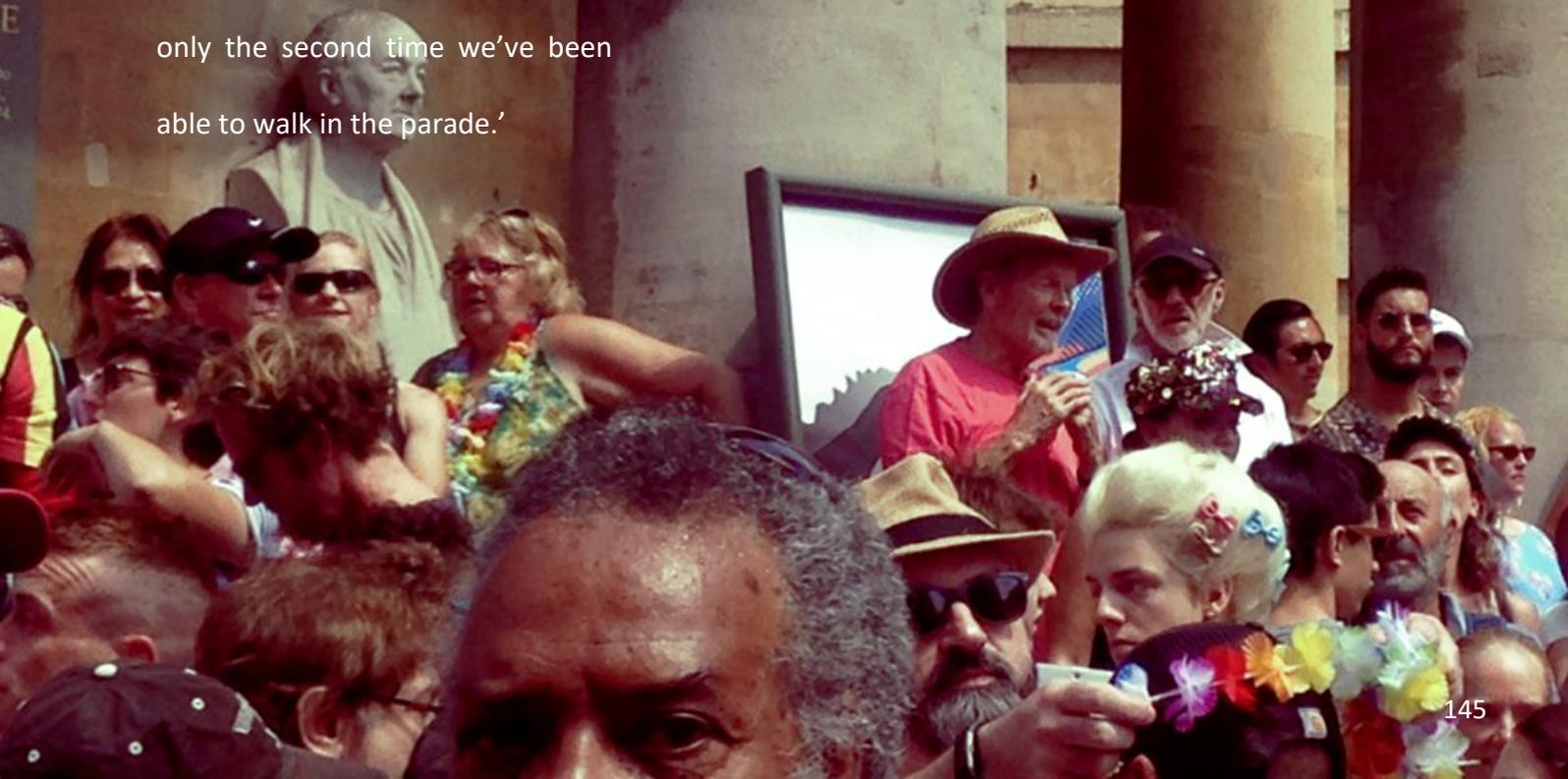
I introduce myself to the both, and we strike up a conversation. They seem very interested in my research, and when I explain that I am looking for participants, the woman actually holds up her hand in a stopping motion and interrupts me: 'Just to be clear, I'm heterosexual. I am here to support my husband.' She literally takes a few steps back, giving him space to stand by himself as the sole person requiring my attention. I don't hesitate to use this physical cue to engage fully in conversation with him; I turn my body towards his, and recentre the absolute focus onto him. We continue our conversation, just the two of us, as his wife continues to work on perfecting her outfit in our background. He tells me about his long-awaited feelings of recognition due





to his engagement with bisexuality groups: 'I finally feel like I meet people who understand my story, because they have experienced it too!' He emphasises the latter with gentle hand motions he holds in close proximity to his chest.

He continues by explaining his experience with Bi Pride in particular: 'You know, when I joined the group last year, I said to the organiser *You must've been planning this for months!* And [the organiser] said, *we didn't exist a month ago.*' He looks at me with wide eyes, 'it turned out that The Pride Council had forgotten about bisexual organisations.' I inhale a quick breath between my teeth, verbalising my discontent with a sharp hiss. He nods in agreement: 'So when they were confronted, like *What about us?* [The Pride Council] basically went *Oh shit... Alright, you can have 100 wristbands.* So, this is only the second time we've been able to walk in the parade.'

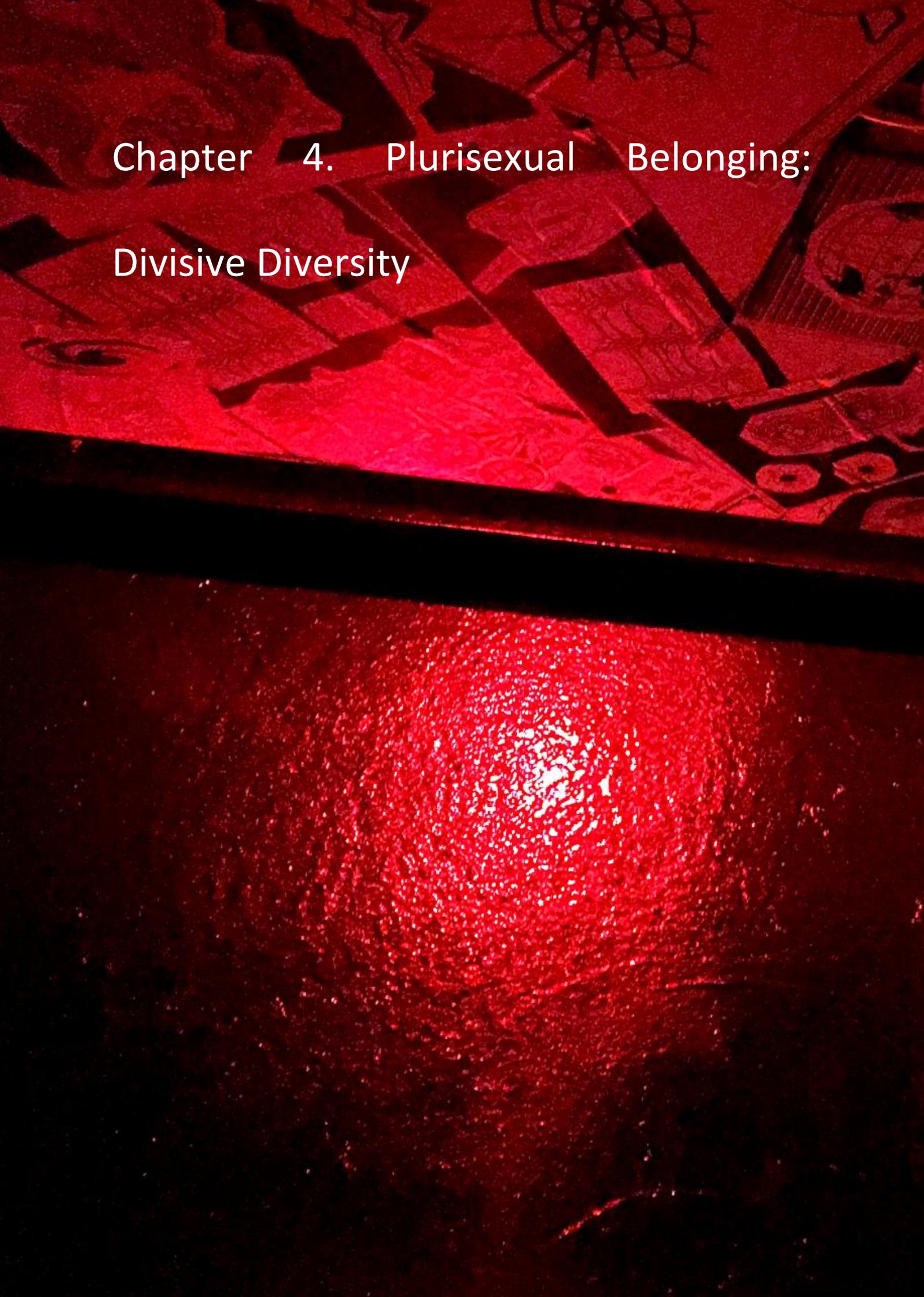




Though intrigued by the hearsay politics, I cannot help but be more interested in his personal experiences, and I ask him what he thought of his first Pride march. His eyes begin to glisten, as he visibly becomes emotional: 'I will never forget the moment that we walked around the corner, and there is this young girl, a teenager, holding a bi flag. She sees us, and her eyes become [he mimics a face in awe] and she just bursts into tears...' I can see him fight back tears of his own as he tries to find the words. 'Just to be able to see yourself be represented...'



He puts his hands near his eyes, and gently flaps some air towards his face in an attempt to regain composure, 'I am trying not to cry. My glitter.' His wife suddenly pipes up from behind me, making me immediately aware that she never left the periphery of her husband, 'We promised we wouldn't do that.' She looks at his make-up and nods in firm confirmation 'And it still looks fine.'

A red-tinted photograph of a ceiling with intricate geometric patterns and a circular light fixture. The ceiling features a complex, interlocking geometric design, possibly a traditional Islamic or Middle Eastern pattern. A circular light fixture is visible on the right side. The overall atmosphere is warm and textured.

Chapter 4. Plurisexual Belonging:

Divisive Diversity



4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I argue that the key to bisexual/plurisexual wellbeing is gaining insight into their complex feelings of (un) belonging as a result of marginalising socio-spatial practices. These feelings are derived from the status of plurisexual as a liminal identity that is forced to operate in binary social structures. In order to understand how plurisexual individuals experience belonging, Chapter 4 explores how plurisexuals conceptualise acceptance and spatial engagement, alongside their experiences of community.

The data provides insight into the different dimension of belonging, where on the one hand we have the importance of a shared narrative of sexual identity as shaped by and through binary notions of validity. Whilst on the other, there are elements of sharing narratives through other social and political facets of an identity, providing an innately intersectional focus of plurisexual belonging. Belonging for plurisexual individuals is one that transgresses commonality of being a part of the LGBT+ community: commonality through membership is simply insufficient to create a true sense of being, and doing, community. I argue that plurisexual belonging goes hand in hand with issues regarding the social and spatial exclusion of different genders, ethnicities, social classes, and disabilities, within the LGBT community – all of which further disempower the sense of community affiliation and engagement for plurisexuals.

The chapter looks at bisexuality and queer literature, work on belonging, and intersectional queer theory to create insight into the place of plurisexuals within communities, opening up the path to investigate the place of plurisexuals within community spaces.

4.2. Theorising Plurisexual Belonging: Being or Doing Community

Being a minority within a minority and making sure that we can... Well, support each other. Not always in the political sense of supporting, just kind of being friends with each other and taking the time for each other. There is a sense shared experience which makes that community what it is (Lilly, bisexual/queer woman aged 23).

Formby (2013; 2017) makes the excellent point that LGBT spaces are not void of unconscious social filtering (such as LGBT+ intimacy) as for some individuals within these spaces, filtering is fully ingrained in their social interactions and limits authenticity through self-censorship in order to 'avoid hostility and discomfort' (2017, p.73). This is emphasised by Formby's (2017) critical note that the ideal of the LGBT community is not congruent with its reality. The ideal of equality and safety is negated by inequality, exclusion, and discrimination within the community itself:

Often feelings of community belonging or membership were thought to be conditional on the basis of conforming to particular norms and/or fitting in other ways. This suggests that the notion of LGBT community is problematic to many, because of a suggestion that it requires similarity that was often felt to not exist, or be desirable. Despite some people feeling a sense of belonging with those with whom they shared a gender or sexual identity, I would suggest that it was when their identities were not alike in other ways (...) that tensions could arise (p.57).

Formby's research looks at various forms of identity difference (including bisexual and queer identities) and how there can be 'acknowledged degrees of social inequality within and between LGBT communities, despite wider social changes' that can lead to negative lived experiences; specifically, when concerned with intersecting identities (2017 p.42).

Halberstam (2005) refers to queer subcultures as positioned in an oedipal conflict with its LGBT parent-culture that revolves around rejecting the norms and structures of homonormativity. While I partially agree that queer subcultures can practice forms of rejection, I argue that there should be recognition for the complex desires of belonging regarding plurisexual community "being" and "doing" that go beyond resistance against the hegemonic mononormative¹ and heterogeneous community. This complex position of (un)belonging is heavily tied to spatial negotiations, and I will discuss several uncovered themes of plurisexual sites of belonging and displacement (as created by gatekeeping, a significant dominance of gay white cis-gendered spaces, spatial precarity, and inner community marginalisation), while simultaneously leaving space for further analysis of spatial negotiation in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.2.2. Where to Fit in If You're Never Enough

The participants of the study were in near unanimous understanding of their complex relationship with belonging as plurisexual individuals. Some of these relations were

¹ As mentioned in Chapter 3, within this thesis the term mononormativity does not relate to its use in relation to monogamy and polyamory studies: I argue that the term mononormativity is, in the context of this thesis, far more appropriate to indicate a normativity that transgresses the binaries of heteronormativity and homonormativity, as the term **mononormativity** (as derived from monosexism; the prejudice related to the belief that attraction to only one gender, as opposed to multiple genders, is the correct way of romantic and sexual engagement) **indicates the socio-political maintenance of monosexuality**. Whilst this is a term with complex social and political positioning that should not be reduced to a simple umbrella term, and should be considered in line with hetero- and homonormativity. This concept will be further explored in Chapters 5 and 6.

constructed through specific identity markers, which is explored further in Chapter 5.² When asked to unpack their understanding of belonging, the participants explored the theme through external and internal factors relating to the construction of individual and collective identities (Guibernau 2013), with emphasis on collective and intersecting identities in this chapter.

Persephone (30-year-old, queer, cisgender woman) approaches belonging through this individual vs collective identity divide. I met Persephone at her work for our interview, and she offered me a seat in front of a large indoor plant in her office. Its leaves draped over my head as I sank deeper into the chair, giving me the sensation of being absorbed by her office interior, becoming one with her space.

For Persephone – who was born and raised in Camden (London) with close religious and heritage ties to the Jewish community – belonging means *being felt, having a community*, and most of all, a sense of *being seen*. To her, being seen is to be accepted for your non-performative unbridled “you” amongst people, a community, or within a space (which she calls *your own version of you, without expectations or judgment*). Persephone’s understanding of community and spatial belonging is tied to her understanding of belonging between individuals: She *is the connection in a community* of people, linking people of belonging, rather than a *[physical and spatial] community-based* experience.

² It should be noted that the themes within this chapter are indicative of the experiences across the participant sample, and the selection of narratives does not indicate bias; it aims to provide a space to engage with less but fuller narratives, rather than snippets of data.

Persephone explained that she feels like she *exists on the periphery* of physical communities and community spaces, as she does not seek them out frequently; she does not feel like she belongs there. She pursed her lips and stared at her wall for a moment before she said:

I do think it is harder to find belonging based on [queer feminist] ideologies, rather than on descriptors [identity labels] and commonality. Commonality does not make you belong, you know?

She explores how her feelings of (un)belonging are related to what Guibernau (2013) explores as ‘communities of choice’ (p.26). According to Guibernau (2013), there is a duality to the concept and affective relations of belonging, as belonging is tied to the social, political, and emotional conceptualisation of identity. Moreso, there is a factor of deliberate conformism to take into consideration: the ‘willingness to conform’ and ‘a certain degree of dependence’ indicate how belonging is a push-pull dynamic of context and choice (p.4). Belonging exists in a framework through which the anxiety of freedom and the stress of oppression play out the desires and conduct that facilitate the sense of collective belonging alongside the sense of individual belonging. This may or may not be congruent to one another, or reciprocated by the community:

(...) self-identity is constructed both through belonging and through exclusion – as a choice or as imposed by others – that, in both cases, it suggests a strong emotional attachment to a range of communities and groups. The distinctive feature of modern societies is that through the process of choosing, belonging is turned into a consequence of free will, which implies a degree of personal

commitment absent from assigned forms of membership where individuals are 'expected to' conform to a series of norms, habits and behaviours in the name of tradition.

Or, as I argue to reframe the last sentence in relation to the complexity of plurisexual belonging: (...) in the name of normativity.

The conceptualisation of communities of choice is most definitely tangible in the narrative of Persephone, who explains how commonality with a collective lacks an intense emotional relationality that encompasses the collective and the individual sense of belonging. She frames this emotional relationality as a *shared narrative that creates meaningful sharing: It is a powerful (...) sense of connection and belonging you didn't know you were missing*. She said:

It helps me understand who I am. Understand myself and my experience of the world. And you know, particularly for marginalised groups, it helps to show that that experience of the world is not unique, that there is something shared there, something meaningful.

It is crucial to engage with the potential precarity of sharing narratives, as a shared narrative is only shared when the marginalised group is able to hear what their "own" are saying. As seen in Chapters 2 and 3, epistemic injustice dampens the voices and decreases the chances of disseminating narratives – which, in turn, negatively impacts the emotional conceptualisation of a shared identity (Fricker 2007; Hall 2019). Spivak (2020) shows in *Can the Subaltern Speak* that marginalised groups are required to have ownership of their own

identity narrative, otherwise a sense of selfhood, agency, and relationality is lost. Moreover, Sedgwick (1990)'s Epistemology of the Closet explores how the realities of LGBT+ individuals are perpetually questioned. The coming-out process is met with doubt, invalidating the truth behind a shared narrative of identity and development. Hall refers to this line of questioning as testimonial injustice (in Kidd et al. 2019, p.158).

Moreover, Persephone explains how to her, a shared narrative is something which happens when queer people who share a world view come together – which she views as a primary condition for the *creation of a space*. A shared narrative (or sense of sameness) is not something she finds in organised LGBT spaces, which she deems primarily aimed at gay men, which is subsequently the reason why she does not seek them out frequently: *I felt like I was a tourist, so I didn't feel like those spaces were mine*. Persephone refers to the *performativity* of sexual and gendered presentation, expression, and identities as connected to *the way we approach who is part of [the LGBT community] what it means to be queer, and who is permitted to be part of it*.

We're stuck (...) this paradigm we live in where we're not gay enough and we're not straight enough. And when we're not... *anything* enough, where do we fit? Where do we belong?

4.2.3. The Mutual Desire to Connect

Lilly, a 23-year-old mixed-race woman (Black Caribbean/White British) who identifies as bisexual/queer, told me that she sees belonging as a *mutual feeling of wanting to be somewhere or within something*. To her, belonging is a *connection*. Lilly clearly separates the

concept of a community from belonging, as she feels that a community is *dependent on engagement* and tells me that *one does not necessarily have to feel that they belong to a community*. Similarly to Persephone, Lilly said a community is about a sense of sharing: *a shared identity, sharing sense of pride; a sense of shared discrimination; and a shared story*. Her voice strained as she noted that despite what appeared to be a shared narrative, that there are still *many differences between a very broad group of people* that make up a community (more on Lilly's perspective on community diversity in Chapter 4.3.). Mainly, Lilly relayed back to belonging being a mutual dynamic of the subject wanting to be connected, and the connection to the subject being one that is wanted.

This is echoed by another participant, Janine (a 32-year-old queer woman, White British) who explains that she believes that acceptance alone does not meet the requirements to feel belonging:

People can accept the unchangeable but they can still treat you horribly over it.

To rephrase: the LG community could accept plurisexuality in their spaces, but this does not equate to being treated with respect in the confines of that space (imagined, material, or otherwise).

Formby's (2017) research on 'Connected Communities' focussed on LGBT health and wellbeing, in particular working with Smart's (2007) conceptualisation of Interconnectedness, alongside May's (2013) theorisation of Everyday Sociology to frame the LGBT community as something which is done rather than something that is. The conceptualisation of a community

as an act of interconnectivity and creation, rather than a universal concept, is particularly experienced by plurisexual individuals - whose requirements for belonging within the LGBT+ community are experienced as a perpetual negotiation.

The limitations of commonality can be found through the constructed framework of importance, appropriateness, and value of the group's collective identity. Guibernau (2013 p.64) explains how 'group narcissism operates as a mechanism', creating a standard (through collective self-importance) to which prospective or current members are held to. When this standard is met, the community, in turn, provides 'material and non-material assets' as part of its membership – such as the material entry to community spaces and non-material emotional support (p.28). However, allowing membership to take place means that there is a 'transfer of a group's attributes onto the individual, who now becomes enhanced by its qualities' (p.65). To apply the words of Lilly and Janine, I argue that in this type of complex negotiation, the membership can be inferred if the subject (as prospective or current member) does not meet the (perceived) full criterium to transfer the full set of community attributes. Which results in issues of "wanting to be" and "being" connected.

Previous research has shown that the feelings of comfort and safety are extremely important conditions for LGBT individuals, and are pivotal for creating communities, friendships, and spaces of belonging (Browne & Bakshi 2013; Moran et al. 2007; Formby 2017). Issues regarding a dichotomous hierarchy of "straight versus gay" (finding a space to escape the pressing experience of heteronormative interactions) inherently relate to the potential danger that LGBT spaces create as being targets of homophobic violence (Myslik 1996; Kitchin & Lysaght 2002). However, as stated by Browne & Bakshi (2013), safety is far more intricate than simply referring to safety as not being threatened by acts of directed violence:

[it] is far more nebulous than this and relates to broader societal acceptances, feelings of safety, possibilities of enacting LGBT identities in taken for granted, indeed ordinary, ways. (pp.135-136)

Browne & Bakshi (2011) also note the existence of the mixed space, which could be considered both heterosexual as well as gay at the same time. However, research fails to fully unpack the threat to safety and comfort posed to plurisexual individuals in LGBT+ spaces, as research continues to maintain the dichotomy of “gay versus straight” spaces, which is unhelpful in the creation of inclusive discourse.

4.2.4. A State of Comfortability

The narrative of safety is discussed among many of the participants. They referred to the difference between belonging and acceptance, and how belonging and unbelonging is a constantly shifting experience when you identify as plurisexual.

To **Ash** (Queer, nonbinary trans man³, 25 years old) feelings of belonging were hard to come by, and they explain that they spent a significant number of years feeling like they did not fit in. We met in a roastery in Canterbury - the smell of coffee and fresh baked goods permeating the whole space. They patiently waited until I had stopped fumbling with my phone. Being a student without a significant amount of funds, I did not own the appropriate equipment at the time, and I recorded my initial interviews on a secondary (and second-hand) phone. This had not proven to be an issue – until the very moment it passed away on the spot. I sputtered my apologies for the rough start and asked them to continue. They told me that growing up,

³ Throughout the thesis I refer to trans identities as trans as an umbrella term to indicate the multiplicity of the identities that fall under the trans umbrella. In this instance I am using the language provided to me by the participant (see also Sebastian).

they did not feel like they belonged amongst their peers, or that they felt any emotional belonging within spaces. They take a sip of their coffee – my eyes glance towards a lanyard with a trans pride flag as they continue to explain that to them, the experience of belonging and unbelonging can occur simultaneously, depending on *the spheres in which you move*. Who relationally operates within these spheres, as well as where and how these spheres are constituted, are important factors; *You cannot feel like you belong in a certain place, but you have people there who create a safety net of belonging*. To Ash, belonging is about *safety*, relationality, and the allowance to simply *be* within a space:

Belonging is feeling secure, and feeling like you have a peer group (...) and you have the right to be somewhere. There is an acceptance that being in that place, or with those people, is right for you and no one's going to reject you from that.

To Ash, the *condition of safety and security* allows them to *fully be themselves*, which they refer to as *a state of comfortability*.

Whilst it is incredibly difficult to measure belonging (Allen et al. 2021) it is often paired with concepts such as comfort, security, and safety: sometimes as interchangeable, sometimes as intertwined, but if anything, as fundamental for its fostering (Fenster 2005; Probyn 2016). Yuval-Davis (2006) refers to comfort as the feeling of being 'at home'⁴, whilst Antonisch (2010) calls comfort a 'feeling of warmth'. While these feelings of comfort are associated on various levels, global and local communities (Kearns & Parkinson 2001; Guibernau 2013; Yarker 2017).

⁴ As based upon Ignatieff (2001)

Moreso, comfort is argued to be being innately class and diversity based; as social positioning is a key factor in the extensions and limitations of space, mobility, and social identity (Ahmed 2006; Savage 2010; Kern 2005; Easthope 2009; Yarker 2017). Comfort as generated through embodiment and belonging⁵ is closely related to concepts of identity (both through self-hood and group-based conceptualisation) as well as authenticity (Levitt & Horne 2008; Hutson 2010).

4.2.4. Safety Which Facilitates Authenticity

Continuing on safety and authenticity, we can look at the experiences of Tom. Tom (35, nonbinary, bisexual), who will be introduced more properly in Chapter 5, conceptualised belonging as the *lack of judgement and the lack of feeling out of place*. To them, *belonging feels a bit like safety, and the sense that you are not standing out in a negative way*. Tom explained that they viewed belonging from *the outside-inwards* because they *always viewed [themselves] through the eyes of other people*. When I asked them why, Tom explained it has to do with being *closeted for so long*. This meant they continuously question if they *fit in* or if *anyone is going to find out that [they] don't belong here*. Once they came out, they learned that *belonging is about presenting yourself and finding a group in which you are accepted*. So *[belonging is] still acceptance, but a bit more with my own participation*. This acceptance is the ability to be:

open with yourself, and for that [openness] not to be met with aggression, either violent or microaggressions or judgment. Feeling that who you are or what you represent would be welcome in a certain space.

⁵ As seen in the works of Fanon (1986), Ahmed (2000), Puwar (2004), Puar (2007).

Herek, Gillis & Cogan (2009) discuss how bisexual individuals can internalise the biphobia and bi-negative attitudes of their direct and indirect environment; from intimate and familial relations to the wider discursive attitudes (from heterosexual “communities” and LGBT+ communities alike). This internalisation is what Herek, Gillis & Cogan (2009) refer to as ‘self-stigma’ (p.34). McKinnis et al. (2022) link self-stigma amongst bisexual individuals as indicative for lessened sense of belonging. Self-stigma and internalised biphobia are, much like other minority stressors (Ramirez & Galupo 2018), related to heightened issues of mental health amongst bisexual and other plurisexual individuals – the latter is also related to the experience of micro-aggressions (Botswick 2012; Callis 2013; Nadal et al. 2016; Flanders 2017; Flanders et al. 2019).

Tom’s experiences with microaggressions have been abundant, and they explain that microaggressions mostly revolve around *painful questions*. These questions can either come from a blatant biphobic place, or from a *well-meant (...) innocent, if not ignorant place*. Moreso, it invokes a visceral and affective response, not just for them but for those who are not accepting or welcoming towards them:

In other spaces it can be a stiffening of someone’s attitude towards you or your identity (...) Again, it is this thing of acceptance, you can see something behind the eyes. (...) It makes you go ‘Oh I’m not one of you’.

They continue: *You want the safety of knowing you’ve gone somewhere that other people have gone before*. For them, the loss of safety is establishing that you have no point of reference, lacking a shared narrative.

4.3. Pervasive Unbelonging: LGBT Communities & Prejudice

A strongly recurring theme amongst the participants is unbelonging as generated through persistent experiences of prejudice when engaging with the LGBT community. While many of the participants recalled examples of biphobia, racism, genderism, ableism, sexism, or transphobia (experienced either first-hand or witnessed as directed to others), this section will explore some of these experiences in more depth.

4.3.2. Navigating Preference vs Prejudice

When I spoke to **Lilly**, a 23-year-old bisexual/queer woman we met over Skype. This was prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the normalcy of interviewing via online communication was not yet a standardised practice for me as a researcher, but I was more than willing to facilitate her needs. She had a busy schedule working as a radio journalist and preferred to speak to me when it suited her most and from her own space. She is mixed race (Black Caribbean/White English), and we talked about her (non-anonymised) name for a moment, after I recognised the spelling as inherently Germanic rather than English. This led us talking about her heritage, and my own background. Lilly was very animated, even over a call, and I was struck with the way she effortlessly managed to convey the depth of emotions with her voice alone. Her experiences relayed a story of intersectional unbelonging and issues within the LGBT community regarding sexism, biphobia, classism, and racism.

Lilly spoke adamantly that *intersectionality should be a conversation* within the LGBT community, especially in regard to the prevalent *privilege* and a specific *tolerance* towards certain genders, gender expressions, and ethnic backgrounds. She believes the community needs to open up conversations about the *communities within the community, as well as a*

whole. She exemplifies through experiences she has witnessed first or second hand; such as transphobia (e.g., *TERFs during Pride 2018*⁶), *misogyny* and the acceptance of certain forms of *masculinities and femininities*, as well as *the language* which can be a fine line between *preference and prejudice* (e.g., discrimination on dating apps such as Tinder and Grindr⁷)

Lilly recollects a time when she was explicitly discriminated against due to her own gender expression within an LGBT space: *This person came up to her* (whilst she was dressed in a very feminine way) and her masculine gay friend, and this person read them as a straight couple.

(...) this person said this place doesn't belong to you. And even if you resolve it and think, 'okay, let's get on with our day', you don't feel like you belong there when someone approaches you like that. I wasn't sure if I still wanted to be there, I didn't feel welcome anymore.

This is a form of bisexual identity interrogation that will be further explored in Chapter 5.

Having witnessed racism within the LGBT community, Lilly, as a mixed-race individual, finds this a significant issue, both from an external point of view (witnessing prejudice, racism, and a lack of intersectionality) but also from an internal perspective. Her personal morals and ethics are in conflict due to complex insider-outsider dynamics she experiences: her compromised feelings of belonging (*I am already an outsider*) places her in the *wholly*

⁶ See Snapshot Ethnography I for reference to the event. See also Southwell (2018) for PinkNews: 'Pride in London has been "hijacked" by a group of anti-transgender campaigners who forced their way to the front of the march.'

⁷ See Conner (2021) and Wade & Pear (2022)

uncomfortable position that makes her less inclined to take any action against racism – which is a profound clash of interests and ethical conduct that makes her feel very *bad admitting*:

My wanting to belong is greater than me feeling like I need to challenge a racial slur, and I feel like it goes against my own principles... The principle of standing up for people who are less privileged than I am.

Guibernau (2013) explores how the multiplicity of group memberships can create hierarchies between the collective and the individual identity. When these identities fail to interact with, rather than against one another, it causes issues of commitment:

Activation of one identity or various identities depends on prominence, commitment and hierarchy control. Individuals have multiple identities and it is usually the identity with the highest prominence or commitment that guides the individual's behaviour. While multiple identities tend to tribute to greater self-esteem, in some cases competing demands deriving from the multiple roles that an individual is seeking to fulfil may cause anxiety and distress (p.36)

Moreover, these issues of identity commitment also generate a sense of self-betrayal as well as group-betrayal, alongside a sense of unbelonging. The works of Dworkin (2002), Chun & Singh (2010), and Thompson (2012) provide insight into the position of bisexual bi-racial adolescents and adults within LGBT+ communities and how the ethnocentric and racialized homogenous representation of the majority of the queer community has led to decades of issues of intersectional nature. Thompson (2012) refers to the social pressures to pick identities if you are caught within an intersectional position. People are cornered to pick

between identifying with either queerness or race, which resonates with the bisexual position of having to deal with the responsiveness to fixed identities. Ultimately, this lack of identity validation will only accumulate and complicate the feelings of belonging (Chun & Singh 2010). Lilly expressed how these experiences have made it *difficult* for her to feel welcome in the LGBT community as a whole, and despite continuing her engagements with community events, this feeling remains unresolved:

To be made to **feel unwelcome** within this community that I was trying to enter put a huge barrier up. And even though I talk to my friends about LGBT issues a lot, and still sometimes go out to LGBT kind of club nights, or picnics, and even online engage with LGBT discourse. I still feel like I'm not... **I feel like that is not a community then I can fall back on.** I feel like I can more strongly identify to, for example, the class community or more strongly identify to the racial community, then I would do LGBT community. (...) And I don't feel like I necessarily want to belong to the class or mixed-race community, **I want to belong to an LGBT community,** because I feel there is a lot more diversity and understanding there. I feel like I don't have that, and I feel that I am still looking for it.

4.3.3. Facilitating Safety

Sebastian is a 24-year-old American trans man⁸ who identifies as queer. He, like myself, has migrated to the U.K. to study. And he, also similarly to me, has roots on these islands, and he referred to himself as a working-class Scottish American. I met him for our interview in a tiny one-bedroom house-turned-café, enjoying a coffee. We were also accompanied by one of his close friends sitting as far away as possible, listening to music while she worked on her laptop within our periphery. Sebastian had specifically asked her to remain in the café whilst he did the interview, which initially made me hesitant. However, I managed to push away any internal conflict regarding participant anonymity when I realised that I was inhabiting his space, and this was his negotiation of safety and comfort. As seen with my response to participant **Rosa** (bisexual/queer woman 26 years old), I framed this through a framework of feminist and queer positionalities: to actively engage with the socio-spatial needs of participants to secure a sense of safety, there significant potential in building a relationship. This ensures a more dynamic power-relationship in which the participant feels more in control of the spatial relationship.

It eventually became clear that Sebastian's understanding of safety as belonging resonated heavily with the other participants. Yet, due to Sebastian's gendered and sexual identities, his story shows a depth and complexity found in the intersectional experience of seeking spatial and affective safety. Sebastian explained how he navigates his feelings of safety, and thus partially the conditions to experience feelings of belonging, through a form of spatial "scouting". Because he is a trans queer man, his gender identity is an important element of consideration, especially since he frequents *bear bars* (where he can find *hairy, fat men who*

⁸ Similar to Ash, I am using Sebastian's self-identifying language, rather than the umbrella term trans.

look just like him). However, there is *one of the big issues* within these gay spaces –as well as within the gay community as a whole, which he calls *phallo-centric* – also in relation to his basic needs. He says it is *uncomfortable to navigate* these spaces, in particular the *hyper-masculine* gay bars where he often feels like he *should not be*: It becomes a matter of navigating the *disclosure* regarding his sexual identity as a queer man, as well as his gender identity as a trans man. I – perhaps naively – asked how he does not fit in a space which is masculine, as before me sat a (what I deemed to be) a very masculine looking man: Broad shoulders; a long, full beard; visible tattoos across his hairy, muscular arms. He agreed: *Yeah, I am* [very masculine]. *The issue is that I don't have a penis*. A soft 'ah, I see' on my end led him to express more on this experience: *I am not what is expected, and so as long as I don't tell anyone that, or I maybe just don't go to the bathroom or whatever. The message that is sent out is all about the penis. It doesn't matter how masculine you are, that's why everyone is there*. He says the U.K. bathrooms in gay bars are *a little bit better* than the ones in the U.S.: *At least the U.K. bathrooms have doors and stalls*. The door-less restrooms⁹ are enforced to avoid cottaging which makes them *inaccessible* for people like Sebastian, who would out himself as a trans man who has not had bottom-surgery. *To know what to expect, Sebastian will scope out the venue's bathroom by going in and just wash [his] hands to assess the situation* and if the bathroom isn't accessible, he *won't drink anything that night*.

A lot of the time people don't understand it, usually if I'm with men, they're particularly critical about it like "Why does it matter, like, just go to bathroom? Whatever, nobody cares." Well, you say that, but you don't know what it's like, and you also don't know that nobody cares.

⁹ See Katz (2015) for LogoTV, who writes that the lack of lavatory doors is an indicator that you are in a gay bar.

Heterosexism is referred to by Weiss (2004; 2011) as the main cause of prejudice against bisexual and trans¹⁰ individuals within LG communities, as constructed through power relations based on “regular vs radical” identities. Whilst I consider this a valid theorisation, I also consider Nash (2011) to have significant merit when relating the experiences of trans men¹¹ in lesbian and queer spaces by analysing them through gendered scripts (Rubin 2003):

Many participants, to ensure legibility in particular places, carefully deployed normative ‘schemes of recognition’—choices made about clothing, hairstyles, bodily comportment, speech patterns, and voice pitch. Participants considered a large number of social scripts as well as the location where such scripts would be enacted and exercised considerable agency over self-presentation.

However, when applying Nash’s (2011) spatial legibility of trans individuals to Sebastian’s experiences of ‘phallo-centrism’ through the framework of gendered scripts (Rubin 2003), I argue that there might be a complex interaction getting overlooked: there is an essentialist validation of certain behaviours, embodiments, and bodies, as based on the gay space phallocentrism. Moreso, with both gender and sexual scripting (Laumann et al. 1994); failing to be identified correctly could lead to perceived socio-spatial transgression – which in turn can impact the trans individual’s safety¹². Lastly, Sebastian’s example, having to explain how his word is not taken seriously by his party-companions could be considered wilful ignorance (Fricker 2007; Hall 2019), and more specifically testimonial injustice (Wanderer 2019).

¹⁰ Weiss’s (2004; 2011) terminology.

¹¹ Nash’s (2011) terminology.

¹² Whilst it is not possible to give this topic the attention it deserves due to the scope of the thesis, I would argue that there are opportunities for further research on the combined gender and sexuality script theory application to trans spatial interactions (see Chapter 7).

McKinnon (2019) explores how supposed trans “allies” undermine and harm trans individuals through a testimonial injustice McKinnon refers to as epistemic gaslighting:

In this epistemic form of gaslighting, the listener of testimony raises doubts about the speaker’s reliability at perceiving events accurately. Directly, or indirectly, then, gaslighting involves expressing doubts that the harm or injustice that the speaker is testifying to really happened as the speaker claims (2019 p.168).

Discounting and reframing the narratives of trans individuals is also a common occurrence with plurisexual individuals (more on that in Chapters 5 and 6), and – of course – this is a discourse which gets intensified on multiple levels if the trans individual is also plurisexual, as seen in the case of Sebastian, who has to defend the validity of his social, political, and spatial presence from the gender and sexuality intersections.¹³

4.3.4. Segregating Allies

Grace (queer cis-woman, age 33) and I met on a particularly sunny, albeit mild, summer’s day in the heart of London, and we have found a place to talk on a busy riverbank near King’s Cross. She blocks out the crowd well, naturally so. Moreso, despite the environment, my “prone to flitting” attention span remains completely focused on our conversation, due to the clear and captivating way she narrates her experiences of biphobia, finding a space of belonging, and queer allyship.

¹³ See Chapter 5.

She told me she has experienced *a lot of hostility towards bisexual women in the lesbian community*, which is one of the reasons she prefers the identification with the term queer, rather than bisexual¹⁴. She said that she considers this an *extension* of the *hostility towards men*, which is something she believes to be rooted in the *struggle of lesbians* [having to] *gate-keep their spaces*.¹⁵ Grace looked at a group of ducks swimming towards someone having lunch at the water's edge, hoping they would share their sandwich: *I know the struggles are not the same*, she turned to look at me again, *but no one's free unless everyone's free, right?*

Stone (1996) wrote 'Bisexual Women and the "Threat" to Lesbian Space: Or What if all the Lesbians Leave?', a critical article where she – as a lesbian scholar who once also disapproved of bisexual women entering lesbian spaces – explores her own (old) assumptions as well as the discourse generated by her peers. When asking the question 'what were we afraid of?' (p.107) we see a correlation to Grace's hypothesis: in order to be truly socially, politically, and spatially aligned with lesbians, everything regarding heterosexuality (and its privilege) and men (and their sexism) must be rejected. This challenges bisexuals on their desires and "remaining connection" to straight privilege. So, according to Stone, even when bisexuals show evident support by aligning themselves socio-politically with lesbians, they are disregarded due to a pervasive moral and sexual standard:

It remains common to hear lesbian feminist argue that bisexual women dilute the movement. Bisexual women, however, have been in the lesbian feminist movement all along – perhaps the movement has always been diluted. It seems to me that bisexual women do not dilute the movement; rather, there

¹⁴ See Chapter 5.

¹⁵ See Snapshot Ethnography II

are lesbian feminists who would weaken the movement by kicking them out
(p.113).

Grace continued by expanding on her experience of both sapphic as well as Achillean gatekeeping, and how both forms of exclusion serve ableism. She provided an example of her and her cousin, who is a disabled, queer, cisgender man, explaining that she supports him on a night out. Grace says that occasionally they cannot access spaces together when the spaces do not allow access for multiple genders:

I think you're breaking up queer allyship if you're not being inclusive towards everyone (...) My cousin is a vulnerable individual and it makes him feel safer in a space if I'm there. And luckily, I'm queer as well, so a lot of the time we find ourselves in spaces that serve both of our needs, and we're very happy. But then there is this little bit where actually he has to go in there on his own, and I feel like that's not right [sic].

Crip theorists argue that due to its extensive history of relating sexuality and disability through socio-medical discourse, that ablebodiedness is a mechanism which produces and maintains compulsory heterosexuality through the differentiation of what is considered normal and what is considered deviant (McRuer 2006; McRuer 2011; Kafer 2013; Kimball et al. 2018). Kimball et al. (2018) argue that the innate transgressive nature of queer and crip identities (alongside its terminology, as constructed through queer and crip theory respectively):

serve[s] as discursive spaces rather than a fixed identity based on a particular sexuality, gender, or disability status [and] that the systems of oppression supporting societal understandings of gender, sexuality, and disability exert interlocking effects that can amplify one another. (n.p. [paraphrase mine]).

Moreover, the ‘interlocking systems of structural oppression’ require an intersectional approach in order to emancipate ‘social identities’ and ‘develop purpose’ (Kimball et al. 2018, n.p.). Whilst this topic, like many other experiences of intersectionality within this thesis, deserves more attention and space than its scope allows, it begins to highlight the issue of breaking up allyship through genderism. As the innate discursive similarities between queerness and disability transgress the theoretical and, as Kimball et al. (2018) refer to it, interlock with one another to create complex social realities and lived experiences, I can begin to understand the frustration of Grace. For a queer community to become separated further through different social categories – be it disability, gender, race, or geography – is incredibly damaging to become further displaced, either spatially or relationally.

4.3.5. Queer Narratives & Displacement

To **Rosa** (26-year-old bisexual/queer woman), a helpful way of understanding privilege and oppression is by comparing queer narratives and experiences with racial conversations, using it as a lens to understand the relationship between race and identity, space, and belonging.

I met with Rosa on an extremely rainy late August day, and we agreed to meet one another at Highbury & Islington station. Regrettably without an umbrella, I was using my scarf as protection and hoping she would recognise me through the layers of cloth and the flurry of rain. Luckily, I noticed her before she did me, as I had met her in a queer artistic space, vFd in

Hackney, several weeks earlier. She performed poetry on dual identities and feelings of being misplaced. Afterwards I had approached her and we exchanged pleasantries by writing in my notebook (as a form of conversation in order not to disrupt the performance that was happening at the time). She wrote down that she was also bisexual, and that her work on belonging also played into that. Enthusiastically I had written down if she wanted to be interviewed and she agreed. She wrote down her details and we said our goodbyes in order to focus on the stage.¹⁶

Returning to the wet summer's day, she had kindly offered to share her umbrella with me as we walked to a small artisan café she knew – I was unfamiliar with the area and let her lead me. Once there, taking shelter and warming up with tea served in dainty second-hand porcelain cups, she began to question me. Whilst not unfamiliar with an open dialogue within my interviews, Rosa was the first and only person who had fully disarmed me with a direct intent of wanting to know me and my position of belonging. She told me she *never feels like she fully belongs in the space* she inhabits, because she feels that rather than belonging within a space, she is always *looking at a space*. She attributed her experiences of spatial unbelonging partially to her work as a writer, taking a role as an observer, but mainly due to the experiences regarding her nationality and her experiences of her bisexuality:

What belonging means to me? It is interesting because it is so tied up in identity and ethnicity, and living, but also identity and sexuality, and love, and then also just [belonging] within yourself.

¹⁶ More on the venue vFd in Chapter 6.

I then understood as to why she managed to disarm me – we were at an impasse of give and take, as we were both looking at one another, trying to find a reflection of the other person’s sense of self. Whilst this did not make me truly uncomfortable (Connell 2019), nor did I consider it invasive towards my personal life due to the non-abrasive communication of Rosa (Rooke 2010), I was actually willing to give more way due to my status as (then) bisexual insider¹⁷ (Browne & Nash 2010). In particular, I cannot help thinking of Crawley (2012) who, through autoethnography as a method, explores the overlap between queer theory, (black) feminist theory, interviewing (and auto-ethnography) as a hybrid methodology that generates a ‘view if the embodiment that other methods lack – a direct line from the analyst to the member’ and allowing to honour the multivocality of social positioning (p.145). This may be an in-depth semi-structured interview, but this is in its foundation a construction of a deeper understanding of social positioning and insight into power relations.

Being of Spanish/English heritage and having grown up in Kenya, Rosa tells me she does not *feel English*. More so, she says her experience of geographical belonging is not tied to space but to people:

I don't think I ever feel like I belong, and the closest I come to belonging is probably when I'm like around other people who also so don't have a specific space that they call home.

¹⁷ As mentioned in Chapter 3, I have since the halfway point of my thesis adopted the label queer due to the complex nuances of my gender identification and sexual/romantic attraction, but this does not erase decades of experiencing biphobia.

In regard to feeling like you belong with people, Rosa said she believes that being amongst people who also experience a feeling of unbelonging due to their fluidity and experience a feeling of discomfort for not fitting neatly into a category – this shared experience can, according to Rosa, create belonging in itself. Moreover, she prefers to have partners who also identify as bisexual or queer (a rule she specifically aims to maintain in regards to cisgender men) as she feels like there is a process of self-reflection, discovery, and emotional growth that comes with being a plurisexual minority that is a necessity of relatability. Regardless of the type of relationship, Rosa believes that the crucial element of intersecting forms of belonging is reflexivity:

You have to know who you are or be okay with not knowing who you are.

Rosa's requirement to own knowledge about your selfhood relates to Hall's (2017) queer epistemological production of identities as being innately open to revisiting one's own understanding of the self. Hall further relates this to McWorther's (1999, p.326) conceptualisation of 'active knowing' as a requirement for marginalised lives:

(...) queer epistemology raises questions about the nature and limits of self-knowledge. Far from offering a position from which one can glean a stable and unifying truth about oneself, queer self-knowledge is a critical position from which one must manage truths about sexuality and their implications for one's well-being (Hall 2017, p.161).

4.4. Arenas of Belonging: Community Spaces

Many of the participants have had negative experiences in LGBT “scene” spaces; spaces that are mainly part of the nighttime economy, such as bars, clubs, and pubs. While previous research shows that feelings of belonging can be possible within scene spaces due to the historical and symbolic nature of these sites such as Soho (Valentine & Skelton 2003, Homfray 2007). However, there is a prominent critique of research on the scene, as these spaces are considered unable to generate well-rounded data due to its demographics (Browne & Bakshi 2013; Formby 2017). The latter resonates with the lived experiences of my participants, as they consider these spaces to cater mainly (if not exclusively) to gay white cis men, creating inaccessibility, unbelonging, and experiences of biphobia, transphobia, and ethnic discrimination.

Many of the following topics are reported by participants – and the literature – to be related to one another, indicating how the production of these experiences feeds into the production (and reproduction) of other socio-spatial experiences, creating a complex network of cause and effect. While Chapter 5 specifically explores the navigation of socio-spatial interactions, communication (and survival) strategies, as well as negating forms of biphobia, Chapter 4 explicitly addresses how spaces are experienced as a condition for plurisexual belonging, and delves into some of the socio-political spatial issues that create the tension as explored throughout Chapters 5 and 6.

4.4.2. Polarised Belonging: LGBT vs Queer Communities & Spaces

The participants were in agreement that there was a distinct affective difference between spaces that were constructed as either queer or LGBT spaces, and that the plurisexual sense

of belonging can be polarised between these socio-spatial experiences. Differences can be found in the physical spatial experience, the social political ethics of and in the space, the demographics of those inhabiting or engaging with the space, and the community.

Much like **Lilly's** experience with misperceptions of her sexuality due to her company and gender expression in an LGBT space, **Persephone** experienced various occasions in her life in which her identity or spatial presence was rejected due to her feminine gender expression: *Apparently, I do not look queer.* She immediately starts grinning and jokes about "having to butch it up a bit" to feel more welcome within these spaces, thinking of ways in which she can achieve a more butch appearance.¹⁸ Persephone continues how this example ties into her experiences within the LGBT community/spaces as a whole. She says that LGBT seeks to categorise, whilst queer community/spaces are more open: LGBT [spaces and community] *creates more categories, boxes, alienation and segregation,* and how it is one thing to acknowledge the importance of difference, whilst reaffirming *segregation* through *sub-sections* is another.¹⁹

The work of Hayfield et al. (2014) highlights how bisexual individuals consider the LG community to lack understanding towards bisexuals. McLean (2008) discerns that bisexual individuals who tend to steer clear from interacting with the LG community do so due to their experiences with and/or fear of bi-negativity. While these studies indicate a conscious positioning towards/interaction with LG communities, there appears to be a distinctive lack in exploring the sense of belonging through the differentiation of LGBT+ communities and queer communities.

¹⁸ More on this in Chapter 5, see Queer Signposting.

¹⁹ See also Snap Shot Ethnography 3.

4.4.3. Commercial vs Non-commercial Spaces

Bobbie (bisexual woman aged 34) explains she feels *more of that sense of belonging* within queer spaces than she would within LGBT spaces, based mainly on a sense of *comfort* that comes from not *being demanded an explanation* of her sexual identity or her presence in a space. She has more *similarities* and a sense of *familiarity* when navigating *smaller queer spaces*, where she experiences a *tighter community* and *more intimacy*, as these spaces facilitate far more *specific events* and *lack the commercial* aspect that mainstream LGBT spaces and events do (such as Pride). Bobbie tells me that she has *more confidence* (either for flirting or approaching people platonically) in these spaces, as these spaces provide her with a *better sense* of who would be open to making a connection. She explains that the comfort brought out by queer spaces heavily outweighs her comfort of attending *bigger, public, mainstream spaces and events* – spaces where Bobbie feels she cannot *fully be herself*.

The sense of familiarity garnered through the interaction with smaller spaces relates to a foundational element of belonging, as described by Guibernau (2013):

Belonging involves a certain *familiarity*; it involves being and feeling ‘at home’ – that is, within an environment which the individual is recognized as ‘one of us’, he or she ‘matters’ and has an identity.

Taking this into account, I argue that it is in these commercial spaces that the production of familiarity could be significantly undermined: the lack of recognition; the validation of identity; and the belonging to a community – can be felt by plurisexuals to a significantly lesser degree. This is seen in the work of Botswick & Hequembourg (2014), who reported on the bisexual experience of micro-aggression and hostile violent behaviour during a Pride

event. This is also seen in Snapshot Ethnography II, with the reference to (previous) exclusionary behaviour towards bisexuality groups during the organisation of London Pride.

Lilly (bisexual/queer woman aged 23) tells me that spaces of belonging *do not have to be a particular place*, but spaces in which you experience *the freedom, access, opportunity, and comfort* to talk freely without fear of *consequences*. She continues that physically designed spaces with this purpose do not by default make for *friendly LGBT space*. Moreover, she thinks that unofficial spaces, such as *someone's home* can offer a *sense of freedom and freedom of prejudice*, and these spaces can house *welcoming and accepting found communities*

Rothenberg (in Bell & Valentine 1995; see also Valentine 1993) has indicated how lesbians have indicated a preference to engage with their community within private spaces due to the appeal of comfort and a lack of accessible community spaces. Whilst the basis of this research comes from a rather essentialist source, there is conceptual merit that marginalised groups within the wider LGBT+ community (particularly monosexual and plurisexual women, non-binary, and trans people²⁰) as they do not get to experience the same degree of the spatial concentration as experienced by gay men (Castells 1983; Rothenberg 1995; Binnie & Valentine 1995; Hemmings 2002; Kitchin 2002; Binnie & Skeggs 2004; Formby 2017).

Lilly started going to *women-only nights* in East London, as she explains that the area in which she lives and grew up in is *very heteronormative* and she *never comes across LGBT pride or expression* in her local working-class West London community.

Lilly's experience of growing up in a working-class neighbourhood is a topic that has been previously explored by theorists as being a source of social complexity and community

²⁰ See also Snapshot Ethnography II: Vauxhall's Butch Please

engagement: Taylor (2008) notes how the tense relationship between lesbians and gay spaces is further amplified through class relations, be it about accessibility due to socio-economic constraints and mobility, or as a dissonance created through the lived-realities of socio-politics and marginalisation (Knopp 1995; Binnie 2000).

When attending these women's nights, she noted there *was this different kind of energy* in comparison to *gay night club space* where they make *a very big point about gay men and a smaller point about gay women*. She feels that the latter also applies beyond spaces and to the LGBT community as a whole. This topic relates intensely to the narratives of power and ex/inclusion within this chapter, as well as the negotiation of these relations in Chapter 5.

4.4.4. Hierarchies: White Gay Dominance & Reproduced Exclusionary Narratives

Bobbie (34-year-old bisexual woman) explains how one of the reasons for her feelings of unbelonging within LGBT spaces is that she *gets the impression* that they are *primarily run by (...) and attended by gay men*— with gay women coming in second within this hierarchy – and that these spaces do not *fully represent the full spectrum of people that [the LGBT space is] technically supposed to be representing*:

(...) whereas I think queer spaces have more of a spectrum of different pockets of people of different genders, sexualities, etcetera. But even some of those are... I think because of the prominence that gay men have within the LGBTQ kind of spectrum, that prominence that they have some queer spaces do still cater more towards them a little bit.

The gender hierarchy with LGBT+ and queer spaces is a significant topic of scholarship which has continuously been revisited over the past 40 years due to the pervasive perpetuation of this issue. Castells' (1983) work marked a pivotal piece in understanding the spatial engagement and socio-cultural patterns between gay men and lesbian women in Western societies – even if there are many critiques to be made:

Men have sought to dominate, and one expression of this domination has been spatial... women have rarely had these territorial aspirations: their world attaches more importance to relationships and their networks are one of solidarity and affection. In this gay men behave first and foremost as men and lesbians as women. So when gay men try to liberate themselves from cultural and sexual oppression, they need a physical space from which to strike out. Lesbians on the other hand tend to create their own rich, inner world and a political relationship with higher societal levels. Thus they are 'placeless' and much more radical in their struggle. For all these reasons, lesbians tend not to acquire a geographical basis for their political organization and are less likely to achieve local power (p.140)

Many scholars have built upon Castell's argument since; recognising the gendered imbalance while criticising the essentialist perspective and the lack of recognition of structural economic sexism through spendable income (such as Lauria & Knopp 1985; Binnie & Valentine 1995; Hemmings 2002; Kitchin 2002; Binnie & Skeggs 2004; Rooke 2007). In particular, the generalisation of lesbians (as de facto cisgender monosexual women) desiring relationality as separated from material spatial desires, is inherently problematic from a queer phenomenological point of view in regards to space-temporality. If social spaces are produced

through political and social processes, it is simply impossible to justify the separation of these concepts through queer and intersectional perceptions of power and space (Ahmed 2006; Massey 2015). Time, space, and politics matter in the conceptualisation of socio-spatial relations, and to consider the material (in)accessibility to spaces from a universally gendered perspective is to heavily undermine the nuances – and realities – of intersectional marginalisation.

Moreover, this does not take into account the gatekeeping of lesbians in lesbian spaces who do desire to maintain claim on their material spaces: an interesting example of inner-community marginalisation comes from **Victoria**, (19-year-old bisexual/queer cis-woman) who only discovered her attraction to men very recently, having dated women exclusively up until a year prior to our interview. To Victoria, belonging has to do with *comfort, safety, recognition*, as well as *solace and acceptance* – feelings she requires to experience for both her bisexual identity and her mixed-race identity, relating to the need of belonging to be of intersectional nature. It was not until we were discussing these concepts during the interview, that she came to realise that her understanding of bisexuality and bisexual belonging is heavily influenced by her *former lesbian narratives*. These views, which she referred to as rooted in exclusionary biphobic language (e.g., gold star lesbianism, bisexual women being on the fence, inherent bisexual promiscuity, and “traitorism”), were heavily perpetuated in the spaces she used to frequent as a lesbian, by lesbians. The views Victoria used to uphold resonate with the experiences of other participants who explored themes of gatekeeping and marginalisation within lesbian scenes (e.g., such as being forbidden from gaining entry because the person did not look gay enough, being ignored, or being explicitly told they did not belong as a bisexual woman in a lesbian bar).

Guibernau (2013) conceptualises the downside to processes of belonging: when the belonging by choice – ergo, you wish to partake in the group identity to which you prescribe – goes well, there is the alleviation of anxiety, the development of comfort through membership, and the confirmation of selfhood. Unlike groups of forced membership, these types of choice-based membership are (overall) easier to sever if the member wishes to remove themselves from the collective. When one distances themselves from ‘assigned membership’ they can ‘in extreme cases (...) be condemned, persecuted and even killed, and often they are portrayed as traitors (p.34).’ Whilst this is indeed an extreme perspective, the rhetoric is interesting, as it shows a narrative of plurisexual traitorism. The irony being that plurisexuals do not subscribe to being lesbians – and are thus technically never traitors to begin with. I argue that it is the perceived portrayal of betrayal which is the perpetuation of bisexual stigma which revolves around socio-cultural and sexual non-commitment, and should therefore be viewed through the lens of monosexism and bisexual erasure (Yoshino 2000).

4.4.5. Gatekeeping vs Exclusion

Josh (bisexual cis-gendered man aged 29) agrees that the *composition* of LGBT spaces is very important as *LGBT spaces are very white, very gay, and very cis-gendered male* [sic]. Josh said he is searching for a physical space in which he can *feel a sense of belonging that is actually cohesive to [his] identity*. But he *struggles* to think as to how LGBT spaces can be made more inclusive for bisexual people. He described an attitude which does not reflect his own view, but relates to this struggle regarding bisexual spatial access and negotiation:

There's a certain level of infiltration that [gatekeepers] are referring to. Like, if you include bi people, you're including heterosexual couples. So, there's a certain level of undermining what LGBT is, by including [bisexuals within LGBT spaces]. I don't agree with that at all, obviously, but that's definitely a perception that I've come across

Josh said that this exclusionary behaviour is expressed through a significant amount of *microaggression*, which he deems a *big issue as it places you on the outside* of that space. More on Josh's spatial negotiations and experiences with micro-aggressions, biphobia, and bi-negative attitudes in Chapter 5.

A topic of contention within community politics is the growing acronym and its impact on what can be felt in spatial negotiations. Josh exemplifies this by explaining how he felt that having an ever-expanding community acronym *undermines the idea of inclusivity* (Flanders 2017) because it can reduce the terminological worth as well as simultaneously heighten inner community exclusivity. However, he believes this does not negate the importance of a low threshold for gaining spatial entry:

It is important to have LGBT spaces that are just immediately inclusive, regardless of the having to signpost [who is or isn't welcome]. There is something very important about these low-level interactions.

Moreover, he said it is *really important* to have physical LGBT spaces that allow for *everyone within those spaces to be themselves to each other*, but also recognises the reason behind the dynamics of gatekeeping safety and the potential exclusivity this generates (see also Grace). Josh did critically address how this can go too far, as self-acceptance and self-preservation can potentially lead to a negative outcome:

That's not easy, because you're dealing with people who have been persecuted or marginalised for a large part of their lives, so you can understand why people really fiercely protect their identity and how the tie to their perception of their identity is so strong. Yeah, but I don't think people realize that sometimes, by being so self-accepting you are actually marginalizing other groups.

While this topic cannot be fully explored in the parameters set by the thesis, there is a theoretical underlining I argue to be part of the process of LG gatekeeping that plurisexual individuals encounter. In Sara Ahmed's (2010) work on happiness, she reshapes Judith Butler's (2004) concept of liveable and unliveable life to create a narrative on queer (or in this specific hypothetical application, lesbian and gay) unhappiness. The idea that certain lives are only bearable if they do not crumble under the weight of unhappiness that is created by the inability to meet the criteria for a "real" (ergo, a hegemonic and normative) life. This has placed the lesbian and gay subject in a discursive space of constant social, political, spatial, and emotional hardship. Ahmed (2010) points out how this positionality can sometimes be too much, from which the endurance of this unhappiness reaches a breaking point. I argue

that there is a merit in applying Ahmed's "breaking point" to the gatekeeping practices experienced by my participants: in order to ensure the safety of their happiness, the maintenance of bearability, the process that involves eliminating the threat of unhappiness is one that turns onto those who do not meet the criteria of kinship (in whatever form this kinship might take, e.g., kinship through sexuality, gender, ethnicity, etc.). This process creates enforced barriers and lesser tolerance to the transgression of the kinship criteria, ensuring that people who do not identify as lesbian or gay are innately dispositioned when attempting to enter these heavily guarded spaces.

4.5. Conclusion

The complex dynamics of plurisexuality within the wider LGBT+ community requires for belonging to be conceptualised as a two-way street: if there is no mutual desire to foster a connection, the road will only lead to feelings of resentment. While this study does not provide any insight into whether this is equally experienced by LG individuals, the far ranging bi-negative experiences of the participants indicate that acceptance – if at all present – does not indicate respect and hospitality. This shows that the de facto membership to a wider community is not experienced as stable enough to experience unconditional safety. Whilst the participants confirm that comfort is a primary desire in order to experience this safety and allow for authenticity, there is an underlying anxiety indicative of minority stress; or perhaps, a minority within the minority-stress²¹. This anxiety takes shape by being "on edge" that at any given point the plurisexual's presence could be challenged, or membership could be revoked. This leads to issues of navigating, and sometimes masking, certain parts of the

²¹ Intersectional minority stress research on LGBT+ individuals, such as that of Watson et al., (2012), McConnell et al., (2018), and Ramirez & Galupo (2018).

plurisexual's identity on various foundational levels, such as gender expression (which is experienced by cisgender and trans participants), the expression of socio-political values (such as standing up against racism, genderism, and sexism), and the desire to see basic needs met (such as being able to use a restroom, or entering spaces in order to provide support to other queer individuals). Participants have indicated that when confronted with these issues, they have to choose to either engage or disengage – in various degrees – in order to keep or lose the already fragile experiences of belonging and membership.

Moreso, this chapter equally indicates how plurisexual belonging is constructed through a desire to experience belonging on multiple levels as based on the multiplicity of their own identities. In particular, it is this contention between different intersecting identifications that both increase and undermine the feelings of belonging – seeing an increase in the positive experiences and belonging if multiple identities are “allowed” to authentically exist simultaneously, as well as the increase of unbelonging through the negative experiences of masking, camouflaging, or navigating. Not only are material and social requirements set for plurisexual belonging to occur, there is also an evident desire to experience affective understanding: the liminality of plurisexuality – particularly alongside intersecting identities constructed through gender, ethnicity, social class, and disability – leads to requiring reflection/reflexivity, insight, and emotional growth on both individual as well as communal levels.

However, it has become increasingly evident that these requirements for belonging are heavily dependent on the spatial experiences in which they take place. Commercial spaces are particularly mentioned as generating little belonging amongst the participants, leading to experiences of emotional alienation and a distinct lack of connection. This is of course not

always the case, as seen in the previous section, the Snapshot Ethnography that took place during London Pride, but even this was contested with socio-political tension (either prior to or during the march). The mainstream commercial spaces or general LG spaces are specifically referred to as being inhospitable, and, as will become evident in the upcoming chapter, are considered spaces that require strategies to navigate the very exclusive environments. The spaces that are dominated by white gay men are spaces in which plurisexuals feel most unwelcome, especially in relation to other social identities, as these spaces are experienced as gatekept, discriminatory, and hierarchal.

However, this exploration has led to particularly striking data that indicates that the participants make very avid distinction between what is considered LGBT+ spaces and communities in comparison to queer spaces and community. LGBT+ spaces are, by plurisexual standards, far more exclusive and restrictive (politically, socially, and spatially) than queer spaces – which are associated with a far more diverse, open-minded, and inclusive environments that do not require plurisexuals, specifically bisexuals, to “identify” themselves – more on that in Chapter 5.

To conclude, plurisexual individuals conceptualise belonging based on the ability for them to be themselves, unapologetically; considering the different facets of their social realities, their social positioning, and their sense of inclusion. Whilst “being versus doing” community is not perse uncharted academic territory (Formby 2017), I argue that this chapter has added to the scholarships of sexualities, sociology, and sexual geographies, by engaging specifically with plurisexual voices in order to understand their social positionings within the LGBT+ community through their construction of socio-spatial inclusivity, acceptance, and belonging.

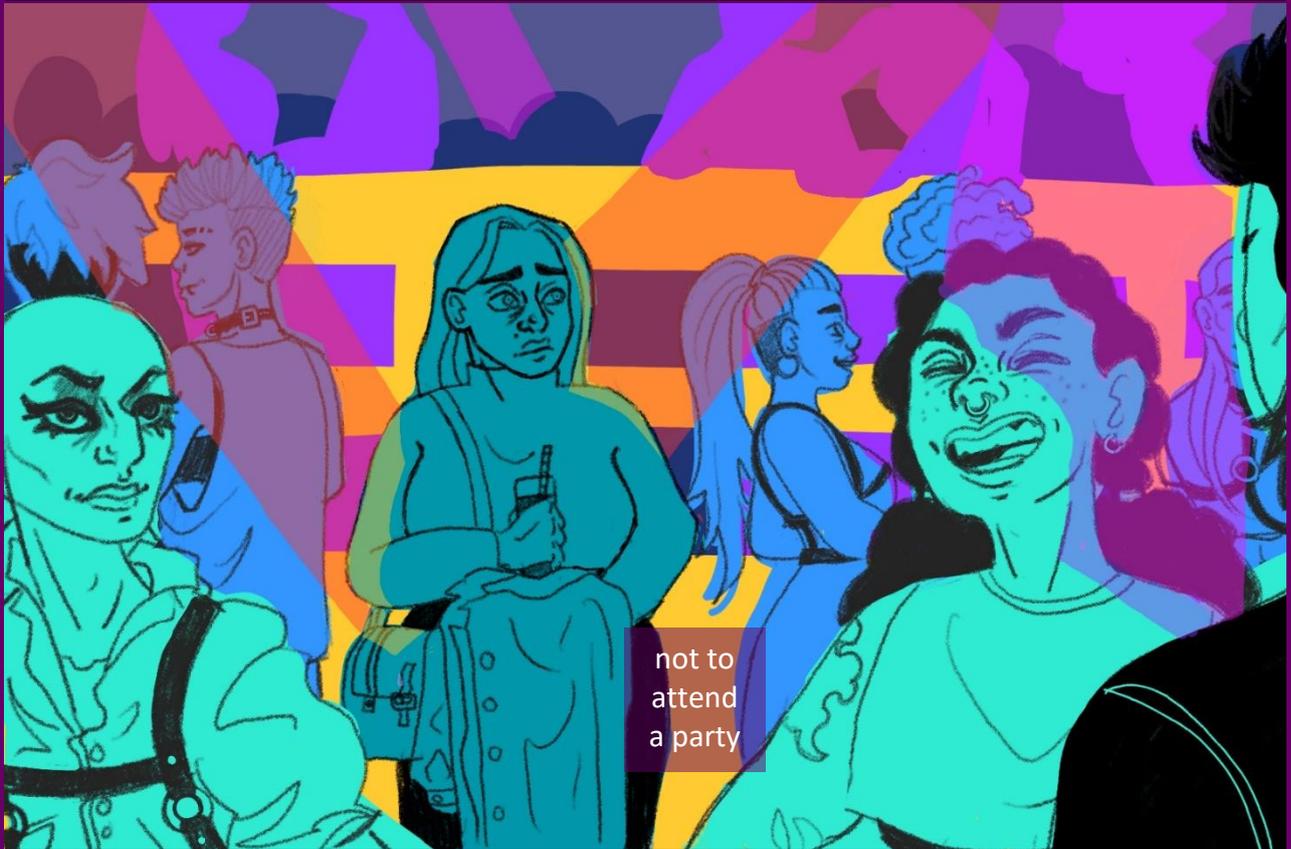
SNAPSHOT ETHNOGRAPHY II

Vauxhall's Butch Please



Vauxhall borough London, home of the venue Vauxhall Royal Tavern. 'Former Victorian music hall turned gay stalwart hosting weekly club nights and cabaret drag acts' as per the website's description. On January 31st 2019 I was doing my first venue observation, and the ethnography took place during a night specifically catered to lesbian, trans, and non-binary people (of any queer variety): Butch Please.

But... I clearly was not prepared. In fact, I was over prepared. I was not dressed for a night out. Holding my drink in one hand whilst uncomfortably holding my heavy wool coat in the other, wearing a turtleneck, a bag on my hip filled with my notebook, pens, a recorder, a power bank; the usual “research stuff”. Frankly, I looked dressed to teach a class -



That’s Amelia (23, pansexual, cisgender woman) and her friend. Amelia was my participant, and she had taken me along to show a place of belonging. This is a space dedicated to women, AFAB, trans* and NB people. They met via a MeetUp group for sapphics – the same group set up a meeting here tonight.



I took a sip of my drink. It was a coke – I wasn't consuming alcohol in a space I was unfamiliar with, in a part of London I didn't know well. And I still needed to -



get a train home. Well, not that a drink would have made a difference, just look at me.

Ofcourse -

I was very grateful Amelia took me there, but I could not help but feel outrageously out of place... Awkward, over encumbered -

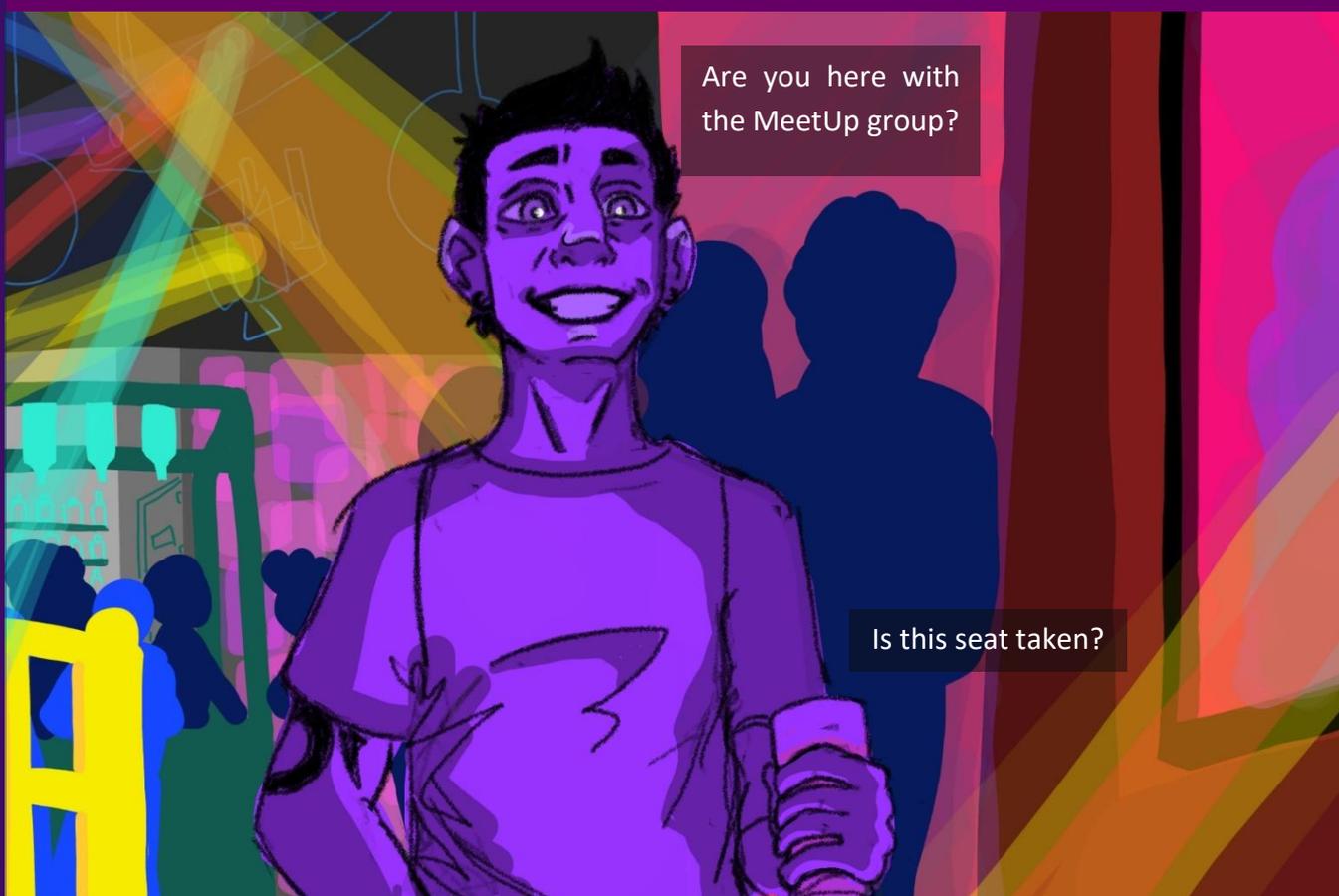


overdressed

Some time later at the MeetUp group table



Hey!



Are you here with the MeetUp group?

Is this seat taken?

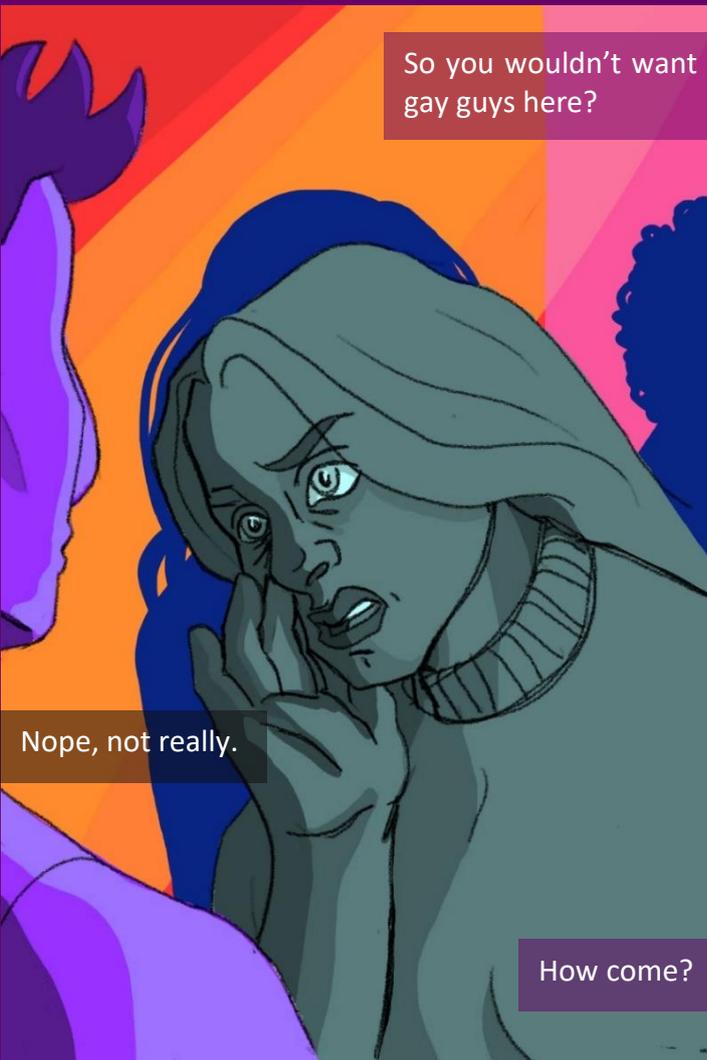


(...) like you said, that you CAN go somewhere but that doesn't make it an accepting place. I don't need to here, but I see the problems with my non-binary bi friend; I go with h-them to the loos because some dykes give them shit.



If a ... like... gay guy would go into a dyke space its different, I don't want that either-

but those lesbians don't see it like that.



So you wouldn't want gay guys here?

Nope, not really.

How come?

There are not nearly as many places as there used to be. Everything is for gay guys. Nowadays it's near impossible to find a night like this, and it sucks that its only once every so many weeks, so if you miss one, you're shit out of luck.



Oh shit, really?

Ohhh yeah.

What happened to those spaces?

Most of them closed down.

So yeah, because basically everything is for gay men, I'd rather they don't go in that ONE space we do have. But at the same time, because it's so rare to have a place where we can be ourselves and meet other gay or bi women, it's important to not be too exclusive you know? It's difficult...



What do you thi-



<PLONK>

LAAADIES & GENTLE- PEOPLE
Let's GET this party STARTED!!

PUT YOUR HANDS UP FOR OUR WONDERFU-



I watched the organiser walk onto stage and she began talking about it being Butch Please's anniversary. She shared the space and event's history, the feelings and politics surrounding these histories, and speaking of the space and people it serves – her voice cracking. She had frankly reiterated many of the things I was just told (but now with a vocal crowd to back it up), and it made me realise I had my work cut out for me on various levels.



Though I couldn't help but wonder what this meant. Not just for the research, or my research perspective, but what it meant for *me*. What did it say about me that I felt such discomfort and... well...

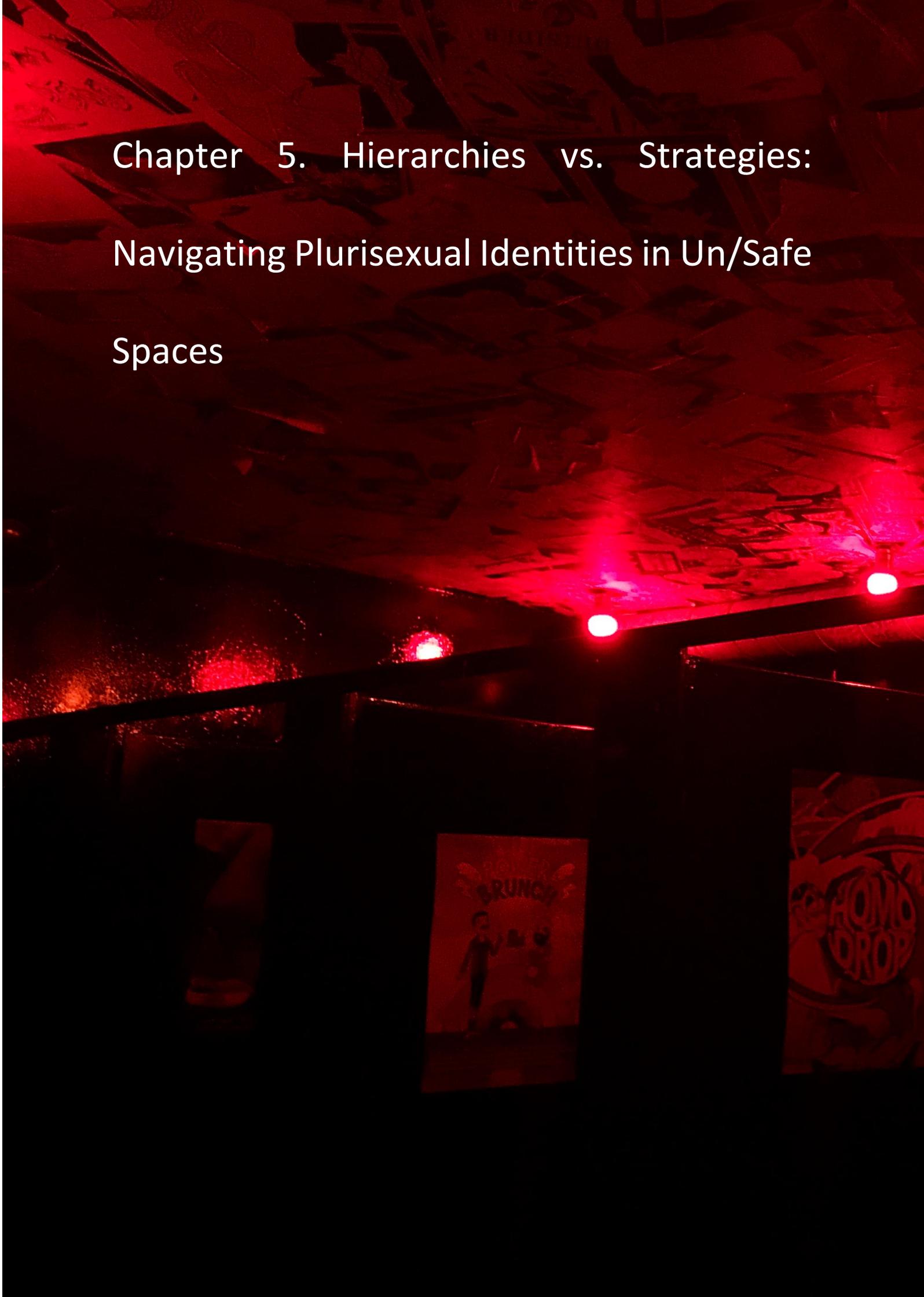
unbelonging

In a place that was this open and welcoming, and clearly so sought after by so many people that felt incredibly displaced – except when they were here.



It was a long train ride home.

Chapter 5. Hierarchies vs. Strategies:
Navigating Plurisexual Identities in Un/Safe
Spaces





5.1. Introduction

In this chapter I argue that homonormative spaces are exclusionary through divisive and hierarchal means, as produced and reproduced by the monosexuals within these spaces, which results in plurisexuals adopting social strategies as safety measures within these environments. While the previous chapter sheds light on why plurisexual belonging matters, and how the processes of marginalisation are put into place (un/belonging as produced and reproduced through social and spatial relationality), Chapter 5 focusses on the impact of and reactions to marginalisation, and how these lived experiences can be applied to counter-argue bisexuality scholars' critique of queer theory.

Bisexual marginalisation impacts plurisexual individuals on multiple levels: socially, spatially and politically. The participants reported their experiences of feeling interrogated on their identity (e.g., such as the nature and frequency of their sexual engagements) and the subsequent rejection around their physical and social presence within LGBT spaces. Throughout the chapter I use my term "bisexual identity interrogation" (BII) to exemplify these social and spatial dynamics, with a particular focus on the strategies adopted by plurisexuals. The latter also engages with the reasoning behind the plurisexual individual's strategy, and the subsequent shifts in socio-spatial dynamics they experience when doing so.

I argue that bisexual identity interrogation is an inherent form of socio-spatial gatekeeping and that through the use of these strategies, the plurisexual individual can impact their own socio-spatial reach. These strategies can tighten or loosen a space, which leads to either further restricting the plurisexual's ability to move and inhabit the space freely, or allows for the plurisexual individual to roam more freely in within the space, respectively.

Through thematic analysis I was able to categorise and name three forms of interrogative and gatekeeping behaviour, as well as three types of counter-responses; three strategies used by plurisexuals to combat mononormative marginalising practices. The three forms of bisexual identity interrogations are: (1) **Monowashing**, (2) **Quantification**, and (3) **Stigma Reiteration**. These are met, interchangeably, with one or more of the three following responses: (1) **Term Switching**, (2) **Queer Signposting**, and (3) **Resistance**. Whilst I do not aim to make any generalising statements due to sample size, the correlation between/and the frequency of these strategies as used amongst my participants was striking, and I argue they are crucial when exploring the politics of belonging, sexual identity, and sexual citizenship. While the thematic similarities were evident, the data did not reach a state of oversaturation due to the intricate social, spatial, and political elements involved. To exemplify some of these complexities: the participants did not always recognise their responses as *active* survivalist strategies, but viewed them as passive ways to navigate unwanted social situations, verbal aggression, identity interrogation, or physical harm – but acknowledged being victimised by these types of violence and marginalisation regardless. An example given as to why their behaviour did not per se read as survivalism was a sense of “overstepping” politically, spatially, and socially, due to internalised biphobia and invalidation of their rights as sexual citizens.

5.2. Bisexual Identity Interrogation: Defining (the strategies against) Monowashing

This section explores the first of the three bisexual identity interrogation methods through my concept of **monowashing**. Monowashing, explained through exemplification below, interacts through a framework built upon compulsory monosexuality and mononormativity creates an incredibly pervasive understanding of what it means to have romantic and sexual

identities. Through bisexual identity interrogation, these structures are meant to be upheld by assigning a perceived monosexual identity upon bisexual and other plurisexual individuals. To provide more depth of analysis around this behaviour, I will also address how the participants respond to this identity interrogation through two types of counter strategies I refer to as term switching and queer signposting.

I start with the experiences of **Grace**, whose identity exploration – and negotiation – exemplify that bisexual identity interrogation is a form of community gatekeeping. As her narrative explores the monowashing of sexual identities, it is **Sebastian's** experience as a queer trans man that further unpacks the concept by focussing on the gender identity element of monowashing. The next participant in this section, **Persephone**, gives further insight into the potential of term switching; not only as a way to self-identify her sexuality, but also delving more into the complex political facets of self-identification and what it means to switch between labels. Lastly, **Tom's** reflections provide a different response to monowashing: countering it by making their non-binary and bisexual identity (un)known through material and physical expression.

Grace (queer cis-woman, age 33) explains that her use of the label queer – as opposed to bisexual or pansexual – is a learned response based on her experiences with spatial gatekeeping. Her self-identification shifted from bisexual to queer following her (long-term) exposure to an artistic queer space in Dalston, Hackney (a London queer space that is explored in depth in Chapter 6). Grace said that queer became her identity because she *lived it and saw other people live it*. She felt like it was a *no-brainer* to identify as queer for several pivotal reasons: Firstly, the most important of which are the *limitations* that she experienced with sexually identifying as bisexual. Secondly, she explains how the *continuity* of the term is

the primary factor for her to use it. It enables her to *always be queer* rather than be considered straight or gay, depending on the (presumed) sex of the person she is seeing:

I almost felt like my bisexuality was situation based, you know? Like if I was with a woman, then I could experience pride and feel like I had a political commitment to LGBT issues. But if I was in a heterosexual relationship, I felt like it almost just washed it off me, in a way. The term queer, it gives me an identity that exists regardless of who I am dating or what sex acts I'm doing. It's like that is part of my identity being queer, and it's not changeable. It doesn't wash off.

This tension of validity between the terms bisexuality and queer is a familiar occurrence amongst the participants and has previously been observed by bisexuality scholars (see Ault 1996; Hemmings 2002; Ochs 2006; Monro 2015; Breetveld 2020). Several of the participants – much like Grace – use the term queer because it allows them to distance themselves from this process of invalidation. However, this form of invalidation of the bisexual identity (Barker et al. 2012, Yoshino 2000, Monro 2015) is one that either happens involuntarily due to inherent monosexism, or is a conscious act of bisexual marginalisation. Regardless of the active or passive nature of this invalidation, it is an intricate and damaging part of bisexual identity interrogation.

I have derived the term Monowashing from Grace's statement: she experiences her bisexual identity as something which *washes off*, which innately invalidates the bisexual identity either internally (as with Grace), or externally (as with Sebastian, see below). Therefore,

monowashing can be explained as the process of recontextualising bisexual/plurisexual relationships as being inherently monosexual; an act where bisexuals are reimagined as being only attracted to one sex/gender. I argue that monowashing, as an aspect of identity interrogation, functions as an external negation of bisexual identities which can become internalised; this negation is based on perceived gendered sexual and romantic interactions. To break this down, I believe the individuals from my study experience a form of invalidation that happens through third party labelling of sexuality. The third party labels the identity of the bisexual individual based on the perceived romantic engagements within social spaces. By doing so, there is a nullifying aspect to the intricacies of not only the bisexual identity but also of gender identity.

This is evident in **Sebastian's** (queer trans man aged 24) experience, as he is frequently met with assumptions from people who look at his relationship without intimate knowledge of the gender identities of him and his partner(s), especially as he is a *passing* masculine trans man:

Yeah, like now I'm dating a man. He identifies as gay, so 'I am gay now'. No matter how I identify myself it's like 'Whatever, it doesn't matter'. It feels like as a person who is not monosexual, I feel like my sexuality is defined by whoever I'm dating.

Sebastian, much like Grace, expresses that his sexuality is defined through their romantic and sexual relationships. Though, unlike Grace, Sebastian explicitly experiences the erasure of his sexual identity as being forced upon him by external parties, rather than through an internal

narrative around bisexuality¹. Sebastian argues that he is defined by the gaze of monosexuals: perceiving romantic/sexual relationships through a monosexual paradigm perpetually undermines the plurisexual's autonomy over their own self-labelling.

The next section further shows that queer, as a label, is also not free of political engagement but has a significantly different impact, ensuring that the political nature of the term can provide social and spatial "breathing room" for the plurisexual subject. The term queer impacts the sense of self of the plurisexual (through self-labelling) as it enables the subject to further extend their spatial reach (Ahmed 2006)².

Persephone (Queer/bisexual woman aged 30) conceptualises and understands queer(ness) to be inherently political, and our conversation shows me that to her it is a way of life. A thematic overlap between the experiences of my participants is framed in a very clear and concise way by Persephone:

Who I fuck does not determine my sexuality.

Monowashing has a significant impact on the social, emotional, and political elements of the plurisexual individuals' identification. This is also evident with Persephone, who enjoys embodying the *original meaning of queer*, as it allows her to *challenge the status quo by being a little bit wonky, a little bit of fun, a little bit off*. However, when asked about her relationship

¹ See also Schlenker (1986), Plummer (2014), and Weeks (2017) on self vs public identification.

² Participants Persephone and Janine are opposing examples of individuals who self-label as queer whilst having explicitly different relationships with the socio-political impact of that term: whereas Persephone's experiences with the political engagement is far more positive (see 5.1.2.), Janine expressed a more doubtful tension associated with the label (see 5.1.4.). This opposition will be further explored in Section 5.1.4.

with the terms queer and bisexual, Persephone explains that she does not *necessarily consider* [identifying as queer] *a conscious political act* but does significantly relate it to her personal *ideology*:

Queerness is] a natural part of me, of who I am. But a part of that is the political and ethical approach to discovery, and exploration, and self-development. That's not just 'I like dick, I like pussy, yeah. They're both good.' It's more than just that for me.

However, despite saying it is not a conscious political act (but an inherent one), she does address various explicitly conscious socio-political elements such as *looking at the world* through a *queer feminist framework* that *exceeds attraction* and revolves around *complex issues* (e.g., *marginalisation, activism, queer theory, a queer outlook on life and experiences* that leads to *embracing our differences*).

This, in relation to some of Persephone's experiences with belonging³ makes me question if her sense of belonging and inclusion has yet to be narrated into being – particularly through the engagement of the social and political elements (re)produced in and by queer spaces. Lim (2007) argued that 'queer theories often exemplify ways in which a politically attuned body of thinking can be alive to the ethical potentials of affect' (p.60), engaging with queer theorists such as Sedgwick (2003) and Halberstam (2005), and how the concept of temporality engages with the social processes of what-can-be and what-is-yet-to-come. In particular, Lim (2007) uses Sedgwick's (2003) notion of 'hope' to indicate potentiality: what someone actually does

³ See Chapter 4 in which Persephone refers to herself as 'being on the periphery of queer spaces.'

and what someone could actually do, and how understanding the distinction allows them to envision change. This application creates a narrative akin to that of Persephone – bridging her conceptualisation of belonging and her queer feminist framework:

(...) rather than forming connections only with whom people share an identity, or with whom one's life narrative overlaps, queer friendships and communities become based on the intimacy of intensity and the immediacy of continuing to live now (...) in the sense that queer temporality seeks to maximise the potential of intensive encounters and seeks to map ethical paths of connection, desire, and friendship (...) (Lim 2007, p.59).

Persephone explains that the reason why she likes the term queer is for its inherent inclusivity, something she believes bisexuality does not provide due to her interpretation of bisexuality's binary essentialism, which is not something she *connects with anymore*. Persephone identified as bisexual when she was younger because that was the *terminology that [she] had available* at that time. While she refers to it as a more *accessible* term in comparison to queer, bisexual is still a term she begrudgingly uses to indicate her sexuality to someone who she believes to be *completely outside of the queer world* (in particular heterosexuals). This leads to Persephone reluctantly using the strategy I refer to as term switching. Term switching is the act of strategically switching between one's own sexual identification (in terms and labels) in order to negotiate the plurisexual's socio-spatial movement when confronted with bisexual identity interrogation; thus, term switching can be seen as a context dependent self-labelling process.

Persephone associates bisexuality as an identification that is *too prescriptive, too binary*, and a *straight down the line split*, which simply does not connect to the way she experiences sexual identity. To her, LGBT (as a term and as a community) *creates more subsections, categories, and boxes*, which lead to more *alienation and segregation*. She feels that queer is far more inclusive:

Queer is this lovely all-encompassing beautiful rainbow that no one needs to subsection themselves within, and it means all of it, it means everyone (...) We're all big fat queers and isn't it great? We don't need to define what that means to the letter what exact genital are you attracted to. Like... who cares!

It becomes clear that Persephone, much like Grace, explicitly expresses the difference in perceived validity of the bisexual/queer terminological divide. This is not only seen between these two participants, the overall data shows that queerness is experienced as a concept that is fluid in its expression, attraction, and acts. However, it is equally perceived as steadier in the way in which it is discursively accepted. On the other hand, bisexuality can be experienced as a sexual identity that is both substantial (with a perception of solidity through binary sexual attraction rather than gendered attraction – or the other way around, substantiality based on the fluidity of gendered attraction as opposed to the more binary attraction to a biological sex). However, bisexuality can also be conceived as a sexuality that is inherently insubstantial (a perception of it lacking a solid foundation, as if it lends its reality to the expression of sexual acts; who you fuck is what you are). Though it must be noted that

something being framed as substantial versus insubstantial does not lend itself to being framed as a dichotomous good or bad, as both conceptualisations are experienced as valid: It is the process of disregarding the self-identification which invalidates the identity of the plurisexual, regardless of their label. Something which all of the participants have encountered when experiencing bisexual identity interrogation from monosexuals.

Maliepaard (2015) makes an intriguing proposal in which he argues to apply Du Plessis' (1996) work on language to focus on the 'doing' and 'not doing' of bisexuality:

focussing on not doing bisexuality, or the negation of bisexuality, or passing as heterosexual/gay/lesbian might shed more light on how bisexual subjects position themselves in a society based upon compulsory monosexuality and how bisexual subjects are impacted by processes of monosexuality.

I argue that this approach to language bridges bisexuality and queer theory: the deconstruction of terminology through the strategy term switching. Britzman (1995) commented on the role of language as a way of deconstructing power and meaning through queer theory – and how this in turn, queers queerness:

Queer Theory signifies improper subjects and improper theories, even as it questions the very grounds of identity and theory. Queer Theory occupies a difficult space between the signifier and the signified, where something queer happens to the signified – to history and to bodies – and something queer happens to the signifier – to language and to representation (1995, p. 153).

Furthermore, Dilly frames the following: 'It is not a question of "*who* is queer," but "*how* is queer;" not so much "*why* are they queer," but "*why* are we saying they are queer?" (1999,

p.459)'. Saying that you are queer, as with bisexuals who term switch to queer, does not go against bisexuality, as "going against" implies a black and white "queer is good and bisexual is bad"; when referring to yourself as queer, it is a conscious socio-political act of queering perception (in a manner that does not necessarily relate to reclaiming a slur, see Monro 2015). The discourse around bisexuality (as an identity, a term, a sexuality) is negative, and thus, by queering the terminology, the subject queers expectations: it re-humanizes them. By queering their position, the subject undermines the normalised stigmatisation against bisexuality, redirects expectations (as based on bi-negativity), and reclaims their allowance within a space. This act defies the binary construction⁴ that forces bisexuals as either/or and neither/nor sexual and social subjects, and in turn allows them the power to redefine the monosexual narrative rather than be oppressed by it (though, of course, there are individuals, also within my research, who identify as bisexual for the socio-political resistance of this act, which could be argued to be queering power relations in its own right).⁵

This leads back to how the fluidity of the queer identity is something which connects rather than divides. As seen in the previous chapter (as well as with Tom's experience as seen below), the notion of "being queer enough" is one many participants relate to. Thus, it should be

⁴ A critique against queer theory (Callis 2009; Erickson-Schroth & Mitchel 2009; Monro 2015).

⁵ Additionally: (1) whilst it can depend on "the audience" with whom the bisexual interacts. To refer to bisexuality with a straight audience, or people who are "not as familiar in the queer world", the term bisexual can actually lead to "familiarity" as it is a widely understood term (usually a binary understanding of bisexuality, rather than an inclusive bisexuality). However, it is important to note that indicating one's bisexual identity will create a more immediate terminological recognition rather than create understanding, as it does not reduce potential bisexual identity interrogation. (2) when referring to identifying with queer/queerness rather than a bisexual identity, it can negate affirmative interrogation with a mononormative audience due to its positive "vague" nature (Queerness as the *amorphous, all encompassing, vague, fluid, multidimensional, encapsulating, and permanent* nature of non-descriptive sexual and romantic attraction and gender identification). The term queer receives less questioning as bisexuality does, and does not "demand explanation". This term switching is not the same as the Ault's (1996) research in which bisexuals use the term queer to indicate their belonging as a claim to collective rights ("You will have to accept me, I am just as queer as you and I deserve to be here") but rather a belonging based on freedom of individual identity and freedom of individual movement ("I am queer and this will reduce any unwanted communication in which I will have to defend my identity, whilst simultaneously opening a path of more accepting communication").

important to see the relation to queerness, either as a label or as an ideological and social concept; an intricate and complex element of plurisexual belonging.

Tom (non-binary bisexual, 35) looks delightfully cosy in a light pink fluffy jumper, their tabby cat sitting behind them on the sofa backrest seeming very content – eyes closed and paws folded in, invisible under its body. Tom told me that in advance of their interview they attempted to write down things they would like to discuss. At the top of their paper, it said: *“Am I queer enough?”*. Tom has been met frequently with monowashing, but rather than term switching, they engage with another strategy against bisexual identity interrogation, one I refer to as queer signposting.

Queer signposting is the act of explicitly signifying through material expression that the plurisexual is part of the LGBTQAI+ community in order to avoid interrogation from monosexual community members. These signifiers can include, but are not limited to, rainbow flag pins, and tote bags, as well as t-shirts, with rainbow/LGBT+ flags or indicative texts. Participants, Tom included, have reported that queer signposting lowers the chances of hostility, such as gatekeeping and verbal harassment, by monosexual community members when entering LGBT spaces. Another important element of the strategy is that the participants noted they use queer signposting for two distinct reasons: 1. As a strategy to ensure spatial access (being allowed to enter the space), and 2. As a way to ensure that upon entering this space they are allowed to inhabit it further (the freedom of movement, and the freedom to exist within a space). There is an innate transactional symbolism to the process, however, due to the nature of this mediation I argue that it goes beyond the “presentation of the self to indicate group membership” but is far more performative in regards to showing social and political alignment as it relates to a form of identity risk management (Goffman

1963; Seidman 2002; Hutson 2010; Guibernau 2013). Though it must be noted that queer theory's engagement with bisexual performativity has been less than stellar, as it focusses on gender (through masculine/feminine dichotomy) rather than any other 'master status' such as social class, ethnicity or as seen in this case, sexuality (Butler 1990; Hemmings 2002; Hutson 2010, p.16), although Hemmings (2002, p.46) does align 'bisexual self-identification' to their placelessness:

Bisexual self-identification is not directly related to an external bisexual 'home' in the same way as lesbian and gay self-identification is, or at least can be.

Therefore, I argue that queer signposting is a strategy which aligns plurisexuals as "unstraightened" in order to combat their unbelonging – as opposed to methods described by Mason (2001 p.35), where 'camouflaging' is a form of self-regulation⁶ to ensure in-visibility which can be considered a 'straightening device' (Ahmed 2006, p.107). This strategy however, can also lead to issues of self-value based on authenticity and self-regulation as it simultaneously conceals authenticity whilst enhancing visibility.

Tom finds it difficult to navigate the tension between avoiding interrogation and establishing spatial belonging, and our conversation provides me with a better understanding of this tension - which I consider a delicate balance between fearing to be seen, as well as failing to be seen. Tom exemplifies this through a series of events, including one in an LGBT+ bar in Manchester where they used a rainbow tote bag *up and over [their] body* to enter and

⁶ See also Formby (2020)

navigate the space, *almost* [using it] *like a pass to say, look I belong here*. Tom explains that when with their wife, they *pass* as a cis-het couple, and neither of them wanted to appear as *tourists* within this bar. Tom affirms strongly that this place made them feel *really welcome*, but that simply being such spaces makes them feel like *they have to appear like they belonged there* nonetheless:

“Am I queer enough” feels like a push and pull. Looking straight or feeling like yourself, or... It's very difficult to establish, but I think survival is a huge element of it. On the way to the bar, I'm trying to not appear very queer with my straight camouflage, and in the bar trying to ramp it up almost. Not in any performative way, but in the sense of trying to make my identity known.

This push-and-pull is an important element of responding to bisexual identity interrogation. Whether this relates to signposting your social and spatial belonging, or using a certain label to gain validation or dissuade a threat, it is at its core, as Tom mentions below, survival. Rather than performative behaviour, Tom recognises their behaviour as a form of survivalism. They explain how people (in- and outside of an LGBT+ bar) tend to view them as a *blokey heterosexual cisman* – a tension of which they are *hyper aware* and uncomfortable. Tom would prefer to be seen as a *visible, healthy, successful, happy bisexual person*, but they are aware this requires them to confront the tension with the fear of being seen as insufficiently queer. This is something they find difficult; struggling to find a way to express their authenticity when they feel like they must adapt to garner a sense of spatial belonging – which is a feeling shared amongst many participants. In regard to authenticity (as the alignment of

one's values) Hutson's (2010, p.220) research that the notion of 'freedom' was understood by lesbians and gays as crucial to authenticity and presentation:

"freedom" was often understood as the ability to appear in ways they thought of themselves internally (....) they were able to appear gay or lesbian and feel authentic in their performances as they aligned their inner self-values with external appearance.

It is evident that Hutson's (2010) process of aligning is different from the signifying of queer signposting, and I would argue that this, at its core, relates to plurisexuals not experiencing innate freedom within LGBT+ spaces. Tom refers to the point of tension between wanting to belong and wanting to be themselves as the *medium space*:

I want to form a more authentic self in the "medium space": a space where I do not feel the despair of wanting to be more myself outside, and working on dialling it down in an LGBT space. (...) I want to dress more like I feel and value that.

This medium space could be considered both a physical as well as a metaphorical space. The interaction with materiality is evident, as queer signposting relies on material displays of desire and erotica (Queen 1991; Lingel 2009), or symbols of membership (Guibernau 2013), in order to signify belonging. Though one could also argue that queer signposting, much like term switching, can be done in a social-lingual way (dropping hints, so to speak). However,

the medium space seems to refer to a space of transgressive relational nature, where one is simply allowed to be.⁷

5.3. Bisexual Identity Interrogation: Defining (the strategies against) Quantification

In this subsection, I argue that quantification is another thematic aspect of the bisexual identity interrogation. The act of quantifying the sexual and romantic preferences of a plurisexual individual is an interrogatory method used to establish sub-classification of the plurisexual identity. This is done by dissecting and framing the plurisexual identity through binaries, a sliding scale, or percentages. The form of interrogation leads to questioning bisexual attraction, and examples as experienced by participants include, but are not limited to: *Do you prefer men or women? Are you attracted to one gender over another? And are you a gay bisexual or a straight bisexual?* By questioning the preferences of plurisexual individuals, there is a process of both straightening and un-straightening simultaneously, which enforces the mononormativity framework onto plurisexual experiences.

While exploring the concept of quantification, I will draw upon the experiences of Lilly, Rosa, and Josh. While both Lilly and Rosa respond to the quantification of bisexuality mainly through term switching, Rosa also responds through queer signposting. Josh, however, addresses his negative experiences with bisexual quantification through resistance. Exploring the experiences of quantification of participants **Rosa, Lilly, and Josh**, I also shed light on their responses to quantification and other forms of bisexual identity interrogation.

⁷ This relates heavily to the themes explored further on in Chapter Six through the ethnographic analysis of the venue vFd, which I would call such a “medium space” where materiality and affect meet (Lim 2007).

Rosa (bisexual/queer woman 26), like many of the participants, uses term switching to manoeuvre the social and spatial issues that come with being a bisexual individual. In particular, she identifies as bisexual but uses the word queer in relation to enhance a position of safety and validity, as she explains to me that the concept of queerness comes with *less stigma* and more acceptance from the LG community. To Rosa, the term queer is *encapsulating yet vague* enough for people to experience more *willingness to accept it*, more understanding, and opens up the opportunity to ask questions at a later stage. Whereas bisexuality comes with the identity interrogation that is driven by *negative assumptions* and a conceptualising of bisexuality as a sexual identity that is unwavering in its attraction and discourse, which leads to an immediate negative effect. According to Rosa, using the self-identifier of bisexual stops the conversation before it can begin: *It feels like it mostly shuts things down.*

I argue that, as mentioned prior, the freedom of bisexuals is heavily impacted when they are being their full selves: the bi-negativity and stigma surrounding the identity ensures that the extension of a space, a relation, or a connection is immediately halted when the signifier engages from a place of authenticity (Ahmed 2006).

Moreso, Rosa experiences a significant amount of quantification, which can – to her frustration – *filter into [her] own psyche* and cause her to doubt her own identity and desires:

It can take a hold of you, and then suddenly you're like "maybe I *am* confused, maybe this is all bullshit, maybe I am just attention seeking (...) and I know I am not, but it just gets into your head. It dislodges you somehow, and when it does, you're like "No, I stand here, damnit!"

This self-doubt relates to some of the themes referred to in Chapter 4, in relation to the sense of belonging in one's self, and shows how the external identity negotiation impacts the individual's internal narrative leading to self-stigmatisation and amplifying a sense of unbelonging (Herek, Gillis & Cogan 2009; McKinnis 2022).

When dealing with quantification, Rosa feels like she *has to explain herself* against her own wishes. To Rosa, to be accepted in her sexual identity is to *feel fully and completely seen, not judged, and welcomed as your full complete self*, even when that full complete self is *different*.

This ties in with Rosa wanting to *avoid* the *detachment* that she experiences as inherent to the label of bisexuality. Interestingly, she will actually employ the quantification of bisexuality herself if she feels that term-switching does not fully negate potential stigma – similar to Lilly's experience of overriding her values in order to maintain membership. Rosa explains that the following experiences occurred in *women-only bars*, where she felt *uncomfortable* and *discarded*:

I will say queer because I don't want the judgement of bisexuality. "Okay, but you're only half" (...) So, I'll say queer, and if I'm sort of pushed to define it, then I'll say bisexual, and sometimes I'll even quantify it further like: "Oh but like 80% gay". Queer is definitely more accepted (...) because when I say I'm bisexual and they'll just be like [mimics disinterest]. There be that detachment from wanting to communicate.

Rosa has not felt comfortable in a community space – in particular LGBT spaces – for quite some time, and she reminisces about a time when she did not have to be afraid to experience monowashing or quantification, which had to be countered with strategies such as queer signposting and term switching:

I would go there and be like [deep sigh] “Okay, good”. I’m finally in a space where I don’t have to pretend to be anything. I don’t have to dress queer to prove that I’m queer. I could wear whatever the fuck I felt like wearing that day and people would know that I still like [men and women].

The theme of spatial acceptance depending on the type of community space re-emerges as she told me she explicitly experienced marginalisation and discrimination within LGBT spaces (which are *dominated by cisgender gay men and cisgender lesbians*⁸), rather than in queer spaces (which to her feel innately different to LGBT spaces, and refers to them as *safer and freer*):

Not that I *wouldn’t* feel safe [in an LGBT space] at all, but I don’t think I would feel at home there. When I have been [in those spaces] it felt a little bit like I’m stepping on carpet that’s not for me, you know?

The difference between safety and a sense of ‘home’ is an important distinction to make when considering the politics of belonging and sexual citizenship. To relate to Chapter 4, it is

⁸ See Castells (1983) and Hubbard (2012)

the comfort which creates the experience of true belonging within community spaces. If plurisexuals are experiencing safety as a bare minimum standard for space engagement, it is not far fetched to consider that the space between safety and belonging is one of precarity if the plurisexual individual is considered a secondary sexual citizen within a hierarchal system.

Lilly (bisexual/queer woman aged 25) identifies as bisexual but also frequently uses the term queer. Lilly explains that she experiences *a line of questioning*, specifically from lesbian and gay individuals with regard to the validity of bisexuality or for bisexuals to be allowed and included within the LGBT community/spaces. She views bisexual identity interrogation as parallel with other prevalent acts of marginalisation within the LG community – as well as the sub-categorisation/cultures of LG community members (e.g., butch, femmes, twinks, bears; see Eves 2016; Franklin, Lyons & Bourne 2022), which she believes to be hierarchal maintenance presented as preference. As an interesting point, Lilly feels that the validity of bisexuality – as framed through a hierarchy of gendered preference – has an unfortunate position within the bisexual community itself. She believes this to be *wholly unhelpful* and damaging to the *discourse* around bisexuality:

I want to actively try to get rid of this notion of ‘You are either a gay bisexual, or a straight bisexual, what kind of bisexual are you?’ Because at the end of the day, I’m just bisexual.

The reason why Lilly believes term switching is the most effective strategy to avoid quantification leans into the validity aspect of the identities between bisexual and queer. I argue that even for a different form of bisexual identity interrogation (as opposed to

monowashing as seen above), it is the term queer which holds narrative power and undermines any form of oppressive rhetoric through the monosexual lens. In other words, queerness does not allow quantification:

I don't get the same line of questioning when I identify as queer. Like 'are you a gay queer or a straight queer?' I never heard that before.

Lilly's understanding of inner community hierarchies ties into my critique of Ahmed's (2004) understanding of the "queer hierarchy". According to Ahmed, this hierarchy is based on mimicry and legitimacy⁹ which ties into the understanding of mononormativity. However, I argue that the hierarchies of queerness within the LGBT community itself are only partially based on socio-legality, as the maintenance of mononormativity eventually revolves around the ties between sexual morality and sexual citizenship (see also Bell & Binnie 2000; Yoshino 2000; Weeks 2017), with the (in)accessibility to membership and social spaces as a direct response. Moreover, I argue that the maintenance of the mononormative hierarchy within a bisexual community counts as a form of inner-community oppression.

Josh (Age 29, bisexual cisgender-man) experiences a high level of what he refers to as *interrogation* – by gay men as well as heterosexual people – regarding his identity and his spatial belonging. He is unequivocal in his condemnation of this. He refers to this interrogation as an unwarranted *entitlement to pry*, and an equally unwarranted *right to discuss* the frequency and quantity of his sexual behaviours, romantic relationships, and bisexual identity.

⁹ See also Puar (2007)

He provides examples of how people question the validation of his identity through the gendered quantification of his sexual acts (*How bisexual are you; Who do you like more, men or women; How many have you slept with?*) as well as the attempt to classify the gendered boundaries of his sexual attraction (*would you have sex with a trans person?*).¹⁰ Moreover, it impacts the way in which he feels *accepted in a group*, as well as in a space, and refers to it as *conditional acceptance*. Due to his experiences around this conditional acceptance around his bisexual identity, he says that his *comfort and belonging* comes second to *trusting* he won't be subjected to *underlying homophobia, biphobia*, and other *offensive misconceptions* associated with bisexuality. Unlike many of the participants, Josh appears to have particular issues with negotiating term switching, which he actively refuses to do. He has negative associations with the word queer from a labelling perspective due to its derogatory history, but will not refer to himself as pansexual either - which he believes is *the same* as his gender inclusive experience of bisexuality (Hayfield & Křížová 2021). Moreso, Josh explains that the experience of being in LGBT spaces is *alienating for bisexuals and trans people*, due to gendered and sexual identity interrogations, and he refers to these spaces as inherently *divisive*. I argue that these experiences of alienation exemplify the hierarchal nature of LGBT spaces as inherently built around the acceptance of sexual citizenship via 'the politics of recognition and redistribution' framed through monosexual and cisgender structures (Bell & Binnie 2000 p.79; Guibernau 2013).

¹⁰ Not dissimilar to the discourse where pansexuality and bisexuality are "pitted against one another" on the basis of identity, desire, and inclusivity (see Hayfield & Křížová 2021).

Despite finding it hard to navigate BI's, either through his own experience or when seeing it unfold with others, Josh is actively willing to combat it:

I am just fed up with people's sense of entitlement. Just because I identify as bisexual to interrogate me about that? [He sips his Starbucks coffee and looks at me with determination and a hint of humour] I don't fucking think so.

With Josh we see the third strategy employed by plurisexuals, which I refer to as **resistance**. In particular, as seen next section, resistance is often a response to stigma reiteration, but it is not an uncommon response to any other forms of marginalising behaviour and monosexism. Resistance is the most active form of strategizing against bisexual identity interrogation and refers to a defensive verbal response in order to resist being forced into mononormative structures.

Using the works of Ahmed (2004; 2006) and Massey (2015), alongside Halberstam's (2003; 2011) conceptualisation of failure, this strategy can be framed through spatial, queer, and affective practices and negotiation of power: resistance can be perceived as the active renegotiation of a trajectory; a trajectory of spatial allowance, the trajectory of a narrative, or the trajectory of a political position. To actively redefine one's place within discourse.

Place (...) does change us, not through some visceral belonging (some barely changing rootedness, as so many would have it) but through the practising of place, it is the negotiation of intersecting trajectories; place as an arena where

negotiation is forced upon us; place as an arena where negotiation is forced upon is. (Massey 2005, p. 154)

Ahmed (2006) helps contextualise the failure of belonging from a social and spatial perspective through the concept of queer spatial manoeuvrability: The queer child is taught from an early age that heterosexuality (and cis-genderism) is compulsory (Wittig 1983; Rubin 1984; Butler 1990, 2002). To not repeat and reiterate the shapes of these 'straight lines' (the normative and restrictive paths created through the repetition of social and sexual norms) means you are failing at being straight, which is – when straightness is compulsory – simultaneously a failure at being a successful sexual citizen (Bell & Binnie 2000). These 'straightening devices' are, in a sense, discourses and narratives set in place to straighten that which is not (Ahmed 2006, p.107). These marginalising and discriminatory discourses sometimes border on being tropes, and examples could be seen in the straightening of lesbians ("she wants to be a man"), the straightening of transgender people ("they are not truly [gender] until they have fully transitioned"), or the straightening of same gender couples ("who is the man and who is the woman?")¹¹. These straightening devices are practices that invalidate queer experiences through the explicit normativity of compulsory heterosexism – as if these queer experiences are forcefully redirected and pulled back into the trajectory of a *straight* line.

When considering the compulsory nature of cis-gender heterosexuality, I once again argue to view homonormativity as compulsory in its own right. Built upon the same normative structures (as a mirrored version of societal rights-and-wrongs), it is the concept of *compulsory monosexuality* which raises questions around the existence of an alternate

¹¹ See also Sedgwick (2003)

version to straightening devices. Specifically, when looking at these practices with the bisexual/plurisexual experience, I am inclined to not refer to these devices as solely “straightening”. When the bisexual individual is met with stigma such as bisexuality being a transitional sexuality rather than an autonomous identity (“it is only a phase”), it is a stigma which is re-iterated by heterosexual, as well as lesbian or gay individuals (Barker et al. 2012; Monro 2015). As these practices are inherently driven by monosexism, it means that these devices do not only straighten (as argued by Ahmed), I propose that these devices also “unstraighten”. Again, when viewing monosexism, it is evident that this is based on normativity (be it hetero- or homo), it is still an extension of normative sexual citizenship. Therefore, they are devices that follow a different kind of successful sexual citizenship: it is pulling them from one kind of line into another, lines that do not solely represent straightness, but represent normativity. If compulsory heterosexuality can be seen as a force which limits the capacity of bodily reach (a failed social reproduction), as well as limiting the possibilities in which bodies take shape (a failed social expansion or a failed “sinking” within a space) then therefore, compulsory monosexuality does the same. It shapes plurisexual bodies based on their previous experiences, and if the previous experiences are based on a push-and-pull of being forced into straight and not-straight lines: The production of the bisexual body (and to some degree, the plurisexual body overall) is considered a failure to be monosexual (see also Butler 2002; Puar 2007; Halberstam 2011).

Besides queer spatial theorising, it is crucial to pull this exploration back to the active real life social, political, and special (re)enforcement of these concepts: it revolves around real politics of sexual citizenship, real experiences of (un)belonging, and lived experiences of marginalisation. Plummer (2004; 2012) untangled intimacy (as intimate citizenship) from

sexual citizenship, which both frame in/equality through the politics of choice. To Plummer, the relation between intimacy and inequality can be conceptualised as processes of citizenship, where intimacy moves beyond the private (romantic and sexual) into 'arenas' of 'doing identities' (2012, np). In particular, focussing on the interactionism between inequalities and lived experiences: how 'patterns of interconnected inequalities' as produced through institutionalised social division, leading to 'social processes of exclusion and inclusion [such as] empowerment and dis-empowerment, marginalization and mainstreaming, the silencing and presenting of voices' (2012, np). How these interactions lead to 'subjective experiences of inequalities' show how 'people can be placed in hierarchies of esteem' and provides insight into 'the ways in which people can be ignored and rendered invisible' and become subjects of scrutiny 'through the ideas of intimate citizenship, dialogues in pluralized public spheres and grounded moralities' (Plummer 2003; 2004; 2012). Plummer (2012) cites Anderson & Snow (2001, p.399) as to how this positions marginalised groups in limbo, as they are forced to experience 'symbolic assault to [a] sense of self worth and efficacy'. Thus, in the case of intimate "doing" of identities, it is important to note that the maintenance of the compulsory frameworks of normativity is a collective action that aims to restrict the doing of the bisexual identities. The framework originates from heteronormativity, extends to homonormativity, and together become a combined framework of monosexual normativity – or shortened within the confines of this thesis as mononormativity. Thus, as a reproduction akin to the heteronormative blueprint (Ahmed 2004; Puar 2007), it becomes evident that the maintenance of the mononormative framework is enforced by monosexuals upon all sexual citizens within (the English) society - themselves included. BII can be seen as a way for the monosexual to find an indication as to which normative line the bisexual is inhabiting. The monosexual will proceed to interrogate the bisexual in an attempt to establish their spatial

trajectory: are they inhabiting a monosexual normative path, or is the bisexual considered to fall outside of the lines of normativity?

With this in mind, I wish to circle back to the resistance strategy of my participants. When discussing this strategy, the responses are quite harsh (and at times seemingly offensive) in their verbalisation (e.g., *'I won't take any shit from them'*, *'it really pisses me off'*, *'they can fuck right off'*). This makes it even more important to consider that these strategies must be considered as defensive in nature. In the same way it is impossible for a marginalised group to “reverse” oppression against a hegemonic group (e.g., reverse racism, reverse sexism, reverse discrimination), it is not possible for plurisexuals to “reverse monosexism” and take an offensive stance, as this would imply there are equal power structures to reverse. Moreover, it is further complicated by the innate power difference between heterosexuals and lesbian and gay people under the monosexual moniker. I argue that these complexities are crucial to take into account when addressing this power struggle. To build onto the work of Yoshino (2000) and extend his “contract of bisexual erasure” beyond the legal realm, I wish to take this towards a more sociological perspective: I argue that marginalisation through a monosexual framework is a socio-political *and* spatial form of ‘last-place aversion’ (Kuziemko et al., 2014). This type of last-place aversion suggests that the marginalised groups under the monosexual umbrella (gay and lesbian individuals) might oppose social and spatial inclusion for plurisexuals – not just because they fear it has repercussions for the social, legal, and political position of their sexual citizenship (the hard fought battle towards an equal position with the hegemonic monosexual group; the heterosexuals) but also because the current differentiation between homonormative lesbian and gay individuals and the “unplaceable” –

or unintelligible (Butler & Athanasiou 2013) –plurisexual individuals, grants them a sense of superiority.

5.4. Bisexual Identity Interrogation: Defining (the strategies against) Stigma-Reiteration

Last, we explore the interrogation method of stigma reiteration through the experiences of **Victoria, Janine** and **Cassandra**. Victoria, who identified as a lesbian for many years, used to think that the stigma around bisexuality was not real – until she started encountering it herself, and began responding to it by strategically resisting. Cassandra explains her desire for narrative ownership, responding to stigma reiteration using both resistance and term switching. Janine also relies heavily on term switching as her experiences with gatekeeping leave her searching for a balance between guarding her spatial belonging and finding a suitable (and satisfying) form of self-identification.

To view bisexuality via the monosexual lens sheds light upon a theme which appears perhaps a bit obvious, yet is too significant to ignore. Beyond monowashing and the quantification of the bisexual identity, there is a far more active and aggressive form of identity interrogation: The reiteration of stigmas that surround bisexuality, which is enforced to gatekeep spaces from plurisexuals (halting them from entering the space, or as they are already inhabiting the space, essentially pushing them out). This type of interrogation is mainly evidenced through acts of (micro) aggression, or the intentional omission of social engagement. The latter is a form of microaggression in its own right, as through enforced silence, shutting down the conversation – sometimes even *before it can begin* (as said by Rosa in the previous section). Participants Victoria, Cassandra, and Janine share their experiences with stigma reiteration and their responses to such interrogatory – or even antagonistic – behaviour.

Victoria's (19, Queer/Bisexual, Cis-woman) experiences with bisexual stigmatisation come from a place of shifting identities. While she always identified as belonging to the queer umbrella, feeling belonging *in the PLUS of LGBT+*, she only recently started identifying as a *queer bisexual* (as previously she identified as a *queer lesbian*). She had sexually identified as a lesbian since her early teens, and this played a significant part in her overall social identity. She explains how this new identification caused a tremendous shift in her own view of sexual fluidity, bisexuality, and bisexual stigma. When Victoria identified as a lesbian, she *never really had any opinions on bi people*, but she did consider bisexuality to be a *mostly transitional sexuality*, a known microaggression against bisexual individuals (Eliason 1997, 2000; Yoshino 2000; Ross et al. 2010; Bostwick & Hequembourg 2014; Dodge et al. 2016). She now recognises this as being a stigmatising narrative and refers to it as *biphobic*: *I didn't really believe in the stigma against bisexual people, I didn't believe it truly happened*. She says that this belief remained in place *despite having relationships with older lesbians* who had *very negative connotations* of bisexuality (Stone 1996). She tells me that *I know the kind she is talking about* when referring to the narrative of *gold star lesbianism*, where a lesbian has never had intercourse with someone who has a penis: *It's the idea that if you are bisexual you are tainted*. Regarding her own experiences of being the target of bisexual stigmatisation, it is something that Victoria tells me she is becoming increasingly acquainted with: *I [also] didn't really believe people would say that bi people are greedy, but I have heard it since I have come out* (Barker et al. 2012; McClelland et al. 2016; Robinson 2016).

As Victoria talks to me through her own experiences of feeling uncomfortable with straight tourists in LGBT+ spaces (Burchiellaro 2020), I can see the shift happen from being a person who employs monowashing to considering it a form of unwanted identity interrogation:

If I was a bisexual - [Victoria stops and interrupting herself with a softer voice] I *am* a bisexual woman... And if I went [to an LGBT space] with a bisexual male date, then I might just be looking at this differently. But also why ... why don't straight people belong here? If don't see a lot of gay people in like sort of these gay spaces, well what's the point then? But... I don't know how people identify, I should not be making the same judgements like you see more often with, you know, like other people who exclusively consider themselves to be gay or lesbian.

Victoria explains that her friends have commented about the shift in her sexual identity; they consider it something *humorous*, and she tells me that she *immediately got called straight*. She looks at me with a small shrug and says *but it's just banter, right?* Though beyond banter, many people in her life have expressed a loss of expectation as well as negative associations with her new bisexual identity. Victoria's expectations for herself also shifted, and she explains that she *always aimed* to represent the *strong black lesbian character* when growing up and had to adjust her own worldview now that she identifies as bi. However, whether Victoria identified as a queer lesbian, or as a queer bisexual, she has always been – and still is – incredibly selective of who is allowed insight in her sexual identity. While her parents have been supportive, she has always feared being outed among her extended family. Victoria

explains that there is a strong negative sentiment towards queer people within her ethnic group generally, something she acutely experiences with her *family elders*. She refers to it as an “*all gay people must die*” situation. Victoria recognises she had very little positive exposure to either black or *mixed* queer- or bisexual representation, as both aspects of her identity are riddled with repeated stigma:

Whenever I see another queer black person, it makes me happy because my family is so against it. [When opening up about her identity with her black friends] I am always uncertain like, ‘how will you react?’. Sharing my identity is never a simple easy thing, and it is something I constantly consider.

For Victoria, her act of resistance against bisexual identity interrogation intersects heavily with other aspects of her identity such as her ethnic background. For her, the resistance revolves around the active renegotiation of a stigmatised narrative, such as the renegotiation of expectations – either her own, or that of her social circles – the renegotiation of space and its allowance, as well as reframing of previous values (Collins 2004; Williams et al. 2022).

When asking **Janine** (queer woman aged 32) about her self-identification, she says she *identifies as queer now*. When prompted to explain what she means, she says she used to identify as bisexual, which is no longer a label she can identify with. Janine views the term bisexual as one that indicates a binary based on cis-gender attraction, distinctly rejecting an attraction to other gender identifiers. Moreover, she explains that she has had many negative experiences with the term. One of these negative experiences is about the hyper-

sexualisation of bisexual individuals, in particular the hyper-sexualisation of bisexual women. Another negative experience is what Janine refers to as bisexuality being *mistreated*. By this she explains that she has seen the identification of bisexuality receiving a negative response – especially within the LG community, and within LG spaces. She begins by saying that I had *probably heard this already* and referred to her experience as a *classic bisexual woman’s story* of experiencing *nightmarish* gatekeeping due to *not looking gay enough*. The “timeless” rhetoric of this type of marginalisation (with evidence from the 1970s to current day 20s, see Stone 1996, Bell & Valentine 1995; Hemmings 2002; Monro 2015) indicates that despite socio-political and spatial shifts in sexual citizenship, there are pervasive discourses and processes keeping these monosexual hierarchies in place.

Beyond being halted before even entering the space, within the space Janine experiences verbal aggression over her bisexual identity, her femme gender expression, and she tells me how she has witnessed physical aggression towards her (East Asian) butch partner:

I had some really horrible [experiences] with butch lesbians who would just be blatantly horrible to me in clubs. Even if I was there with my girlfriend, you know. They would just say horrible things, and like, try to push you around, and it was just not a very nice environment.

When explaining her experiences in more mixed LG spaces, Janine says that *the gay men can be equally mean because they don’t think that you should be there either*. She believes that she was met with hostility from gay men because they *either think* [she was] *straight* or because they did not want her in the space because *they thought she was a lesbian*. This example demonstrates the intersectional aspects of her experiences of marginalisation: being

halted at the door or being made unwelcome while in the space on the basis of her sexuality, gender, and gender presentation, thus experiencing (literal) gatekeeping by LG individuals who act as enforcers of socio-spatial values and maintaining the community hierarchies.

Janine says that to her, the term queer has more *ambiguity around it*, and due to its ambiguous nature, it is *better to use that* rather than the term bisexual. She perceives that *people [within the gay community] aren't so judgmental [about queer] in that sense*. She puts it quite bluntly: *I moved to queer because it made my life easier*. However, Janine also says she experiences negative connotations with the word queer from within radical queer spaces.¹²

However, I also have issues with the word queer, because there is a whole load of political baggage that I am not sure I identify with. But you know, there is only so many words, right?

Janine believes that the “political baggage” comes in the form of aggressive communication which can go *too far (“this is the only way, and you are not allowed to have a different opinion”)* and *cut down conversation rather than make sure people like each other (anyone who doesn't have their opinion - they cut them off. They don't listen and just assume they're right.)* Janine thinks this is *not the best way to deal with people: You are much more likely to convince people with love and acceptance, and listening to the other side, so I find it a bit of a minefield sometimes*. However, Janine regards her experiences of the queer spaces she visits to be *more open to all sorts of appearances and labels despite its own [political] problems*,

¹² See discussion in Chapter 5 conclusion.

considering them as less divisive as Lesbian or Gay spaces towards labels and physical appearance. This aligns with examples given by other participants, who frame that queer spaces require less queer signposting in comparison to spaces they consider LGBT spaces.¹³

Janine's response to stigma reiteration is one of rebellion based on spatial renegotiation and the negotiation of labels; simultaneously aiming to ensure safety and validity, as well as an appropriate political distancing. She actively tries to avoid experiencing stigmas that intersect sexuality, gender, and gender performativity, by finding a space she feels most welcome in at that point in time.

Cassandra (25, Bisexual/Queer, Cis-woman) started exploring queer spaces in her early twenties, specifically to find a space where she feels control over the narrative surrounding her sexual identity. During our interview, she expresses her opposing issues of dealing with bisexual stigmatisation, from internal to external, to dealing with the ownership of experience versus the story woven through stigmatisation. For Cassandra, being bisexual is a foundational aspect of her identity, one that makes her simultaneously feel *settled* as well as *unsettled*. Unlearning her internal interrogatory narrative is one of the unsettling aspects: Feeling like an imposter based on cis-het passing (monowashing) and little experience with other women (quantification). Questioning the legitimacy of the bisexual experience also extends to Cassandra's experience of spatial interactions and her place in queer spaces:

¹³ See also Chapter 4

Queer people have had to fight so long and continue to have to fight just to be seen, to be acknowledged, to have rights, to be allowed to do things in public spaces. And then there is this kind of internal battle of going, like 'Well, I know who I am and I know where my sexuality lies but I don't want to co-opt this.' I don't think I am, or that I jumping on some sort of bandwagon... But at the same time, I have the privilege to pass as straight, so should I let this be?

She explains that gaining understanding of bisexuality was part of this active process. She says she was not given the tools, or the language, to think about gender and sexuality until she went into higher education. This meant she had to fill the gaps in her knowledge and develop a counternarrative against bisexual stigmatisation in order to catch up. She tells me about the frustration she felt, providing examples of stigmatisation and discrimination such as: Associating sexual identity with sexual acts (*Anything queer immediately goes to sexualisation*), the invalidation of bisexuality (*It's just a phase*), her experience of being outed (*When the narrative is no longer yours, you feel exposed*), as well as her experience of working in transphobic and trans exclusive environments (Williams & Giuffre 2011; Zurbrügg & Miner 2016). In turn, Cassandra uses resistance strategically by facing the stigma head on in order to eliminate misconceptions about bisexuality, queerness, and trans people. She uses her social media platforms to spread knowledge by sharing statistics, facts, theories, and language. By doing so, Cassandra feels like she is asserting control over the counter narrative, but she is aware there is a big affective difference between addressing stigma on virtual platforms versus being physically present in an LGBT space. She also explains how some

spaces position you as a queer person with knowledge. This “knowledgeability” of bisexuality places her in an epistemic position of power (Breetveld 2020), but simultaneously places her in the position of educator, rather than an individual who can simply “be” in a space without having to engage in a transaction:

There is no room to make mistakes. Queer people are invisible and hyper visible at the same time. Especially bisexual people, and transgender people, and gender nonconforming people. There is this default that people like us just gets lost in the chasm. And then suddenly you’re that token bisexual: You are there, you have to answer every question, you have to be completely right about everything, and you know... suddenly there is no room to breathe in these spaces. And if it’s like directed directly at me, then I can talk about it in in a philosophical way, or talk about the political situation, etcetera, etcetera - and it least it also allows you to engage in the conversation.

This perpetual push-pull of authenticity, values, and validation are continuous themes in the strategies against BII, and there is an affective unease amongst the participants; exhausted to be forced to engage in hierarchal navigation in order to be included – hopefully with enough “room to breathe” in the process.

5.5. Conclusion: Navigating Hierarchies, Negotiating Sexual Citizenship & Contesting Placelessness

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 provided insight into the conceptualisation and experiences of belonging and unbelonging in social community spaces: Open communication and shared narratives which lead to a greater sense of spatial comfort for the participants. Opposing this, were the experiences which resulted into a more negative sense of spatial negotiation. The theme of unbelonging was underlined through issues of gatekeeping, a sense of oversaturation regarding social spaces aimed at cisgender, white, gay men, as well as issues of spatial precarity, and inner community discrimination and marginalisation (predominantly on the basis of gender, ethnicity, class, and monosexism).

To summarise Chapter 5, the practices of monowashing, quantification, and stigma-reiteration undermine the autonomy and agency of the bisexual individual's act of self-labelling, as their relationships, identities, desires, and presence are perpetually perceived through the mononormative and monosexist paradigm. These bi-negative experiences invalidate bisexual sexual citizenship on various levels, and enforce hierarchies amongst plurisexual identification. Term switching, queer signposting, and resistance are responses of bisexual/plurisexual individuals and are highly strategic in nature in an attempt to circumvent, avoid, or contest this pervasive and exclusionary nature of mononormativity by signifying their spatial and social belonging and validity as sexual citizens.

Moreover, this Chapter solidifies the importance of bisexual and plurisexual identities that have an epistemic place in queer theorisation, and as social, sexual, and spatial subjects in queer politics. Whilst more classic queer theory (by theorists such as Hemmings, Angelides, and Butler) has been critiqued for focusing on queerness as being 'carved' out of gay and

lesbian identities, spaces, and politics, subsequently failing to interact with the theorisation and lived experiences of bisexuality (see Oswin 2008; Callis 2009; Erickscon-Schroth & Mitchel 2009; Browne & Bashki 2011; Maliepaard 2015; Monro 2015; Monro, Hines & Osborn 2017). I argue that a more inclusive approach to queerness and queer theory is the place through which the nuances of intersectionality, diversity, and lived experiences can come to fruition. Especially if a pluri-inclusive queer theory engages with scholarships that involve geographies and belonging.

Monro (2015, pp.46-47) makes four compelling arguments questioning whether queer theory has a place within bisexuality scholarship: 1. Queer is a transgressive socio-political practice, which might alienate individuals who wish to engage with the mainstream rather than defy it, 2. It is a scholarship that is engaged with primarily by white middle-class academics, 3. it is heavily based on class, education, and ethnic background and therefore mostly engaged with by educated white British individuals, 4. It is 'politically dangerous' as it dissolves the basis of identity categories, rendering bisexuality further invisible, making it 'disappear in a multiplicity of sexed and gendered positions, subsumed within queer constructionism'. However, she ends on a note that due to the nature of bisexual individuals engaging with the term queer, it is important to take it into account regardless of its flaws.

Again, whilst compelling points, due to the nature of the data, I am inclined to critique some of these. I say some of these, because I too am a white middle class-ish academic engaging with queer theory, and I agree that at times it can be a rather "pale" comparison, to which I am actively adding. Whether or not it is mainly white educated Brits who engage with the term is more difficult for me to answer, as I do not have a particularly vast sample, nor do I wish to make any generalisations. However, I would argue that the participants who engaged

with queer and queer theory were mainly educated individuals from working-class backgrounds, and the fieldwork engaged with spaces in gentrified areas but with a diverse demographic (e.g., Hackney and Vauxhall) due to the nature of spatial precarity¹⁴. Whether or not it is ‘politically dangerous’ to allow the bisexual identity to be consumed by the multiplicity of positions, I would thoroughly disagree on two points: Of course, it is important to recognise the differences of sexual identities, but previous research has similarly indicated the danger of “watering down” the collective political strength due to the vast array of non-monosexual identities (Flanders 2017). My second point being: bisexuality is already an identity constructed through multiplicity. Furthermore, this research indicates the intricate socio-political and affective switches of terminology based on comfort, resistance, and self-preservation; it has been shown in previous scholarly work that the binary (or exclusive) approach to bisexuality is simply ‘too narrow to match bisexual realities’ (Ochs 2006; Halperin 2009; Barker et al. 2012; Galupo et al., 2015; Maliepaard 2015, p.155; Breetveld 2020; Nelson 2020). The multiplicity of bisexuality is a lived experience, a bisexual reality. To begrudgingly accept bisexuality having a place in queer theory does both the identity as well as the scholarship a disservice, and rather than separating these ‘critical plurisexuality studies’ from queer theory (Callis 2009; Erickson-Schroth & Mitchel 2009; Nelson 2020, p.42) I suggest readjusting the framework and properly adding to it with the knowledge we now have in order to combine discursive theorisation with (intersectional) lived experiences – as is constructed through queer spatial activism (Browne 2011). Hemmings (2002) suggested she wanted to:

¹⁴ See SSE:II, SSE:III, and Chapter 6

(...) emphasize the consistent partiality of plurisexual experience and its consistent presence in the formation of other sexual and gendered subjectivities.

Therefore, suggesting exactly what is necessary in order to theorise identities and subjectivities through its experiences through normative structures and power relations (see also Nelson 2020). In addition to this, Dilley (1999, p.460) says that queer theory ‘inverts the notion of outsider giving voice to the insider as well as the notion of insider information being untouched by outsider information.’ Therefore, queer theory is about deconstructing the knowledge/power divide and highlighting epistemological and social injustice as produced through oppressive power relations – in which lived experiences have a place and role:

Knowledge and discourse shape social realities, which in turn shape experiences, which subsequently shape identity. So if the production of knowledge (by social researchers) revolves around experience, we are confronted with a multitude of potential issues – not only epistemological, but also ethical. Questions arise such as: Who is allowed to produce knowledge? Who is allowed to disseminate it? And who is allowed to have a voice?
(Breetveld 2020)

Again, Monro (2015) makes a compelling argument of great merit, because it is indeed possible for bisexuality to further succumb to being ignored, invalidated, and rendered invisible. However, if the bisexual political position is already volatile, and the bisexual identity is already invisible, why not strengthen the position of bisexuality by engaging with other non-monosexual identities which are shown to be contextually interchangeable? When there is a common experience of being marginalised by monosexuals, then strengthening the position

of bisexuals, alongside that of other pluri-identities (e.g., pansexual, queer, omnisexual, demisexual) or other identities who fall in the margins even further (e.g., asexual) is a requirement, not a question.

This leads me to my final point about engaging with the mainstream. This is best exemplified through the dichotomous approach between participants Persephone and Janine, who both interchangeably (have) use(d) bisexuality and queer as their self-identifying terms. Persephone is adamant that bisexuality, and in particular queerness, is innately based on politics and ideologies revolving around intersectional and queer feminism. On the other hand, Janine's previous experiences have made it impossible for her to feel safe as someone who identifies as bisexual and no longer engages in lesbian spaces because of this, having moved to less divisive queer spaces. However, she finds it equally difficult to call herself queer/engage with queerness because she does not fully agree with queer politics and would rather not engage with it if given the choice. When relating this to Monro's (2015, p.48) critique of queer not being mainstream, but having a 'vanguardist' role of transgression and opposition, it raises the question: can one be queer or be in a queer space without being political? The experiences of my participants have shown time and time again that they would, simply put, like to be left alone; to not engage with the interrogatory behaviour imposed on them, forcing them to position and navigate spaces, social relations, and identities. The "classic" queer theory did indeed fail to recognise how the social power of sexual citizenship is far more than merely a matter of cultural representation/discourse, as it is driven by the power relations that have real life material, social, and spatial consequences (Bell & Binnie 2000; Dreyer 2002; Maliepaard 2018). The negative experiences of the participants are far more than discursive, they are lived: they are emotionally, psychologically,

and materially exhausting to engage with – let alone fight, contest, or disrupt. Marginalised groups do not wish to engage with the exhaustion generated through (micro, meso, or macro) socio-spatial politics to be recognised as fully-fledged citizens who belong some-where (Lorde 2017). However, this does not mean they can choose to disengage, as their marginalised position forces them – whether they want to or not – with the power structures and relations through which they are oppressed. To apply Butler’s work on vulnerable groups and power/resistance in their book *The Force of Nonviolence* (2021, p.192):

(...) vulnerability traverses and conditions social relations, and without that insight we stand little chance of realising the sort of substantive equality that is desired. Vulnerability ought not to be identities exclusively with passivity; it makes sense only in light of an embodied set of social relations, including practices of resistance (...) if our frameworks of power fail to grasp how vulnerability and resistance work together, we risk being unable to identify those sites of resistance that are opened up by vulnerability.

Specifically linking this to the sites of resistance, I will refer to Maliepaard (2015), who offered a new way forward by focussing on the mundaneness of bisexual spaces as shaped through homes and every-day socio-sexual relations and practices, and while I believe this perspective to hold merit¹⁵ I argue that the evidence points towards a necessity for bisexual/plurisexual spaces to be spaces that are shaped through transgressive socio-politics: “mundaneness” is shaped through transgressive queerness, queer politics, and queer theory, as it represents

¹⁵ In particularly due to the contextual differences between Maliepaard’s (2017) research and mine; having proven that bisexuality and bisexuality spaces are engaged with on very different levels of relationality and discursive power relations when comparing Rotterdam and Amsterdam (NL) to London and the South-East of England.

the ability to simply be your authentic self within a space which does not require justification and negotiation. In other words: transgression creates normalisation. Therefore, it is crucial to engage with the fluidity (alongside the politically disruptive tendencies of queer theory) that is generated by challenging monosexuality within these queer spaces, rather than 'turn away' from them, as a means to connect them to the 'relational theories of space to understand how sexual identity politics are played out in everyday urban and rural lives (p.155).'

Thus, in order to live mainstream lives and/or not having to resort to using strategies to navigate community hierarchies, you have to engage with queer politics to make this a reality. Groups of marginalised people do not simply 'sink' into spatial belonging (Ahmed 2006), as they do not have that luxury as bodies that are "out of place": you cannot simply be bisexual, or simply be queer (or any other plurisexual identity for that matter), or simply be in a queer space without being politically engaged with issues such as sexual citizenship, the politics of belonging, and the ethical practices of inclusivity associated with the structures and power relations imposed by monosexism and mononormativity. Due to this, I argue that bisexuality is truly embedded, alongside other plurisexual identities, within queer theory, queer scholarship, and queer politics – and that going forward with queer theory is to enforce the engagement through an "affective proximity" (as opposed to queer theories' 'cold and distant' approach, see Barker et al., 2009, p.374) of plurisexual theorisation through lived experiences.

SNAP SHOT ETHNOGRAPHY III

vFd Dalston



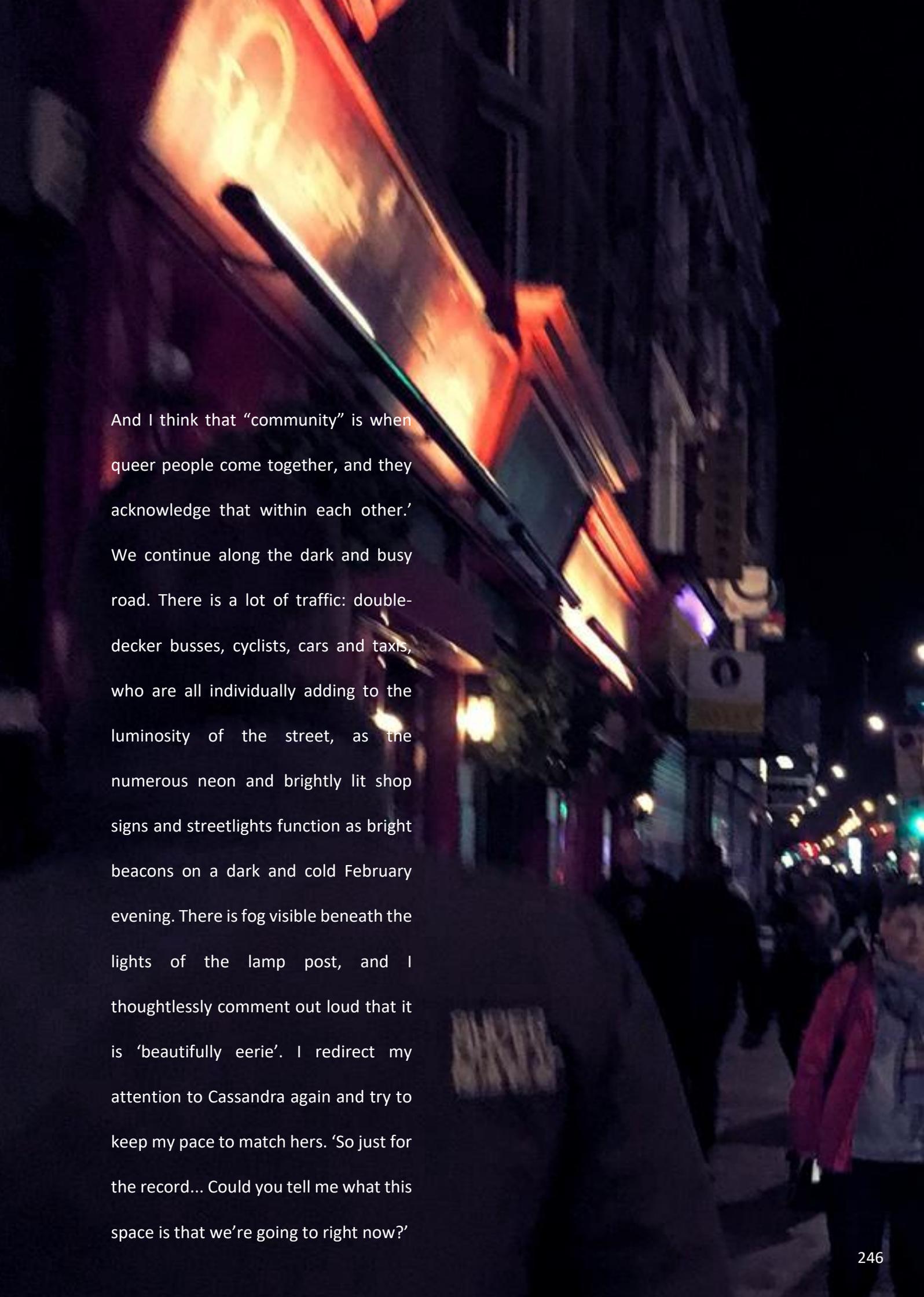
My participant Cassandra and I have been talking in a pub on Kingsland Road for nearly an hour and a half. Our interview takes place while we're sunken into the heavy leather sofas. During it our time there, I ask her to take me to a place where she feels like she belongs; she agrees to let me tag along with her after we finish the interview. She takes a sip of her pint. It is around 19.30 and she is keeping an eye on the time. 'We need to be there by 7.30[pm] to get a name on the list'. By 'the list' she means the list of performers. We are going to a queer space that lends itself to a spoken word night. Cassandra told me that this is a space in which she feels 'able to breathe'.



We make our way North on Kingsland Road. As I ask her questions about her relationship with space and queerness, it becomes clear that for her they revolve heavily around the ability to own a narrative in a space, as *'to be queer is to have your narrative told to you by someone else.'* We cross the street and she continues talking, not making eye contact as she faces ahead, eyes on the road: 'You get told time and time again how [your narrative] looks, how it is presented, you know? What it means, how it should be encountered –



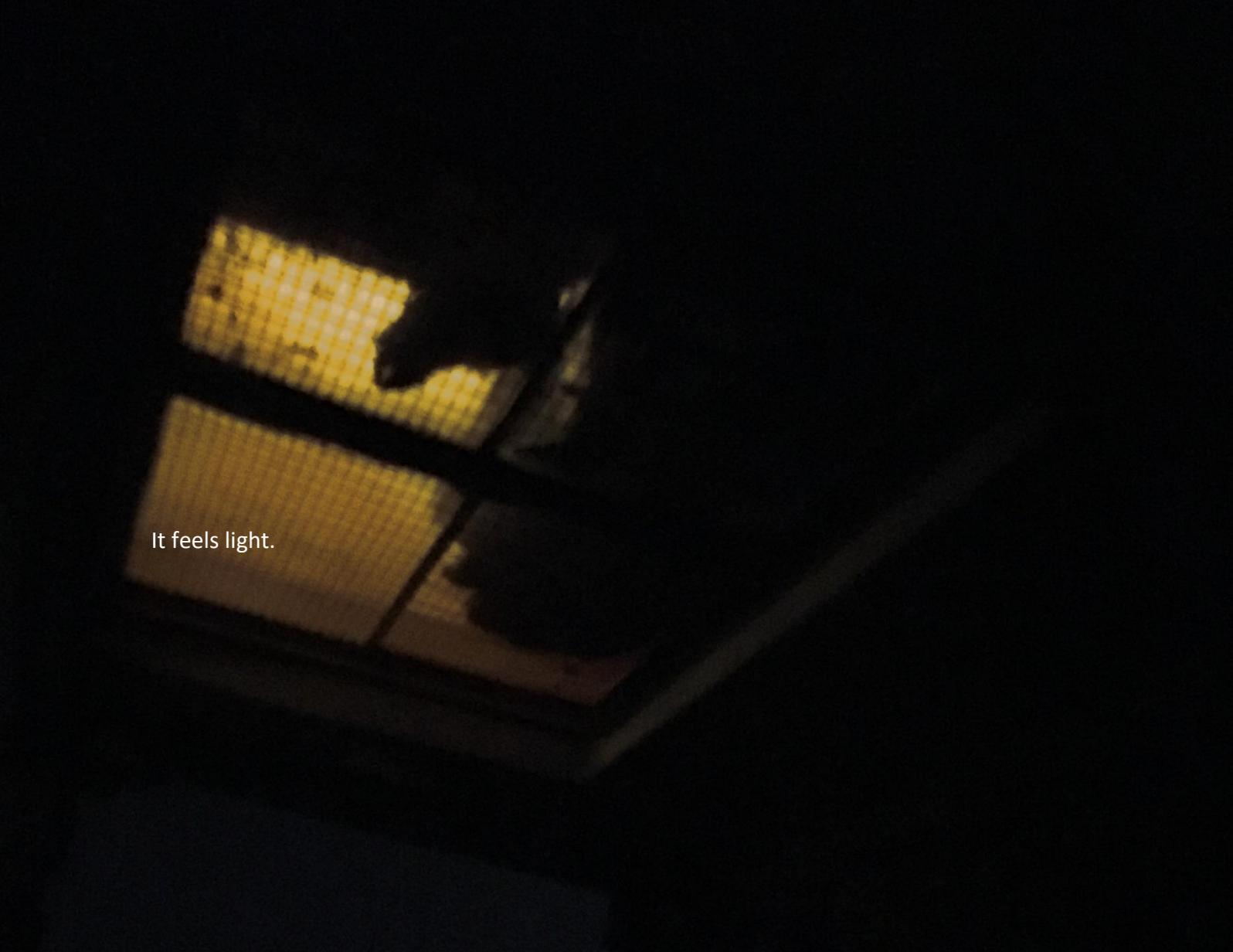
And to just be able to go
"fuck that, fuck you. It's mine."



And I think that “community” is when queer people come together, and they acknowledge that within each other.’ We continue along the dark and busy road. There is a lot of traffic: double-decker busses, cyclists, cars and taxis, who are all individually adding to the luminosity of the street, as the numerous neon and brightly lit shop signs and streetlights function as bright beacons on a dark and cold February evening. There is fog visible beneath the lights of the lamp post, and I thoughtlessly comment out loud that it is ‘beautifully eerie’. I redirect my attention to Cassandra again and try to keep my pace to match hers. ‘So just for the record... Could you tell me what this space is that we’re going to right now?’



Cassandra hums, 'Okay, so we are going to Spoken Word, hosted at vFd Dalston and it is a queer space - very small, very crammed, and a little bit uncomfortable. But what I love about it is a people get five minutes stand up and tell their story no matter what story, no matter what content, you know? Uncensored, unabridged.' She pauses, 'Just... it's stories. You're connecting with people through their stories and it's a queer safe space and people just go there. People are just unapologetically themselves, and it feels -



It feels light.

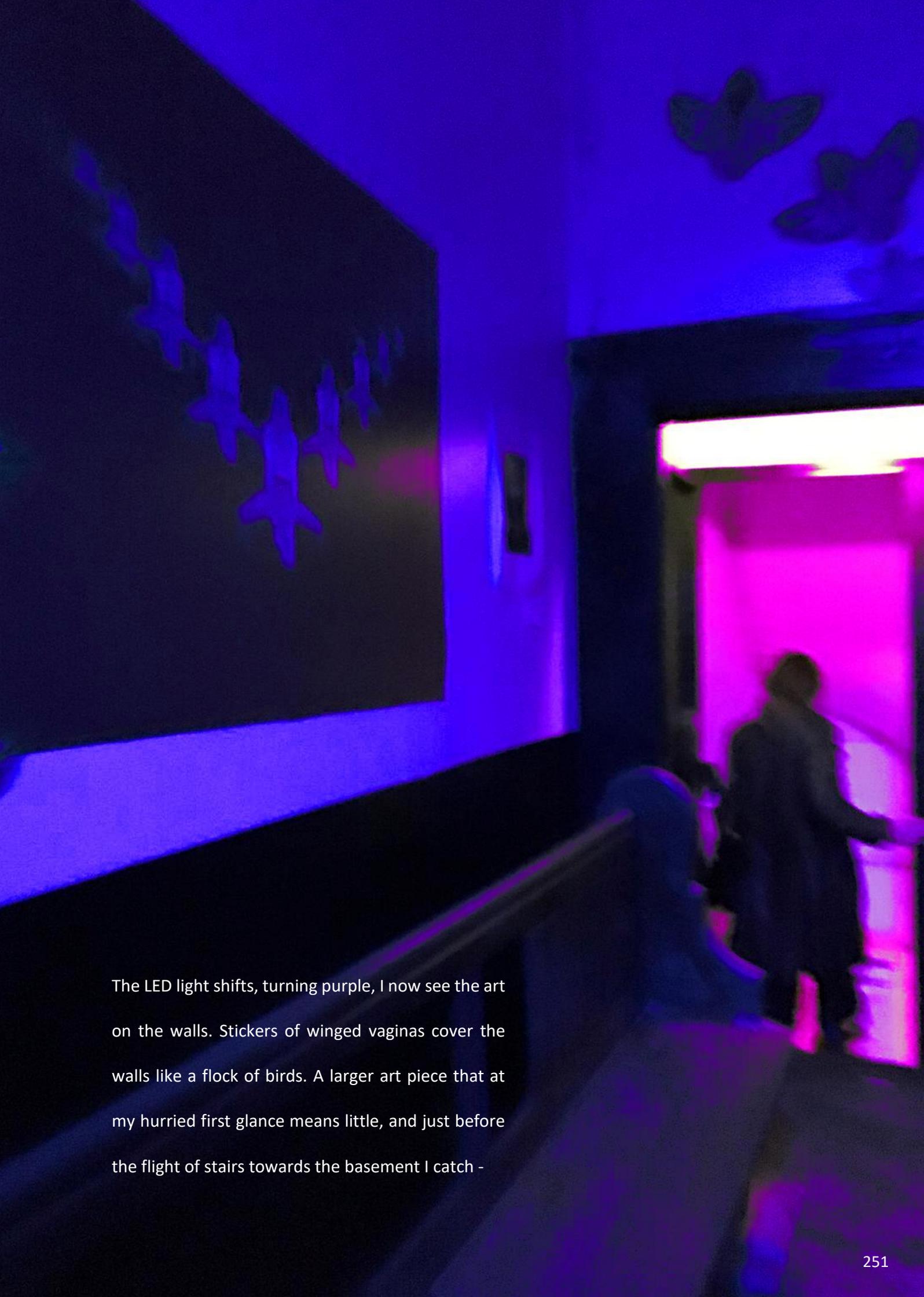
And just... I think it's one of these few spaces that I found but there is just like an absence of the negative.' Intrigued, I reply: 'Is this why you are able to breathe there? The lack of negativity?' 'Yeah, I think so. It's just that there's nothing in there that feels oppressed. Like that little pin in your chest' – Cassandra taps her sternum – 'But you don't feel like you have to disclose. You feel like you could, but you don't have to, or it doesn't matter. It is just... it's just nice. It's just really nice! Also, I love stories.' She smiles. 'I love listening to people's stories, it makes me...' She thinks for a moment: 'I think there's a certain power people have. We get so... I don't know ... lost, I think. We rely on snap shots. We want things in the quickest moment ever. And to take a couple hours out of your day to listen to other people's stories...'



She abruptly stops, 'Shall we cross the road? I always come with someone else, so I can never remember... Which one is the entrance?' I immediately understand Cassandra's searching confusion upon arrival: even despite the dirty hot pink and white lit up sign that displays a simple logo which spells "vFd", the space feels inconspicuously tucked away - snuggled between a computer store and a graphic design shop. The space itself does not seem to lend itself to being a social space at first glance with weathered iron shop front shutters; an opened, heavy iron door is the only indication of us being welcomed in. The blue light is too soft to seep through the bars and doorway onto the street, but provides a glimpse into a short and semi-obstructed hallway which is abruptly cut off by narrow descending stairs. I fumble trying to keep a hold of my phone, while -



still keeping up with Cassandra, who is walking towards the downward stairs with purpose.



The LED light shifts, turning purple, I now see the art on the walls. Stickers of winged vaginas cover the walls like a flock of birds. A larger art piece that at my hurried first glance means little, and just before the flight of stairs towards the basement I catch -

white graphic stickers displaying a person lounging topless in an under bust corset making eye contact and beckoning for the viewer to sit in front of them, a headless figure stroking their erect penis in the background, holding onto the leg of a third disengaged and artistically dismembered person. Unbeknownst to me they will not be the last genitals I will be seeing in the space, but I have yet to make my way down. The lights shift to pink, casting my shadow down the narrow stairs.





PLEASE MIND
YOUR HEAD



I immediately think to myself that this place is only accessible for people who are able bodied. A poster warns me to *please mind my head*, but I am short enough to not have to duck where the stairs meet the ceiling.

I glance over the room and consider Cassandra's words.

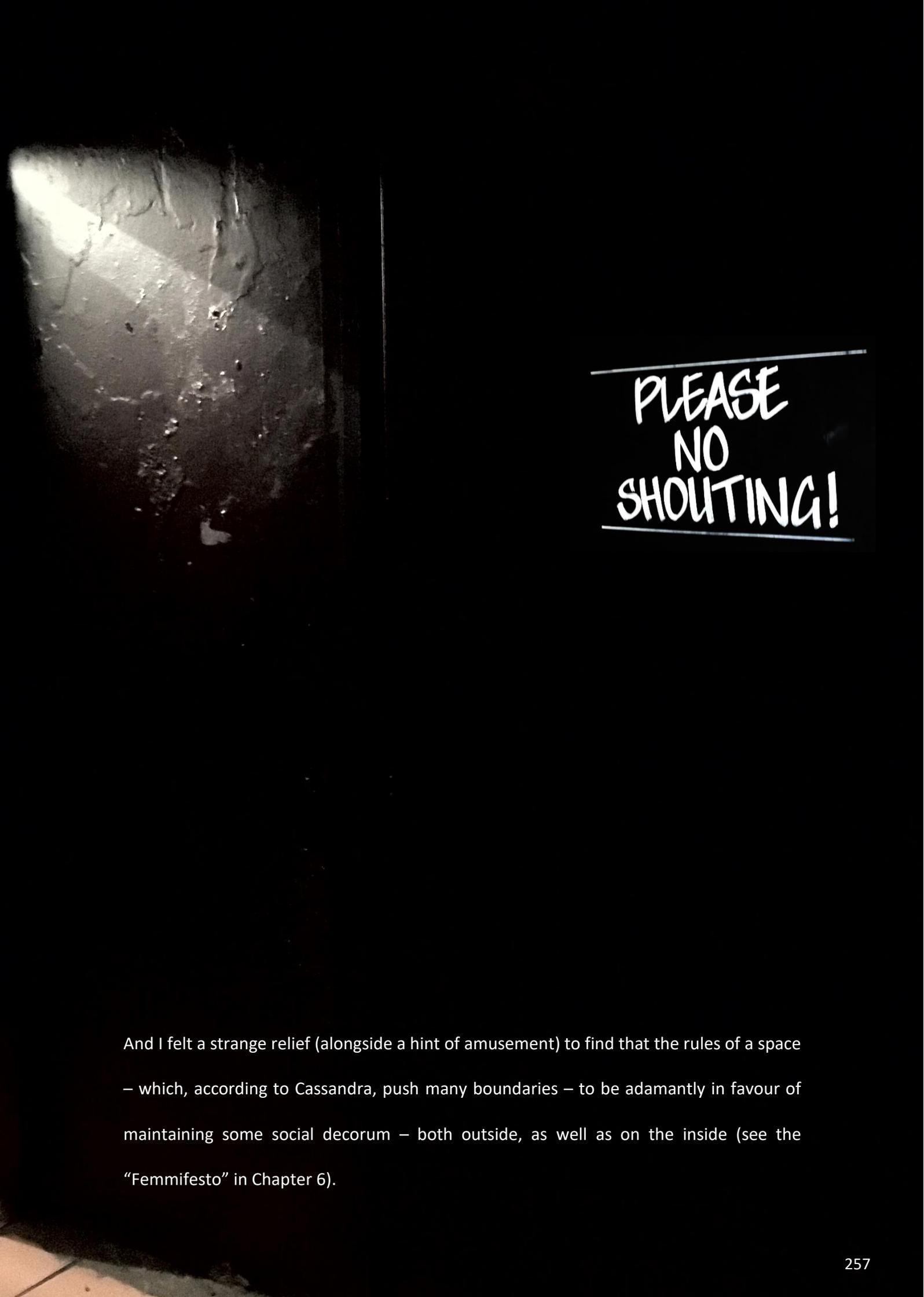
it is indeed small, it is indeed cramped, and it is certainly uncomfortable. What I see is a rather barren basement: unpainted concrete walls with no decoration (as opposed to the hallway above), a low concrete roof, and a small bar with a sound-booth connected to it on my left. Though the place is remarkably crowded, buzzing even.

SMOKING AREA
CLOSES 11 PM

I catch a whiff of cigarette smoke traveling on a breeze through my hair. As I look behind me to locate the source, I see a door that opens to an outside space –



which I will soon find to be the smallest of courtyards -



PLEASE
NO
SHOUTING!

And I felt a strange relief (alongside a hint of amusement) to find that the rules of a space – which, according to Cassandra, push many boundaries – to be adamantly in favour of maintaining some social decorum – both outside, as well as on the inside (see the “Femmifesto” in Chapter 6).

Across the courtyard are the venues two toilet stalls, both labelled "Unisex" and each adorning the aforementioned other genitalia art, showcasing hairy grey painted penises on a candy pink background.



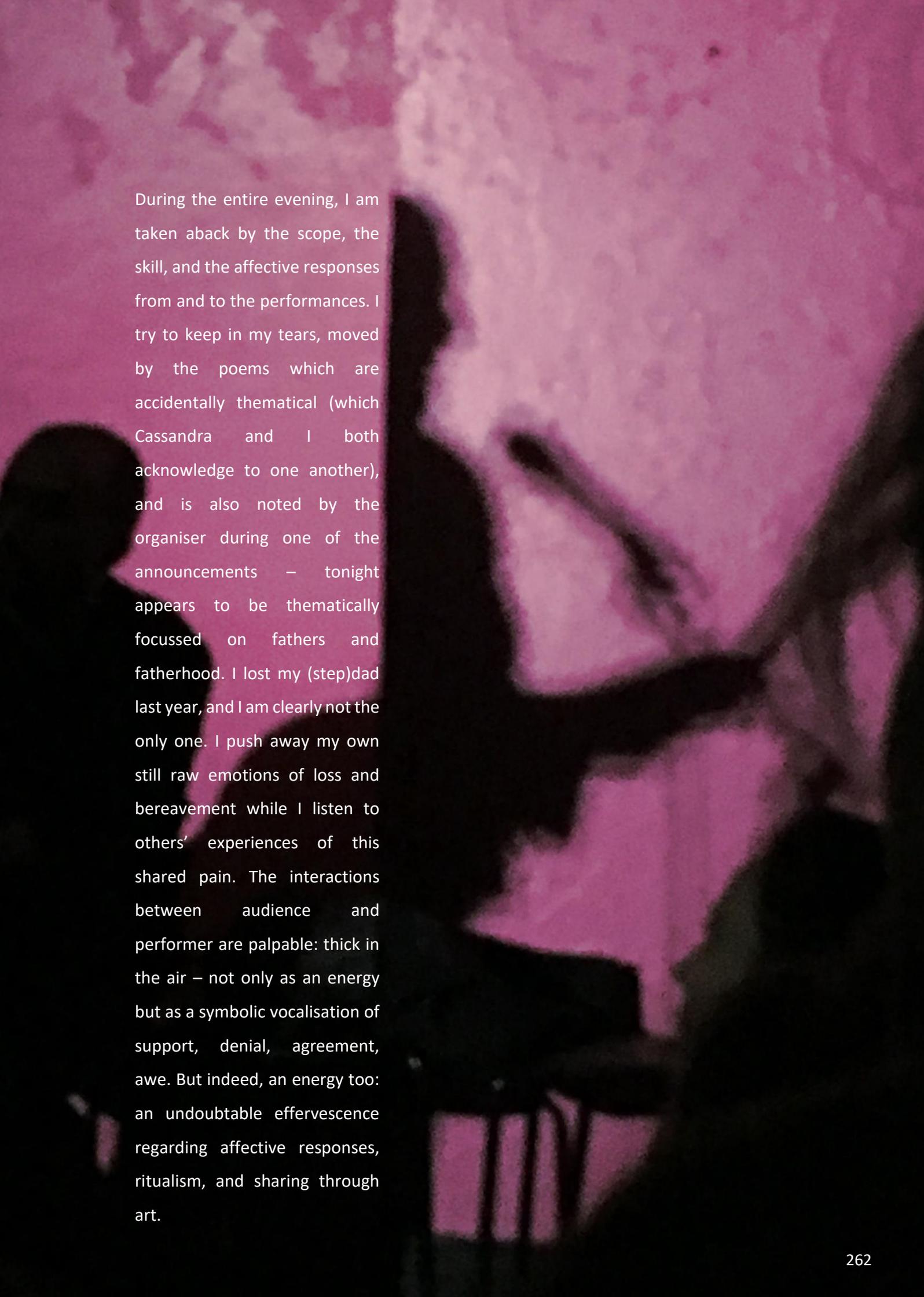




I do a quick headcount – there are approximately 35 people in this dinky basement, cramped and seated on benches that are reminiscent of those in a P.E. class. A narrow walkway leads between the benches and the bar/DJ booth to an open space, encircled by more seats and a spotlight trained upon a single microphone stand in the centre. There is currently no one in front of the microphone, with people talking and laughing amongst themselves. Cassandra has claimed two seats for us on one of the benches furthest from the microphone, and leaves me to go talk to someone she knows. I take in the atmosphere, slightly overwhelmed by the attendance in such a small space. I suppress a thought regarding fire safety and scan the room, taking note of the physical setup, the demographics of people at this event, and take in as much detail as I can. I quickly doodle the back end of the room harbouring an unused microphone, and note down the words “very close” to indicate the lack of personal space I’m experiencing. Sia’s “I don’t need cheap thrills to have fun tonight” is blasted through a singular speaker in the far-right corner, as patrons buy their canned beers or wines in plastic cups – this bar serves nothing on tap. I can just make out a sign adorning the wall, peeking between the heads of patrons: “Femmetopia”. A woman steps forward from the DJ booth and enters the spotlight in the circle, positioning herself as the sole force of attention in the room and everyone quiets down. Her red curls billow from underneath a



black top hat. She addresses the crowd and introduces herself as one of the organisers of Spoken Word London. She lists out the main rules of the event, which is jokingly referred to as the “no bell prize”. Everyone on tonight’s list of performers – which is compiled at entry of the space – gets exactly five minutes of mic time in order to keep it fair for all attendants and performers. Once the bell rings (someone at the booth demonstratively rings an actual brass bell, the sound bouncing off in the small space) this means you have 15 seconds left. Once you hit the five-minute mark, the organiser explains, the music will start playing and you will be cut off no matter what. No phones, no whispering, just your unbridled attention towards the speakers. There will be breaks for refills and restroom use, and she reminds everyone the importance of respecting both the performer as well as respecting the audience. She gives the stage to the first speaker, and she takes off her hat as she walks back to the booth under the loud applause of the patrons, followed by immediate silence as the first speaker takes the stand.



During the entire evening, I am taken aback by the scope, the skill, and the affective responses from and to the performances. I try to keep in my tears, moved by the poems which are accidentally thematical (which Cassandra and I both acknowledge to one another), and is also noted by the organiser during one of the announcements – tonight appears to be thematically focussed on fathers and fatherhood. I lost my (step)dad last year, and I am clearly not the only one. I push away my own still raw emotions of loss and bereavement while I listen to others' experiences of this shared pain. The interactions between audience and performer are palpable: thick in the air – not only as an energy but as a symbolic vocalisation of support, denial, agreement, awe. But indeed, an energy too: an undoubtable effervescence regarding affective responses, ritualism, and sharing through art.



Long before the evening ends, I already know: *This* is the space where I need to do my ethnography - if they'll have me.

Chapter 6.





Knowing Your Place:
The Artistic Queer Space &
The Power of Narrative Ownership

6.1. Introduction

In response to Chapters 4 and 5, which highlight the importance of belonging and the consequences that stem from being marginalized, Chapter 6 provides an ethnographic account of a queer space that challenges many of the problems that are inherent with typically LG spaces. This chapter argues that queer spaces may provide an important alternative space of belonging for plurisexuals – as the rigid binary scripts that often govern LG spaces are lifted here. In this chapter, I look at one particular queer venue in London that adopts an explicit feminist queer ethos that works to celebrate intersectional differences and fluid identities, rather than reifying them. I argue that queer spaces may offer new possibilities of belonging for plurisexual individuals. The vFd (also known as Vogue Fabrics Dalston) is a queer space in Dalston (Hackney, London), which is run through a feminist queer framework and allows for the (re)production of empathy, relationality, and expression through art. I argue that a queer space, such as vFd, allows for narrative ownership which is not experienced by plurisexual individuals in LGBT spaces. The feminist and intersectional framework through which vFd produces queerness allows for a different narrative around sexual citizenship and inclusivity that transgresses sexual identity.

This chapter explores the nature of concepts such as (1) **radical acceptance**, (2) **transgressive relationality**, and (3) **empathic assimilation**, as ways for a queer space to create meaningful socio-political relationships and a sense of belonging. Narrative ownership is explored through the performances of Spoken Word London, as hosted in the vFd. Performances are analysed through (auto)ethnographic fieldnotes, and I argue that the ability to explore one's own authentic narratives through an intersectional lens (e.g., passion, anger, grief, as experienced through sexuality, gender, and ethnicity) in transgressive and accepting space

creates queer places in which belonging can be cultivated and felt – by plurisexuals and allies alike.

6.2. Setting the Queer Scene: Hackney

Beyond the methodologically informed participant-led discovery of vFd as a queer art space, there is a necessity in exploring, even if briefly¹, how the overarching area’s socio-cultural geography influences the space and those who interact with – and within – it. The Hackney Borough is a space which continuously experiences significant developments, either coerced in the form of gentrification and displacement, or as a site of inner-community politics, expressions, and varying forms of cultural recognition.

Walking along Dalston’s Kingsland Road, there are telltale signs of gentrification; the street has long² established community-driven commerce in the form of Turkish shops, Nigerian restaurants, and beauty salons that focus on curly hair, amongst others. Though Kingsland Road is also dotted with far more middle-class-driven and oriented spaces, such as kraft beer breweries, vintage clothing stores, and thematic cocktail bars. Glass’ (1964) conceptualisation of gentrification focussed primarily on the “invasion” of the middle class within London’s working-class neighbourhoods, and it is a process characterised as one that “unmakes” a previously established area. Which, in turn, leaves it socially unrecognisable to its original denizens (Glass 1964, Moskowitz 2018). The relations between the physical and social construction of space (Harvey 1973, Massey 1991), as explored in more depth in this chapter, are thus evident within these processes due to their impact on both the physical and the relative elements of a space. Therefore, gentrification can be critically understood as

¹ Please note a furthering on the topic of queer spatial precarity in thesis Conclusion in relation to COVID-19.

² See Oluwalana (2022).

produced through relational power as it is 'both an effect and cause of socio-economical processes' (Hubbard & Kitchin 2011, p.367). Therefore, Glass' initial conceptualisation mainly focussed on the urban shift of social demographics, but various theoretical adaptations and additions engage with the broad scope of social, cultural, economic, aesthetic, and material changes of gentrification (Smith 1979; 1991, Zukin 1992, Martin 2005).

However, as noted by Atkinson (2003), gentrification is not only based on classist local policies and processes but is also influenced more broadly – allowing us to consider it a side effect of globalisation, with socio-economic ramifications that are rooted within colonialism; in particular in reference to the cultural and ethnic privileges and identities that surround the gentrification process. The divisive nature of gentrification positions the white middle-class gentrifier as a 'saviour of the city' (p.2) while processes of displacement are continuing in the background. Marginalised groups are forced to be adrift in urban settings, forcing relocation and the uprooting of local community whilst disregarding local cultural history – which creates issues of unbelonging (Atkinson & Bridge 2005, Davidson 2008). This "byproduct" of gentrification, known as displacement, tends to get overlooked in favour of a positive bias towards spatial maintenance, rather than engaging with the displacement of the working class – either epistemologically (Helbrecht 2017), or in practice (Baeten et al. 2017). Martin argues that this cultural damage is an act of violence against the marginalised inhabitants: 'local incumbent population is disenfranchised from this recasting, and so the re-imaging of such areas represents a violent imposition of a dominant perspective of place' (2005, p.1). This violence is found to be present in the processes surrounding gentrification and the tensions this brings the local community, who have shown their concerns about the local Council's plans for the area and have been actively campaigning against past and impending

changes. Notable examples are found in Hackney Wick, an area once known as a ‘multi-cultural, multi-ethnic neighbourhood’ that is now unaffordable for its displaced working-class inhabitants (Gregory 2021); as well as Hackney’s Dalston area, which has tremendous socio-spatial and economic changes lying in its wake, with equal concerns from local citizens for the precarity of property ownership, the loss of culture, and the disintegration of diversity, and the overall fear of losing a home (Oluwalana 2022). Dalston, where my ethnography takes place, is one of Hackney’s 21 wards, bordering the Borough of Islington. Dalston, known as ‘Hackney’s largest town centre’ which is ‘known for its creative industries, cultural organisations, night time economy and mix of communities’, has had a developmental strategy proposed, consulted, and adopted between 2018 and 2021, indicating the local government’s action towards socio-economic and geographical improvement³. In light of the critiquing these developments, concerns can be raised following the potential socio-cultural displacement harming the locals and potentially “wrecking” Dalston, rather than be its “saviour” – echoing narratives of socio-cultural loss through ‘small scale colonialism’ (Atkinson, 2003). The narrative of colonialism is equally prevalent in contemporary work on Hackney’s socio-economic and political geography, as Taylor (2020) explores how the daily negotiations with governmental housing and migration policies lead to the experiences of intergenerational insecurity, obstruction, and ‘cumulative precarity’ of Hackney’s inhabitants (p.588) – of which 50% can be categorised as being ‘young and precarious’, under the age of 29 (p.589). ‘The council says homes in Dalston costs 15 times the average salary’ and local community campaigners expressed that the council’s promise to ensure that 50% of these

³ See the Hackney Council’s (2023a) Regeneration and (2023b) Dalston Supplementary Planning Document.

new homes would be “affordable” does not negate how this development lacks homes available for social rent in an area with high levels of poverty (Gregory 2021).

The lack of affluence is reflected in Hackney’s place in London’s Poverty Profile: Based on data generated in the 2021 population Census, Hackney scored below average on the sections of Living Standards, Work, and Housing – mostly standing out with Living Standards. Living standards in Hackney are worse in comparison to all London Boroughs in relation to Child Poverty Rate, Pay Inequality, and Income Deprivation (Trust for London 2023) The ONS 2011 data on population showed Hackney to be ‘one of the most ethnically diverse boroughs in the country - just over 40% of its people are non-white’. This appears to be in line with the data of the 2021 census, which shows that 53.1% of Hackney residents identified as White, in relation to 54.7% in 2011 (ONS 2022; 2023). Moreover, Hackney has shown to be the third most densely populated Borough in the London area in the latest census, with 11 of its 21 wards falling under the ‘most deprived 10% of [London] neighbourhoods’ (ONS 2023; Trust for London 2023). This, in turn, relates to the socio-spatial narrative of how poverty and homophobia go hand in hand (Hanhardt 2013, Judge 2018). This is particularly of interest as Hackney is a space which exemplifies the spatial and social facilitation of queerness as well as one that discursively indicates otherwise.

While some research suggests LGBTQ+ people take on the role of the gentry within the gentrification process – in particular, the white LGBT middle class (Bell & Binnie 2004, Anderson 2009, Burchiellaro 2020) – far more evidence favours the position in which LGBTQ+ spaces, areas, and “gaybourhoods” are inherently victimised by marginalised displacement in neo-liberal cities (Doan & Higgins 2011). According to Hubbard & Wilkinson (2014), the hegemonic narrative favours the rhetoric of urban inclusivity and the positive socio-economic

changes, over critiquing it's socio-spatial issues such as displacement. Generally, urban displacement of sexual minority groups has been an under-researched area within sexual political discourse when discussing spatial hierarchies of sexual morality, gendered norms and political progression (Puar 2007; Spruce 2020). Moreover, it is possible to consider these areas to mark 'spatio-temporal hierarchies' which in turn 'reflect knowledge about zones of sexual in/tolerance' within a city scape (Spruce 2020, p.962). Spruce further notes that the positive associations with LGBTQ spatial inhabitancy is based on the white middle-class, whilst the ethnically diverse spaces are associated with working-class homophobic violence (Judge 2018) – the latter leading to a binary socio-spatial divide from which displacement ensues (ridding an area of non-white working-class bodies in order to progress to a “good, white, gay middle-class area”) (Bell & Binnie 2004; Binnie & Skeggs 2004). Hanhardt (2013) refers to the axes of 'poverty and/or nonwhiteness' to be at the perceived 'crux of homophobia', which in return implies that issues of class and gentrification are spatially and politically positioned in a way that allows for sexual geography scholarship to not only recognise “gaybourhoods” or “gay-friendly” spaces but also recognise a 'cultural map of homophobia' (p.14). Furthermore, Hanhardt (2013, p.15) refers to gentrification as a way for the city to further marginalise the 'racialised poor' through Harvey's (2001) concept of 'spatial fixing' (which indicates a socio-political process driven by capitalism to either *expand* on the city's capital or *displace* it to battle the over-accumulation of wealth, as well as certain peoples, within certain urban areas). These processes sanitise and transform spaces where sexual subversion is practised, such as LGBT+ and queer spaces, through 'large-scale gentrification and neoliberalisation, which leaves fewer interstitial places available for non-conforming populations, and the organisation which supports them' (Buckingham, Degen, and Marandenet 2017, p.14). However, unlike Soho, Dalston does not appear to be perceived as a gaybourhood, let

alone as an overtly established space for the LGBTQAI+ community in equal measure. However, even an area such as Soho – a neighbourhood with deep-seated LGBT situated memories (Spruce 2021) and a prominent nighttime economy (Hubbard 2012) – has its own distinct history of gentrification and erasure. This, in turn, can be used to reflect on the issues faced by marginalised areas within London, such as Hackney, to fail to be as established as “historically long standing” (or as profitable⁴) in its socio-sexual and spatial diversity:

There have been queer venues in London’s east end for decades, operating both in and out of the shadows. But unlike Soho, the history of these spaces isn’t well preserved: partly because, historically, east London hasn’t been the most affluent or well-off area in the city, and partly because, like so much of queer history, little was documented due to fear of persecution (Kheraj 2021).

Hackney is a diverse space equally plagued by precarity, poverty, and marginalisation, as well as brimming with life, commerce, and character. It feels hermeneutically unjust to attempt to boil down the social, cultural, economic, and spatial histories and experiences of – and within – the Hackney Borough to such a limited scope. However, equally so, I implore the reader to engage with this subchapter as a pre-cursor to understanding the unique nature of Hackney, and its area Dalston, in order to begin grasping at the complex and diverse socio-cultural, economic, political dynamics at play within and through the vFd. This, alongside the issues found within the research data, where plurisexual inclusivity and queerness are considered precarious within the overarching urban areas, either economically and socio-culturally, or as affectively experienced, indicates how the ‘thrown-togetherness’ of vFd creates a space in

⁴ Please see Conclusion in relation to the LGBTQ+ Nightlife in Hackney, which delves into the issues of economic and spatial precarity.

which various experiences can come together and create a different dynamic anew. In other words, how the overarching spatial dynamics influence and impact the “dinky London basement” the ethnography takes place in, alongside the already complex social-political dynamics found within the LGBTQIA+ community and vFd’s own socio-spatial maintenance.

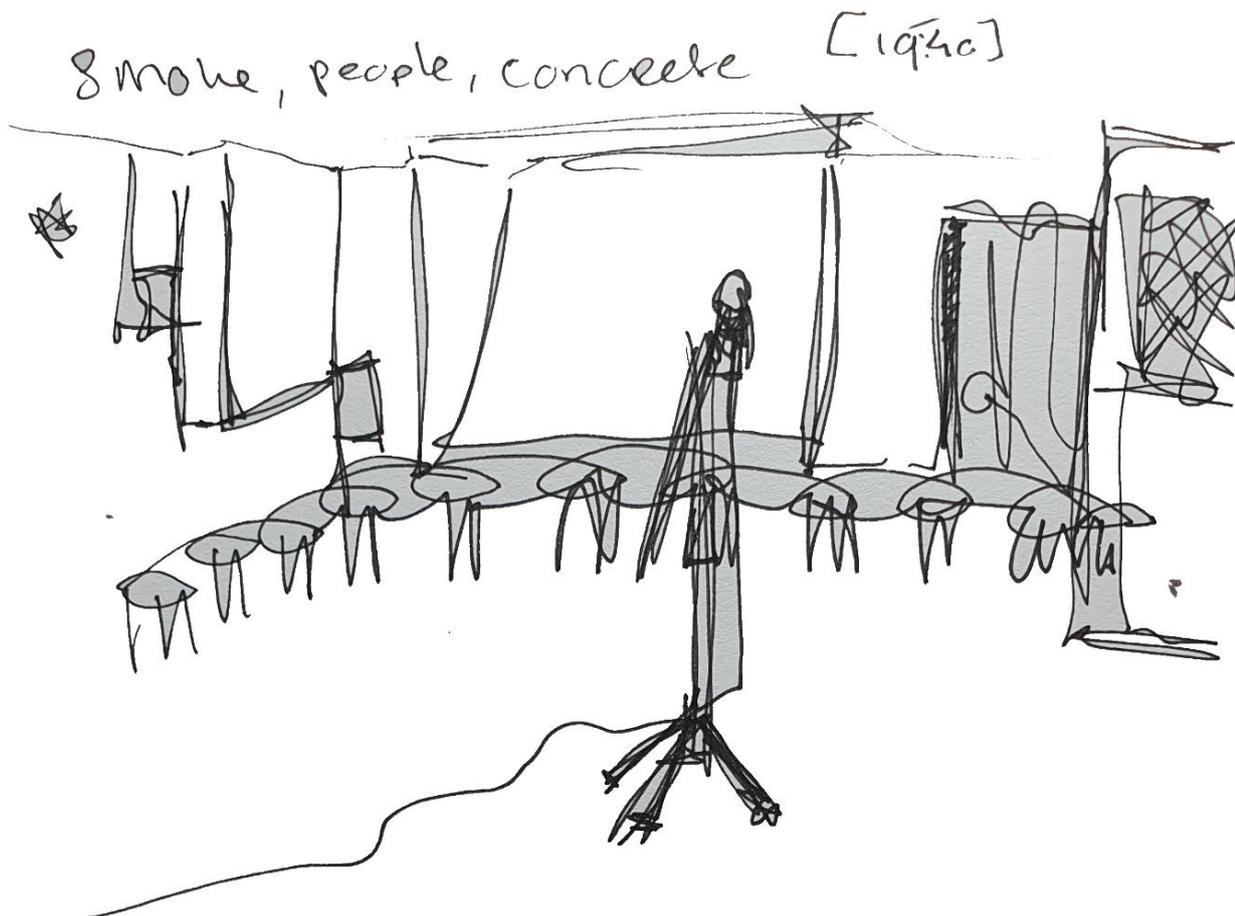
6.3. Radical Agency, (Inclusive) Radical Feminism, Radical Acceptance

vFd (previously known as Vogue Fabrics Dalston) opened in 2007 and is an artistic club that holds London Art Council Funding for their Femmetopia nights - nights which celebrate femininity and feminism as a radical response to the masculine dominance of the London LGBTQ nightlife (Kheraj 2021; field notes 2019; interviews 2018 - 2019). As alluded to in the ethnographic section of the introduction, the venue is a small basement, with a small bar that does not evoke the feeling of a commercial club as it serves drinks either in cans (beer or soda) or in plastic see-through cups (wines, spirits, and mixers). While inconspicuous and difficult to find from the street, there is also a shop front known as the Outsiders Gallery where Queer artists get the opportunity to share their work, which is often political in nature. One of the most intriguing aspects is the space’s own political and affective terminologies, such as *“radical acceptance”*, *“radical kinship”*, *“radical agency space”*, and their *“Femmifesto”* (see Fieldwork Image: Femmetopia). These terms and creeds apply to what I refer to as the space’s **transgressive spatial relationality**, and in order to authentically convey the terms, symbols, and meanings used in the vFd space, I adopt the language throughout this chapter.

Fieldwork Image: Femmetopia⁵



Fieldwork image: Performance Space⁶



⁵ A bright yellow lightbox with the space logo and the text “femmetopia” illuminates the wall of the concrete basement: An illuminating reminder that this space resists London’s masculine focussed LGBT+ community whilst simultaneously hinting at the queer feminist code of conduct of the space.

⁶ The barren basement has a slope leading to a blacked-out window to the street, a massive speaker stands on the right side of the space. A half-moon circle of stools against the back wall creates an atrium for the lone microphone in the middle; the only open space in the room, as it is enclosed by the PE benches and bar from the POV.

To explore the spatial navigation of the vFd, I interviewed with one of the hosts and facilitators of Spoken Word London, discussing her interpretation of these spatial navigations, the function of art, and how the space defies issues seen within LGBT spaces. To maintain anonymity the host shall be referred to as Róisín. Róisín and I meet each other close to Kings Cross Station on a sunny day in August 2019. I instantly recognise her approaching the square as I am waiting in the shade. She tells me that she is going to a writers' group afterwards, and as she explains the kind of creative writing she does with this group, I instantly became aware of the passion that poetry and spoken word hold in her life. It is evident that these art forms relate to a deeper meaning that exists beyond the concrete walls of the Dalston basement where SWL takes place. We make our way to the river, setting up a small space for our interview amongst the people drinking and laughing in the sun. According to Róisín, *belonging is like glue*. She continues: *within the queer community, belonging is that what binds people together, through a shared idea of accepting people for what they are, and understanding there are differences, and being okay with that*. She seems critical of selective spatial inclusivity in LGBT spaces, and Róisín believes that to actively exclude individuals *choosing not to engage with them* despite sharing membership within a marginalised group is the *antithesis of belonging*. This is further explored when Róisín refers to the LGBT community as *fractured*, which echos the explicit experiences of many of the interview participants – whether it is about gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, or disability, there is an intrinsic sense of hierarchies that comes with being a minority within a minority (see also Chapter 5):

It's weird how, in almost like to survive you have to Other other marginalized people, you know disempower other marginalised people so that you can kind of feel some power.

Róisín believes that it is *quite radical* to be expressing emotions and accepting of these expressed emotions, and that queer spaces should accommodate this as *radically queer* and *radically accepting*:

[In regards to acceptance and queer trauma] The more you lose, the more intense your belonging becomes when you find people that you can belong with. But I also think with radical kinship... it is okay to cry in a queer space. And I think that is radical kinship, like taking people with their traumas and being like, "It's okay".

In relation to radical kinship and radical acceptance, I relay an example of something I had witnessed in my fieldwork, where I turned to someone adorned in explicitly clownish make-up, ready for a performance, and told them that I liked their look. They thanked me and their friend turned to them with a wide grin: 'See, I told you, you would find your place here!' Róisín smiles at my example and says there is a *beauty in the sense of being found*:

Queer people are more predominantly lost in the world because there isn't a – you know – there isn't such a clear idea of how we should live our lives and what we do. Like all of these landmarks, like getting married, having children. I mean for a lot of queer people, that's not their thing. So, to have a different way of being and to have it acknowledged by a group of people. I don't know, it's really liberating.

The liberation of finding social spatial commonality and belonging comes from an interesting dynamic of mononormative rejection. This allows for patrons to find kinship amongst peers who also “fail” at doing normative society (Ahmed 2006, Halberstam 2011), as well as other previously mentioned concepts through the participant data analysis (e.g., the “good gay vs bad queer” discourse; the rejection of the cisgender homosexual male dominance of LGBT+ spaces; how there is power/loss when there is no embodied material queerness, such as accessible lavatories or seeing other queer bodies; and how belonging can also to be found in the awkward, the skewed, the unfamiliar, the queer). This space allows to navigate the loss and grief associated with non-conformity and provides a relational element to the progression of healing through narrative power.

This relates to Warner’s work on queer spaces of resistance (1993) that resist the ‘regimes of the normal’ (p.xxvi), though building upon the themes of belonging, identity, and its negotiations in relation to mononormativity as explored in Chapters 4 and 5, I want to emphasize that a queer space such as vFd fights the regimes of the normative; where normality is not just based on hegemony, but constructed through complex hierarchies of power structures.

Moreover, the vFd working concept of *radical agency*, as explained to me by one of the organisers of vFd’s biweekly Live Art Club night (LAC), is about providing a judgment-free artistic platform for expression – which in turn allows for critical engagement with one’s own and other’s boundaries: You are *free to leave if you’re uncomfortable*, and there is an active openness to engage with one another and allow for critical *conversation*. The latter engages heavily with vFd’s rules and regulations, as radical acceptance and radical agency encourages (self)critical reflexivity and relationality, but it does not encourage radical rejection of hard

boundaries laid out by patrons or the hard rules of the space's feminist manifest. The maintenance of this safety is found in the space's manifest, referred to as *The Femmifesto* (vfdalston.com) and respect, body positivity, gender expression, consent, and love as key aspects to ensure that vFd is a safe queer space (see next page)⁷. The Femmifesto is printed on several A4 papers and taped/framed and hung across the space as a reminder for its guests that there is a feminist code of conduct to maintain whilst engaging with other patrons within the space.

The interview participants have expressed in various occasions how commonality alone is not sufficient to experience belonging within community spaces. In particular, Persephone's desire to find a community based on a feminist ideology comes to mind, as for her, this indicates a deeper connection based on ethical practices that result in an inclusive mutual respect. Likewise, participants Tom and Ash spoke in length about how inclusivity and safety allow for the expression of authenticity. To find a space in which there is an explicit social maintenance of intersectional feminist codes of conduct and practices, creates a different relationship with the space and its patrons. Moreso, it is the maintenance of these practices that removes vFd's code of conduct from being a mere tick box exercise for intersectional inclusivity, to one that is embodied and felt – which I will explore further throughout the chapter.

⁷ Cited version of the vFd's Femmifesto (retrieved from: vfdalston.com [accessed on 24 October 2019])

FEMMIFESTO

vFd has always been a safe space for all, in the light of neoconservatism and the need for intersectional unity we want to reiterate the beliefs and practice that we stand by.

vFd is a space to imagine, create and take action. It is place to make transgressive imagery, a home to the outlaw rebel visionary and a space to discuss the critical alteration of the oppressive status quo. We ask in the interests of liberation and for the enjoyment of all who find their way to vFd that you observe the following:

Respect Yourself And Everyone Else.

Glorify All Bodies For Their Individual Beauty And Power.

Celebrate Each Person's Self-Determined Gender.

Always Establish Positive Consent ... It's Hot!

Remember To Frequently Tell Your Friends You Love Them.

If at any point during your time at vFd you feel our code of conduct is not being observed then please tell one of the vFd staff so that they may rectify the problem immediately.

We understand that each of us is on a journey of constant transformation and that as a community we are here to love each other through the challenges of dismantling the oppressive imperialist white supremacist capitalist heteronormative patriarchy in order to live equally in shared freedom.

Accountability is, according to Róisín, maintained by the patrons themselves, who will actively engage with performers or patrons they believe to be negatively transgressing the code of conduct. The Femmifesto revolves around the dismantling of oppressive structures and the perpetual state of change and growth required to achieve this by creating a political platform to allow for queer spaces to be transgressive and liminal. These forms of political activism and progression have been ingrained within queer spaces since there have been queer spaces (Halberstam 2005). bell hooks wrote on accountability and rejecting Othering as coming from a chosen, radical space of resistance (1990), whilst simultaneously holding the position that change is intrinsically linked to forgiveness and compassion⁸, which does not entitle anyone to an unconditional pardon, but grants everyone a space of learning. In conversation with author and activist Maya Angelou, hooks' well-known quote on transformation through compassion, is followed by an often-overlooked remark which I argue to be at the heart of transgressive spaces – physical and conceptual alike:

I feel I'm always trying to address the question of not dividing people into oppressors and oppressed, but trying to see the potential in all of us to occupy those two poles, and knowing that we have to believe in the capacity of someone else to change towards that which is enhancing of our collective well-being. Or we just condemn people to stay in place (hooks 1998 [no pagination]).

⁸ bell hooks (1998): 'For me, forgiveness and compassion are always linked: how do we hold people accountable for their wrongdoings and remain in touch with their humanity enough to believe in their capacity to be transformed?' (McLeod 1998 [retrieved from <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/249.html>])

To note, the concept of accountability within vFd as a queer radical space will be further explored in 6.4.2. Performance: ~~Queer~~ Fear.

Despite vFd's code of conduct and political activism being embedded in a queer and intersectional feminist narrative, there seems to be some disparity between active spatial engagement and academic engagement. Some scholars, such as Bain & Podmore (2021), argue that to disrupt oppression the 'important next step for LGBTQ+ urban studies involve attending to the place-based dimensions of its urban activism' in order for 'queer urban studies to be useful'. Recognising the need to marry the act with the theory is one step, but I argue it requires active academic engagement for these double hermeneutics to develop (Giddens 1987; Fricker 2009, 2011; Kidd, José & Pohlhaus 2019).

6.4. Transgressive Relationality

The interview participants have frequently relayed issues of socio-spatial rejections, of which many experienced "not belonging" as being explicitly weaponised against their presence within a space (e.g., Lilly and Josh, who have been told that they did not belong in a space due to their bisexuality).

When we consider space as the interwoven connection of social relations, a network, and its constant production and reproduction, we consider places to be processes that develop (through and by) significant political dynamics (Massey 1994; Lefebvre & Nicholson-Smith 2009; Soja 2010; Ahmed 2006). For a place to be considered a process, it is inherently impossible to consider it as a singular static concept: space and time do not have singular identities by default, and to consider it a rigid identity is inherently considering it as something which is permanently maintained (ergo encapsulated, timeless, in stasis). While the meaning

and memories of places are in fact situated in spatial-temporality, to *maintain* this concept it immediately 'deprives the spatial of meaningful politics' altogether (Massey 1994, p.251). Frankly, when considering Massey's work on place and identity, a place of belonging is one formed out of (spatial and temporal) multiplicity and maintained as having the potentiality of transgression through these political dynamics:

(...) the attempts to fix the meaning of places, to enclose and defend them: they construct singular, fixed and static identities for places, and they interpret place as bounded enclosed spaces defined through counter position against the Other who is outside (1994, p.168).

Right on the axes of these political power relations, we find (sexually) marginalised groups in the crosshairs. Brown, Browne & Lim (2007) argue the same relationality of sexual subjective interaction through space, politics, and power:

(...) power might be understood as myriad entanglements of resistance and domination that are mutually constitutive of each other. Power operates through how we interact with one another, how we regulate each other's behaviour and consequently make the spaces that we inhabit (p.5).

When relating this to power struggles, identity negotiations, and feelings of belonging as experiences of plurisexual individuals in LGBT+ spaces (as explored in Chapters 4 and 5), the disparity between LGBT and Queer placemaking becomes progressively evident. Brown (2007) specifically relates how spatial activism has been working towards a more bisexual and trans inclusive environment, and how queerness transcends the "umbrella status" of all that is non-normative. Queerness, according to Brown (2007), is more of a 'relational process'

(p.197), adding onto Heckert's (2004) suggestion that a 'truly radical politics of sexuality must move beyond simple transgression, and incorporate its ethical goals (for example, co-operative, non-hierarchical, sex-positive relationships) into its mode of operations' (Brown 2007, p.197). In agreement with Brown, I argue that these social and relational processes are at the very core of political queer radical space making, and that they 'offer more than empty transgression (p.205)'. It is the reflexivity and empathy through which these relationships and spaces are built which are the most transgressive acts of all.

6.5. Empathic Assimilation: Queer Narrative Power & Negotiating Empathy through Queer Art

When exploring empathic assimilation and the political affective power of art as platformism, I argue that the relationality that is produced within the transgressive queer space is reproduced outside of the space – creating allyship and compassion with those who may not have engaged with queerness and LGBTQ+ politics, and create a sense of belonging with those whose lived experiences are shared in recognition and radical acceptance.

Papacharissi (2015, p.16) has argued⁹ that 'affect is inherently political' as it 'provides a way of understanding humans as collective and emotional, as well as individual and rational, by presenting these states as confluent rather than opposite'. Moreover, Panacharissi argues that affect is confluent in multiple stages beyond the emotional and the rationale, as it is equally 'intense' as well as 'abstract in its focus at the same time', as well as containing the 'specificity of corporeal representation' as well as being produced through the 'abstract

⁹ See also Proveti 2009

formations of the general affects of pleasure, desire, or pain' – referring to the state of affect as abstract fluidity.

Róisín refers to Spoken Word London as a *queer utopia*. Róisín started there as a performer herself, but quickly climbed up to be one of the main organisers of the bi-weekly event. She ties her own sense of plurisexual belonging to Spoken Word London: *I found a beautiful community here*. We discuss the space as a place that enables affective change. Róisín believes that the act of entering the space already functions as a gateway to innate queer allyship:

Like, a vaguely homophobic person coming along and there is... they can't question that moment, you know if they're following that piece, they are feeling that, and they are feeling the bravery of somebody standing up, and talking about their identity. Even it was an identity they would normally dismiss as non-existing; it exists there in that moment.

Róisín mentions this type of allyship again further on in our interview, explaining how the space is one that is transitional. She views the space of vFd to exist in the middle of the Venn diagram where the *cisgendered heteronormative world and the queer world* exist [sic]. Róisín says that the expression of queer experiences through poetry and spoken word allows for this empathic assimilation to occur, creating the transitionality of the space: *Making the people exist together in an authentic and powerful way*.

I feel like if they're not outrightly queer, they're allies. You walk through the door and you kind of have no option. You can leave obviously, and I'm sure some people do, but I've never noticed it. I think it's like when people get through the door, they're like 'Oh yeah, this is fine. I'm cool with this.' They'll hear like a really heartfelt poem by a trans person and they're like 'oh Jesus...'. Their empathy kind of makes them allies.

Moreover, Róisín tells me that the position of queer people within this transitional space allows for the experience of intersecting issues and identities to have a platform to be expressed:

The queer person is also black, the queer person who is also poor, the queer person who is also Muslim, the queer person who is also trans, the queer person is also working class, or whatever those things are, you know, they're all kind of queer issues.

This, in turn, addresses some of the issues found by the participants, who felt that their experiences within different social spaces led not only to the segregation of queer allies, but also to the more personal conflicts of trying to navigate (the expression of) the multiplicities of their identity, as addressed in Chapter 4. A space that not only allows for the expression of different forms of queerness, alongside of the explicit expression of one's intersectional identity facets, allows for a very different kind of identity ownership. Madison (2010, p.159) discusses the transgressive nature of political performances, arguing that

spaces that provide platforms can become scenes ‘where unjust systems ... can be identified and interrogated (...) One performance may or may not change someone’s world... but one performance can be revolutionary in enlightening citizens as to the possibilities that grate against injustice.’ Due to the inherent queerness of the space, alongside its diverse demographics, all relationalities created within this feminist space are emerging from – and interacting through – an intersectional framework. Róisín’s words connect practice with theory: vFd facilitates space in which a sense of safety is generated that allows the exploration of authenticity, gender, and sexuality, for both its allies as well as its queer inhabitants:

But I think it is not just the middle ground between queerness and heteronormativeness, for a want of better word. But also, all of those issues in the book like ageism, race, and class. It is a safe middle ground for these issues to be explored. I think all of those issues (...) they are all queer issues too you know? We have queer people who suffer at the intersection.

This, in turn, relates to the interview data, as participants who experience their identities as being forced into segregation, rather than a cohesive intersectional existence; such as Lilly’s experiences of racial and classist politics, having to “pick” which part of her identity is most important and subsequently sacrifice another. To endure partial erasure rather than experiencing full belonging is a theme that is actively addressed within the walls of vFd.

Brown (in Browne, Lim & Brown 2007) works through Thrift’s (2004, p.69) ‘politics of emotional liberty’ in order to explore the affective relationality that produces queer spaces. Brown (2007) discerns that queer spaces do not exist solely to be a space that makes up for

queer loss (Ahmed 2006); they are spaces that exist to make up for a lack of social acceptance. Thrift refers to these political spaces as spaces that exist not only to 'avert pain' (2004, p.70). According to Brown (2007, pp.202-203), queer spaces also come together for 'play' and 'pleasure', and draws upon McGormack's (2003, pp.459-503) understanding that ethical attachments 'emerge through the cultivation of the affective dimensions of sensibility' which demand 'openness to the uncertain affective potentiality of the eventful encounter'. Through these affective encounters, an intense production of 'affective attachment, creativity, and connectivity' is established within queer autonomous spaces. Brown refers to these spaces as having an immersive freedom: The creation of a space in which participants get a chance to question the limitations and boundaries of their regular social and emotional interactions. While Brown (2007, p.203) alludes to this process as one that is indicative of the exploration of political activism (using affective relational terms such as comradeship and 'disagreements'), I cannot help but relate this to the empathic assimilation process within the walls of the vFd. While the vFd is not a space that aimed to create a political movement, it does engage in/encourage radical practices; making it an innately political space, as produced through its feminist queer guidelines and manifesto. When applying Brown's (2007) theoretical angle, Thrift (2003) refers to the nature of politics as one of inherent relational performativity:

politics is a precious thing, a fragile form of life and one of the chief means through which society is achieved, it is also necessarily a hesitant entity as it is highly performative (pp.2021-2022).

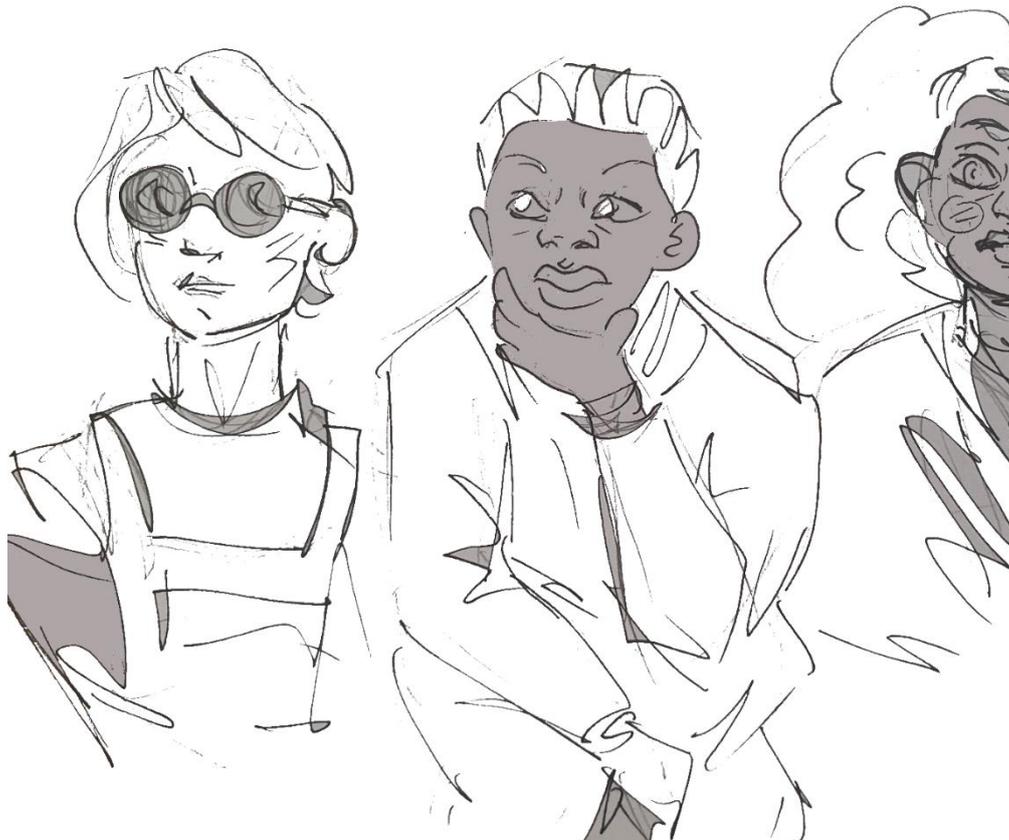
Ahmed (2017) considers the term "feminist subjectivity", she refers to feminism as being perceived as the wilfully obstinate state of the feminist subject; where the subject is unable to be directed or "straightened" in ways which favour the narrative of the non-feminist

subject. The framing of the disobedient feminist holds familiarity and similarity to what can best be described as the disobedient plurisexual: the non-mononormative; the queer; the transgressive; the racialised; the radicalised; the artistic; the wilful plurisexual – who persistently fights for their own narrative ownership. It is this narrative ownership, the (re)claiming of the lived experience and the contesting of stigma, that resonates in the words of many of my participants – those who have engaged with queerness, politics, and art in this basement in Dalston or not. I argue that this process of narrative ownership is the first step in the space's relational empathic abilities: as to relay your own narrative is to create a liminal space from displacement and rejection towards a path of (external and internal) acceptance and belonging. The second step is the maintenance and regulation of radically reflexive practices through an intersectional feminist framework, as this allows for self-ownership to be claimed and conveyed without judgement or ire. These steps combined create what I call empathic assimilation, where queer people and allies alike – whether they take the role of performer or audience member (see Fieldwork Images next page) – can facilitate the acceptance of one's own and other's voices, which I argue to be a main contribution to knowledge in the thesis and for sexuality scholarship overall.

Fieldwork images: LAC Performer¹⁰ and the SWL Master of Ceremony¹¹



Fieldwork images: Audience members Spoken Word London



¹⁰ Sketch of a performer during a fortnightly performance night at vFd known as ACL (Art Club Live) that was open to all forms of performances, which held a single rule beyond the space's Femmifesto: To partake you have to engage in radical acceptance.

¹¹ The masters of ceremony during Spoken Word London nights are recognisable by their black top hat.

6.5.2. Empathic Assimilation: Performances

To exemplify the aforementioned political performativity through transgressive spatial dynamics, in the following section, I analyse four of the performances from Spoken World London in order to engage with these affective relationalities.

Alongside the analysis I also provide images of performances with context and, for brevity, minimal thematic engagement to provide insight into the diversity of the performers, themes, politics, and affective responses – of the audience and myself from a reflexive auto-ethnographic perspective. All sketches alongside a Performance Analysis are directly associated with this performance.

This type of analysis captures the complexity of the space in a different way. I argue that this reflexive and creative type of analysis (through fieldwork sketches and the socio-spatial and political impact of the performances) refrains from overanalysing the creative work of the performer whilst ensuring the researcher does not claim the narrative and experiences of the subject. The performers keep ownership of their own narrative whilst I convey my experience of their socio-spatial and political engagement and art through my own engagement and art – a form of ethnographic analysis which contributes to both queer methodologies and sexuality scholarship, both the sociology of sexualities and sexual geography alike.



Performance Analysis 1: Protect Black Girls

In the wake of 'Surviving R. Kelly' (Kreativ Inc. & Bunim/Murray Productions 2019) a known performer to the local spoken word community, a black woman, addresses the audience¹². She questions why it is that white girls get protected, while young black girls are left victimised – even by their own community – as some take the side of a rapist and abuser, just because

¹² The performer speaks on topics of intersectional violence and misogyny (2019).

he has power and a name. She asks why creativity comes before the lives of young black women, and why intersectional support is conditional when intersectional violence is indiscriminatory.

Her request for reflection leaves the room buzzing. Sketching her face, I am contemplating her words: whilst AFAB, this is not a world that is experienced by me, through me, through my body, my age, my culture, or the (unconditional) value I place upon this type of artistry. I may not be explicitly complicit, but I wonder if my lack of engagement makes me compliant by proxy. Am I cherry-picking which misogynies to oppose, or do I consider this a fight in which I have no place due to my obvious lack of lived experiences? Moreso, the participants – in particular those who identified as mixed race – spoke of the navigation where they feel they must sacrifice parts of their identity to experience partial support or experience none at all. This is then no longer a practice of cherry-picking, but one of survivalism. Reframing Audre Lorde's famous words to this performance allows for a reflexive analysis of hermeneutics and (perhaps wilful?) ignorance (Fricker 2007):

(...) what does it mean in personal and political terms when [the Black woman who performs here is my greatest insight into this double bound cultural misogyny]? What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow parameters of change are possible and allowable (Lorde 1984, p.X)

Perhaps it is through these performances that the parameters of change become broader, as awareness creates potential for understanding. Lorde's essays *The Transformation of Silence Into Language* and *Poetry is not a Luxury* (1984, 2007) indicate that for marginalised women poetry acts as the requirement of affective exploration and transformative action (from hope,

to language, to concept, to change¹³). Furthermore, I cannot lay judgement on black masculinities nor the complexity of the racialised politics of male black sexualities.¹⁴ As seen in Leung & Williams' (2019) critical examination of the #MeToo movement, it is white women who are socially, politically, and culturally more able to publicly share their trauma – leading to further intersectional marginalisation: 'While the movement has found success with the Weinstein effect, the original audience of the movement—women of colour—did not share in its success because of the added factor of race p.349'. So why would I, a white AFAB scholar, have any say in this topic without bordering the unethical? I do not. I can however open my mind to the experiences of a woman who sees harm done to a community and requires me – alongside a room full of others – to listen and reflect upon this act of listening. Moreso, this requires me to aid in the facilitation of a socio-political space which allows for this transformative action – as well as its affective impressions and assimilations – to take place. It is through these processes that the argument for transgressive relationality truly takes hold; through the performance I – alongside the other patrons – were able to begin to understand the socio-political issues of a group that suffers from intersectional violence and structural marginalisation. Not through statistical analysis or theory, but through the wilful listening to the lived experiences of oppressed people and to engage with the willingness to establish a mutual dynamic, as mentioned in Chapter 4.

¹³ See *When I Dare To Be Powerful*, Audre Lorde (2007), p.103.

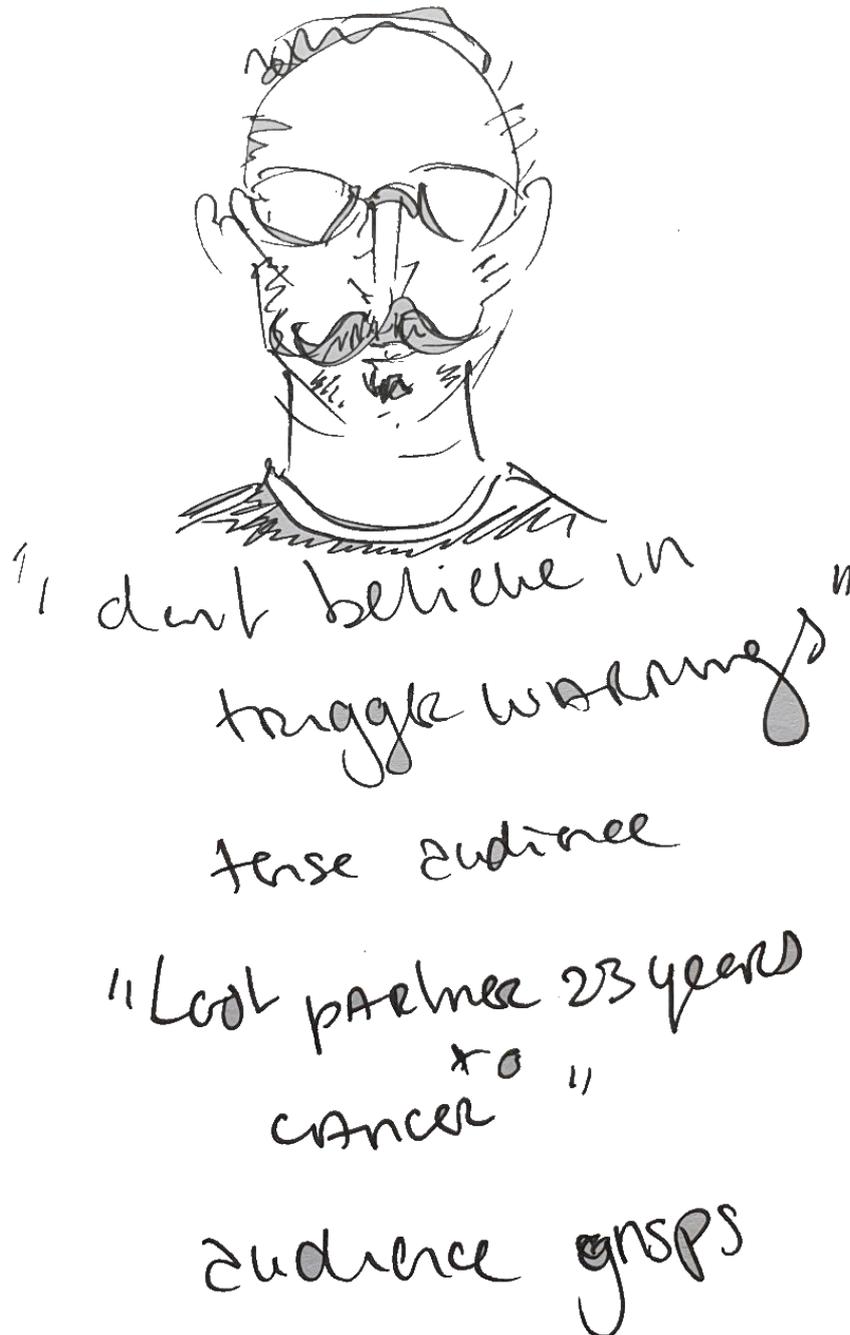
¹⁴ bell hooks (2004) on the complexity of male black misogyny through racialised and sexualised embodiment: 'In imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchal culture, hatred of black masculinity finds its most intense expression in the realm of the sexual. The dehumanization of the black male sexual body (often taking place with black male consent) is widespread and normalized. There are few places black males can go to get the sexual healing they need that would allow them to exert healthy sexual agency. Victimized by racist white projections of sexual pathology, most black males fear that naming dysfunctional sexual behavior is tantamount to agreeing that the black male is pathological. This is the type of identity forged in reaction that keeps black males from inventing liberatory selfhood. (...) Perhaps the formation of therapeutic sites for sexual healing will allow black men to speak a sexual longing that is not informed by sexual violence, either the racialized sexual violence imposed by whiteness or the hypermasculine mask imposed by blackness' pp. 77-78.

Performance image: Love & Fucking¹⁵



¹⁵ A black woman addresses the audience through the perspective of a dialogue with her partner, questioning the partner's desire for the size of her body, the colour of her skin, and her willingness to sexually please; all while questioning their relational sustainability based on the connection of romantic love and sexual acts. The audience is enthralled by her presence, both in words and in stature – the accessories adorning her do not distract, they draw you in – and eventually I too question: 'if he still loves her, why aren't they fucking anymore?'

Performance image: Grief Overrides Trigger Warnings¹⁶



¹⁶ The performer presents his heart wrenching piece on loss, tearing through the audience with an uncanny (albeit not transgressive) harsh and callous hurt. My notes (not part of this image) say 'pain(t)ed by grief'. There are little notes for this performance, as I too am mourning a loss and I am aware that there is a time for psychological analysis and necro-politics – and this isn't it. I stop taking notes and just listen.

Performance Analysis 2: ~~Queer~~ Fear

A performer, a young white gay man, performed a piece regarding his experiences of homophobic violence. He mentioned the prevalence of his fears culminating on his way to enjoy casual sexual relations through Grindr, telling the audience that to 'bring a fork to a date' is an act of premeditated self-defence that heterosexual people would not grasp.

"BRING FORK TO THE GRINDER DATE"
BEING SCARED TO GO ON A DATE
↳ only ~~is~~ fear known to QUEERS
"the STRAIGHTS won't understand"
QUEER FEAR

While the gravity of his words weighed heavy in relation to homophobic assault, I felt a spurring conflict with this statement, and not just for myself; sensing the tensing stiff shoulders on either side of me made me realise there was an unspoken reaction amongst the women and AFAB individuals in the room. There was a tension, an energy, an immediate buzz which did not appear to be picked up by everyone – but connected those who *did* like conductors that expeditiously exchanged... Something. I could not even place it properly in that moment: perhaps it was a sense of alertness? Or disappointment? A distinct distrust? Outright irritation? None of these, and all of these, all at once. The performer was correct in

the sense that heterosexual individuals would never understand the fear of being baited for homophobic abuse. However, this does not negate that every AFAB in this basement has unanimously, through a pregnant silence, considered how they have experienced their own share of fear – that all of us have had the equivalent of a fork as the third wheel on our own dates.

There are several important elements to consider for understanding the impact of the ignorance experienced during this performance: firstly homophobic violence, secondly Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), and thirdly, male privilege and – a topic which sees little academic discussion – sexism of gay men (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, Blumell & Rodriguez 2020). However, whilst VAWG¹⁷ and homophobic violence¹⁸ are significant issues

¹⁷ It should also be noted that this performance took place in 2019, and while this time frame is nowhere free of gendered fear of crime, it is notably prior to several very prominent cases of sexual violence and homicides that led to vigils, protests, and debates on violence against women and girls in the United Kingdom during the COVID-19 period: the murders of Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman (June 2020), Sarah Everard (March 2021), Julia James (April 2021) Sabina Nessa (September 2021), and Ashling Murphy (January 2022) were some of the high-profile murder and sexual violence cases during the pandemic period within the U.K. (BBC June 2020, March 2021, April 2021, September 2021, January 2022). The discourse has highlighted male violence (BBC 2022) generated during this timeframe has been incredibly impactful on the fear of crime (ons.gov.uk 2022) and the overall trust in police lies currently at 40% (Stacica.com 2022). According to Rape Crisis England & Wales (rapecrisis.org.uk n.d.), the ‘highest ever number of rapes was recorded by police in the year ending March 2022: 70,330. In that same time period, charges were brought in just 2,223 rape cases.’ Moreover, the overall England and Wales statistics of this period indicate that 85,000 women experiences sexual violence (rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault) per annum alongside an approximated 12,000 men (ONS 2022). With, ofcourse, unreported cases not included; indicating a potentially significantly higher number in reality (criminalinjurieshelpline.co.uk. 2022). The recent cases and numbers have generated more attention to VAWG across social, legal, and societal levels. The U.K. government’s VAWG Strategy and Domestic Abuse Plan of March 2022 has been a step in the acknowledgment of the prevalence of gendered violence, and aims to reduce VAWG through early intervention (gov.uk 2022).

¹⁸ Homosexual men are symbolically and structurally placed lower in relation to heterosexual men in the hierarchies of gender and power ((Thompson & Bennet 2015), and homophobic violence is often theorised as enacted through this framework of masculinities (Connell 2005, Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, Messerschmidt 2018) alongside the maintenance of heteronormativity (Jackson 2006). According to Hubbard, 64% of the respondents as recorded in the LGBT+ Hate Crime Report (2021, p.7) reported that they have experienced ‘anti-LGBT+ violence or abuse’ (of which ‘92% verbal, 29% physical, and 17% sexual’). Sexual assault and rape is recorded to target various groups within the community¹⁸, but it must be noted that sexual assault spans upon varying sexualities of both victims and as well as perpetrators. Moreso, unlike the general anonymity between victim and perpetrators of hate crimes (Perry 2001), with sexual assault cases amongst LGBT+ community, the perpetrators and victims can be strangers (Javaid 2017), acquaintances (Davies 2002), or are in relationships that experience intimate partner violence (Bermea, Slakoff & Goldberg 2021).

in the current socio-political climate, it is such a tremendous topic it cannot be done justice in full without taking away from the main issue at hand: the tension created by a white gay man who presents his suffering as unique to him to a room of people who experience more structural violence and suffering than he does.

Thinking of the forks, pens, keys, screwdrivers, scissors, and pocket knives I have legally carried around my pockets before, I contemplated his words: 'The straights don't understand'. The performer felt afraid and vulnerable on his way to hook up with a stranger, and rightfully so; I was not going to undermine the fear and vulnerability. I was, however, contemplating how to process the lack of insight in his statement. Because that night the performer did not read the room; failing to address that the fear of falling victim to male assault is astoundingly common beyond his proposed framework. That (despite the intricate connection between gender and sexuality¹⁹) within a patriarchal society, this fear is gendered first, and sexuality-driven second. However, more importantly, it created the opportunity to reflect upon the message that has been reiterated by my participants who have found themselves unwelcome in spaces that were 'dominated by white, middle-class, cisgender gay men' (Bobbie, age 34, bisexual). It highlights that intersectional understanding of gender is a crucial point for change, amongst white cisgender gay men and white cisgender straight men alike (Shields 2008, Arana 2017, Blumell & Rodriguez 2020). Notably, there are various news articles that address the issue of sexism and intersectionality with gay men – as well as the issue that this discourse could potentially bring towards a minority group (see Friess 2014; Daley 2016; Liveris 2016; Newkey-Burden 2016; Power 2016; Arana 2017; Donovan 2017), but significantly less academic articles with a specific focus on this sexist attitudes of

¹⁹ See also Butler's (1991) concept of the heterosexual matrix.

homosexual cisgender men (Murgo et al. 2017; Blumell & Rodriguez 2020), and becoming increasingly more under researched when relating this to specific groups with intersecting gender and sexualities (see Wilkinson 2008; Keiller 2010; Blumell & Rodriguez 2020). However, Simoni and Walters (2001) address how carefully this discourse should be researched in order to not damage the gay community by pinning blame on gay men who, in their own right, face violence and heterosexism whilst simultaneously addressing the privileges gay men have in relation to other groups within the LGBT+ community.

Though, I could not shake the feeling. The underlying discomfort that permeated many moments in my research – echoed through my own reflections or, as mentioned, by my participants: how do you manoeuvre these hierarchies without undermining the validity of someone’s experienced fear? This is not a competition of victimisation, marginalisation, or even simpler; it is not a competition of hurt. Moreso, the performer would not garner such a response in an LG space which does not focus on intersectionality, but this is no such space. It was a moment of critique for my own argument of relationality and empathic assimilation: these queer transgressive spaces do not provide a traditional “utopia” as proposed by theorists²⁰ and participants alike. Participants Róisín, Grace, Lily, Bobbie, Persephone, Cassandra, and Janine have all spoken of the limits of acceptance, and even a space like vFd – which is constructed through the (re)production of intersectional acceptance – is not free of the tension created by the hegemonic group in relation to the marginalised. It does, however, form a demand for critical reflection: if you enter a radical space of relational transgression and empathic assimilation, you have to adapt to the reflexivity demanded by its relationality.

²⁰ see Brown (in Browne, Lim & Brown 2007) and Róisín, one of the organisers of SWL.

Performance image: Authenticity²¹

NEVER Apologise
NEVER Apologise

²¹ Truth be told, I remember very little about this performance. All I remember was the intensity of the repetition of the phrase 'never apologise', and it fills a full page in my fieldwork notebook. I do not remember the performer. Who they were, what they looked like, how their voice sounded. I just remember the illuminating presence behind the force of this request of accepting one's own queerness – and perhaps that is enough.

Performance image: True Merit²²



"do you deserve
to be
here?"

²² The performer talks about his sense of belonging as a young black man. His voice is deep and calm as he weaves his prose: the perpetual questioning of his own narrative, and the questions imposed upon him and his merit, all of which are focussed on the axis of his skills and his ethnicity. Moreover, does he deserve to be in the spaces which he inhabits, regardless of what his imposter syndrome tells him?

I only wanted
to be authentic
just wanted
to be

Performance Analysis 3: Trans Experiences

On several occasions, I have seen performers relay their trans experiences, from navigating the full and honest desire of their selfhood to experiences of aggression. A middle-aged performer stands in the spotlight, and during her Spoken Word performance

recalls experiences of public violence and trauma: being shouted at on the streets, and being called a *fag* and a *tranny*. Even on this very street which hides this basement where the queer and the arts are celebrated. She tells the audience that when such violence occurs, she uses it to *stand even prouder* and *shout even louder than them*, encouraging us to shout this along as a reminder to be stronger.

Since 2017/2018, the UK government has reported a significant increase in recorded hate crimes against trans individuals (Home Office 2022): the number stood at 1703 reported crimes in 2017/2018, less than 2% of the overall reported hate crimes, but was recorded at 4355 hate crimes in 2021/2022. While this number had seen an increase of 56% in relation to the year before (from 2799 to 4355 (Home Office 2022), it has shown an overall increase of 156% since 2017/2018 (and standing just shy of being 3% of all recorded hate crimes within that year). Despite the current increase in recorded numbers, scholars such as Colliver & Silvestri



already noted in 2019 that there is a prevalent systemic ‘invisibility’ in relation to trans hate crimes, harm, and victimisation in both theorisation as well as practice. Moreover, McLean refers to the current shift in the Anglo-Saxon socio-political climate as ‘toxic’ and framed as ‘free speech’ whilst undermining the basic human rights of trans people (2021, p.473). The latter is exacerbated through negative media attention (Burns & Fisher 2018, Mclean 2021). Current concerns from Westminster towards Scotland’s proposed shortening of legal gender changes (as December 2022) from 2.5 years to 3 months only reiterates the prevalence of this issue (Gender Recognition Act 2004; Lockhart 2022)²³, specifically as this is related to the potentiality of legal misuse. This is a common discourse around trans spatial accessibility: fearing a threat of sexually predatory behaviour of men under the guise of self-proclaimed womanhood in single-sex spaces (Mclean 2021, Lockhart 2022).

However, two weeks after this initial performance in 2019, I was standing in line outside of the vFd on a remarkably warm October evening, I complimented another performer, who I will refer to as Stella, on her act. I have seen her perform on Spoken Word nights before, and I praise her for her humorous and witty work. We strike up a conversation and Stella tells me that by performing on these nights she – as a trans woman – is able to *explore her voice* in a way she otherwise could not. Soirse, during our interview together, speaks of the transformative powers of this very space in a way that she refers to as a *genesis*. Laughing at her evident catholic imposition, she refers to performers (such as Stella) as *becoming themselves with witnesses: you see their identity forming through being listened to, and that’s really powerful* [sic].

²³ As per the Gender Recognition Act 2004.

When applying Butler (1993, p.3), I can see the potency behind these acts: rather than being culturally, symbolically, and materially ‘unintelligible’ and perceived, in turn, as threatening; the embodied turn – if you will – is found in the perception of cultural, symbolic, and material intelligibility. The “unlivability” of trans identities, trans bodies, and trans experiences alongside the “failure” (Ahmed 2006, see also Halberstam) of gender and heterosexuality can, under the right circumstances, and amongst the right crowd, turn into a slow unravelling of its discontents. The affective relationality in these socio-political spaces can – through the artistic exploration and subsequent ritualistic feedback of an audience – create a sense of liveability and success, and specifically, create a sense of belonging.

While this was not shared in the previous Chapters, this quote of participant Tom (35, non-binary, bisexual) has rooted itself in my internalisation of the theories – and experiences – of the unintelligibility (Butler 1993); the unliveability (Ahmed 2006); and the failure (Halberstam’s 2011) of queer lives, and is relived through the sense of hope brought to me within these concrete walls:

Society tells you that who you are is going to hurt you in some way, somehow. But the world did not burn down because of who you are – and I think that’s important.

Performance image: Faitheism²⁴



²⁴ The performer, a middle-aged man with headphones around his neck, stands stiffly as he recites his work. He would come across as stoic, if it was not for his trembling hand. He speaks of his atheism, and how he at times wishes to dabble in religion, only to find it not for him due to the institutions around it. I use the term "faitheism" to indicate the questioning space between religion and atheism.

Performance image: A Hot Mess²⁵



²⁵ The performer, a young white woman with a blonde space bun hairstyle and an oversized jean jacket, speaks of her (self-appointed) disgustingly sappy feelings of infatuation. She did not anticipate feeling the way she does, but she is grateful of it regardless, and she thanks her lover for the unravelling of her composure.

Performance Analysis 4: "But"

A performer, a young woman who I perceived to be in her early twenties, explored the narrative around her bisexual identity. She started her five minutes with a question: 'Any queers out there?' Seemingly satisfied with the

vocal response of the audience, as there were most definitely queers present, she began. She said with an undercurrent of sadness that she has been given a free pass in her current romantic relationship: Her boyfriend has told her, filled to the brink with benevolent intent, that she can kiss girls if she wants to. If she wanted to experience her bisexuality by acting upon it, he would not experience any anger, jealousy, or sadness. As, according to him, any relations between her and another woman would be meaningless. Sure, it would be "kind of hot", but there is 'no reason to be jealous because girls don't count'. This stanza is contrasted by her next, in which she shared the inner conflicts construed by her own internalised biphobia and held a grieving silence over its implications on her sense of self. Ending a sentence that explains her identity with a contrasting clause: 'I am bisexual... but...' She never explained the internalised issues with (or against) her bisexuality, but she stated that she objected to her own objections. I sighed deeply as I listened to her poetry, as it is prose I have heard so many times before.

As felt through the narration of the performer, this "generosity" and "benevolence" are met with a negative response: the feelings of discomfort, sadness, and confusion of identity negotiation were palpable. Not just with myself, but with the room – not measured in a sense of effervescence, but heard through exclamations, hums, finger snaps, and whistles. She was

"Any queers out here?"



"no reason to be jealous: girls don't count"

"I am bisexualbut"

not alone in this, it is a feeling that is known and an experience that is lived through relations of those “present queers” inside the Dalston basement. ‘No reason to be jealous: girls don’t count’ was presented with a positivity that I believe to be intrinsic to an extremely specific discourse surrounding bisexuality and cisgender women who are in intimate relationships with cisgender straight men. Be it conscious or subconscious, these attitudes²⁶ towards bisexual women that indicate a freedom for them to experience their sexuality within the constraints of their existing relationships are sexist at the very core – and I argue to henceforth refer to this as false-positive attitudes. Though, it should be noted that I refer to this only under the condition that these attitudes are imposed by the hegemonic group; the moment the attitude becomes internalised by the bisexual individual it transforms from a false-positive attitude to internalised biphobia.

I argue that there are two specific false-positive attitudes to address within this example: say the man encourages his partner to engage with women outside of their relationship because he considers it “hot” and finds no “threat” in this dynamic, there are the sex-focussed and the gender-focussed elements. Whilst research has shown that blatant objectification of bisexual women is a known issue (Isreal & Mohr 2004), it is the explicit rhetoric of “acceptance” and “allowance” of the romantic partner that shapes the insidious nature of this behaviour. By objectifying the sexual acts of WSW for his own sexual pleasure (either through passive or active engagement), the act of depersonalisation is by extension a form of violence; as depersonalisation is a telltale sign of objectification²⁷. Due to the cultural and symbolic implications of bisexual women²⁸ being innately associated with the stigma of “doing it for

²⁶ See also Isreal & Mohr (2004) on attitudes towards bisexual women and men.

²⁷ See also Haslam & Loughnan (2014) on the concept of depersonalization.

²⁸ To note, lesbian women are not free of this stigmatisation and objectification, see Szymanski, Moffit & Carr (2011).

the attention”, it requires overriding the relational value between the couple in order to enact the imposed fantasy of a “male-oriented girl-on-girl performance”. By doing so, it nullifies the complexity of women’s sexualities, desires, emotional capacities, and their sense of identity *alongside* their agency and autonomy. Moreso, in this specific example, there is only a mention of kissing other women, which indicates a very limited measure of what does and does not count as bisexual exploration. If WSW sex were to be involved, I argue that this would swiftly shift into what Yoshino (2000) refers to as the bisexual threat against monogamy. Anything beyond kissing would break the rules of the social contract that separates the permitted exploration and unpermitted infidelity; dipping into the complex discourse between bisexuality and non-monogamy (Baumgartner 2020) – which is equally an issue of generalising stigmatisation that experienced by the participants, regardless of their gender identification.

Furthermore, I argue that the gender focussed side of false-positive attitudes is equally important: If the partner undermines the importance of intimate contact of WSW based on the hierarchies of gender, it is a form of violence. By expressing that it ‘does not count’ for his partner to engage with other women (regardless of what intimate act is allowed), he innately undermines the gender equality between himself and his partner and women as a whole. If there is only validity in the infidelity of his partner constructed through sexual relations with another man, the threat to his relationship is based on the dynamics of his own masculinity (as perceived through concepts such as competence, ownership, prowess, etc.²⁹) in relation

²⁹ See also objectification through the framework as proposed by Nussbaum (1995) and added to by Langton (2009), as related succinctly by Loughnan & Pacilli (2014): ‘Nussbaum (1995) defines objectification as treating a person as an object and identified instrumentality, denial of autonomy, inertness, fungibility, violability, ownership, and denial of subjectivity as its main manifestation (...) Langton (2009) added three further aspects to Nussbaum’s list: treating a person as identified with her body (reduction to body or body parts); treating a person in terms of how she looks (reduction to appearance); treating a person as if she lacks the human capability to speak (silencing)’ (p.310).

to other masculinities. Serpe et al. (2020) tested the sexual objectification theory (Fredrickson & Robert 1997) on bisexual women and found direct links to previously recorded issues around physical and mental health (Brewster & Moradi 2010; Feinstein & Dyar 2017; Botwsick et al. 2019;), sexual health and violence (Flanders et al. 2017; Watson et al., 2021), and media representation (Johnson 2016; Corey 2017). Moreover, Serpe et al. (2020) specifically relate their results to the discursive nature of the bisexual identity (Callis 2009; Galupo, Mitchell & Davis 2015; Breetveld 2020), particularly alongside intersectional discrimination – which results in multiple oppressed identities (Bowleg et al. 2003; Chung & Singh 2010). Watson et al.'s (2021) research into bisexual women's experiences with oversexualisation, objectification, and gendered discrimination (e.g., through classism, racism, and ableism) has shown that there is a strong correlation between gendered bi-negativity and negative sexual identity negotiation (see also Johnson & Grove 2017). Most notably, when considering minority stress through an intersectional framework (Crenshaw 1989), Watson et al. (2021) found indication that due to sexism, multiple stressors of minority identification, and intersecting oppression makes bisexual women 'more vulnerable to sexual assault' (p.225). The discourse of the identity of bisexual women perpetually places them in situations of heightened violence, be it sexual, verbal, physical, or discursive.

To further complicate the matter, it is not only the bisexual woman's identity that undermines their safety and authentic identity development but also the bisexual identity's position in the monogamy and polyamory divide. Both monogamous as well as open and/or polyamorous relationship models contest/are contested when framing them through bisexuality stigmatisation (Baumgartner 2020; Daly 2020). Stigmas surrounding bisexual individual's sexual conduct such as (a heightened chance of) infidelity, promiscuity, hypersexualisation

(Ault 1994; Rust 1996; McLean 2008; Barker et al. 2012; Callis 2014). George (1993) argues the discourse on bisexuals requiring multiple partners of multiple genders intrinsically links bisexuality with infidelity, as it is believed that bisexuals are 'incapable of monogamy, and by extension of commitment and deep feeling (p.83)'.³⁰ It is worth noting that there are (of course) genuine, emotionally deep, healthy, and reflexive open and/or polyamorous bisexual relationship dynamics and set-ups that allow for positive sexuality exploration. While this discourse has to actively contest the bi-negative stigma of infidelity, research indicates a discursive socio-political shift that is gaining significantly more prevalence and is strongly tied to feminist critiques around gender deconstruction (Klesse 2020).

With so many factors complicating the potential of healthy and supportive environments and relationships for bisexual women, I argue that the concept of false-positive attitudes towards bisexual women are not frequented enough as a specific form of bi-negativity. The false-positive attitude has a complex interaction between the bisexual identity, sexism, and monogamy that generates a paradoxical interaction which simultaneously validates the man's perceived open-mindedness and invalidates the woman's identity as a bisexual, but also as a gendered subject. However, at the core of this performance stands the relationality of this space; it is through a place such as this that the performer can gain an understanding of her own internalised biphobia, the problematic rhetorics around her sexual identity, and a sense of plurisexual community and belonging. To refer back to the interview with Róisín, that 'there is a sense of beauty in being found', and it leaves me feeling hopeful in the knowledge that this space will provide the self-acceptance the performer requires.

³⁰ The latter is echoed, and built upon by Rust (1996)

Performance image: Fuck You, London³¹



³¹ The performer, a witty, lanky white British man talks about of his place of birth, an English island that is known for its lower socio-economic status, which he colourfully paints as a place he would prefer to not return to. London as a city has changed him, and while he believes the topic of London to be painfully overdone, but also sees why it is a subject of prose for many – him included. Though he says that London is a cruel mistress, with its economy, politics, and high housing prices. His billowing shirt dramatically sways as he leans from leg to leg, and says that he is content with not having a high income regardless; a victory over the demands of his love, his London.

Performance image: Angry Dyke Stereotype³²



³² This performer was one of the first who stood out to me in the beginning of my fieldwork. Her passion was not like fire, but like a pillar, which she seemed to emulate in stature; her broad shoulders and furrowed brow indicated a solidity. Her words were witty, sharp, and swift, but equally steady and tough. In mere moments she had dug her hands into intersecting topics, such as her working-class background, her gender, her queerness, her age. She mentioned it only once, but truly emulated her “angry dyke stereotype”. The crowd is hanging onto her every word, loudly responding through vocalised agreements, the snapping of fingers, and exclams of excitement. If I could hand pick an embodied example of the productivity of power, I would choose this performer; as I would trust her to lead me down the streets and show me what good can come out of a riot.

The performances of Spoken Word London provided a deeper understanding of narrative ownership and its relation to belonging. The space as facilitated, produced, and reproduced through an intersectional feminist framework created a place for people to claim their own stories, feelings, experiences, and express them as they saw fit. The spatial processes of vFd are social, political, and innately empathic: the space does not only lend itself to a platform for socio-political artistic performances, it also provides a space of emotional understanding and growth. Moreover, it is the maintenance of these transgressive and relational processes that generates an atmosphere of acceptance that creates a deep sense of belonging. However, a condition of this relationality is active participation; the regulation of ethical conduct through the space's intersectional framework, partaking in reflection and reflexivity, and for some – as seen with my own auto-ethnographic experience within vFd as seen in Chapter 3 – a conscious endeavour to fully partake in the socio-political, spatial, and affective artistic processes.

6.6. Conclusion

Chapter 6 has provided a deep insight into the affective social, political, and spatial processes of an artistic queer space in London, and subsequent analysis of how this ethnographic space creates belonging through a queer intersectional framework.

The ethnographic account of vFd delved into various topics of analysis, such as transgressive relationality, radical acceptance and accountability, and empathic assimilation, which are all processes that provide the conditions for the other process to come into existence. All of these processes are critical and reflexive practices that benefit plurisexual individuals, alongside others who experience intersectional marginalisation, to experience a space in

which they can claim ownership over their own narrative, which is a primary requirement for the development of belonging.

The process of transgressive relationality within the venue directly relates to the spatial theorisation of spaces being produced by political and social processes. In particular, the innate role of emotions in politics is an important element in the analysis of spaces as produced through radical, queer, and intersectional frameworks and how this produces and reproduces relations and practices, which in turn (re)produce the space. Transgressive relationality is, at its core, a process that creates an equal engagement between individuals of varying backgrounds who through exposure and critical reflexivity through artistic expression experience radical acceptance. This form of acceptance is, as mentioned in Chapters 4 and 5, an affective response (and practice) which greatly benefits plurisexual individuals, as it enables them to avoid the negative experiences of bisexual identity negotiation and – in turn – generate comfort and belonging. Radical acceptance is particularly generated when there is active engagement with the artistic elements of the space (either as an audience member or as a performer). Through empathic assimilation, there is engagement with different dimensions of socio-political processes; there is the simultaneous process of learning about the self, the other, and the relations and dynamics between one another (of oneself as an audience member or as performer, as well as learning about oneself or others as an audience member). This is brought forward through active listening, critical reflexivity, and acceptance which, in turn, feeds into the production of transgressive relationality.

The chapter also delved into topics of analysis such as false-positive attitudes and relates to Chapter 3's performing researcher-position. False-positive attitudes, these sexist attitudes are attitudes imposed by cis-gendered heterosexual men in relationships with bisexual

women (or plurisexual AFABs) and revolve around a sexist and bi-negative rhetoric that is disguised as an accepting attitude within a monogamous relationship dynamic. False-positive attitudes is only briefly touched upon as it was generated from the analysis of a fieldwork performance, and I preliminarily propose this to be a topic of further research. The auto-ethnographic work on the researcher position has been adapted in the thesis as an active method for practice, and I refer to Chapter 3 for a further argumentation in regard to its original contribution of this method for queer methodologies.

I argue that this ethnography heavy chapter has not only engaged with artistic and reflexive narratives (auto-ethnographic or ethnographic), but it has also methodologically and theoretically produced new knowledge for the field of sexuality scholarship and geographies of sexualities and has actively furthered the progress to realise inclusivity of plurisexual individuals in social spaces.

SNAPSHOT ETHNOGRAPHY IV

Vauxhall Revisited







This was not an ethnography, but perhaps that makes the reflection all the more powerful.

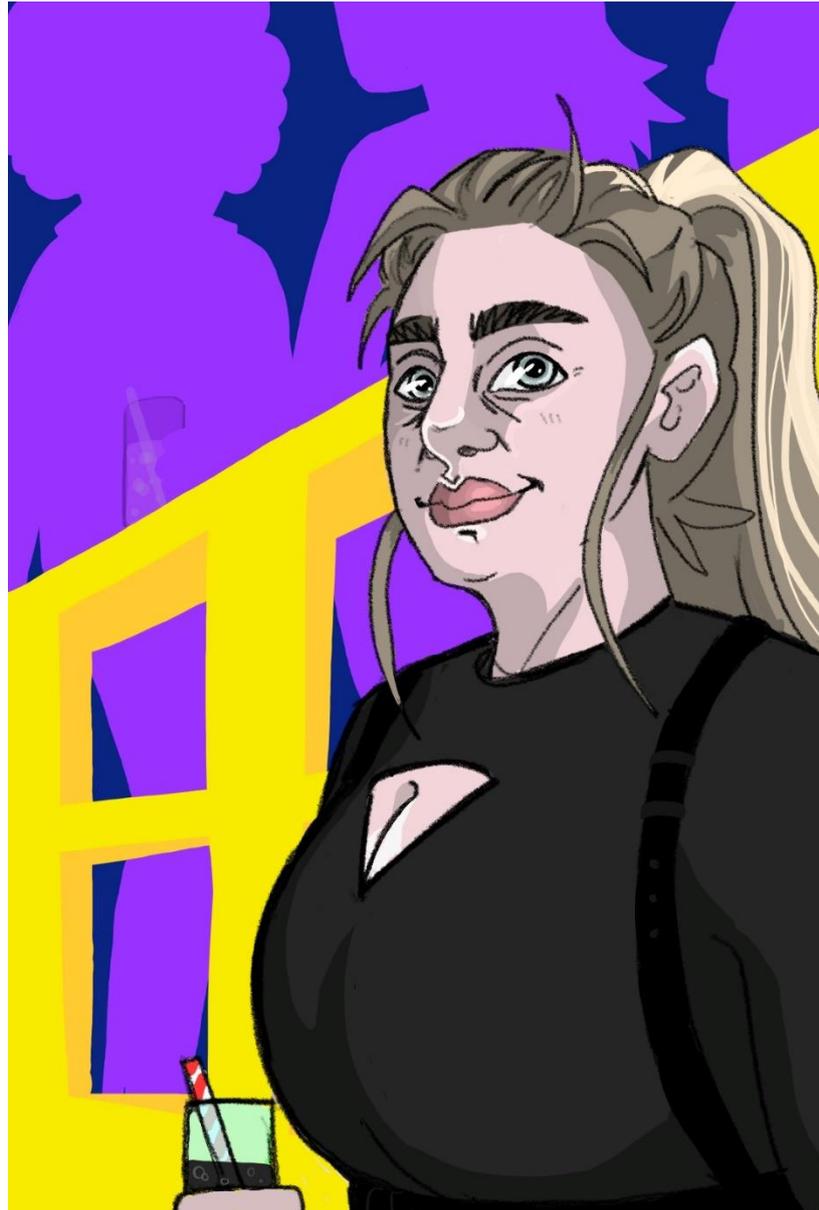
The 9th of July 2022. I had spent the entire day in London with my friends, marching for Trans+ Pride. I had decided against going the night before, but woke up re-evaluating my previous decision and came into London anyway.

There was a floral theme, and we all wore flowers in our hair, waved bouquets around, tucked stems in the hooks of our bags and clothes. They had long wilted on that hot July day, but we had left petals across London regardless.



Some moments felt tense: a feeling of unsafety next to a busy open road, the judging gaze of the less accepting onlookers, the eye contact with a cop who was told by some protesters to go fuck themselves. But more so, it felt important.

My friend had gotten us tickets for Butch Please that evening. It had been an exhausting day, and even my thoughts of going home after the march somehow did not come to pass. I did not get the memo for the dress code, but unlike last time, I managed to fit right in. A happy accident. I had gone to the bar, leaving my friends outside. Having found a space to myself I stood looking at the dance floor. I actually recognised some of the faces in the venue from the march. I stood there for a few minutes...



And I don't know what it is exactly, but as I was taking in the crowd – people dancing, shirts being taken off, laughing, flirting – I thought to myself “people feel safe and happy”

I saw the

QUEER



JOY

and suddenly I felt it

the
unmistakable
sense of
belonging.

Just like that, it
clicked in my
head.

The space had
become a place.



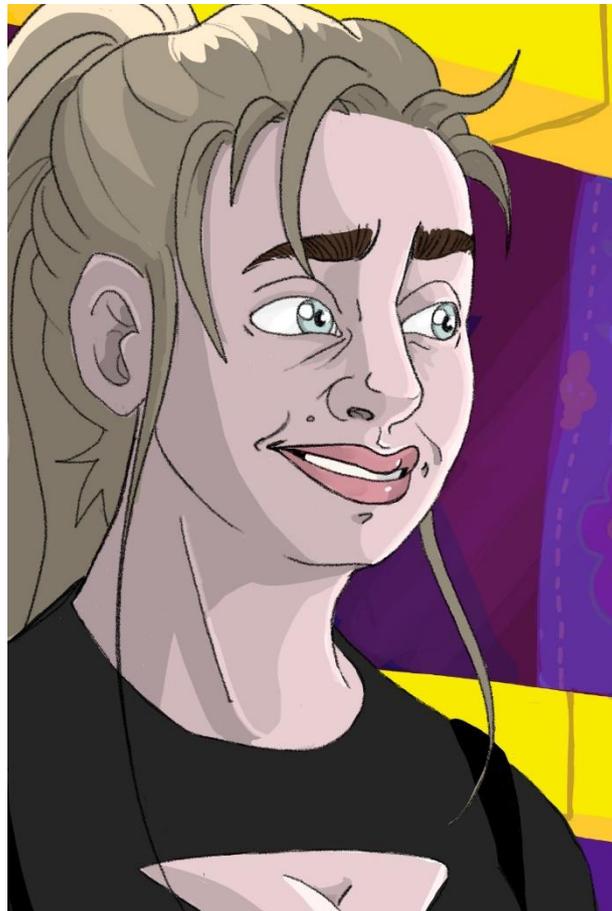
It was such an earnest, genuine feeling, which I could never have experienced the way I did in that very moment without a world of change.

It had been 3 and a half years since I was last there. So much was different

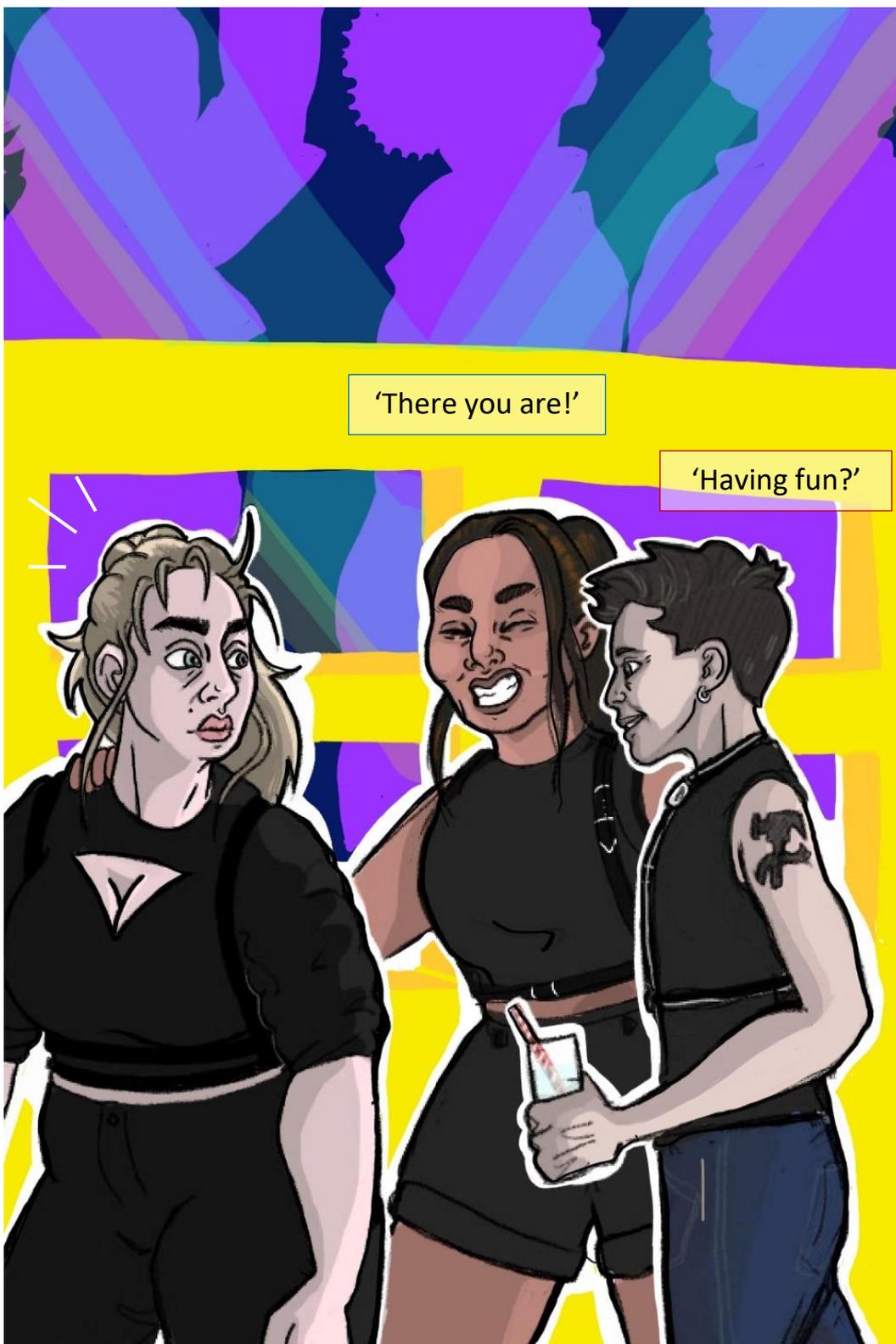
– I was so different –

and the conditions were organically met for me to actually understand what was needed, what I needed, to belong.

‘Huh ...’



‘I think I
get it n- **‘ROBIN!’**



'There you are!'

'Having fun?'

'Yes! Yes, I am.'

'I'm glad you came.'

'Yeah. Me too.'

Chapter 7. Conclusion



FB
BEER (CANS) \$5.00
LIDER (CANS) \$5.40
PROSECO \$6.99
SINGLE SHOT \$5.00
WITH MIXER \$5.50
DOUBLE SHOT \$7.50
WITH MIXER \$8.50
WTC \$7.99
WINE (RED/WHITE) \$1.99

The Complex Praxis of Plurisexual
Belonging & The Queerness
of Validation

7.1. Understanding Plurisexual Belonging

7.1.1. Answering the Research Question

- How do plurisexual individuals experience feelings of belonging in social spaces designated for sexual minorities?

The research has indicated that plurisexual individuals have complex experiences of belonging that are unique to their demographic. Due to the discursive erasure, invalidation, and marginalisation of bisexual and plurisexual individuals, there are significant indicators that plurisexual belonging requires a reflexive and relational construction of safety, comfort, and authenticity on social, spatial, and affective levels. When plurisexual individuals are unable to move freely through social spaces (at the hand of gatekeeping, discriminatory, and marginalising practices by monosexuals) they engage with strategies to circumvent, contest, or disengage from these interactions. Due to the pervasive nature of bisexual identity interrogation, the majority of the participants experience LGBT+ spaces and communities¹ as divisive, exclusionary, and inherently hierarchal; whereas queer spaces and communities are experienced as explicitly open, welcoming, and intersectionally inclusive. Queer spaces and communities, unlike LGBT+, ensure that plurisexuals do not feel pressured into justifying their identities on sexual, romantic, spatial, lingual, embodied, or relational levels. Moreover, many participants consider queer to be an identity that allows for more social and spatial access due to its ambiguous nature, actively undermining the pervasive stigma associated with the bisexual identity (which would otherwise lead to these aggressive interactions). Plurisexual

¹ The plurality refers to the conceptualisation of “communities within communities” as seen throughout the thesis, and encompass a general alignment towards practices associated with the differences between LGBT+ and/or queer socio-spatial and political interactions.

narrative ownership is a perpetually negated experience due to the discursive bisexual erasure and invalidation, and a great source of unbelonging. However, the research has indicated that queer spaces allow for plurisexual individuals to reclaim ownership of their story. In particular, queer spaces that are constructed through intersectional feminist practices allow for belonging to occur. Narrative ownership is also related to queer spaces that provide platforms of affective political expression, artistic engagement, and inclusive practices.

7.1.2. Have the aims and objectives been met?

The thesis set out to gain insight into plurisexual (un)belonging in relation to social and spatial practices. I can confidently argue that the aims and objectives have been met and that they even exceeded the initial expectations. The project organically adapted through the lived experiences of the participants, allowing the research to engage in spaces/sites that were perceived as places of belonging. This provided the research with knowledge that would otherwise not have been interacted with. Moreover, the explicit aim of engaging with plurisexual experiences and the amplification of their voices meant that the research has achieved what it sought to do: making the invisible visible.

7.2. The Contribution to Knowledge

The thesis contributes to current scholarship by

- Providing new insight and context for wider LGBT+ and queer community-based socio-spatial debates and addressing the necessity of plurisexual belonging as relationally constructed through community engagement and connection.

- Actively adding towards the intersections of sociology, sexuality studies, and sexual geographies by contributing towards the nexus of these scholarships: the epistemological debate of bisexuality and plurisexuality studies' place within queer theory.
- Innovative research methods that engage with artistic and visual methods, language, affective relationality, and reflexive performance auto-ethnography that challenge the researcher positions.

7.3. Limitations & Future Research

As with any study, the research process brought forward its limitations. Some of the limitations were methodological, while others were circumstantial. Regardless, the limitations have provided me with the insight to propose (and plan) for future research on plurisexual belonging. The main limitations of the research can be divided into three main components:

1. The impact of COVID-19 on the research as well as the communities involved.
2. The scope of the project and the sample size.
3. The potential for multiple community perspectives.

7.3.1. Thoughts & Remarks on LGBT Spatial Precarity: The closing of LGBT+ and queer spaces in London & the pending impact of COVID-19

The first limitation lies with the issues provided by the COVID-19 pandemic.² While the data was collected until November 2019 and the pandemic did not impact any data collection, it has created a problem of temporal applicability. The volatile struggles of precarious queer

² I am highly aware that I am breaking a general rule to not add any new information to a conclusion. However, due to the time frame, the scope of the project, and the urgency to address this issue, I am bending proper form in the hopes to provide a gateway for much needed research into post-Covid-19 London LGBT+ and queer spatial precarity, without undermining the structure of my thesis.

spaces have only been exacerbated through the 2020 to 2022 period. In particular in relation to the London LGBTQ+ Venue charter.

With neo-liberal London's gentrifying processes constricting queer sexual geographies (Sanders-McDonagh, Peyrefitte & Ryalls 2016), we can see that LGBT+ and queer spaces have been navigating severe losses in the past decade. According to the 2017 UCL report on *LGBT+ cultural infrastructure in London nightlife venues*, there has been a staggering decline in LGBT+ spaces, with a loss of 58% of LGBT+ venues between 2006 and 2017 (UCL 2017). The number of LGBTQ+ venues left standing within London declined from 125 to 51, remaining stable between 2018 and 2019 (London City Hall 2019). The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, and the London night time economy ambassador Night Czar, Amy Lamé, worked from 2016 onwards towards stagnating the decline of the London nightlife which dropped an overall 58% since 2006 (London City Hall 2017). After the UCL publication, Khan and Lamé pledged to safeguard remaining LGBT+ venues through their 'LGBT+ Venues Charter'. The charter is referred to as a 'practical tool that organisations can sign up to if they want to open a new LGBT+ venue or reopen one that has closed to affirm their commitment to the LGBT+ community in London' (London City Hall 2017).

Despite the successful attempts to stabilise the decline of LGBTQ+ venues in London in 2018 and 2019, the cultural industry has suffered nationally due to the global COVID-19 pandemic from 2020. It is significant to mention that whilst the pandemic has not affected this thesis' data, as my ethnographic and LGBTQ+ venue related data collection was conducted up until late 2019. This requires an important footnote to this work, as the current primary data does not engage with the (global) detrimental effect on LGBTQ+ venues. Nor does it engage with the consecutive issue of LGBTQ+ individuals suffering from the effects of the pandemic, such

as loneliness and hostility due to LGBTQ+ spaces and services dwindling further during the COVID-19 pandemic (Dasgupta, Sinha & Roy 2021; Spruce 2021). From 23 of March 2020 venues in England were forced to close their premises under national lockdown rules and regulations. Since my first attempt of the 31st of May 2021 and as of the final check-in on the 16th of January 2023, there has been no encompassing data released to indicate the precise number of affected LGBTQ+ spaces in London. However, there are significant indicators through governmental and media press releases that many of London's LGBTQ+ venues did indeed suffer severely during this period (Consortium 2021; Rawat 2021; Thatcher 2021; Mizel 2021; London LGBTQ Centre 2022). However, within this time frame the venues were met by a protective local governmental measure to ensure social and economic support: the provision of emergency funding from City Hall to provide protection towards precarious LGBTQ+ spaces under London's Culture at Risk fund (London City Hall 2020). The Mayor's Culture at Risk Office is an initiative that aims to 'safeguard [the long-term sustainability of the] cultural infrastructure across london', among which: 'operators, businesses, social enterprises, charities, non-profits and community groups' (london.gov.uk, n.d.) are supported. The initiative includes other precarious cultural community based projects, such as grassroots music venues, (...) artistic workspaces and independent cinemas' (London City Hall 2020).

The money is part of the £2.3 million emergency fund launched by the Mayor of London to support the creative industries during this time. Of that amount, £225,000 has been allocated for LGBTQ+ venues. City Hall plans to distribute further funding to venues in the next few months (Aron 2020).

The LGBTQ+ Venue Business Support Service, the specific LGBTQ+ support within the Fund, has no 'formal match funding requirements' in regards to the eligibility of struggling venues.

However, the venue must provide proof indicating they have examined further possibilities of funding prior to accessing The Service (safersounds n.d.). The accessibility of the service does require several criteria to be met; among which geographic placement, the immediacy of support, and having a significant purpose to maintain and provide a social cultural space to the LGBTQ+ community whilst being marketed as such (Safersounds n.d.)

Since late April 2020, a total of eleven LGBTQ+ venues have received emergency funding from the Mayor's Culture at Risk Business Support Fund for a total of £128,500 GBP. Amongst these venues are three Hackney based LGBTQ+ spaces: Dalston Superstore (£10,000), The Glory (£15,000), and importantly, vFd (£5,000) by the 6th of July 2020 (South London News 2020)

I am aware of the limitations within the primary data due to the shift in policy, as well as the lack of follow up primary data in regards to the VFD's current socio-economical position: both during the global pandemic, as well as their position after receiving the governmental boost. Beyond a sense of awareness, I fully support and suggest this to be a topic of further research engagement – not just for the VFD but for the hard hit LGBTQ+ venues in London, as well as LGBTQ+ venues in different metropolitan spaces (as well as rural areas), in order to get an encompassing understanding of the impact of the global pandemic on contemporary urban LGBTQ+ politics, spatial maintenance (both on- and offline), and its social affect to LGBTQ+ communities.

7.3.2. Research Scope

Whilst this research shows various perspectives on identity and belonging, it is important to critically consider this project's intersectional sampling strategy as simultaneously "sufficiently encompassing" whilst also being "the bare minimum". The intersectional plurisexual

experience is not a well-researched topic, and whilst this work fills in some of the empirical and methodological gaps, it is difficult to be content with the scope and breadth of the project as a more robustly diverse sample would be preferred. The experiences of the participants have indicated there are significant complexities related to identity belonging if the identity of plurisexuality intersects with other social markers. In particular, the experiences of individuals who consider themselves to identify with liminal social identities that are considered to “fall in between” hegemonic groups (e.g., intra-national, bi-racial, non-binary). The voices of plurisexuals who embody other positions of complex (un)belonging beyond their sexual identity (as a “neither-straight-nor-gay” sexuality) should be amplified as (sexual) citizens in a growing heterogeneous society. Therefore, I argue that the research should be seen as a mere stepping stone towards good intersectional feminist practice within plurisexuality studies, and I recommend adhering to reflexive methodologies and critical participant sampling to further this aim.

7.3.3. Sample Size & Researching Multiple Intersectional Queer Sites

Moreso, I argue that this research can benefit from a more extensive research size as well as exploring multiple intersectional queer sites. While the current sample size is not meant to be generalising, it is innately part of the nature of intersectionality that there are many forms of situated knowledge and lived experiences. Therefore, it is not about widening the participation to make the analysis more applicable for a greater group of plurisexuals – it is to ensure the amplification of voices that experience complex and valid lives. To put further research into intersectional queer sites will allow for a deeper understanding of socio-spatial interactions, and in particular, richer insight into the plurisexual narrative empowerment through various artistic and affective political means. For instance, the Dalston site was led

through an intersectional feminist lens, but was simultaneously a space which did not allow entrance for people with physical disabilities due to its layout. While this inaccessibility was addressed as ‘regretful’ – both in on-site conversation as well as on their website³ – it is due to their precarious economic and spatial position an issue without a solution on the horizon. Other spaces may provide different experiences on an intersectional level which will inform a greater understanding of the spatial (and subsequent social) limitations and opportunities such spaces bring to a plurisexual community.

7.3.4. Researching Monosexual Experiences with Plurisexual Gatekeeping

Lastly, one of the most prominent elements of the research, giving a voice to plurisexual individuals, also comes with a potential drawback as it does not provide the perspective of individuals who navigate the safeguarding and/or gatekeeping of the hierarchal LGBT spaces. Previous research has shown that there is active discrimination from lesbian and gay individuals (Welzer-Lang 2008), issues around safeguarding from straight tourism (Hartless 2018a, 2018b) as well as overall concerns towards hierarchal exclusion within communities (Formby 2012, 2017). However, I believe that in light of this new data on forms of exclusion, communication, and gatekeeping, future research can inform a deeper insight into these dynamics.

7.4. Suggestions for Future Research

The limitations create the following opportunities for furthering the research:

³ vfdalston.org

1. Researching intersectional belonging of plurisexual individuals with a focus on participants who identify with having multiple liminal identities.
2. Strengthening the research of belonging and narrative ownership on intersectional queer sites with a focus on politically affective acts.
3. Approaching community and space as being gatekept from plurisexual individuals from the perspective of the monosexual experience, with a particular interest into the maintenance and regulation of membership and spatial allowance through community aesthetics.
4. Researching the Post-Pandemic precarity of queer spaces through an intersectional lens with a specific focus on the impact on plurisexuality, gender, and ethnicity.

7.5. Non-academic Impact: Final Thoughts on Auto-ethnography as a Reflexive Method

I began my research from a significantly different space and place than I finished. Through the auto-ethnographic accounts, I provided the reader glimpses into my development as a budding researcher and as a progressively more active member of the queer community. Working on the representation of myself as an embodied plurisexual subject, I was able to pursue my passion for visual and creative research methods within a project that lies close to my heart. The thesis produced a confident researcher and a healed child; as to my surprise, I was able to work on building and on loss within the confines of the queer spaces I frequented, through the conversations with my peers and colleagues, in relation to the experiences of my participants, and through the art I witnessed and the art I made. As I have been told “a good thesis is a finished thesis”, and I would agree. Not as a piece that has been “handed in” for career progression, but as a personal testament that consolidates that I found a sense of belonging during the research process. One which so happened to result in a physical copy

that marks the completion of a chapter closed, along with the desire to create something new (and too, tangible) from its experiences.

Bibliography

The 1833 factory act - UK parliament (no date) *Parliament.uk*. Parliament UK. Available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/19thcentury/overview/factoryact/> (Accessed: March 19, 2021).

The 1870 education act - UK parliament (no date) *parliament.uk*. Parliament UK. Available at: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/school/overview/1870educationact/> (Accessed: March 19, 2021).

Adams, T.E., Ellis, C. and Jones, S.H. (2017) "Autoethnography," *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, pp. 1–11. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0011>.

Adjepong, A. (2017) "Invading ethnography: A queer of color reflexive practice," *Ethnography*, 20(1), pp. 27–46. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138117741502>.

Adler, J. M. (2012). "Sitting at the nexus of epistemological traditions: Narrative psychological perspectives on self-knowledge." In S. Vazire & T. D. Wilson (Eds.), *Handbook of self-knowledge*. The Guildford Press, pp. 327–342.

Adler, P.A. and Adler, P. (2000) *Membership roles in Field Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Ahmed, S. (2000) *Strange encounters: Embodied others in post-coloniality*. London: Routledge.

Ahmed, S. (2004) *The cultural politics of emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2006) *Queer phenomenology: Orientations, objects, others*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2010) *The promise of Happiness*. Durham, N.C: Duke University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2017) *Living a feminist life*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Alarie, M. and Gaudet, S. (2013) "'I don't know if she is bisexual or if she just wants to get attention': Analyzing the various mechanisms through which emerging adults invisibilize bisexuality," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 13(2), pp. 191–214. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2013.780004>.

- Alexander, B.K. (1999) "Performing culture in the classroom: An instructional (auto) ethnography," *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 19(4), pp. 307–331. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10462939909366272>.
- Allen, K.-A. *et al.* (2021) "Belonging: A review of Conceptual Issues, an integrative framework, and directions for future research," *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 73(1), pp. 87–102. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049530.2021.1883409>.
- Anderson, L. and Snow, D.A. (2001) "Inequality and the self: Exploring connections from an Interactionist Perspective," *Symbolic Interaction*, 24(4), pp. 395–406. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2001.24.4.395>.
- Angrosino, M.V. (2005) "Recontextualizing Observation: Ethnography, Pedagogy, and the Prospects for a Progressive Political Agenda.," in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds) *The sage handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 729–745.
- Antonsich, M. (2010) "Searching for belonging - an analytical framework," *Geography Compass*, 4(6), pp. 644–659. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2009.00317.x>.
- Arana, G. (2017) *White gay men are hindering our progress as a queer community*, *Them*. Available at: <https://www.them.us/story/white-gay-men-are-hindering-our-progress> (Accessed: December 24, 2022).
- Archer, M.S. (ed.) (2010) *Conversations about reflexivity*. London: Routledge.
- Ardiya, P. and Hutahaean, B.S. (2020) "Does sense of belonging mediate the relationship between internalized homophobia and depressive symptoms among homosexual individuals in Indonesia?," *Joint proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Intervention and Applied Psychology (ICIAP 2019) and the 4th Universitas Indonesia Psychology Symposium for Undergraduate Research (UIPSUR 2019)* [Preprint]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201125.038>.
- Arena, D.F. and Jones, K.P. (2017) "To 'B' or not to 'B': Assessing the disclosure dilemma of bisexual individuals at work," *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 103, pp. 86–98. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2017.08.009>.
- Aron, I. (2020) *These 11 LGBTQ+ venues have been saved by emergency funding*, *Time Out London*. Time Out. Available at: <https://www.timeout.com/london/news/these-11-lgbtq-venues-in-london-have-been-saved-by-emergency-funding-100120> (Accessed: January 16, 2023).
- Asselin, M.E. (2003) "Insider research," *Journal for Nurses in Staff Development (JNSD)*, 19(2), pp. 99–103. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1097/00124645-200303000-00008>.
- Audre Lorde (no date) *Poetry Foundation*. Poetry Foundation. Available at: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/audre-lorde> (Accessed: January 17, 2023).

- Ault, A. (1994) "Hegemonic discourse in an oppositional community: Lesbian feminists and bisexuality," *Critical Sociology*, 20(3), pp. 107–122. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/089692059402000306>.
- Ault, A. (1996) "Ambiguous identity in an unambiguous sex/gender structure: The case of bisexual women," *The Sociological Quarterly*, 37(3), pp. 449–463. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.1996.tb00748.x>.
- Austen, J. (2009) *Sense and sensibility*. London: Penguin Classics.
- Bain, A.L. and Podmore, J.A. (2021) "Placing LGBTQ+ urban activisms," *Urban Studies*, 58(7), pp. 1305–1326. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098020986048>.
- Barker, M. and Langdrige, D. (2008) "II. bisexuality: Working with a silenced sexuality," *Feminism & Psychology*, 18(3), pp. 389–394. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353508092093>.
- Barker, M., Richards, C. and Bowes-Catton, H. (2009) "'All the world is queer save thee and me...': Defining queer and Bi at a critical sexology seminar," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 9(3-4), pp. 363–379. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710903316638>.
- Barker, M., Richards, C., Jones, R., Bowes-Catton, H., Plowman, T. and Yockney, J., 2012. *The Bisexuality Report: Bisexual Inclusion in LGBT Equality and Diversity*. Milton Keynes: Centre for Citizenship. Identity and Governance, The Open University.
- Barker, M.-J. and Scheele, J. (2016) *Queer: A graphic history*. London: Icon Books Ltd.
- Barker, M.J. (2015) "Depression and/or oppression? bisexuality and mental health," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 15(3), pp. 369–384. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2014.995853>.
- Barker, M.J. and Scheele, J. (2021) *Sexuality: A graphic history*. London: Icon.
- Barthes, R. and Howard, R. (2020) *Camera lucida: Reflections on Photography*. London: Vintage Classics.
- Baumeister, R.F. and Leary, M.R. (1995) "The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation.," *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), pp. 497–529. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>.
- Baumgartner, R. (2020) "'I think that I'm not a relationship person,'" in E. Maliepaard and R. Baumgartner (eds) *Bisexuality in Europe: Sexual citizenship, romantic relationships, and bi+ identities*. London: Routledge.
- Bechdel, A. (2006) *Fun Home: A family tragicomic*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Bechdel, A. (2008) *The essential dykes to watch out for*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

- Bell, D. and Binnie, J. (2000) *The sexual citizen: Queer politics and beyond*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Bell, D. and Binnie, J. (2004) "Authenticating queer space: Citizenship, urbanism and governance," *Urban Studies*, 41(9), pp. 1807–1820. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098042000243165>.
- Bell, D. and Valentine, G. (2005) *Mapping desire: Geographies of sexualities*. London: Routledge.
- Bell, D., Valentine, G. and Hemmings, C. (1995) "Locating bisexual identities: Discourses of bisexuality and contemporary feminist theory.," in *Mapping desires: Geographies of sexualities*. Routledge, pp. 41–55.
- Berg, R.C., Munthe-Kaas, H.M. and Ross, M.W. (2015) "Internalized homonegativity: A systematic mapping review of Empirical Research," *Journal of Homosexuality*, 63(4), pp. 541–558. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2015.1083788>.
- Berger, J. (1972) *Ways of seeing*. London: BBC and Penguin.
- Bermea, A.M., Slakoff, D.C. and Goldberg, A.E. (2021) "Intimate partner violence in the LGBTQ+ community," *Primary Care: Clinics in Office Practice*, 48(2), pp. 329–337. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pop.2021.02.006>.
- Bermea, A.M., van Eeden-Moorefield, B. and Khaw, L. (2018) "A systematic review of research on intimate partner violence among bisexual women," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 18(4), pp. 399–424. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2018.1482485>.
- Bernard, H.R. (2018) *Research methods in anthropology qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Binnie, J. (2000) "Cosmopolitanism and the Sexed City," in D. Bell and A. Haddour (eds) *City Visions*. Harlow, England: Pearson Education, pp. 66–78.
- Binnie, J. and Skeggs, B. (2004) "Cosmopolitan knowledge and the production and consumption of sexualized space: Manchester's Gay Village," *The Sociological Review*, 52(1), pp. 39–61. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954x.2004.00441.x>.
- Bisexual women and sexual violence* (no date) MCASA. Available at: <https://mcasa.org/newsletters/article/bisexual-woman-and-sexual-violence> (Accessed: January 15, 2023).
- Blair, K.L. and Hoskin, R.A. (2014) "Experiences of femme identity: Coming out, invisibility and femmephobia," *Psychology & Sexuality*, 6(3), pp. 229–244. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2014.921860>.
- Bloemhoff, H. and der, K.J.van (2008) *Handboek Nedersaksische taal- en letterkunde*. Assen: Van Gorcum.

- Blumell, L.E. and Rodriguez, N.S. (2019) *Ambivalent sexism and gay men in the US and UK - sexuality & culture*, SpringerLink. Springer US. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12119-019-09635-1#ref-CR67> (Accessed: December 24, 2022).
- Bostwick, W. (2012) "Assessing bisexual stigma and Mental Health Status: A brief report," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 12(2), pp. 214–222. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2012.674860>.
- Bostwick, W. and Hequembourg, A. (2014) "'just a little hint': Bisexual-specific microaggressions and their connection to epistemic injustices," *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 16(5), pp. 488–503. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2014.889754>.
- Bostwick, W. et al. (2018) "Depression and victimization in a community sample of bisexual and Lesbian women: An intersectional approach," *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 48(1), pp. 131–141. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-018-1247-y>.
- Bowleg, L. (2012) "'once you've blended the cake, you can't take the parts back to the main ingredients': Black gay and bisexual men's descriptions and experiences of intersectionality," *Sex Roles*, 68(11-12), pp. 754–767. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-012-0152-4>.
- Boylorn, R.M. (2016) "On being at home with myself," *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 9(1), pp. 44–58. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2016.9.1.44>.
- Bradford, M. (2004) "The bisexual experience," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 4(1-2), pp. 7–23. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1300/j159v04n01_02.
- Bradley, A. and Potter, A. (2018) *Women most at risk of experiencing partner abuse in England and Wales: Years Ending March 2015 to 2017, Women most at risk of experiencing partner abuse in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics*. Office for National Statistics. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/womenmostatriskofexperiencingpartnerabuseinenglandandwales/yearsendingmarch2015to2017> (Accessed: January 15, 2023).
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) "Using thematic analysis in psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77–101. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2012) "Thematic Analysis.," *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol 2: Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological.*, pp. 57–71. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-004>.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2019) "Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis," *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), pp. 589–597. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676x.2019.1628806>.

- Breetveld, R.R. (2020) "Forms of bisexual injustice: Bi, being, and becoming a knower," in E. Maliepaard and R. Baumgartner (eds) *Bisexuality in Europe: Sexual citizenship, romantic relationships, and bi+ identities*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, pp. 149–162.
- Brewster, M.E. and Moradi, B. (2010) "Perceived experiences of anti-bisexual prejudice: Instrument Development and evaluation.," *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 57(4), pp. 451–468. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021116>.
- Brewster, M.E. and Moradi, B. (2010) "Perceived experiences of anti-bisexual prejudice: Instrument Development and evaluation.," *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 57(4), pp. 451–468. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021116>.
- Britzman, D.P. (1995) "The tangles of implication," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 10(1), pp. 31–37. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/095183997237386>.
- Brown, G. (2007) "Autonomy, Affinity and Play in the Spaces of Radical Queer Activism" in Lim, J., Browne, K. and Brown, G. (eds) *Geographies of sexualities: Theory, practices and politics*. Hampshire: Ashgate. pp. 195-205.
- Brown-Beresford, E. and McLaren, S. (2021) "The relationship between self-compassion, internalized heterosexism, and depressive symptoms among bisexual and lesbian women," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 22(1), pp. 90–115. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2021.2004483>.
- Browne, K. and Bakshi, L. (2013) *Ordinary in Brighton?: LGBT, activisms and the city*. Routledge.
- Bryman, A. (2012) *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- The Buggery Act 1553* (no date) *British Library*. Available at: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-buggery-act-1533> (Accessed: January 17, 2023).
- Burchiellaro, O. (2020) "'there's nowhere wonky left to go': Gentrification, queerness and class politics of inclusion in (East) London," *Gender, Work & Organization*, 28(1), pp. 24–38. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12495>.
- Burns, C. and Fisher, F. (2018) *Trans britain: Our journey from the shadows*. London: Unbound.
- Burrill, K.G. (2001) "Queering bisexuality," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 2(2-3), pp. 95–105. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1300/j159v02n02_06.
- Butler, J. (1986). Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*. *Yale French Studies*, 72, 35–49. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2930225>
- Butler, J. (1990) *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.

- Butler, J. (1993) *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of "Sex"*. London: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2004) *Undoing gender*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2021) *The force of nonviolence: An Ethico-political bind*. London: Verso.
- Butler, J. and Athanasiou, A. (2013) *Dispossession the performative in the political*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Caldwell, K. (2010) "We exist: Intersectional in/visibility in bisexuality & disability," *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 30(3/4). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v30i3/4.1273>.
- Callis, A.S. (2009) "Playing with Butler and Foucault: Bisexuality and queer theory," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 9(3-4), pp. 213–233. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710903316513>.
- Callis, A.S. (2013) "The black sheep of the Pink Flock: Labels, stigma, and bisexual identity," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 13(1), pp. 82–105. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2013.755730>.
- Callis, A.S. (2014) "Bisexual, pansexual, queer: Non-binary identities and the sexual borderlands," *Sexualities*, 17(1-2), pp. 63–80. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460713511094>.
- Canan, S.N. et al. (2019) "Differences in lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual women's experiences of sexual assault and rape in a national U.S. sample," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(19-20), pp. 9100–9120. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260519863725>.
- Caplan, P. (1987) *The cultural construction of Sexuality*.
- Casey, M. (2013). Belonging: Lesbians and Gay Men's Claims to Material Spaces. In: Taylor, Y., Addison, M. (eds) *Queer Presences and Absences. Genders and Sexualities in the Social Sciences*. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137314352_8
- Castells, M. (1983) *The city and the grassroots: A cross-cultural theory of urban social movements*. London: E. Arnold.
- Ceatha, N. et al. (2019) "The power of recognition: A qualitative study of social connectedness and wellbeing through LGBT Sporting, creative and social groups in Ireland," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(19), p. 3636. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16193636>.
- Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (2020) *Prevalentiemonitor Huiselijk Geweld en seksueel geweld 2020.*, Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. Available at: <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/publicatie/2020/51/prevalentiemonitor-huiselijk-geweld-en-seksueel-geweld-2020> (Accessed: January 15, 2023).

- Chun, K.Y. and Singh, A.A. (2010) "The bisexual youth of color intersecting identities development model: A contextual approach to understanding multiple marginalization experiences," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 10(4), pp. 429–451. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2010.521059>.
- Clarke, L.G. & J. (2022) *How many violent attacks and sexual assaults on women are there?*, *BBC News*. BBC. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-56365412> (Accessed: December 29, 2022).
- Collins, J.F. (2004) "The intersection of race and bisexuality," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 4(1-2), pp. 99–116. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1300/j159v04n01_08.
- Colliver, B. and Silvestri, M. (2020) "The role of (in)visibility in hate crime targeting transgender people," *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 22(2), pp. 235–253. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748895820930747>.
- Comella (2015) "Revisiting the feminist sex wars," *Feminist Studies*, 41(2), p. 437. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.15767/feministstudies.41.2.437>.
- Compton, D.L.R. *et al.* (2018) "Thank You for Coming Out Today: Queer discomforts of In-Depth Interviewing.," in *Other, please specify queer methods in sociology*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Compton, D.L.R., Meadow, T. and Schilt, K. (2018) *Other, please specify queer methods in sociology*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Connell, R. (2005) *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Connell, R.W. and Messerschmidt, J.W. (2005) "Hegemonic masculinity," *Gender & Society*, 19(6), pp. 829–859. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639>.
- Conner, C.T. (2022) *How gay men justify their racism on Grindr, The Conversation*. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/how-gay-men-justify-their-racism-on-grindr-164208> (Accessed: January 5, 2023).
- Corey, S. (2017) "All bi myself: Analyzing television's presentation of female bisexuality," *Journal of Bisexuality*, pp. 1–16. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2017.1305940>.
- Cosman, B. (2007) *Sexual citizens: The legal and cultural regulation of sex and belonging*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Coston, B.M. (2017) "Power and inequality: Intimate partner violence against bisexual and non-monosexual women in the United States," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(1-2), pp. 381–405. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517726415>.

- Crawley, S.L. (2012) "Autoethnography as feminist self-interview," in J.F. Gubrium et al. (eds) *The sage handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989) "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Policies." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1: 139-167
- Criminal Injuries Helpline (2022) *Sexual assault & rape statistics - 2022 UK Data: CIH, Criminal Injuries Helpline*. Available at: <https://criminalinjurieshelpline.co.uk/blog/sexual-assault-data-stats-2022/> (Accessed: December 31, 2022).
- Crowley, C., Harré, R. and Lunt, I. (2020) "Safe spaces and sense of identity: Views and experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people," *British Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Psychologies*, pp. 127–143. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003063889-12>.
- Cultural shift needed to tackle male violence, says London mayor* (2022) *BBC News*. BBC. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-60545379> (Accessed: December 29, 2022).
- Daly, S.J. (2020) "Bisexual women and monogamy," in E. Maliepaard and R. Baumgartner (eds) *Bisexuality in Europe: Sexual citizenship, romantic relationships, and bi+ identities*. London: Routledge.
- Daly, S.J., King, N. and Yeadon-Lee, T. (2018) "'femme it up or dress it down': Appearance and bisexual women in monogamous relationships," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 18(3), pp. 257–277. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2018.1485071>.
- Dasgupta, S., Sinha, S. and Roy, R. (2021) "'we are helpless, hopeless and living in despair': Impact of covid-19 on the overall health and well-being, and participation of the transgender community in India," *The International Journal of Community and Social Development*, 3(4), pp. 372–389. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/25166026211050743>.
- D'Augelli, A.R. (2006) "Developmental and contextual factors and mental health among lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths.," *Sexual orientation and mental health: Examining identity and development in lesbian, gay, and bisexual people.*, pp. 37–53. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/11261-002>.
- Davies, M. (2002) "Male sexual assault victims: A selective review of the literature and implications for Support Services," *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 7(3), pp. 203–214. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1359-1789\(00\)00043-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1359-1789(00)00043-4).
- De Feiten en cijfers over Seksueel Geweld* (2022) *Rutgers*. Available at: <https://rutgers.nl/themas/seksueel-geweld/feiten-en-cijfers-seksueel-geweld/> (Accessed: January 15, 2023).

- DeCapua, S.R. (2017) "Bisexual women's experiences with Binegativity in romantic relationships," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 17(4), pp. 451–472. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2017.1382424>.
- Denzin, N.K. (2018) "Constructing new critical inquiry through performance autoethnography," *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 11(1), pp. 51–56. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1525/irqr.2018.11.1.51>.
- Denzin, N.K. (2018) *Performance Autoethnography*. Routledge.
- Denzin, N.K. and Giardina, M.D. (2010) *Qualitative inquiry and human rights*. London: Routledge.
- Diamond, L.M. (2010) *Sexual fluidity: Understanding women's love and desire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Dilley, P. (1999) "Queer theory: Under construction," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 12(5), pp. 457–472. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/095183999235890>.
- Doan, L. (2010). Forgetting Sedgwick. *PMLA*, 125(2), 370–373. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25704431>
- Dodge, B. *et al.* (2016) "Attitudes toward bisexual men and women among a nationally representative probability sample of adults in the United States," *PLoS One*, 11(10). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0164430>.
- Donovan, C. (2017) *The dangerous 'gay men are misogynists' movement*, *HuffPost UK*. HuffPost UK. Available at: https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/charles-donovan/post-15730_b_17816344.html (Accessed: December 24, 2022).
- "Doreen Massey, 'a global sense of place' (1991)" (2014) *Exploring Human Geography*, pp. 243–251. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315832555-19>.
- Du Plessis, M. (1996) "Blatantly Bisexual; or, Unthinking Queer Theory". In: Pramaggiore, M. and Hall, D. ed. *RePresenting Bisexualities: Subjects and Cultures of Fluid Desire*. New York, USA: New York University Press, pp. 19-54. <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9780814768839.003.0007>
- Dworkin, S.H. (2003) "LGBT identity, violence, and Social Justice: The psychological is political," *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 25(4), pp. 269–279. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1023/b:adco.0000005526.87218.9f>.
- Dwyer, S.C. and Buckle, J.L. (2009) "The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(1), pp. 54–63. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800105>.
- Dyer, R. (2002) *The matter of images: Essays on representation*. London: Routledge.

- Easthope, H. (2009) "Fixed identities in a mobile world? the relationship between mobility, place, and identity," *Identities*, 16(1), pp. 61–82. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10702890802605810>.
- Edgar, J.B. & D. (2022) *Ashling Murphy: Teacher's killing a 'depraved act of violence'*, *BBC News*. BBC. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-60024295> (Accessed: December 29, 2022).
- Eliason, M. (2000) "Bi-negativity," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 1(2-3), pp. 137–154. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1300/j159v01n02_05.
- Eliason, M.J. (1997) "The Prevalence and Nature of Biphobia in Heterosexual Undergraduate Students," *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 26(3), pp. 317–326. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1024527032040>.
- Ellis, C. and Bochner, A.P. (2000). "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject." pp. 733–768 in Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2e ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ellis, H. (1897). *Studies in the psychology of sex*. Philadelphia, PA: FA Davis
- Emerson, R.M., Fretz, R.I. and Shaw, L.L. (1995) *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Erickson-Schroth, L. and Mitchell, J. (2009) "Queering queer theory, or why bisexuality matters," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 9(3-4), pp. 297–315. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710903316596>.
- Eves, A. (2004) "Queer theory, Butch/Femme identities and lesbian space," *Sexualities*, 7(4), pp. 480–496. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460704047064>.
- Fahs, B. (2009) "Compulsory bisexuality?: The challenges of modern sexual fluidity," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 9(3-4), pp. 431–449. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710903316661>.
- Fanon, F. (1986) *Black Skin, white masks*. London: Pluto Press.
- Feinstein, B.A. and Dyar, C. (2017) "Bisexuality, minority stress, and health," *Current Sexual Health Reports*, 9(1), pp. 42–49. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11930-017-0096-3>.
- Feinstein, B.A., Goldfried, M.R. and Davila, J. (2012) "The relationship between experiences of discrimination and mental health among lesbians and gay men: An examination of internalized homonegativity and rejection sensitivity as potential mechanisms.," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 80(5), pp. 917–927. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029425>.

- Feldman, S. (2009) "Reclaiming sexual difference: What queer theory can't tell us about sexuality," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 9(3-4), pp. 259–278. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710903316562>.
- Fenster, T. (2005) "Gender and the city: The different formations of belonging," in L. Nelson and J. Seager (eds) *A companion to Feminist Geography*. Hoboken, N.J: Wiley, pp. 242–257.
- Ferrer, J.N. (2018) "Mononormativity, Polypride, and the 'Mono–poly wars,'" *Sexuality & Culture*, 22(3), pp. 817–836. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-017-9494-y>.
- Firestein, B.A. and Ochs, R. (1997) "Biphobia: It goes more than two ways.," in *Bisexuality: The psychology and politics of an invisible minority*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, pp. 217–239.
- Flanders, C.E. (2017) "Under the Bisexual Umbrella: Diversity of identity and experience," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 17(1), pp. 1–6. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2017.1297145>.
- Flanders, C.E. et al. (2016) "Negative identity experiences of bisexual and other non-monosexual people: A qualitative report," *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, 20(2), pp. 152–172. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19359705.2015.1108257>.
- Flanders, C.E. et al. (2017) "Sexual health among young bisexual women: A qualitative, community-based study," *Psychology & Sexuality*, 8(1-2), pp. 104–117. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2017.1296486>.
- Flanders, C.E. et al. (2019) "Bisexual stigma, sexual violence, and sexual health among bisexual and other PLURISEXUAL Women: A cross-sectional survey study," *The Journal of Sex Research*, 56(9), pp. 1115–1127. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2018.1563042>.
- Flanders, C.E., Dobinson, C. and Logie, C. (2016) "Young Bisexual Women's perspectives on the relationship between bisexual stigma, mental health, and sexual health: A qualitative study," *Critical Public Health*, 27(1), pp. 75–85. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09581596.2016.1158786>.
- Flanders, C.E., LeBreton, M. and Robinson, M. (2018) "Bisexual women's experience of microaggressions and microaffirmations: A community-based, mixed-methods scale development project," *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 48(1), pp. 143–158. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-017-1135-x>.
- Formby, E. (2011) "Lesbian and bisexual women's human rights, sexual rights and sexual citizenship: Negotiating sexual health in England," *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 13(10), pp. 1165–1179. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2011.610902>.

- Formby, E. (2012a) Connected lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities? A scoping study to explore understandings and experiences of 'community' among LGBT people. Swindon: AHRC.
- Formby, E. (2012b) *Solidarity but not similarity? LGBT communities in the twenty-first century*. Sheffield: SHU.
- Formby, E. (2013) "Understanding and responding to homophobia and bullying: Contrasting staff and Young People's views within community settings in England," *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 10(4), pp. 302–316. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-013-0135-4>.
- Formby, E. (2017) *Exploring LGBT spaces and communities: Contrasting identities, belongings and wellbeing*. New York: Routledge.
- Formby, E. (2020) "LGBT 'communities' and the (self-)regulation and shaping of intimacy," *Sociological Research Online*, 27(1), pp. 8–26. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1360780420974031>.
- Forstie, C. (2019) "Disappearing dykes? post-lesbian discourse and shifting identities and Communities," *Journal of Homosexuality*, 67(12), pp. 1760–1778. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2019.1613857>.
- Foucault, M. (1978) *The history of sexuality: Volume one*, New York: Vintage Books.
- Franklin, J.D., Lyons, A. and Bourne, A. (2022) "Exploring the adoption and expression of subcultural identities among gay, bisexual, and queer-identifying men in Australia," *Current Psychology* [Preprint]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-02948-9>.
- Fredrickson, B.L. and Roberts, T.-A. (1997) "Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21(2), pp. 173–206. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00108.x>.
- Freud, S. (1962) *Three essays on the theory of sexuality*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Freud, S. (1975) *Civilisation and its Discontents*. London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis.
- Fricke, M. (2007) *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Friess, S. (2014) *Rose McGowan was right: Women can't lean on the Gay Rights Movement*, *Time*. Available at: <http://time.com/3572314/rose-mcgowan-feminists-gay-misogyny/>. (Accessed: December 24, 2022).
- Gagnon, J. H., & Simon, W. (1973). *Sexual conduct: The social sources of human sexuality*. Chicago: Aldine Books.

- Gagnon, J. H., & Simon, W. (1987). The scripting of oral genital sexual conduct. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 16, 1–25.
- Galupo, M.P. *et al.* (2014) “Conceptualization of sexual orientation identity among sexual minorities: Patterns across sexual and gender identity,” *Journal of Bisexuality*, 14(3-4), pp. 433–456. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2014.933466>.
- Galupo, M.P., Mitchell, R.C. and Davis, K.S. (2015) “Sexual minority self-identification: Multiple identities and complexity.,” *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 2(4), pp. 355–364. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000131>.
- Garr-Schultz, A. and Gardner, W. (2019) “‘it’s just a phase’: Identity denial experiences, self-concept clarity, and emotional well-being in bisexual individuals,” *Self and Identity*, 20(4), pp. 528–544. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2019.1625435>.
- Geertz, C., 1973. *Thick description: toward an interpretive theory of culture*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Basic Books
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance guidelines* (2018) *GDPR.eu*. Available at: <https://gdpr.eu/> (Accessed: December 13, 2018).
- George, S. (1993) *Women and Bisexuality*. London: Scarlet Press.
- Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Giddens, A. (2007) *Social theory and modern sociology*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Goffman, E. (1959) *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday.
- Goffman, E. (1963) *Stigma*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Gonzalez, K.A., Ramirez, J.L. and Galupo, M.P. (2016) “‘I was and still am’: Narratives of bisexual marking in the #stillbisexual campaign,” *Sexuality & Culture*, 21(2), pp. 493–515. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-016-9401-y>.
- Gooß, U. (2008) “Concepts of bisexuality,” *Journal of Bisexuality*, 8(1-2), pp. 9–23. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710802142127>.
- Hahm, J.(J.), Ro, H. and Olson, E.D. (2017) “Sense of belonging to a lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender event: The Examination of Affective Bond and collective self-esteem,” *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 35(2), pp. 244–256. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2017.1357519>.
- Halberstam, J. (1998) *Female masculinity*. Duke University Press.
- Halberstam, J. (2005) *In a queer time and place: Transgender Bodies, subcultural lives*. New York: New York University Press.

- Halberstam, J. (2011) *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.
- Hall, D.E. *et al.* (2013) *The Routledge Queer Studies reader*. London: Routledge.
- Hall, K.Q. (2019) "Queer Epistemology and Epistemic Injustice," in I.J. Kidd, Medina José, and G. Pohlhaus (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 158–166.
- Hall, S.M. (2013) "The politics of belonging," *Identities*, 20(1), pp. 46–53. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289x.2012.752371>.
- Halperin, D.M. (2009) "Thirteen ways of looking at a bisexual," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 9(3-4), pp. 451–455. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710903316679>.
- Hamilton, M. (1978) Opposition to the Contagious Diseases Acts, 1864-1886. *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 10(1), 14–27. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4048453>
- Hammett, D. (2010) *The maltese falcon*. London: Orion Books.
- Harris, A. *et al.* (2015) "Feelings of belonging: An exploratory analysis of the sociopolitical involvement of black, Latina, and Asian/Pacific Islander Sexual Minority Women," *Journal of Homosexuality*, 62(10), pp. 1374–1397. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2015.1061360>.
- Hartless, J. (2018) "Questionably queer: Understanding straight presence in the post-gay bar," *Journal of Homosexuality*, 66(8), pp. 1035–1057. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2018.1491707>.
- Hartless, J. (2018) "'they're gay bars, but they're men bars': Gendering questionably queer spaces in a Southeastern US University town," *Gender, Place & Culture*, 25(12), pp. 1781–1800. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369x.2018.1557601>.
- Harvey, D. (1996) *Justice, nature and the geography of difference*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Haslam, N. and Loughnan, S. (2014) "Dehumanization and inhumanization," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65(1), pp. 399–423. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115045>.
- Haslam, N. and Loughnan, S. (2014) "Dehumanization and inhumanization," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65(1), pp. 399–423. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115045>.
- Hate crime, England and Wales, 2021 to 2022 (2022). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022> (Accessed: 30 December 2022).

- Hayfield, N. and Huxley, C. (2015) "Insider and outsider perspectives: Reflections on researcher identities in research with Lesbian and bisexual women," *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 12(2), pp. 91–106. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2014.918224>.
- Hayfield, N. and Křížová, K. (2021) "It's like bisexuality, but it isn't: Pansexual and Panromantic people's understandings of their identities and experiences of becoming educated about gender and sexuality," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 21(2), pp. 167–193. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2021.1911015>.
- Hayfield, N., Clarke, V. and Halliwell, E. (2014) "Bisexual women's understandings of social marginalisation: 'the heterosexuals don't understand us but nor do the lesbians,'" *Feminism & Psychology*, 24(3), pp. 352–372. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353514539651>.
- Head, S. (2020). Understanding Power Dynamics in Bisexual Intimate Partner Violence: Looking in the Gap. In: Russell, B. (eds) *Intimate Partner Violence and the LGBT+ Community*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-44762-5_7
- Heidegger, M. (1962) *Being and time*. Trans. Macquarie, J. & E, Robinson, E. London: London Press.
- Hemmings, C. (1998) *In search of bisexual experience: Mapping contemporary bisexual space*. York.
- Hemmings, C. (2002) *Bisexual spaces: A geography of sexuality and gender*. New York: Routledge.
- Hemmings, C. (2007) "What's in a name? bisexuality, transnational sexuality studies and Western colonial legacies," *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 11(1-2), pp. 13–32. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642980601176258>.
- Herek, G.M., Gillis, J.R. and Cogan, J.C. (2009) "Internalized stigma among sexual minority adults: Insights from a social psychological perspective.," *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 56(1), pp. 32–43. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014672>.
- Hertlein, K.M., Hartwell, E.E. and Munns, M.E. (2016) "Attitudes toward bisexuality according to sexual orientation and gender," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 16(3), pp. 339–360. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2016.1200510>.
- Hochschild, A.R. (2012) *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Holman Jones, S. and Adams, T.E. (2010) "Autoethnography is a queer method," in K. Browne and C.J. Nash (eds) *Queer methods and methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*. London: Routledge, pp. 195–214.

- Holmes, H. and Hall, S.M. (eds) (2020) "Auto-ethnography: managing multiple embodiments in the live drawing class," in *Mundane methods: Innovative Ways to research the everyday*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 174–189.
- Homfray, M. (2007) *Provincial queens: The gay and lesbian community in the north-west of England*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- hooks, bell (2004) *We real cool: Black men and masculinity*. New York: Routledge.
- hooks, bell (2015) *Yearning: Race, gender, and cultural politics*. New York: Routledge.
- hooks, bell (2020) "Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness," *The Applied Theatre Reader*, pp. 80–85. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429355363-17>.
- Hoskin, R.A. (2019) "Femmephobia: The role of anti-femininity and gender policing in LGBTQ+ people's experiences of discrimination," *Sex Roles*, 81(11-12), pp. 686–703. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-019-01021-3>.
- Houlbrook, M. (2005) *Queer London: Perils and pleasures in the sexual metropolis, 1918-1957*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hubbard, G., Backett-Milburn, K. and Kemmer, D. (2001) "Working with emotion: Issues for the researcher in fieldwork and teamwork," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 4(2), pp. 119–137. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570116992>.
- Hubbard, L. (2021) *The Hate Crime Report 2021: Supporting LGBT+ Victims of Hate Crime*, London: Galop
- Hubbard, P. (1997) "Red-light districts and toleration zones: Geographies of female street prostitution in England and Wales," *Area*, 29(2), pp. 129–140. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4762.1997.tb00015.x>.
- Hubbard, P. (2000) "Desire/disgust: Mapping the moral contours of heterosexuality," *Progress in Human Geography*, 24(2), pp. 191–217. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1191/030913200667195279>.
- Hubbard, P. (2000) "Desire/disgust: Mapping the moral contours of heterosexuality,"
- Hubbard, P. (2008) "Here, there, everywhere: The ubiquitous geographies of heteronormativity," *Geography Compass*, 2(3), pp. 640–658. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2008.00096.x>.
- Hubbard, P. (2011) *Key thinkers on space and place*. London: SAGE.
- Hubbard, P. (2012) *Cities and sexualities*. Abingdon: Routledge.

- Hunt, S. and Hunt, E. (2018) "Sexual fluidity: An integrative review," *European Scientific Journal, ESJ*, 14(32), p. 182. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2018.v14n32p182>.
- Husserl, E. (1963) *Ideas: A general introduction to pure phenomenology*. Trans. W.R. Boyce Gibson. New York: Collier Books.
- Hutson, D.J. (2010) "Standing out/fitting in: Identity, appearance, and authenticity in gay and Lesbian Communities," *Symbolic Interaction*, 33(2), pp. 213–233. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2010.33.2.213>.
- Ignatieff, M. (2001) *Human rights as politics and idolatry*. Princeton University Press.
- Ingold, T. (2015) *The life of lines*. London: Routledge.
- Ingram, G.B., Bouthillette, A.-M. and Retter, Y. (1997) *Queers in space: Communities, public places, sites of resistance*. Seattle, WA: Bay Press.
- Israel, T. and Mohr, J.J. (2004) "Attitudes toward bisexual women and men," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 4(1-2), pp. 117–134. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1300/j159v04n01_09.
- Jackson, S. (2006) "Interchanges: Gender, sexuality and heterosexuality," *Feminist Theory*, 7(1), pp. 105–121. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700106061462>.
- Jackson, S. (2006) "Interchanges: Gender, sexuality and heterosexuality," *Feminist Theory*, 7(1), pp. 105–121. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700106061462>.
- Javaid, A. (2017) "The unknown victims: Hegemonic masculinity, masculinities, and male sexual victimisation," *Sociological Research Online*, 22(1), pp. 28–47. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.4155>.
- Johnson, H.J. (2016) "Bisexuality, mental health, and media representation," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 16(3), pp. 378–396. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2016.1168335>.
- Johnson, N.L. and Grove, M.B. (2017) "Why us? toward an understanding of bisexual women's vulnerability for and negative consequences of sexual violence," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 17(4), pp. 435–450. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2017.1364201>.
- Jones, H. (2019) *Queering autoethnography*. Routledge.
- Julia James: Callum Wheeler jailed for life for PCSO murder* (2022) *BBC News*. BBC. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-62085713> (Accessed: December 29, 2022).

- Julie Bindel: *Council cancels author's talk over Trans Views* (2022) *BBC News*. BBC. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-61948946> (Accessed: January 13, 2023).
- Kafer, A. (2013) *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Katz, E.R. (2015) *8 signs you're definitely in a gay bar*, *News | Logo TV*. Available at: <https://www.logotv.com/news/ec2u3e/nine-signs-youre-definitely-at-a-gay-bar> (Accessed: January 5, 2023).
- Kearns, A. and Parkinson, M. (2001) "The significance of neighbourhood," *Urban Studies*, 38(12), pp. 2103–2110. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980120087063>.
- Keiller, S.W. (2010) "Masculine norms as correlates of heterosexual men's attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women.," *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 11(1), pp. 38–52. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017540>.
- Kern, L. (2005) "In place and at home in the city: Connecting privilege, safety and belonging for women in Toronto," *Gender, Place & Culture*, 12(3), pp. 357–377. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09663690500202590>.
- Kertzner, R.M. et al. (2009) "Social and psychological well-being in lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals: The effects of race, gender, age, and sexual identity.," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 79(4), pp. 500–510. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016848>.
- Kesselring, R. (2015) *Moments of dislocation: Why the body matters in ethnographic research*. Basel: Inst. of Social Anthropology.
- Kidd, I.J., Medina, J. and Pohlhaus, J.G. (2019) *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*. London: Routledge.
- Kimball, E. et al. (2018) "Gender, sexuality & (dis)ability: Queer Perspectives on the experiences of students with disabilities," *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 38(2). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v38i2.5937>.
- Kinsey, A. C., Pomeroy, W. B., & Martin, C. E. (1948). *Sexual behavior in the human male*. Saunders.
- Kitchin, R. (2002) "Sexing the city: The sexual production of non-heterosexual space in Belfast, Manchester and San Francisco," *City*, 6(2), pp. 205–218. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360481022000011155>.
- Kitchin, R. and Lysaght, K. (2003) "Heterosexism and the geographies of everyday life in Belfast, Northern Ireland," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 35(3), pp. 489–510. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1068/a3538>.
- Klein, F. (2014) *The bisexual option: Second edition*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.

- Klesse, C. (2011) "Shady characters, untrustworthy partners, and promiscuous sluts: Creating bisexual intimacies in the face of Heteronormativity and biphobia," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 11(2-3), pp. 227–244. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2011.571987>.
- Klesse, C. (2020) "Bifeminist anti-monogamy and the politics of erotic autonomy," in E. Maliepaard and R. Baumgartner (eds) *Bisexuality in Europe: Sexual citizenship, romantic relationships, and bi+ identities*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Knopp, L. (1995) "Sexuality and Urban Space: A Framework for Analysis," in D. Bell and G. Valentine (eds) *Mapping desire: Geographies of sexualities*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Kobabe, M. (2019) *Gender queer: a memoir*. Lion Forge Comics.
- Krafft-Ebing, R.von, Falls, D. and Sellers, T. (2011) *Psychopathia Sexualis: The case histories*. Washington, D.C.: Solar Books.
- Kuziemko, I. et al. (2014) "'last-place aversion': Evidence and redistributive implications," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 129(1), pp. 105–149. Available at: <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjt035>.
- Langton, R. (2009) *Sexual solipsism philosophical essays on pornography and objectification*. Oxford u.a.: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Laumann, E. O., Gagnon, J. H., Michael, R. T., & Michaels, S. (1994). *The social organization of sexuality*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lauria, M. and Knopp, L. (1985) "Toward an analysis of the role of gay communities in the urban renaissance," *Urban Geography*, 6(2), pp. 152–169. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.6.2.152>.
- Lee, R.M. and Robbins, S.B. (1998) "The relationship between social connectedness and anxiety, self-esteem, and social identity.," *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 45(3), pp. 338–345. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.45.3.338>.
- Lefebvre, H. and Nicholson-Smith, D. (2009) *The production of space*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Leung, R. and Williams, R. (2019) "#MeToo and intersectionality: An examination of the #MeToo movement through the R. Kelly scandal," *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 43(4), pp. 349–371. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859919874138>.
- Levitt, H.M. and Horne, S.G. (2008) "Authenticity, identity, and embodiment: The struggle for inclusion in lesbian space," *Sex Roles*, 59(3-4), pp. 296–297. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-008-9401-y>.

- LGBT+ venues in crisis - London has lost 58 per cent since 2006* (2017) London City Hall. Available at: <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayor-pledges-support-to-lgbt-venues-in-london> (Accessed: January 16, 2023).
- The LGBTIQ+ Plan for London: A recovery and renewal plan for London's LGBTIQ+ communities* (no date) Consortium . Available at: <https://www.consortium.lgbt/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/LGBTIQ+Plan-for-London-final.pdf> (Accessed: January 16, 2023).
- LGBTQ+ nightlife venues* (2021) London City Hall. Available at: <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/arts-and-culture/lgbtq-nightlife-venues> (Accessed: January 16, 2023).
- Lim, J. (2007) "Queer Critique and the Politics of Affect" in Lim, J., Browne, K. and Brown, G. (eds) *Geographies of sexualities: Theory, practices and politics*. Hampshire: Ashgate. pp. 53-67.
- Lim, J., Browne, K. and Brown, G. (eds) (2007) *Geographies of sexualities: Theory, practices and politics*. Hampshire: Ashgate.
- Lingel, J. (2009) "Adjusting the borders: Bisexual passing and queer theory," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 9(3-4), pp. 381–405. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710903316646>.
- Lockhart, D.W. (2022) *UK government could challenge Scottish gender change law*, BBC News. BBC. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-63909309> (Accessed: December 30, 2022).
- Lorde, A. (2007) *When I dare to be powerful: women so empowered are dangerous*. London: Penguin Books.
- Loughnan, S & Pacilli, MG 2014, 'Seeing (and treating) others as sexual objects: Toward a more complete mapping of sexual objectification', *Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 309-325. <https://doi.org/10.4473/TPM21.3.6>
- Love, H. (2016) "Queer messes," *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly*, 44(3-4), pp. 345–349. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1353/wsq.2016.0068>.
- Luhtanen, R.K. (2002) "Identity, stigma management, and well-being," *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 7(1), pp. 85–100. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1300/j155v07n01_06.
- Lyon, D. and Back, L. (2012) "Fishmongers in a global economy: Craft and social relations on a London market," *Sociological Research Online*, 17(2), pp. 1–11. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.2692>.
- MacDowall, L. (2009) "Historicising Contemporary bisexuality," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 9(1), pp. 3–15. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710802659989>.

- Macpherson, H. (2016) "Walking methods in landscape research: Moving bodies, spaces of disclosure and Rapport," *Landscape Research*, 41(4), pp. 425–432. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01426397.2016.1156065>.
- Madison, D.S. (2010) *Acts of activism: Human rights as radical performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Maimon, M.R. *et al.* (2019) "Bisexual identity denial and health: Exploring the role of societal meta-perceptions and belonging threats among bisexual adults," *Self and Identity*, 20(4), pp. 515–527. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2019.1624275>.
- Maliepaard, E. (2015a) *Bisexual Spaces: Exploring Geographies of Bisexualities*, *Acme-Journal*. Available at: <https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/1148/916> (Accessed: January 16, 2023).
- Maliepaard, E. (2015b) "Bisexuals in space and geography: More-than-queer?," *Fennia – International Journal of Geography* [Preprint]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.11143/46303>.
- Maliepaard, E. (2018a) "Biseksuele ruimte OP Amsterdam pride," *AGORA Magazine*, 34(1), pp. 43–45. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.21825/agora.v34i1.10097>.
- Maliepaard, E. (2018b) "Disclosing bisexuality or coming out? Two different realities for bisexual people in the Netherlands," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 18(2), pp. 145–167. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2018.1452816>.
- Maliepaard, E. (2018c) "Introduction to the special issue: Eurobirecon: (inter)national research frontiers," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 18(1), pp. 1–14. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2018.1421307>.
- Maliepaard, E. (2020) "Spaces with a bisexual appearance: Re-conceptualizing bisexual space(s) through a study of bisexual practices in the Netherlands," *Social & Cultural Geography*, 21(1), pp. 45–63. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2018.1454979>.
- Maliepaard, E. (2022) "Bisexuality/plurisexuality in romantic relationships: Making space for bisexuality/plurisexuality?," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 21(4), pp. 560–580. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2022.2031369>.
- Mason, G. (2001) "Body maps: Envisaging homophobia, violence and safety," *Social & Legal Studies*, 10(1), pp. 23–44. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/a016321>.
- Massey, D. (1994) *Space, place and gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Massey, D. (2005) *For space*. London: SAGE.

- May, V. (2013) *Connecting self to society: Belonging in a Changing World*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mayor's Culture Support Fund awards grants to London LGBTQ+ venues (2020) London City Hall. Available at: <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayors-fund-awards-grants-to-lgbtq-venues> (Accessed: January 16, 2023).
- McCann, H. (2019) *Queering Femininity: Sexuality, feminism and the politics of presentation*. London: Routledge.
- McCann, H. (2022) "The refusal to refuse: Bisexuality trouble and the hegemony of monosexuality," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 22(1), pp. 71–89. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2022.2045243>.
- McClelland, S.I., Rubin, J.D. and Bauermeister, J.A. (2016) "Adapting to injustice: Young bisexual women's interpretations of microaggressions," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40(4), pp. 532–550. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684316664514>.
- McCormack, D.P. (2003) "An event of geographical ethics in spaces of affect," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 28(4), pp. 488–507. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0020-2754.2003.00106.x>.
- McInnis, M.K. et al. (2022) "Where does the 'B' belong?: Anti-bisexual experiences, self-stigma, and bisexual individuals' sense of belonging," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 22(3), pp. 355–384. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2022.2031368>.
- McKinnon, R. (2019) "Allies behaving badly: Gaslighting as epistemic injustice," in I.J. Kidd, Medina José, and G. Pohlhaus (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 167–174.
- McLaren, S. (2009) "Sense of belonging to the general and lesbian communities as predictors of depression among lesbians," *Journal of Homosexuality*, 56(1), pp. 1–13. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918360802551365>.
- McLaren, S. and Castillo, P. (2020) "The relationship between a sense of belonging to the LGBTIQ + community, internalized heterosexism, and depressive symptoms among bisexual and lesbian women," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 21(1), pp. 1–23. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2020.1862726>.
- McLaren, S. and Castillo, P. (2020) "What about me? sense of belonging and depressive symptoms among bisexual women," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 20(2), pp. 166–182. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2020.1759174>.
- McLean, C. (2021) "The growth of the anti-transgender movement in the United Kingdom. the silent radicalization of the British electorate," *International Journal of Sociology*, 51(6), pp. 473–482. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207659.2021.1939946>.

- McLean, J. (2003) *Daily desires: Everyday geographies of bisexual men*. Burnaby, B.C.: Simon Fraser University.
- McLean, K. (2018) "Bisexuality in society" in D.J. Swan & S. Habibi (Eds.), *Bisexuality: Theories, research, and recommendation for the invisible sexuality* (pp. 77 – 94). Cham: Springer.
- McLean, K. (2004) "Negotiating (non)monogamy," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 4(1-2), pp. 83–97. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1300/j159v04n01_07.
- McLean, K. (2008) "Inside, outside, nowhere: Bisexual men and women in the gay and lesbian community," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 8(1-2), pp. 63–80. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710802143174>.
- McLean, K. (2008) "Inside, outside, nowhere: Bisexual men and women in the gay and lesbian community," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 8(1-2), pp. 63–80. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710802143174>.
- McLeod, M., Hooks, B. and Angelou, M. (1998) *Angelou*. Shambhala Sun. Available at: <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/249.html> (Accessed: December 27, 2022).
- McRuer, R. (2006). *Crip theory: Cultural signs of queerness and disability*. New York, NY: NYU Press.
- McRuer, R. (2011). Disabling sex: Notes for a crip theory of sexuality. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 17(1), 107–117. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2010-021>
- McWhorter, L. (2009) *Racism and sexual oppression in Anglo-america: A genealogy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Messerschmidt, J.W. (2018) *Hegemonic masculinity: Formulation, reformulation, and amplification*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Meyer, I.H. (2003) "Prejudice, social stress, and Mental Health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence.," *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(5), pp. 674–697. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.5.674>.
- Miller, R.A. (2015) "'Sometimes you feel invisible': Performing queer/disabled in the university classroom," *The Educational Forum*, 79(4), pp. 377–393. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2015.1068417>.
- Mills, C.W. (1959) *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: : Oxford.
- Mitchell, R.C., Davis, K.S. and Galupo, M.P. (2014) "Comparing perceived experiences of prejudice among self-identified plurisexual individuals," *Psychology & Sexuality*, 6(3), pp. 245–257. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2014.940372>.

- Mizel, J. (2021) 'without income from restricted or closed LGBTQ+ venues to fund initiatives, progress slows', *morningadvertiser.co.uk*. William Reed Ltd. Available at: <https://www.morningadvertiser.co.uk/Article/2021/06/16/Wider-impact-of-Covid-restrictions-on-LGBTQ-venues> (Accessed: January 16, 2023).
- Mohr, J.J. and Rochlen, A.B. (1999) "Measuring attitudes regarding bisexuality in lesbian, gay male, and heterosexual populations.," *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 46(3), pp. 353–369. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.46.3.353>.
- Monro, s. & Richardson, D. (2014) "Citizenship: Gender and Sexuality," in van der Heijden, H. *Handbook of Political Citizenship And Social Movements*. Hein-Anton (ed). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Monro, S. (2005) *Gender politics: Citizenship, activism and sexual diversity*. London: Pluto.
- Monro, S. (2015) *Bisexuality: Identities, politics, and theories*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Monro, S., Hines, S. and Osborne, A. (2017) "Is bisexuality invisible? A review of sexualities scholarship 1970–2015," *The Sociological Review*, 65(4), pp. 663–681. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026117695488>.
- Montserrat, G. (2013) *Belonging: Solidarity and division in Modern Societies*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Moran, L.J. (2007) "'invisible minorities'," *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 7(4), pp. 417–441. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748895807082065>.
- Mulick, P.S. and Wright, L.W. (2002) "Examining the existence of biphobia in the heterosexual and homosexual populations," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 2(4), pp. 45–64. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1300/j159v02n04_03.
- Mulick, P.S. and Wright, L.W. (2011) "The biphobia scale a decade later: Reflections and additions," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 11(4), pp. 453–457. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2011.620486>.
- Muñoz José Esteban (1999) *Disidentifications queers of color and the performance of politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Murder of Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman* (no date) *BBC News*. BBC. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/cd6rv4pdm2et> (Accessed: December 29, 2022).
- Murgo, M.A. et al. (2017) "Anti-effeminacy moderates the relationship between masculinity and internalized heterosexism among gay men," *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, 11(2), pp. 106–118. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15538605.2017.1310008>.

- Murphy, J.P. and Lugg, C.A. (2016) "Scavenging as queer methodology," *Critical Concepts in Queer Studies and Education*, pp. 369–379. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-55425-3_36.
- Myslik, W.D. (1996) "Renegotiating the social/sexual identities of places: gay communities as safe havens or sites of resistance," in N. Duncan (ed.) *BodySpace: Destabilizing geographies of gender and sexuality*. London: Routledge, pp. 156–169.
- Nadal, K.L. et al. (2016) "Microaggressions toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and Genderqueer People: A review of the literature," *The Journal of Sex Research*, 53(4-5), pp. 488–508. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2016.1142495>.
- Nash, C.J. (2011) "Trans experiences in Lesbian and Queer Space," *The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien*, 55(2), pp. 192–207. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0064.2010.00337.x>.
- Nash, C.J. and Browne, K.J. (eds) (2010) *Queer Methods and Methodologies*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Nelson, R. (2020) "Questioning identities/shifting identities: The impact of researching sex and gender on a researcher's LGBT+ identity," *Qualitative Research*, 20(6), pp. 910–926. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794120914522>.
- Nelson, R. (2020) *Sexual Renegades: Bisexual and Plurisexual Experiences of Sexual Identity, Gender Identity, and Romantic Relationships*, research-information.bris.ac.uk. dissertation. Economic and Social Research Council. Available at: <https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/sexual-renegades> (Accessed: August 21, 2020).
- A New Queer London: LGBTQ+ Communities and Spaces beyond Covid-19* (2022) londonlgbtqcentre.org. London LGBTQ+ Community Centre. Available at: <https://londonlgbtqcentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/A-New-Queer-London-LGBTQ-Communities-and-Spaces-beyond-Covid-19.pdf> (Accessed: January 16, 2023).
- Newcomb, M.E. and Mustanski, B. (2010) "Internalized homophobia and internalizing mental health problems: A meta-analytic review," *Clinical Psychology Review*, 30(8), pp. 1019–1029. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2010.07.003>.
- Newkey-Burden, C. (2016) *The gay community needs to deal with its misogyny problem*, *The Telegraph*. Telegraph Media Group. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/the-gay-community-needs-to-deal-with-its-misogyny-problem/> (Accessed: December 24, 2022).
- Nussbaum, M.C. (1995) "Objectification," *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 24(4), pp. 249–291. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1088-4963.1995.tb00032.x>.

- Oakley, A. (1981) Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms? In: Roberts, H. (ed.) *Doing Feminist Research*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, pp.30–61.
- Ochs, R. (2015) *Biphobia: It goes more than two ways*, Robyn Ochs. Available at: <https://robynochs.com/biphobia-it-goes-more-than-two-ways/> (Accessed: September 15, 2016).
- Ochs, R. (2015). Definition of bisexuality [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://robynochs.com/2015/10/11/the-definition-of-bisexuality-according-to-bi>
- Oosterhuis, H. (2012) “Sexualmodernity in the works of Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll,” *Medical History*, 56(2), pp. 133–155. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/mdh.2011.30>.
- Orczy, E. (2018) *The scarlet pimpernel*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Oswin, N. (2008) “Critical geographies and the uses of sexuality: Deconstructing queer space,” *Progress in Human Geography*, 32(1), pp. 89–103. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132507085213>.
- Papacharissi, Z. (2015) *Affective publics: Sentiment, technology and politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Participation, E. (2016) *Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 april 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation) (text with EEA Relevance), Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation) (Text with EEA relevance)*. Queen's Printer of Acts of Parliament. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eur/2016/679/contents> (Accessed: January 13, 2023).
- Paz Galupo, M., Taylor, S.M. and Cole, D. (2019) “‘I am double the bi’: Positive aspects of being both bisexual and biracial,” *Journal of Bisexuality*, 19(2), pp. 152–168. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2019.1619066>.
- Pennasilico, A., & Amodeo, A. L. (2019). The invisibles: Biphobia, bisexual erasure and their impact on mental health. *PuntOorg International Journal*, 4(1), 21–28. <https://doi.org/10.19245/25.05.pij.4.1.4>
- Pensoneau-Conway, S.L., Adams, T.E. and Bolen, D.M. (2017) *Doing autoethnography*. Rotterdam: SensePublishers.
- Perry, B. (2001) *In the name of hate: Understanding hate crimes*. New York: Routledge.

- Persson, T.J. and Pfaus, J.G. (2015) "Bisexuality and mental health: Future research directions," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 15(1), pp. 82–98. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2014.994694>.
- Pew Research Centre. (2013, June 13). A survey of LGBT Americans: Attitudes, experiences, and values in changing times. <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/06/13/a-survey-of-lgbt-americans/>
- Peyrefitte, M. (2012) "Ways of seeing, ways of being and ways of knowing in the inner-city: Exploring sense of place through visual tours," *Sociological Research Online*, 17(4), pp. 125–141. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.2809>.
- Peyrefitte, M. and Sanders-McDonagh, E. (2018) "Space, power and sexuality: Transgressive and transformative possibilities at the interstices of spatial boundaries," *Gender, Place & Culture*, 25(3), pp. 325–333. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369x.2018.1454405>.
- Pieper, M., & Bauer, R. (2005). Polyamory and mono-normativity: Results of an empirical study of nonmonogamous patterns of intimacy. Unpublished manuscript. Hamburg, Germany: Research Center for Feminist, Gender, and Queer Studies, University of Hamburg
- Pink, S. (2007) *Doing visual ethnography*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Pink, S. (2015) *Doing sensory ethnography*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Plummer, K. (1992) *Modern homosexualities: Fragments of lesbian and gay experience*. London: Routledge.
- Plummer, K. (2004) *Telling sexual stories: Power, change, and Social Worlds*. London: Routledge.
- Plummer, K. (2010) "The Call of Life Stories," in P. Atkinson et al. (eds) *Handbook of ethnography*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Plummer, K. (2012) *Intimate citizenship in an an unjust world, Ken Plummer*. Available at: <https://kenplummer.com/selected-writings-2/intimate-citizenship-in-an-an-unjust-world/> (Accessed: January 12, 2023).
- Probyn, E. (2016) *Outside belongings*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Protevi, J.L. (2009) *Political affect: Connecting the social and the somatic*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Puar, J.K. (2007) *Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Puwar, N. (2004) *Space invaders: Race, gender and bodies out of place*. Oxford: Berg.

- Queen, C. (1991). The queer in me. In L. Hutchins & L. Kaahumann (Eds.), *Bi any other name*. Boston, MA: Alyson. pp. 12-21.
- Rape crisis* (no date) *Rape Crisis*. Available at: <https://www.rapecrisis.co.uk/> (Accessed: December 31, 2022).
- Reporter, N. (2020) *London mayor's £130k boost for LGBT bars and clubs, South London News*. Available at: <https://londonnewsonline.co.uk/london-mayors-130k-boost-for-lgbt-bars-and-clubs/> (Accessed: January 16, 2023).
- Results and submissions* (2021) *Unit of assessment 32: Arts and Design: History, Practice and Theory : Results and submissions : REF 2021*. REF. Available at: <https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/profiles/units-of-assessment/32> (Accessed: June 14, 2022).
- Results and submissions* (no date) *Unit of assessment 33: Music, Drama, Dance, performing Arts, Film, and Screen Studies: Results and submissions : REF 2021*. REF. Available at: <https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/profiles/units-of-assessment/33> (Accessed: June 14, 2022).
- Roberts, T.S., Horne, S.G. and Hoyt, W.T. (2015) "Between a gay and a straight place: Bisexual individuals' experiences with monosexism," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 15(4), pp. 554–569. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2015.1111183>.
- Rooke, A. (2007) "Navigating embodied lesbian cultural space: Toward a lesbian habitus," *Space and Culture*, 10(2), pp. 231–252. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331206298790>.
- Rooke, A. (2009) "Queer in the field: On emotions, temporality, and performativity in Ethnography," *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 13(2), pp. 149–160. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10894160802695338>.
- Rooke, A. (2010) "Queer in the field: On emotions, temporality, and performativity in Ethnography," *Queering Methodology*, pp. 34–45. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003302469-4>.
- Rose P. (1985). *Writing on women: Essays in a renaissance*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Rose, M. (2020) "Pedestrian practices: walking from the mundane to the marvellous," in H. Holmes and S.M. Hall (eds) *Mundane methods: Innovative Ways to research the everyday*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 211–229.
- Ross, L.E. *et al.* (2017) "Prevalence of depression and anxiety among bisexual people compared to gay, lesbian, and heterosexual individuals:A systematic review and meta-analysis," *The Journal of Sex Research*, 55(4-5), pp. 435–456. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2017.1387755>.

- Ross, L.E. *et al.* (2017) "Prevalence of depression and anxiety among bisexual people compared to gay, lesbian, and heterosexual individuals: A systematic review and meta-analysis," *The Journal of Sex Research*, 55(4-5), pp. 435–456. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2017.1387755>.
- Ross, L.E., Dobinson, C. and Eady, A. (2010) "Perceived determinants of mental health for bisexual people: A qualitative examination," *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(3), pp. 496–502. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2008.156307>.
- Ross, M.W., Daneback, K. and Månsson, S.-A. (2012) "Fluid versus fixed: A new perspective on bisexuality as a fluid sexual orientation beyond gender," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 12(4), pp. 449–460. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2012.702609>.
- Rothenberg, T. (1995) in D. Bell and G. Valentine (eds) *Mapping desire: Geographies of sexualities*. London: Routledge.
- Rubin, G. (2012) *Deviations: A gayle rubin reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Rubin, H. (2003) *Self-made men: Identity and embodiment among transsexual men*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP.
- Russell (2020) *Intimate partner violence and the LGBT+ community*. Springer International Publishing.
- Rust, P.C. (1995) *Bisexuality and the challenge to lesbian politics: Sex, loyalty, and revolution*. New York: New York University Press.
- Rust, P.C. (1996) "Monogamy and polyamory: Relationship issues for bisexuals," in B.A. Firestein (ed.) *Bisexuality: The psychology and politics of an invisible minority*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sabina Nessa: Group Marks Anniversary of teacher's murder* (2022) *BBC News*. BBC. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-62894572> (Accessed: December 29, 2022).
- SafeLives (2018) *Free To Be Safe: LGBT+ people experiencing domestic abuse*.
- Safer sounds partnership* (no date) *Safer Sounds Partnership*. Available at: <https://www.safersounds.org.uk/> (Accessed: January 16, 2023).
- San Francisco Human Rights Commission. (2011, March). *Bisexual invisibility: Impacts and recommendations*. https://sf-hrc.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRC_Publications/Articles/Bisexual_Invisiblity_Impacts_and_Recommendations_March_2011.pdf
- Sanders-McDonagh, E. (2019) *Women and sex tourism landscapes*. Routledge.

- Sanders-McDonagh, E. and Peyrefitte, M. (2018) "Immoral Geographies and Soho's sex shops: Exploring spaces of sexual diversity in London," *Gender, Place & Culture*, 25(3), pp. 351–367. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369x.2018.1453487>.
- Sanders-McDonagh, E., Peyrefitte, M. and Ryalls, M. (2016) "Sanitising the city: Exploring hegemonic gentrification in London's Soho," *Sociological Research Online*, 21(3), pp. 128–133. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.4004>.
- Sarah Everard Murder* (no date) *BBC News*. BBC. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/c8657zxx82wt> (Accessed: December 29, 2022).
- Savage, M. (2010) "The Politics of Elective Belonging," *Housing, Theory and Society*, 27(2), pp. 115–161. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14036090903434975>.
- Savin-Williams, R.C. (2014) "An exploratory study of the categorical versus spectrum nature of sexual orientation," *The Journal of Sex Research*, 51(4), pp. 446–453. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2013.871691>.
- Schechner, R. (2013) *Performance studies: An introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Schlenker, B.R. (1986). Self-Identification: Toward an Integration of the Private and Public Self. In: Baumeister, R.F. (eds) *Public Self and Private Self*. Springer Series in Social Psychology. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4613-9564-5_2
- Schmidt, S. (2017). Genderplay and Queer Mapping. In: Ares, N., Buendía, E., Helfenbein, R. (eds) *Deterritorializing/Reterritorializing. Breakthroughs in the Sociology of Education*. SensePublishers, Rotterdam. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-977-5_13
- Sedgwick, E.K. (1990) *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Sedgwick, E.K. (2003) *Touching feeling: Affect, pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Seidman, S. (2002) *Beyond the closet: The transformation of gay and lesbian life*. Routledge.
- Seidman, S. (2015) *The social construction of Sexuality*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Serpe, C. *et al.* (2020) "Bisexual women: Experiencing and coping with objectification, prejudice, and erasure," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 20(4), pp. 456–492. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2020.1820421>.
- Sexual assault and the LGBTQ community* (no date) *Human Rights Campaign*. Available at: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/sexual-assault-and-the-lgbt-community> (Accessed: January 15, 2023).
- Shively, M. G., & de Cecco, J. P. (1977). Components of sexual identity. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 3(1), 41–48. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v03n01_04

- Silverman, D. (2013) *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. London: SAGE.
- Simon, W. and Gagnon, J.H. (2003) "Sexual scripts: Origins, influences and changes," *Qualitative Sociology*, 26(4), pp. 491–497. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1023/b:quas.0000005053.99846.e5>.
- Simoni, J.M. and Walters, K.L. (2001) "Heterosexual identity and heterosexism," *Journal of Homosexuality*, 41(1), pp. 157–172. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1300/j082v41n01_06.
- Skeggs, B. (1999) "Matter out of place: Visibility and sexualities in Leisure Spaces," *Leisure Studies*, 18(3), pp. 213–232. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/026143699374934>.
- Skeggs, B. et al. (2004) "Queer as folk: Producing the real of urban space," *Urban Studies*, 41(9), pp. 1839–1856. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098042000243183>.
- Smart, C. (2007) *Personal life: New directions in sociological thinking*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Smith, J.A. and Osborn, M. (2008) "Interpretative phenomenological analysis," in J.A. Smith (ed.) *Qualitative psychology*. Los Angeles, Calif, London : SAGE, pp. 53–80.
- Smith, J.A., Flowers, P. and Larkin, M. (2009) *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Soja, E.W. (2010) *Postmodern geographies: The reassertion of space in critical social theory*. London: Verso.
- Southwell, H. (2018) *Anti-trans group allowed to lead pride in London March after Hijack*, *PinkNews*. Available at: <https://www.thepinknews.com/2018/07/07/anti-trans-group-allowed-to-lead-pride-in-london-march-after-hijack/> (Accessed: January 5, 2023).
- Spivak, G.C. et al. (2020) *Can the subaltern speak?* London: Afterall Books.
- Spruce, E. (2021) "The place of transversal LGBTQ+ Urban Activisms," *Urban Studies*, 58(7), pp. 1520–1528. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098020986063>.
- Spry, T. (2016) *Body, paper, stage: Writing and performing autoethnography*. Abingdon, England: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.
- Stanley, L., & Wise, S. (1993). *Breaking out Again: Feminist Ontology and Epistemology*. London: Routledge.
- Stone, S. (2021) *'nights out should be about fun and freedom, not fear'*, *morningadvertiser.co.uk*. William Reed Ltd. Available at: <https://www.morningadvertiser.co.uk/Article/2021/06/14/What-impact-has-Covid-19-had-on-LGBTQ-venues> (Accessed: January 16, 2023).

- Stone, S.D. (1996) "Bisexual women and the 'threat' to lesbian space: Or what if all the lesbians leave?," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 16(1), p. 101. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3346927>.
- Storms, M. D. (1980). Theories of sexual orientation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38(5), 783–792. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.38.5.783>
- Storr, M. (1999) *Bisexuality: A critical reader*. London: Routledge.
- Storr, M. (1999) "Postmodern bisexuality," *Sexualities*, 2(3), pp. 309–325. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/136346099002003003>.
- Surviving R. Kelly (2019). Kreativ Inc. & Bunim/Murray Productions. Available at: Netflix (5 January 2019)
- Swan, D.J. and Habibi, S. (eds) (2018) *Bisexuality: Theories, research, and recommendations for the invisible sexuality*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Szcześniak, M. (2014) *Blending in and standing out - camouflage and masking as queer... View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture*. Available at: <https://www.pismowidok.org/en/archive/2014/5-queer-images/blending-in-and-standing-out-camouflage-and-masking-as-queer#sdfootnote13sym> (Accessed: January 12, 2023).
- Szymanski, D.M., Carr, E.R. and Moffitt, L.B. (2011) "Sexual objectification of women: Clinical implications and training considerations," *The Counseling Psychologist*, 39(1), pp. 107–126. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000010378450>.
- Szymanski, D.M., Moffitt, L.B. and Carr, E.R. (2010) "Sexual objectification of women: Advances to theory and research," *The Counseling Psychologist*, 39(1), pp. 6–38. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000010378402>.
- Table 4 experiences of physical assault and sexual assault since age 15 and in the past 12 months, by sexual orientation and Gender, Canada, 2018 (2020) Table 4 Experiences of physical assault and sexual assault since age 15 and in the past 12 months, by sexual orientation and gender, Canada, 2018*. Statistics Canada, Government of Canada. Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00009/tbl/tbl04-eng.htm> (Accessed: January 15, 2023).
- Tackling violence against women and girls strategy: progress update (2022). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy-progress-update/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy-progress-update#:~:text=The%20strategy%20will%20set%20out,identifying%20and%20responding%20to%20it>. (Accessed: 31 December 2022).
- Taussig, M.T. (2011) *I swear I saw this drawings in fieldwork notebooks, namely My Own*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Taylor, J. (2017) "Bisexual mental health: A call to action," *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 39(1), pp. 83–92. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01612840.2017.1391904>.
- Taylor, Y. (2013) "'that's not really my scene': Working-class lesbians in (and out of) place," *Queer Presences and Absences*, pp. 159–177. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137314352_9.
- Thatcher, N. (2021) *Roadmap delay 'will force 1 in 4 night-time businesses to close for good'*, *morningadvertiser.co.uk*. William Reed Ltd. Available at: <https://www.morningadvertiser.co.uk/Article/2021/06/14/Will-nightclubs-reopen-on-21-June> (Accessed: January 16, 2023).
- TheAdvocateMag (2016) *Gay men and sexism: Time to accept responsibility*, *ADVOCATE*. Advocate.com. Available at: <https://www.advocate.com/commentary/2016/9/08/gay-men-and-sexism-time-accept-responsibility> (Accessed: December 24, 2022).
- TheAdvocateMag (2016) *Yes, you can be sexist even if you're a gay man*, *ADVOCATE*. Advocate.com. Available at: <https://www.advocate.com/women/2016/12/19/yes-you-can-be-sexist-even-if-youre-gay-man> (Accessed: December 24, 2022).
- Thompson, B.Y. (2012) "The price of 'community' from bisexual/biracial women's perspectives," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 12(3), pp. 417–428. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2012.702623>.
- Thompson, E.H. and Bennett, K.M. (2015) "Measurement of masculinity ideologies: A (critical) review.," *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 16(2), pp. 115–133. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038609>.
- Thrift, N. (2003) "Performance and," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 35(11), pp. 2019–2024. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1068/a3543a>.
- Thrift, N. (2004) "Intensities of feeling: Towards a spatial politics of affect," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 86(1), pp. 57–78. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0435-3684.2004.00154.x>.
- Toft, A. (2020) "Parallels and alliances: The lived experiences of young, disabled bisexual people," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 20(2), pp. 183–201. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2020.1774460>.
- Tredway, Kristi (2014). Judith Butler Redux – the Heterosexual Matrix and the Out Lesbian Athlete: Amélie Mauresmo, Gender Performance, and Women's Professional Tennis. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 41 (2):163-176.
- Trust in police by country 2022 | Statista (2022). Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1274278/trust-in-police-worldwide-by-country/> (Accessed: 31 December 2022).

- Tuana, N. (2017) "Feminist Epistemology: The subject of knowledge," in Kidd, I.J., José, M., and Pohlhaus, G. (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 125-138.
- Turner, A. (2007) "Embodied ethnography. doing culture," *Social Anthropology*, 8(1), pp. 51–60. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8676.2000.tb00207.x>.
- UCL (2022) *LGBTQ+ Nightlife Spaces in London*, UCL Urban Laboratory. Available at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/urban-lab/research/research-projects/lgbtq-nightlife-spaces-london> (Accessed: January 16, 2023).
- Ulmer, G.L. (1989) *Teletheory: The making of "Derrida at the Little Bighorn"*. New York: Routledge.
- Upshaw, A. (2017) "My Body Knows Things: This Black Woman's Storied Theory in Performative Autoethnograph," in S.L. Pensoneau-Conway, T.E. Adams, and D.M. Bolen (eds) *Doing autoethnography*. Rotterdam: SensePublishers, pp. 55–65.
- Valentine, G. (1993) "Negotiating and managing multiple sexual identities: Lesbian Time-Space Strategies," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 18(2), p. 237. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/622365>.
- Valentine, G. and Skelton, T. (2003) "Finding oneself, losing oneself: The Lesbian and gay 'scene' as a paradoxical space," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27(4), pp. 849–866. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0309-1317.2003.00487.x>.
- van Anders, S.M. (2015) "Beyond sexual orientation: Integrating gender/sex and diverse sexualities via sexual configurations theory," *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 44(5), pp. 1177–1213. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-015-0490-8>.
- Violence against women and girls national statement of expectations (accessible)* (2022) GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/violence-against-women-and-girls-national-statement-of-expectations-and-commissioning-toolkit/violence-against-women-and-girls-national-statement-of-expectations-accessible> (Accessed: December 22, 2022).
- Wade, R.M. and Pear, M.M. (2022) "A good app is hard to find: Examining differences in racialized sexual discrimination across online intimate partner-seeking venues," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(14), p. 8727. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19148727>.
- Ward, J. (2016) "Dyke methods: A meditation on queer studies and the Gay Men Who Hate it," *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly*, 44(3-4), pp. 68–85. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1353/wsqr.2016.0036>.
- Watson, L.B. et al. (2021) "'I was a game or a fetish object': Diverse bisexual women's sexual assault experiences and effects on bisexual identity," *Journal of Bisexuality*, 21(2), pp. 225–261. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2021.1932008>.

- “We are here to party? lesbian, gay, bisexual and Trans Leisurescapes beyond commercial gay scenes” (2013) *Sexualities, Spaces and Leisure Studies*, pp. 89–106. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203722190-10>.
- Weeks, J. (1993) *Sexuality and its discontents meanings, Myths & Modern Sexualities*. London u.a.: Routledge.
- Weeks, J. (1998) “The sexual citizen,” *Theory, Culture & Society*, 15(3-4), pp. 35–52. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276498015003003>.
- Weeks, J. (2011) *The languages of Sexuality*. London: Routledge.
- Weeks, J. (2017) *Sex, politics and society: The regulation of sexuality since 1800*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group.
- Weeks, J. (2017) *Sexuality*. London: Routledge.
- Weiss, J. (2011) “Reflective paper: GL versus bt: The Archaeology of Biphobia and transphobia within the U.S. gay and Lesbian Community,” *Journal of Bisexuality*, 11(4), pp. 498–502. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2011.620848>.
- Weiss, J.T. (2003) “GL vs. BT,” *Journal of Bisexuality*, 3(3-4), pp. 25–55. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1300/j159v03n03_02.
- Wekker, G. (2006) *The politics of passion: Women's sexual culture in the Afro-surinamese diaspora*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Welzer-Lang, D. (2008) “Speaking out loud about bisexuality: Biphobia in the gay and lesbian community,” *Journal of Bisexuality*, 8(1-2), pp. 81–95. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710802142259>.
- Widerberg, K. (2020) “Memory Work: an approach to remembering and documenting everyday experiences,” in H. Holmes and S.M. Hall (eds) *Mundane methods: Innovative Ways to research the everyday*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 49–65.
- Wilkinson, W.W. (2008) “Threatening the patriarchy: Testing an explanatory paradigm of anti-lesbian attitudes,” *Sex Roles*, 59(7-8), pp. 512–520. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-008-9432-4>.
- Williams, C. and Giuffre, P. (2011) “From organizational sexuality to Queer Organizations: Research on homosexuality and the workplace,” *Sociology Compass*, 5(7), pp. 551–563. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2011.00392.x>.
- Williams, D. *et al.* (2022) “Beyond the boundaries: Exploring the identity-related experiences of biracial/multiracial and bisexual adults,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 51(4), pp. 2241–2259. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-021-02236-w>.

- Williams, D. *et al.* (2022) "Beyond the boundaries: Exploring the identity-related experiences of biracial/multiracial and bisexual adults," *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 51(4), pp. 2241–2259. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-021-02236-w>.
- Williams, K.L. and Galliher, R.V. (2006) "Predicting depression and self-esteem from social connectedness, support, and competence," *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 25(8), pp. 855–874. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2006.25.8.855>.
- Wilson, G.D. and Rahman, Q. (2005) *Born gay: The psychobiology of sex orientation*. London: Peter Owen.
- Yarker, S. (2017) "Reconceptualising Comfort as part of local belonging: The use of confidence, commitment and irony," *Social & Cultural Geography*, 20(4), pp. 534–550. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2017.1373301>.
- Yoshino, K. (2000) "The epistemic contract of bisexual erasure," *Stanford Law Review*, 52(2), p. 353. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229482>.
- Zurbrügg, L. and Miner, K.N. (2016) "Gender, sexual orientation, and workplace incivility: Who is most targeted and who is most harmed?" *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00565>.

Appendix

Table C: Appendices Content List	
A	Thematic Analysis
B	Ethnographic Observations and Methods
C	Participant Contact
D	Participant Consent Form
E	Participant Information Sheet
F	Participant Debrief Sheet
G	Final Interview Guide
H	Initial Interview Guide
I	The Kinsey Homosexual-heterosexual Rating Scale

Appendix A. Thematic Analysis

Main theme 1	Main theme 2	Main theme 3
Conceptualisation of Plurisexual Un/belonging	Negotiating plurisexual identities (as a concept)	Spatial Negotiation (as a concept)
Overlapping subthemes		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unbelonging 2. Acceptance 3. Identity Negotiation (as practice) 4. Community 5. Spatial negotiation (as practice) 6. Ideology/Politics 		
Specific Subthemes Un/belonging	Specific Subthemes Identity Negotiation	Specific Subthemes Spatial Negotiation
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Belonging as comfort and Safety 2. Belonging and community dynamics - Community spaces - Ideology and practice - Intersectional prejudice 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identity interrogation - Monowashing - Stigma reiteration - Quantification 2. Identity interrogation responses - Term switching - Queer signposting - Resistance 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sites of belonging: Queer vs LGBT spaces 2. Spatial precarity and spatial availability 3. Transgressive spaces - Affective political performativity

Appendix B. Ethnographic Observations and Methods

Event	Location	Frequency	Date	Data Collection Method
Pride2018	London, Portland Place to Whitehall route.	Singular	09/07/2018	Photos, audio, notes.
BiCon2018	University of Salford. Chapter House, 43 Crescent, Salford M5 4WT	Singular	02/08/2018	Notes.
BiFest2018	Kingston Quaker Centre. Fairfield E, Kingston upon Thames KT1 2PT	Singular	18/08/2018	Notes.
Soho, London	Soho, London	Singular	14/11//2018	Photos, audio.
Butch Please	Royal Vauxhall Tavern. 372 Kennington Ln, Lambeth, London SE11 5HY	Singular	31/01/2019	Video, notes, sketches.
Spoken Word London	vFd (Vogue Fabrics Dalston). 66 Stoke Newington Rd, Hackney Downs, London N16 7XB	Singular	06/03/2019	Notes, photographs.
		Weekly (Wednesdays)	17/07/2019 (until 16/10/2019)	Notes, sketches, photographs.
Live Art Club	vFd (Vogue Fabrics Dalston). 66 Stoke Newington Rd, Hackney Downs, London N16 7XB	Monthly (Wednesdays)	24/07/2019 (until 30/10/2019)	Notes, sketches.
Queer Grief	vFd (Vogue Fabrics Dalston). 66 Stoke Newington Rd, Hackney Downs, London N16 7XB	Singular (Wednesday)	31/07/2019	Notes, sketches, photographs.
Dalston Ethnography Week	vFd (Vogue Fabrics Dalston) The Glory; Dalston Superstore	Week long	October 2019	Notes, sketches, photographs

Appendix C. Participant Contact

Pseudonym	Contact Established	Meeting	Interview Time
1. Victoria	Twitter	Face to Face	01:28:45
2. Lilly	Twitter	Skype	02:13:19
3. Josh	Twitter	Face to Face	01:49:51
4. Delphine	Pride 2018	Skype	01:30:00
5. Tom	Pride 2018	Skype	01:22:16
6. Leroy	Pride 2018/BiCon 2018	Face to Face	01:18:21
7. Amelia	Snowball	Face to Face	01:14:20
8. Sebastian	Snowball	Face to Face	00:50:20
9. Cassandra	Conference	Face to Face	01:14:42
10. Ash	Conference	Face to Face	01:18:36
11. Persephone	Snowball	Face to Face	00:54:02
12. Bobbie	Snowball	Face to Face	01:03:58
13. Grace	VFD Dalston	Face to Face	01:49:44
14. Rosa	VFD Dalston	Face to Face	02:01:15
15. Janine	Snowball	Face to Face	00:57:20

Appendix D. Participant Consent Form



School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research
 Cornwallis East
 University of Kent
 Canterbury, CT2 7NF

RESEARCH INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Project:	How do bisexual individuals experience feelings of belonging within designated social space for sexual minorities?	Ethics Approval Number:	
Researcher:	Robin Rose Breetveld	Researcher Email:	r.r.breetveld@kent.ac.uk

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS AND, IF YOU AGREE, INITIAL THE CORRESPONDING BOX TO CONFIRM AGREEMENT:

	Initials
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my participation is <u>voluntary</u> and that I am free to withdraw at any time throughout the research process without giving any reason.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my data will be treated confidentially and any publication resulting from this work will present information in a manner which <u>does not</u> identify me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I acknowledge and consent to the interview being voice-recorded, and I understand that this audio recording is for the researcher's use <u>only</u> .	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the above research project.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signatures:

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant (block capitals)	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher (block capitals)	Date	Signature

If you would like a copy of this consent form to keep, please ask the researcher. If you have any complaints or concerns about this research, you can direct these, in writing to Dr Erin Sanders-McDonagh (E.Sanders-McDonagh@kent.ac.uk) and Dr Marian Duggan (M.C.Duggan@kent.ac.uk) Alternatively, you can contact them by post at School of Social Policy, Sociology, and Social Research, University of Kent, Canterbury, CT2 7NF.

Appendix E. Participant Information Sheet



School of Social Policy, Sociology
and Social Research
Cornwallis East
University of Kent
Canterbury, CT2 7NF

Research title: How do bisexual individuals experience feelings of belonging within designated social space for sexual minorities?

Researcher: Robin Rose Breetveld, PhD Sociology research student.

Participant Information Sheet

Approved by the University of Kent's Faculty of Social Sciences Research Ethics Advisory Group.

The project

Thank you for your interest in this research project which aims to gain insight on how bisexual individuals feel in LGBT spaces, and how these feelings are affected by the inclusivity within the LGBT communities. Participants will identify as one or more of the following: bisexual; non-cis gendered; affiliated with the LGBT and/or Bisexuality community; or have expertise in this area.

Consent and Participation

Your participation is voluntary, but requires that you sign a consent form to indicate that you agree to the terms of the project. Interviews are anticipated to last approximately 90 to 120 minutes. The interviews will be audio recorded to be transcribed at a later date. Questions will focus largely on your feelings and experiences of belonging as a bisexual individual. There is a possibility that you will feel uncomfortable talking about these sensitive topics; if at any given time you wish for the interview to stop, you can ask the researcher not to continue. Likewise, you are not obliged to answer any questions which you do not wish to. To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of those interviewed, a pseudonym will be agreed during the interview. If you wish to withdraw from the research, please let the researcher know within a month of the interview date.

Privacy

The research complies with the United Kingdom's Data Protection Act 1998. All recordings and transcripts will be kept on password-encrypted files which only the researcher has access to. All data will be destroyed ten years after the research has concluded.

Results

The research will constitute a PhD thesis and may be published as a book and/or journal articles. All participant information will be anonymised here too. If you wish to be provided with information about the findings or a copy of the findings when published, please provide your contact details to the researcher.

Questions

If you have any questions, you can contact Robin Rose Breetveld via email: R.R.Breetveld@kent.ac.uk or the researcher's supervisors: Dr Erin Sanders-McDonagh (E.Sanders-McDonagh@kent.ac.uk) and/or Dr Marian Duggan (M.C.Duggan@kent.ac.uk).

Thank you very much for considering to be part of this research, and thank you for reading this participant information sheet. Please keep this participant information sheet with the researcher contact details.

Appendix F. Participant Debrief Sheet



School of Social Policy, Sociology
and Social Research
Cornwallis East
University of Kent
Canterbury, CT2 7NF

Research title: How do bisexual individuals experience feelings of belonging within designated social space for sexual minorities?
Researcher: Robin Rose Breetveld, PhD Sociology research student.

Participant Debrief Sheet

Thank you for participating in the research interviews. I hope that you have found it interesting and have not been upset by any of the topics discussed. However, if you have found any part of this experience to be distressing and you wish to speak to the researcher, please contact Robin Rose Breetveld at R.R.Breetveld@kent.ac.uk

There are also a number of organisations listed below that you can contact:

Brighton and Hove LGBT Switchboard:

Telephone number: 01273 204050
Website: <https://www.switchboard.org.uk/>

London Friend:

Website: <http://londonfriend.org.uk/get-support>

MindLine Trans+ Helpline:

Telephone number: 0300 330 5468
Website: <http://bristolmind.org.uk/help-and-counselling/mindline-transplus/>

MindOut:

Website: <https://www.mindout.org.uk/get-support/>
(Offers online support)

NHS Mental Health Helplines

Website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/>

Samaritans:

Telephone number: 116 123
Website: <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you/contact-us>

Stonewall Mental Health:

Website: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/category/mental-health>

Appendix G. Final Interview Guide



School of Social Policy, Sociology
and Social Research
Cornwallis East
University of Kent
Canterbury, CT2 7NF

Research project: How do bisexual individuals experience feelings of belonging within designated social space for sexual minorities?

Researcher: Robin Rose Breetveld (PGR student PhD Sociology)

Interview questions **CANDIDATE 00**

Please state:

Name and preferred pseudonym:

Age / Gender / Sexual orientation / Nationality / Ethnic background / Religion

Could you please explain to me what the following notions mean to you:

- A. Belonging
- B. Acceptance
- C. LGBT+ community
- D. LGBT+ spaces

Appendix H. Initial Interview Guide



School of Social Policy, Sociology
and Social Research
Cornwallis East
University of Kent
Canterbury, CT2 7NF

Research project: How do bisexual individuals experience feelings of belonging within designated social space for sexual minorities?

Researcher: Robin Rose Breetveld (PGR student PhD Sociology)

Interview questions **CANDIDATE 00**

Please state:

Name and preferred pseudonym:

Age / Gender / Sexual orientation / Nationality / Ethnic background / Religion

Could you please explain to me what the following notions mean to you:

- A. Belonging
- B. Acceptance
- C. LGBT+ community
- D. LGBT+ spaces

1.1. Please tell me how and when you first realised you are bisexual/sexually fluid.

1.2. How do you experience a coming-out process?

1.3. What sort of responses have you experienced when addressing your sexual identity?

1.4. Have you experienced people discerning your sexual identity to others without your consent? ("Outing")

2.1. Have you interacted with the LGBT+ communities, now or in the past? Please elaborate.

2.2. Have you interacted with communities in which bisexuality/sexual fluidity is centralised, now or in the past? Please elaborate.

2.3. Do you consider there to be the difference between the LGBT+ communities and the Bisexuality communities?

2.4. If yes, what do you consider to be the differences between the LGBT+ communities and the Bisexuality communities?

- 3.1. How does this difference (or lack thereof) affect the atmosphere within these communities? Please elaborate.
- 3.2. How does this difference (or lack thereof) affect your own feelings of inclusion within these communities? Please elaborate.
- 4.1. How do you feel about bisexual representation within the LGBT+ community? (e.g. on printed flyers/forums/specific meetings guided towards bisexual individuals).
- 4.2. What kind of bisexual representations (or lack thereof) do you encounter within the LGBT+ community?
- 5.1. How does your *gender/ethnicity/age* affect the way in which you engage with these communities?
- 5.2. How does your *gender/ethnicity/age* affect the ways in which members of these communities engage with you?
- 6.1. Are you familiar with Pride and its aim? (If not, the researcher will elaborate).
- 6.2. Do you attend/participate/organise Pride events or have you in the past?
- 6.3. If yes, how would you describe the representation of bisexuality during Pride events?
- 6.4. If yes, how would you describe the representation of various gender identities during Pride events?
- 6.5. If yes, how would you describe the representation of various ethnic identities during Pride events?
- 6.6. If yes, how would you describe the representation of age during Pride events?
- 7.1. What can the LGBT+ communities do to make bisexuals feel more accepted within the LGBT+ communities?
- 7.2. What do you think would make others who identify as bisexual from different gender identities, ethnic groups, or ages feel more included within the LGBT+ community?

Appendix I.

Rating | Description

- 0 | *Exclusively heterosexual*
- 1 | *Predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual*
- 2 | *Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual*
- 3 | *Equally heterosexual and homosexual*
- 4 | *Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual*
- 5 | *Predominantly homosexual, only incidentally heterosexual*
- 6 | *Exclusively homosexual*
- X | *No socio-sexual contacts or reactions¹*

¹ Source: Kinseyinstitute.org n.d. [accessed 04/08/2021], see also Klein 1985)