

What we mean when we talk about bisexuality:
a critical discourse analysis of self-definitions by bi-identified people online

Nanne Bäckström

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A Critical Discourse Analysis on the language used by bisexual people when defining bisexuality. The aim of the thesis is to define current discourses about bisexuality within the modern frameworks of sexuality and gender and explain why bisexuality lacks the stability and visibility of other minority sexualities. The material is gathered from profiles submitted to a website with the purpose to educate about and bring visibility to bisexuality. Research is conducted according to Fairclough's methodology and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics within the framework of postmodern critical theory. Despite the frequent use of relational intensive process verbs, clauses defining bisexuality are marked as subjective with the choice of Subject and circumstantial information. Bisexuality is defined by what it is not by rejection of stereotypes. The lack of established cultural imagery shows that bisexuality cannot be performed as an identity. Additionally, it cannot be categorized as a sexual orientation, because it is not supported by the gender frameworks that define sexual attraction. For bisexuality to exist as a solid sexual identity, sexual and gender frameworks need to be redefined.

Keywords: humanities, discourse, sexuality, qualitative research

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Abbreviations

LGBTQ+ = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and other gender and sexual minorities

CDA = Critical Discourse Analysis

SFL = Systemic Functional Linguistics

1 Introduction

Sexuality is an integral part of contemporary Western culture. It is a moral argument guiding legislature, a measure of adulthood, an aspect of human rights, and an essential part of every individual's identity, among other things. With so much power and influence, it is no surprise that it is a site of struggle in Western society, subject to regulation and control and strong opinions.

The birth of modern sexual identities can be traced to the regulation of sexual behavior by the church. It judged some acts as proper and some as improper and sinful, and furthermore, tied the acts and the judgements made of them to the offending person (Foucault 1978, 17). Actions were seen as a representation of the doer: a person committing sin became a sinner. Once the Catholic church lost its influence, non-monogamous and non-heterosexual behavior became a mental illness and a crime. Though classified differently, they were still part of the person's identity and something that separated them from "normal good people". To this day, despite legal and cultural changes, heterosexuality remains the dominant, "normal" sexuality.

With the rise of gay and lesbian rights activism in the second half of the 20th century, sexuality became an identity, crafted for the purposes of identity politics to be used as a tool for changing legislation. Subsequently, postmodernism divorced sexuality from a fixed identity with conceptions of both sexuality and gender becoming more fluid. Sexuality is a recurring topic for the general public but also something that is constantly discussed, defined and redefined within sexual minority communities and academic research.

Bisexuality as an orientation and an identity has historically struggled to be accepted within the LGBTQ+ community despite being the third letter in the acronym. In mainstream culture, bi-erasure is still prevalent, and the attitudes that bisexuality is a faze or a stepping stone to "full gayness" still prevail. Within academia, bisexuality has barely been researched unless the researchers were bisexual themselves. In the last decades, there has been a renewed interest in bisexuality, and with it, new topics of research: Does bisexuality uphold the gender binary? Is it trans-exclusionary? What does being bi mean?

As a bisexual, I expected myself to have clear answers to all of these, and most I do: No, bisexuality does not uphold the gender binary. No, it is not trans-exclusionary. Bisexuality means being attracted to more than one gender. But the overwhelming message from sexuality research and the erasure in the LGBTQ+ community is that bisexuality is oblique and hard to understand. For some, it does not even exist. Hence, the

purpose of this thesis is to add to the limited but growing amount of literature on bisexuality and to answer the question of why bisexuality has not managed to get accepted as an adult sexual orientation.

The research questions of this thesis are as follows. First, how is bisexuality linguistically constructed by self-identified bisexuals? Second, how do discourses of gender, especially one that accounts for multiplicity and fluidity in gender, interact in self-definitions of bisexuality? And third, what do definitions of bisexuality mean for current sexual frameworks?

The research is conducted in the order the research questions are presented. A linguistic analysis is the most useful for answering the first question. With a Critical Discourse Analysis approach and methods from Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, especially transitivity analysis, the grammar of the clauses is categorized and analyzed to explain how bisexuality is defined linguistically. Building on these results, further analysis considers immediate context of the profiles and the larger context of bisexual discourse and research. By understanding bisexuality and how it is situated in current frameworks on sexuality, this thesis aims to explain why it is not considered one.

The thesis is divided into eight chapters, the first of which you are currently reading; the last of which is the conclusion with a summary of the findings and suggestions for further research. The second chapter outlines the history of sexuality as a modern identity concept in the context of the United States of America and wider Western culture. This chapter highlights the development of sexuality research and the exclusion of bisexuality from it. Special attention is given to queer theory, which has historically not been concerned with bisexuality but does provide an interesting approach to it.

The third chapter introduces the critical discourse analysis approach to the study of language. Weight is given to the meaning-making and socially constructive functions of language. Additionally, the relation between discourse and identities and sexuality is covered in two separate subchapters.

Following this, the fourth chapter focuses on bisexuality both as a concept, a lived identity, and as a possible epistemological approach to sexuality. Theories and approaches introduced in the previous chapters are recovered specifically in relation to bisexuality.

Chapter five covers the data and methods of this study. The data was chosen from a website to which bi-identified people can submit their own stories about their life as a bisexual. The methodology follows approaches of critical analysis, with methods applied

from Systemic Functional Linguistics. Following Fairclough's approach of different levels, the analysis expands from the textual to consider relevant frameworks.

Though results and analysis have been grouped together into chapter six, and discussion separated into chapter seven, there is overlap between all chapters. Results and analysis are primarily focused on analyzing the textual elements, covering the linguistic analysis of the clauses containing information about what bisexuality and a bisexual identity is and is not, whereas the discussion chapter theorizes bisexuality in the context of sexuality and gender. Additionally, the results are situated within existing research and used to problematize the dominating frameworks.

2 Sexuality

This chapter is divided into two subchapters. The first presents the history of modern sexuality from the nineteenth century to the present day. It includes both changes in academic approaches and activism, which has been hugely influential upon the former and vice versa. The second subchapter goes into more detail about the most recent theoretical approaches in sexuality studies: queer theory and the following materialist turn, introducing relevant concepts and theories that will be used in the analysis.

However, before an introduction to sexuality research, sexuality should be defined both as a word and as a concept, as

the territory itself — that domain of Western knowledge, socially constructed and discursively produced since the mid-nineteenth century, and its related social and cultural phenomena, which attempts to make sense of how gender may or may not relate to the possession and expression of certain sexual desires, orientations, and identities. (Wilde 2014, 335)

This thesis is not concerned with sexuality as a purely biological phenomenon but as a knowledge framework, culturally and notably for this thesis, discursively constructed. Sexuality guides our behavior and our customs and norms, as stated in the introduction, and it is in a constant state of dynamic interaction with other aspects of our culture. This thesis covers the history of sexuality to enable a better understanding of its current form. Additionally, showcasing the instability of definitions of sexuality supports theorizations for future changes and illustrates how inevitable change itself is.

Sexuality is a word often used and a concept often discussed and yet hard to define. In the Oxford English Dictionary, sexuality is defined as 1) Capacity for sexual feelings, 2) A person's sexual orientation or preference, or 3) Sexual activity (*OED*, s.v. “sexuality,” n.). The definition this thesis is primarily concerned with is the second though it is frivolous to argue that all three are not intertwined inextricably. After all, the lack of sexual feelings (1) is defined as asexuality, a sexual orientation (2), and sexual activity (3) is often used as an argument against or for a sexual orientation (2).

However, a prescriptive answer such as the one provided by a dictionary, does not attempt to explain the nature of sexuality or of different sexual orientations, nor does it say anything of the lived experience of people with sexuality or the relationships between sexualities. A postmodern critical analysis requires a descriptive approach to definitions,

analyzing a phenomenon as it is rather than as what it should be. This is the approach applied in the thesis at hand.

For a better understanding of sexuality, which is unarguably integral to individual people and society, more consideration needs to be given to the subject. Due to the aims of this thesis, the primary use of sexuality is the second definition, on sexuality as sexual orientation, but as argued in the previous paragraph, both other definitions will be present though possibly not directly addressed.

In an American study published in 1994, researchers found that based on a questionnaire, the respondents primarily defined their sexual orientation based on three “axes”: desire, acts, and self-identification (See Laumann et al. *The Social Organization of Sexuality*). Historically, one or more of these has been dominant when defining sexuality.

Self-identification, or in other words, sexuality as an identity, is the most modern out of these, cultivated somewhat consciously for the purpose of identity politics in the late twentieth century in Western countries. Self-identification is usually done based on sexual desire and attraction towards a particular sex (or sexes!). The sex/gender debate and wherein this thesis falls on the topic is discussed later in subchapter 2.2. For now, the terms sex and gender are used interchangeably with no intent to moderate membership within their categories.

Regarding sexual acts and their relation to sexuality, it is commonly agreed in modern Western countries that someone engaging in same-sex activities—or opposite-sex for that matter—is not automatically of that sexual orientation. For example, a gay man married to a woman because of fear of coming out could and probably would be considered homosexual, while a young person experimenting once in their youth does not a queer make.

But does it make a bisexual? If self-identification is the ultimate measuring stick—as it nowadays is—then no. However, as is shown in the following chapter, same-sex acts have been used to find sexual minority representation throughout history and on the other hand, criminalized in recent history so arguing that they are irrelevant to the experience of sexuality seems weak. How relevant, if relevant, is something this thesis considers for a better understanding of sexuality.

The following subchapters start with a brief overview of sexuality and sexuality studies chronologically, presented in more detail as current and more relevant concepts, theories and approaches for this thesis are introduced. Additionally, activism and its

influence on academic research is covered, as well as criticism toward sexuality research that is taken into account in this thesis.

2.1 Recent history of sexuality research and politics

History is storytelling, a constructed narrative, and always interpreted through modern values (Hall 2002, 21). Thus, it is difficult and inadvisable to try to cover an objective history of sexuality, and such an attempt would be too long and mostly unnecessary for this thesis. However, a brief overview is provided, with the most attention paid to recent history and the USA. The data for this thesis is from American people's experiences, so situating their personal experiences into a larger cultural context is necessary.

Despite being a relatively young field of scientific study, sexuality studies have changed significantly in the past decades due to influences both from academia and activism. The change from sexuality defined as a pathology to an identity has also changed how it has been studied, and conversely how it has been studied has changed its definition.

Same-sex acts have been recorded in ancient texts from all over the world, but sexuality as we understand it today has its root in the pathologizing of it in the nineteenth century and the identity politics of the twentieth century (Hammack and Cohler 2009, 4). Homosexuality and heterosexuality were born at the same time: the conception of homosexuality could be said to have created heterosexuality because they are defined by what they are not: the other (Fuss 1991, 3). The binary immediately settled into a hierarchy in the same way that all binaries in Western culture do (ibid.) The word 'homosexual' was coined in the late nineteenth century, followed by 'heterosexual' to complete the binary between abnormal and normal (Garber 2000, 40).

Moving sexuality, in this instance meaning the capacity for sexual feelings, from the body to the subconscious, can be credited to Freud. Though many feminist and queer researchers have since taken issue with his methods for being nonreplicable and subjective, and with his theories for being misogynistic and heteronormative, Freud's work has admittedly been influential to postmodern theory.

Psychoanalysis has been since reinterpreted by especially French feminists such as Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, but the most important takeaway remains the general idea of "the relationship between the body and the sexed subjectivity [...] that [Freud] too thought of the body as concrete, historical and open to change" (Moi 2004, 842). The

concept that the physical body and a developing sexuality were not mutually exclusive has been embraced by feminist research since.

In sexuality studies, this approach can be used to argue the innate nature of sexual orientations combined with the changing cultural meaning of them. Nevertheless, in the 1990s, there were still studies that claimed to have found genetic components, differing features of the brain, and chromosomes that defined sexual orientation (Weinberg et al. 1994, 3). Modern sexuality research is however not concerned with the biological foundations of sexual orientations but focused on the cultural aspects that define and place them in hierarchies.

Most Western countries including the United States criminalized homosexuality in the early 1900s. Though there is always overlap and coexistence between discourses, the control over sexuality moved from medical institutions to state institutions. Homosexuality was placed against normative “good” values such as family, children, and decency. Having covered the beginnings of sexuality as a concept and how the cultural understanding of it has changed over time, this period in time provides a smooth segway into briefly covering sexual minority activism in the US, and recent developments that brought sexuality research to its modern form: queer studies.

In the United States, the 1950s saw the rise of the homophile movement, and Illinois became the first state to decriminalize sexual acts between adults of the same sex in 1962. One of the most marked events for sexual minority history was the Stonewall Riot of 1969, during which a group of transgender and gay patrons of a bar resisted the police during a raid of the Stonewall Inn, a popular gay establishment in New York City. Though there had been activism before this event, the riot is generally considered the start of the modern gay liberation movement.

Knowledge of minority activism is necessary for understanding sexuality research. In the case of sexuality studies in academia, it has been always influenced by activism (Cameron and Kulick 2003, 76). The political activism of repositioning homosexuality as an identity as valid and unchangeable as ethnic minorities steered the research done on the topic. Though discord still existed between activist groups, the predominant objective had changed from assimilation to diversity (Barker and Scheele 2016, 15).

During this time, bisexuality was effectively ignored in these efforts. The reasons for this are expanded upon in chapter four when focus is aimed specifically at bisexuality.

Concurrently with the more aggressive and organized activism of gay and lesbian communities, other minorities were vocally criticizing the white, straight, and male norms

of academia during the end of the twentieth century: postcolonial, queer, and trans-, and feminist writers respectively. Though there existed—and still exists! —criticism and tension between these groups, they shared in common the objective to destabilize the dominant norms and structures of society.

Especially feminism is linked with sexual minority issues both in activism and in academia. “[...] the study of sexuality [...] will inevitably need to make reference to, and may in some respects overlap with, the study of gender.” (Cameron and Kulick 2003, 7). As long as definitions of sexuality are determined by gender, they cannot ignore each other. Additionally, lesbian and gay studies owe much to the inquiries into identity politics made by feminist theorists and activists.

Nevertheless, gender and sexuality studies are “quite different avenues of inquiry” with separate objectives and focus of research (Gayle Rubin, as quoted in Hall 2002, 44). Especially lesbian feminists have historically been at odds with feminists because of disagreements over which is more important: gender or sexuality? This tension will be considered in the thesis at hand, as bisexuality is not inherently tied to one specific gender and thus has a uniquely complicated relationship to it,

Both sexuality and gender studies underwent a massive shift in their theoretical focus as activism was followed by theory, namely queer theory, which moved away from identity politics into postmodern theorization (Hall 2002, 54). The following subchapter is dedicated to a deeper dive into queer theory and the materialist turn that followed it. The concepts introduced by them are relevant for this thesis because they are the frameworks and dominant discourses through—or against—which bisexuality is theorized currently.

The following subchapter details the most relevant contributions and theories of queer theory, focusing especially on cultural constructionism and identity formation. Queer theory criticism is followed by detailing the significance of a materialist turn in research, especially when considering bisexuality research.

2.2 Queer theory and the materialist turn

Queer theory is a term as hard to define as queer itself. Queer originally simply meant weird. Later it became a derogatory term used against people with same-sex attractions. During the late twentieth century activism, queer was reclaimed by the LGBTQ+ community. It is a noun and adjective and a verb.

In this thesis, queer is used as an umbrella term for LGBTQ+ as it is more concise and less exclusionary, including everyone outside the heterosexual and cisgender norm (Barker and Scheele 2016, 12). Queer has been criticized for being too inclusive (is a bisexual woman dating a heterosexual man queer *enough?*) and ignoring differences in power within the queer community (white homosexual men prioritizing equal marriage right over the suicide rates of transgender youth, for example). This will be taken into account when necessary.

The term ‘queer theory’ was coined by Teresa De Lauretis for a conference in 1990 (Halperin 2003, 339). It was intended to provoke, not describe an already existing field of research, but was quickly adopted by researchers and applied to works already published that fit the general theses of queer theory (ibid.). Queer theory could be summarized neatly into “a kind of theoretical discourse embodying critical perspectives [...] on heteronormativity” (Cameron and Kulick 2003, 149). Yet queer theory is not neat with its multidisciplinary past and present. At its conception, it was ontologically empty and has later been filled with theories, works, and writers that align with its disruptive nature (Halperin 2003, 340).

Queer theory has its roots in feminist and gay/lesbian studies, postmodernism and poststructuralism (Giesecking 2008, 737). Gender and sexuality are fluid within queer theory, rather than naturalized and essentialist. In fact, its core position is to challenge “any attempt to render ‘identity’ singular, fixed, or normal” (Hall 2002, 15). Queer theory goes beyond queer studies to challenge science itself: its norms and assumptions and ‘truths’.

The relationship between gender and sex is a debated topic. Historically, sex has been the dominant one, determined by biological factors that have changed over the years. With the emergence of postmodern criticism of biological determinism, feminist theorists applied the criticism to gender, pointing out the naturalization of biology, and how what it means to be a woman, or a man is interpreted through culture. Queer theory embraced this critique and extended it to sexuality.

In this thesis, the term gender is favored over sex. Sex denotes the biological gender of a person whereas gender refers to its culturally-bound presentation—unconscious and conscious—, guided by frameworks of modern Western society. Additionally, when analyzing and presenting the data, a person’s self-proclaimed gender is used.

One of the most influential concepts introduced by queer theory is Butler’s performativity. Butler’s theory owes a lot to Foucault’s theories of power and discourse

and Goffman's concept of framing. Both are introduced later in this thesis. According to Butler, gender is constructed through repeated coded acts; it is performed. Rather than biological sex determining how someone acts, it is the acts that determine what gender is: "identity is seen as performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results" (Butler 1990, 25). Gender is then naturalized to the biological sex so that one can claim, for example, that men are naturally less emotional (instead of having been taught that it is feminine to cry) or that women are dumber because of smaller brains (instead of because they have been excluded from educational institutions for most of Western history).

In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler illustrates performativity through drag performers. She points out how they are (usually) men performing womanhood with how they dress, how they move, and how they talk. The fact that "the opposite gender" can imitate the other would mean that there is nothing in those actions that requires a biological foundation. Femininity—and masculinity—are available to everyone and hence belong to no one. This is a similar argument to how people are able to mimic different discourses on a linguistic level (Cameron and Kulick 2003, 58). For example, a woman might adopt traditionally masculine speaking patterns when in a leadership position, or a student might change their writing style for an academic paper. These discourses are available to anyone yet coded for someone, and Butler argues that it is the same for all aspects of identity expression.

Because queer theory seeks to disturb normalized assumptions, bisexuality could fairly be assumed to be popular as both an identity that blurs binaries and as a theoretical approach that questions known 'truths'. Instead, bisexuality has been either ignored or slandered by queer theorist. Eve Sedgwick, a prominent queer theorist, whose work *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) is as essential reading within queer theory as *Gender Trouble*, stated in an interview that "I'm not sure that because there are people who identify as bisexual there is a bisexual identity" (Wofford 1991, 36).

Sedgwick's quote illustrates that even the boundary-breaking queer theory had some boundaries; some lines it was not willing to queer. Despite its huge influence on bisexuality studies—and postmodern science overall—it has many shortcomings. Next, some of the critiques towards queer theory are introduced as well as the turn away from extreme poststructuralism that followed. Much of this criticism is aimed at specific writers of strands of queer theory, as the entire field is varied enough to critique and contradict itself (Barker and Scheele 2016, 125).

Unlike its predecessor gay and lesbian studies, queer theory wanted to be taken seriously. In its efforts to fit into the established educational institution, queer theory has been accused of moving away from ‘the queer’ in favor of assimilation and simultaneously making gay and lesbian studies seem unreliable and old-fashioned. (Halperin 2003, 341).

Due to the assimilation and subconscious need to be taken “seriously” and thus conforming to traditional academia, activists push the boundaries of queer theory more than academia. (Hall 2002, 107) Consequently, queer theory is seen as unapproachable for anyone outside of academia and out of touch with the current issues of people who should fall under the queer umbrella.

These frustrations prompted a counter-reaction to queer theory’s radical cultural relativism primarily from trans- and postcolonial researchers. They argued against the domination of culture and discourse over the material world, pointing out that in criticizing the subordination of culture, queer theorists had simply put nature in its place rather than destroying the dichotomy. Researchers such as Donna Haraway and bell hooks argued for a mutually affecting link between nature and culture and stress that neither can be completely dismissed when it comes to identity. This is explored in more detail in chapter 3.1.

Furthermore, some argue that the division has naturalized sex and turned gender into socially essentialized (McIlvenny 2002, 6). To reiterate, instead of breaking the dichotomy of sex versus gender, queer theory had simply switched their places in the hierarchy. The domination of culture ignored the effect of skin color, for example, and basically invalidated transgender people.

Neither did it leave space for bisexuality, either placing it in the past in a Freudian manner or in the future, when the need for labels has passed.

The materialist turn in theory to include biological aspects and physical realities into identity construction offers the possibility of more inclusive and more diverse research. A changed framework of sexuality can also offer ways of identifying a bisexual identity through alternative means. “A materialist turn is important in theorizing bisexuality, and it will include a concern with lives and socially situated experience, power dynamics and inequalities, economic factors, and biological diversities” (Monro 2015, 55). More on this in chapter 4 when the focus is turned specifically to bisexuality.

It would have been easy to write this whole chapter on sexuality without ever mentioning bisexuality. In nearly all the works referenced in this chapter, unless they

were directly concerned with bisexuality, the B in LGBTQ+ was given a cordial nod if even that, which serves as proof for the erasure discussed here and in future chapters, as well as the data, and seems to be—now that we’ve embraced a biopsychosocial approach to analysis—a common facet of bisexuality.

3 Discourses of identity and sexuality

This chapter starts with a definition of critical discourse analysis and discourse. Following that, the functions of discourse from a critical discourse analysis perspective are introduced, as well as its role in societal change and as constituting the frameworks through which we interpret the world we inhabit. The following subchapters focus on discourse and identity formation, and discourse studies specifically related to sexuality.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) and queer theory operate on the same epistemological basis and are thus easy to combine for analysis and research. Both are poststructuralist, believing in the lack of absolute objectivity; both have often unabashedly political aims in why the topics of research are chosen. Queer theory believes that culture and society define whatever a society considers as ‘truth’ at a given time; CDA believes that language is used to construct ‘truths’. By analyzing language, CDA untangles how these truths are produced and maintained and seeks to expose the power structures behind them (Wodak 1996, 16).

Discourse can be an ambiguous term. Next, discourse is defined for the purposes of this thesis so that no misunderstandings will arise later. Discourse as meaning-making and as a site of power struggle is covered first, before focusing in subchapter 3.1 on the role of discourse in identity construction with definitions for power and ideology. In subchapter 3.2, the focus is on how discourse and sexuality are intertwined, how sexuality has been studied through language, and where such research is currently.

Following the thoughts of Macdonnell (1986), Mills writes:

[A] discourse is not a disembodied collection of statements, but groupings of utterances or sentences, statements which are enacted within a social context, which are determined by that social context and which contribute to the way that social context continues its existence. (Mills 2004, 10)

Unlike more traditional strands of linguistics, CDA is not concerned with grammar or syntax. The focus is on texts in their context. Combined with methods from Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics, primarily transitivity analysis, a CDA analysis can combine grammar, text and context into a coherent whole. In SFL, “grammar is seen as a resource for making meaning – it is a semanticky kind of grammar” (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014, 49).

CDA commonly analyzes ‘natural texts’, i.e. spoken language, but also written texts that seek to influence in one way or another: opinion columns, social media entries, news

articles. As Mills pointed out, context matters in CDA. Who is saying, where they are saying, and when they are saying will reveal what is being said, how it's being said and why.

Within CDA, language is considered a (re)creating force rather than a descriptive tool. Discourses are “practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 1972, 49). In other words, language and discourses form and shape the world, rather than simply describing it from the outside. This is especially important when it comes to language about identities and people. In Fairclough’s words, “[d]iscourses do not just reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct and constitute them” (1992, 3). There was no such thing as a lesbian identity until the word lesbian was applied to certain people, and those people began claiming certain aspects to describe themselves and were described by other people in sometimes a different way.

Thus, it is easy to see why discourse is inherent in social change (Fairclough 2012, 10). Furthermore, there exists no one single discourse, but multiple discourses in competition: “discourses do not exist in a vacuum but are in constant conflict with other discourses [...] over questions of truth and authority” (Mills 2004, 17). For example, until the twentieth century, the church had determined what sexuality was—sinful behavior. When the power shifted, medical discourses controlled what sexuality was, classifying it as a deviance or even a mental illness. Additionally, all discourses are intertextual, “related to other discourse, synchronically and diachronically” (Wodak 1996, 11). Thus, in chapter 3.2 some time is spent on detailing the history of sexuality discourse to help understand current tensions and properties.

“[...] discourses do not exist in isolation, but are the object and site of struggle. Discourses are thus not fixed but are the site of constant contestation of meaning” (Mills 2004, 14). The struggle can be unconscious or conscious. The data for this thesis is a case of the latter, with bi-identified people explicitly writing about what their sexuality is and is not.

However, there are always unarticulated ideologies guiding people’s use of language. Hence, discourse holds more meaning than the words themselves do. A related term is that of frameworks, which “[consist] of socially shared, interest-related fundamental cognitions of a group and its members, [and] is mainly acquired, confirmed, or changed through communication and discourse” (Van Dijk 1989, 21). What we believe about sexuality is a social framework. The powers and ideologies within discourses that

constitute our frameworks and the effect they have on people, society, and truth are central to a critical analysis of a text (Fairclough 1992, 12).

3.1 Discourse and identities

This subchapter introduces the concepts of power and ideology as they are understood in CDA based Foucault's, Fairclough's and Van Dijk's approaches, as well as how discourse is used to construct identities such as gender and sexuality. Gender and biological sex are problematized and defined for the purposes of this thesis. Additionally, the dangers of identities are considered from an intersectional perspective.

Foucault's theories on power is one of the most influential concepts for CDA and queer theory. According to Foucault, power is no longer exerted by a monarch onto the people, but by people onto themselves. Foucault redefined power as something inherent in interaction and language, as people monitor themselves and others to be and behave in specific ways so as not to be "punished" (e.g. Foucault 1980, 119). Furthermore, power does not only restrict but also "produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse" (ibid.).

This conceptualization of power is the basis for many of the theories on discourse presented in the previous chapter. It is important to understand that what is fighting for power isn't people, it's ideologies.

An ideology [...] is a complex cognitive framework that controls the formation, transformation, and application of other social cognitions, such as knowledge, opinions, and attitudes, and *social representations, including social prejudices*. This ideological framework itself consists of socially relevant norms, values, goals, and principles, which are selected, combined, and applied in such a way that they favor perception, interpretation, and action in social practices that are in the overall interest of the group. (Van Dijk 1989, 24. italics added)

In modern Western countries, there are dominant ideologies regarding gender and sexuality that are upheld by institutions and norms and expectations, all of which guide individuals to behave and believe in certain ways. What minority sexuality activism is doing is fighting for power with heteronormativity rather than with heterosexual individuals.

Such a reading of power and ideologies—as inherent in social interaction and as guiding those interactions—allows for analysis of them both within language and discourse. Furthermore, it positions the topics and issues as systemic problems rather than

individual problems. Sexism, for example, can't be blamed on a few individual men, but rather on all institutions upholding it and on internalized norms and attitudes.

In addition, as discourses interact with each other, ideologies support and oppose and contradict each other. Notably, for this thesis, discourses on gender and sexuality are inherently linked because definitions of sexuality rely on gender. Sexuality is defined by a person's gender and that of the object of a person's attraction. Logically it follows, that when there are changes in dominant discourses of gender, discourses of sexuality are bound to react. Bisexuality is traditionally defined as attraction to the opposite sex. With the normalization of multiple genders, the definition of bisexuality has changed to reflect it, now introduced as "being sexually attracted *not exclusively to people of one particular gender*" (OED, s.v. "bisexuality," n., italics added).

The reverse is equally true: Gendered traits denote sexuality with varying accuracy. An effeminate man is often assumed to be gay because of his feminine qualities, demonstrating the symbiotic relationship between sexuality and gender. One defining aspect of Western hegemonic masculinity—the most desirable form of manhood within a culture—is heterosexuality (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 851), which explains the aforementioned phenomenon.

Foucault's definition of power that (re)creates rather than restricts has been embraced by postmodernist researchers, notably feminist writers who applied it to identity formation, restriction, and creation. In addition, a more nuanced exploration of oppression was possible as well as identifying strategies for resistance. The creation of oppressed categories of people who were classified based on a shared characteristic lead to unified groups that could fight against their oppression (Hall 2002, 66). Van Dijk calls this counterpower: the acts of resistance that dominated groups may undertake to make the powerful less so (1989, 21).

To create a space for agency within Foucault's definition of discourse, feminist discourse theorists have formulated how "individuals actively engage with discourses in order to forge particular positions of identity for themselves" (Mills 2004, 81). Individuals are not slaves to the structures and rules of particular discourses but function within them as subjects. "It is the process of engaging with those discursive structures that constitutes us as particular types of individuals or subject positions" (Mills 2004, 95). One example of this is Spivak's strategic essentialism. When fighting for their causes, it can be beneficial for minority groups to present a simplified and unified identity to put forth (Barker and Scheele 2016, 134).

However, such uniformity is an illusion and a danger if never questioned. This blurring of internal differences and inequalities was one of the most solid critiques towards queer theory.

Though this thesis is primarily interested in the discursive construction of a bisexual identity, it is important to take into account that it is not the only identity the writers of the data have. Intersectionality is the idea that there are different aspects of power that interact (intersect) and produce different effects (Crenshaw 1989). For example, a black lesbian faces different oppression than a black heterosexual woman or a white lesbian. Hence, even though the purpose is to find common features of bisexuality in a time of changing discourses of gender, the goal is not to describe a universal bisexual experience while ignoring that there are other axes of power that affect it.

Before moving on to discuss the relation of discourse (studies) and sexuality, the relationship between sex and gender should be settled for this thesis. Though queer theory and discourse studies both prefer to prioritize gender over sex, sex should not be ignored. Here gender refers to the sociocultural construct articulated through language and physical performing. Sex is the biological property of a body. They interact with and are dependent on each other. Though what Butler argues is true, that anyone can embody masculine or feminine traits, the sexed body determines which are deemed appropriate for whom, and which are expected and trained since birth. Understanding this standpoint will be essential for theorizing sexual orientations later in this thesis.

Additionally, though we accept the premise of sociocultural structuralism, it must not be confined to full relativism or understood to make change easier. “[A]lthough aspects of the social world such as social institutions are ultimately socially constructed, once constructed they are realities which affect and limit the textual (or ‘discursive’) construction of the social.” (Fairclough 2003, 8) Socially constructed does not equal unreal.

3.2 Discourse and sexuality

This subchapter covers sexuality language research, beginning with a more detailed look at Foucault’s work on sexuality, different discourses of sexuality and their development, and the birth of sexual identity as we understand it now.

For the purposes of this thesis, it is convenient to start with an overview of Foucault, who has had a huge influence on both discourse studies and all identity studies, including sexuality studies. His theories of power have had such a profound impact on postmodern

thought that it is near impossible to read a book on the topic without coming across his name.

Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1978) tracks the start of discursive control of sexuality to the seventeenth century and the confessionals of the Catholic church (17). Foucault argues that specifically speaking about sex, even if it was with the intent to suppress it, was what created sexuality because it defined what it was, what it wasn't, and what it should or should not be (e.g. 1978, 17-18). What had previously been undefined sexual acts became classified as good or bad creating a binary (Hall and Pramaggiore 1996, 102). With new categories, sexual acts became a device for judging the people practicing them.

Beginning in the mid-1800s, regulation of sexuality was transferred from the church to the medical industry (see Weeks 1977). The development of psychomedical discourses made sexuality something innate in an individual, and sexuality became a part of a person rather than something one does. These developments did not only concern sexuality, but also gender: "Discourses of sexual science developed to establish supposed scientific differences between different sexes [...]" (Monro 2015, 22, referencing Angelides 2001). The context was that of a larger effort to establish the dominance of (white) men, and the regulation of sexuality played a significant part in it (ibid.)

In the twentieth century, sexuality began being understood as an identity especially due to the rise of activism from minority groups who somewhat consciously reframed sexuality as a feature of human diversity rather than something immoral or sick. It is important to note, however, that even though the discourse in a dominant 'truth-defining' position has changed, the others still exist and interact with each other. Churches still preach against homosexuality as a sin; transgender groups argue for the biological foundation of their dysphoria simultaneously with queer theorists discarding biology all together; conversion camps still operate in many US states.

Focusing on language studies of minority sexualities in modern Western countries, Cameron and Kulick divide it into four phases (Cameron and Kulick 2003, 76). Starting in the 1920s through to the 1940s, non-heterosexuality was considered a medical issue, a pathology, and language research was focused on cataloging how sexual minorities, mostly gay men, speak. In the 50s and 60s gay rights activism started influencing academia, with the first sexual minority scholars beginning to conduct research. Additionally, the concept of homosexuality changed from a medical condition to an identity.

From the 1970s to the 1990s this development continued. Sexual identity became a political identity and a minority framed akin to ethnic minorities (e.g. Murray, 1979). Language studies began coding 'Gayspeak', which focused on more features than simply vocabulary in contrast to the earliest studies on the language of homosexuals.

The last phase of sexual minority language studies is identified to begin in the mid-1990s and continuing to the present. Queer theory has a huge influence on the research along with poststructuralist concepts of identities as constructed and/or performed. The essentialist notion of sexual identity changes to a focus on how language (re)creates rather than reveals identity. The 'epistemological subject' (Butler 1990, 144) that exists prior to culture and can objectively choose among representations and discourses to reflect what it already is has been abandoned.

In the following chapter, the focus is on bisexuality and bisexuality research now that their context has been covered satisfactorily.

4 Bisexuality

This chapter starts with an investigation into why bisexuality has been erased both within queer and heterosexual discussions, and why it has been largely ignored within lesbian and gay studies and queer studies, followed by the historical and theoretical development of bisexuality studies from identity-focused to epistemological. After a comprehensive introduction on why bisexuality has been disfavored within queer theory and how it has been defined by different bisexuality researchers from Kinsey and Angelides to Hemmings and Wilde, a perspective on why it could benefit postmodern theorization is covered.

Alfred Kinsey was one of the first researchers to attempt a scientific study of sexuality in the late 1940s (Weinberg et al. 1994, 4). His research measured activity and desire, rather than self-identification or classifying people into types like earlier sexologists had done (Barker and Scheele 2016, 38). Though the Kinsey Scale has fallen out of favor within the scientific community due to methodological and factual questionability, it is still well-known and relevant in popular culture (Hall 2002, 39) and presented sexuality—though not gender—as a continuum rather than a binary. It inspired other similar models such as the Klein grid, which takes into account past, present, and future changes in attraction, social and emotional relationships, and identity.

Perhaps surprisingly, Kinsey's results relating specifically to bisexuality, for example, that not only were many people not monosexual, many experienced changes in their attraction over time, were mostly ignored by sexuality studies (Weinberg et al. 1994, 4) which focused rather on sexual identity.

It took until the 1970s for the first interest towards bisexuality in academia to emerge in the UK and the US, but that interest quickly disappeared and wasn't reignited until the 1990s (Storr 1999, 309-310). However, outside of the researchers specifically writing about bisexuality, there was still a debate over whether it even existed as a sexual orientation (ibid).

Simultaneously, there was a postmodern shift away from identity politics towards blurring all lines as queer studies gained popularity within LGBTQ+ academia. As mentioned before, this did little for bisexuals and those studying bisexuality in terms of credibility. As queer theorists began tearing down identity categories, bisexuals were still struggling to construct one for themselves. “[O]ne cannot deconstruct a subjectivity one has never been fully granted; one cannot diffuse a sexuality that has historically been

defined as dark and mysterious” (Braidotti 2011, 268). This thesis will reflect on whether bisexual identity-work has been successful, and if not, what opportunities exist for it.

It is easy to divide queer theory and bisexual research into separate chapters because in most literature they are treated as such. Bisexuality has been featured very little in gay/lesbian studies and queer studies (Angelides 2001, 6-7, Monro 2015, 13, and more). As mentioned in both subchapters 2.1 and 2.2, even when bisexuality has been an obvious solution or an inescapable alternative, it has been overlooked both within academia and activist movements.

In his work, Angelides constructed a genealogical history of bisexuality as an identity category, tracing the origins of bisexuality not as a term but as a concept. He defined bisexuality as both homo- and heterosexuality. Homosexuality was as a word coined and defined in the early 20th century as sexual deviancy, but more importantly for Angelides, as not-heterosexuality:

The concept of bisexuality as a dual sexuality (both/and instead of either/or), as the conjunction of hetero- and homosexuality, or as the epistemological threshold between the two, must emerge as a logical and conceptual possibility at precisely the same moment at which hetero- and homosexuality emerged as dualized identities. (Angelides 2001, 15)

For Angelides, bisexuality was only possible within the gender binary. Considering that current queer and postmodern theorists have criticized the gender binary and actively propose alternative frameworks for sexuality, Angelides’ interpretation has become somewhat outdated. However, his work was an important milestone within sexuality studies that convincingly argued for the theoretical existence of bisexuality and thus exposed the erasure that has been ongoing since. Additionally, it is the definition provided by the website from which the data was gathered, though they do not constrict it to a gender binary.

The term biphobia was introduced by Kathleen Bennett in 1992 to describe negative attitudes about bisexuals and bisexuality. Negative stereotypes were and are perpetuated by both the heterosexual mainstream culture and within LGBTQ+ circles, both in activist groups and in academia. Bierasure, the ignoring of bisexuality and bisexuals, is a dimension of biphobia.

Usually, heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals are situated against one another in a mutually exclusive binary. This binary requires the erasure of bisexuality to exist. This is known as the epistemic contract of bisexual erasure: “[...] bisexuals are being erased

because the two most powerful sexual orientation constituencies - self-identified straights and self-identified gays - have mutual investments in the erasure of bisexuals” (Yoshino 2000, 388). Both self-identified homosexuals and heterosexuals have required a mutually exclusive binary to form their identities, conceptually and politically. This binary has been naturalized, but that naturalization would be threatened by an identity that muddles the differences.

Defining bisexuality is a difficult task and has been approached in multiple different ways throughout history: attraction to the opposite gender, multiple genders, both homo- and heterosexuality; behavior, attraction, identity. According to Freud, everyone is bisexual—according to Sedgwick, nobody is.

To adopt whatever definition of bisexuality undergirds the conventional wisdom that '[e]veryone is bisexual,' for example, is to demonstrate bisexual erasure at the moment of definition. Similarly, to adopt whatever definition of bisexuality undergirds the countervailing conventional wisdom that '[t]here is no such thing as bisexuality,' is simultaneously to demonstrate bisexual nonerasure. (Yoshino 2000, 370)

The basis of this research, however, assumes that there is such a thing as bisexuality and that it is not universal. To recollect what was introduced in the second chapter, sexual activity has popularly been a factor in defining sexuality, both by institutions (e.g. criminalizing certain sexual activities) and by individuals to support self-identification. As with other sexualities, sexual activity with all sexes is not a requirement for bisexuality. In fact, sexual activity and relationships are often dismissed as 'inauthentic', either as an experimental phase to confirm a heterosexual identity or as proof of homosexuality (Wilde 2014, 323-324).

To add to the difficulty of defining bisexuality, it must always be taken in the context of where and when it occurs. Behavioral bisexuality occurs in different societies through history in different forms but should not be universalized for this very reason (for example, Herdt 1997, 178). In Monro's words: "variations point away from any kind of 'universal' bisexuality, even if sexual behaviours and desires towards persons of different genders are fairly ubiquitous" (Monro 2015, 20). In modern Western civilization, bisexuality is understood and defined in relation to that context. History, conceptions of gender and other sexualities in the US all affect the definition of bisexuality.

Many bisexuality theorists have argued that Western bisexuality—and other forms of pluralsexualities such as pansexuality—has a lot to offer to postmodern theories.

According to Storr, “[T]he existence of a self-conscious bisexual identity, and of recognizable forms of bisexual community, organization and politics, are very clearly rooted in early postmodernity, from the mid-1970s onwards” (1999, 320). Though the efforts to legitimize a bisexual identity often mirror the actions of gays and lesbians before them, there is something much more postmodern about it.

Despite this, bisexuality has never been in favor within queer theory. Even though queer theory revolutionized much of sexuality research, it stuck with the old paradigm of ignoring bisexuals. Together “the queer deconstruction of identity categories on the one hand and the reassertion of the more dominant lesbian and gay categories on the other has rendered bisexuality largely absent from the field of lesbian and gay (LG), LGBT, and queer studies” (Monro 2015, 27).

Bisexuality is defined in the dictionary as “[t]he quality or characteristic of being sexually attracted not exclusively to people of one particular gender” (OED, s.v. “bisexuality,” n.). The changing of gender frameworks is evident in the phrasing that allows for multiple genders rather than only two. The lexical choice is revealing but not determinative. Identity is constructed through the use of words, but it also includes lived experience and is counter-defined by competing discourses.

This thesis’ data consists of self-identified bisexuals discussing their sexuality. Compared to minority monosexuals, “narratives of bisexuality produced by bisexuals themselves are often markedly postmodern” (Storr 1999, 315), meaning that they are “full of indeterminacies, multiple possibilities and multiple choices, and recount the blurring or changing of identities” (ibid). Meanwhile, the relatively uniform coming out stories by gays and lesbians that have a structure of suffering, crisis, and transformation (Plummer 1995, 54).

To be able to make any statements about a bi-identity, the narratives told by bi-identified people must be taken into consideration. Though this thesis begins with the linguistic analysis of smaller textual elements, larger recurring themes of bisexual experience are included from the data to provide a more reliable analysis. This allows for the inclusion of intersectionality and the material realities that the people who produced the data feel affect their experience of their sexual identity.

If bisexuality is hard to define even by those who are bisexual, it will be an impossible task to do so within this thesis. Luckily, it is not the aim of it. It would be out of line to determine such a fluid identity. The purpose is rather to get an overview of what

people consider part of their identity, and how that reflects recent discourses of sexuality as a whole, and even how that could affect how we think and talk about sexuality.

Recent bisexual theory has turned focused on the postmodern nature of bisexuality: how it deconstructs the naturalization of the dominant monosexualities and even how it enables us to think about sexuality itself in a different way.

The latter half of the twentieth century was concerned identity politics, arguing that a person's sexuality is not a choice but something innate and should thus be accepted. There were clear political reasons for constructing a stable gay or lesbian identity and crafting it to either as something unique or as something non-threatening. Though different activist groups, radical versus assimilationist, used different methods to achieve equality, the underlying argument was the same: one is born gay.

With the rise of postmodernism and queer theory, this was questioned. Simone de Beauvoir wrote, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (1964, 301) and inspired feminist theorists to separate sex and gender and focused on the cultural creation of the latter. In turn, queer theorists argued for a social construction of sexual identity that was more meaningful than sexual orientation. The desire remained 'natural' but queerness—how gay people talk, how lesbians dress, where they go to meet each other—was all culture.

As was covered in chapter 2.2, critics of queer theory pointed out that biological determinism had simply been replaced by cultural essentialism. Furthermore, many of the binaries queer theory was supposed to criticize had merely been renamed and then left alone.

Bisexuality as an identity has been studied and conceived of in the same ways other minority sexualities have been, though later and at the sidelines. However, when bi researchers began considering bisexuality as an epistemology rather than an identity, they found new approaches to sexuality as a whole; to the binaries and frameworks left untouched by queer theory.

Bisexuality raises important issues concerning identity construction and its social and political ramifications. This is partly due to the complex and fluid nature of bisexual identities, which are different from the more bounded and static identities assumed by lesbians, gay men, and heterosexuals, and partly because of the fragmented and partially submerged nature of the bisexual population. (Monro 2015, 13)

A turn from considering bisexuality as an epistemology rather than from an identity perspective means investigating what bisexuality can say about sexuality theoretically rather than using the research as justification and evidence that bisexuals exist (Hemmings 2002, 34-36). Perhaps the biggest takeaway thus far has been the criticism of monosexuality—being attracted to one gender—as the naturalized norm of Western society.

Goffman (1974) argued that meaning-making requires interaction and context; that phrases hold no meaning in and of themselves. Social frameworks are the result of that social process. These social frameworks guide how we know things, for example how we know that someone is a woman, but they also exclude some things as unknowable within certain frameworks (Wilde 2014, 323). Borrowing from Goffman’s concept of framing and social frameworks, Butler created her theory of performativity, which in turn has been expanded and applied to sexuality.

Though sexuality is at its simplest attraction, the meanings sexualities hold, their position in a culture, what is expected of people of specific sexualities, are all created through social frameworks. In Western modern culture, the framework that we use to identify sexualities is based on a binary opposition of hetero- and homosexuality. Even though homosexuality is the less acceptable one, it is readable. But, “what this binary hetero/homo framework actually excludes as “knowable” are sexualities that do not rely on the specific gender of one’s sexual object choice as their organizing principle—such as bisexuality (Wilde 2014, 323).

In modern Western societies, sexuality is synonymous with sexual orientation. Many sexual activities, such as masturbating or practicing sadomasochism do not matter when sexual orientation is interpreted. Though, to use the latter as an example, sadomasochists often consider it an important part of their sexuality, whether they are straight or gay or something else is prioritized (Hemmings 2002, 24-25). It is the gender of the object of attraction that we—as a society and as individuals—use to determine someone’s sexual orientation.

Even when in a monogamous relationship, the attraction to more than one gender does not disappear. However, attraction cannot be seen. Thus, we use other frameworks, such as the gender of a person and their partner to classify them. In the US, monogamy, relationships that are between only two people, is the norm. This makes bisexuality impossible to detect through our sexual framework: a bisexual in a monogamous relationship will read as heterosexual or homosexual (Whitney 2001).

This is an instance of bisexual erasure in practice, not one born out of malicious intent, but out of our way of interpreting sexual orientation. Yet a bisexual in a monogamous relationship is still a bisexual. The only way for a framework that relies on monogamy to work is for all bisexuals to be polyamorous: dating more than one person of different genders. However, polygamy is not a requirement of bisexuality. Thus, already, we can see a way in which bisexuality challenges our current sexual frameworks.

Furthermore, due to the binary of the monosexualities, the gender one is attracted to determines the gender of the person with the attraction as well (Hemmings 2002, 24-25). A lesbian is attracted to women, and because she is a lesbian, she is also a woman. This is a result of the gender binary. Though bisexuality is often criticized for enforcing it, upon closer inspection it seems the same criticism should be aimed at homo- and heterosexuality as well. But a bisexual's multiple objects of attraction make it impossible to read their gender, making their identity fluid and undefinable.

All of these factors, including the changing of the object of desire without consistency in their gender, makes bisexuality impossible within current sexual frameworks:

Our "bisexual subject," then, cannot be structurally produced or endorsed through gender of sexual object choice, gendered subject position or chronology of sexual identity, and hence cannot be understood as an adult sexual identity under these terms. (Hemmings 2002, 27)

Such theorizations on bisexuality are not intended to take anything away from people who identify as bisexuals and struggle to make meaning of their sexual identity. The purpose is to question sexuality as a framework in and of itself. Due to its postmodern, fluid and non-essentialist nature, "bisexuality is the middle ground between sexes, genders and sexualities, rather than being a sexuality, or indeed a gender or sex, in itself" (Hemmings 2002, 2).

Following the standpoint theory, according to which people from within marginalized groups possess both the dominant majority perspective (accessible to all) and their minority perspective (accessible to only them), so does bisexuality exist both within and outside the sexual framework and thus offers a 'strong objectivity' through which to examine itself and consequently sexuality as a framework (Harding 1991, 142). As research is forced by the nature of bisexuality to question it, research must take into account all the social factors that have gone into the creation of a bisexual identity and the continued erasure of it.

Analyzing the inconsistencies and tensions in the definitions of bisexuality made by people who self-identify as bisexuals will hopefully open up new interesting avenues of inquiry with regards to sexuality itself.

5 The present study

To perform a qualitative study of language used when defining bisexuality by bisexuals, an internet website that fulfilled this requirement was chosen. The first subchapter introduces the website and how the data was chosen from it, as well as gives relevant context to the data as far as possible about who created the texts. The second subchapter discloses the methods used. There are a few statistical tools, but the focus is on close reading and treating language on a textual level with the help of Halliday's systemic functional linguistics. Lastly, a few notes on research integrity are provided.

5.1 Data

The material was gathered from the website bisexual.org. The site was created by The American Institute of Bisexuality and the Bisexual Foundation to: "give a voice to the bisexual community, share accurate information, answer questions, and provide resources to learn more" (bisexual.org 2013). A Google search done in February 2019 with the search words 'bisexuality', 'bisexual', and 'bisexuality USA' suggested the link on the first page of hits, which strengthens its relevance. Additionally, it fulfills the requirements of being created by the bi community and featuring bi-identified people writing specifically about their experiences.

All data was gathered in March 2019. Since then, the web page has been updated, with its layout and organization changed. Despite this, I introduce the page as it was when the data was gathered and specifically mention if newer content is used. The Q&A questions and five anonymous profiles can be found in the appendices.

The website is divided into five sections: Home, People, In Focus Blog, Q&A, and Resources. Out of these, the People and Q&A pages are examined in this study. They were chosen above the other options because they contain entries from bi-identified people who do not have an administrative role for the site or the founding organization.

The People page has three subheadings: Faces of Bisexuality, Am I Bi, and Famous Bi People. Out of these, texts from the Faces of Bisexuality are analyzed. It displays self-written profiles from people who identify as bisexual. The profiles are structured around questions about them and their experience, and by the changing styles, lengths, and approaches, it can be assumed that there has been little to no post-editing done on the answers.

All the profiles, before moving on to the questions about bisexuality, begin with a short introduction. This space is used by the person writing the profile to introduce

themselves outside of their sexuality. The meta function of this introduction is to, first, give the person the chance to express themselves as more than just their sexuality. Most write about their work, interests, and families. Second, the introductions' function is to highlight the similarities between bisexuals and non-bisexuals. Like hetero- and homosexuals, bisexual people have siblings, hobbies, and a life outside of the bedroom.

The introductions are not relevant to this thesis. The existence of a shared cultural imagery of an identity is the basis for identity politics. Ultimately, I agree that bisexuals are individuals and as multifaceted as everyone else, but what this thesis is interested in is the bisexual identity if such an identity exists.

However, bisexuality like any other aspect of someone's identity intersects with other facets of a person's identity. This makes isolating experiences that are strictly caused because of bisexuality and only bisexuality near impossible. This is taken into account during the analysis.

The Q&A page has a list of questions (Appendix 1) that by clicking on, the visitor can read first an answer provided by the editors of the page followed by answers that other users have submitted to add their own opinions on the topic. It is primarily these submissions this thesis is interested in, though the editors' prefacing comments might be considered if relevant.

All in all, text was gathered from 100 profiles from the Faces of Bisexuality page, which ended up being 53243 words. The only qualifying factor for choosing the profiles was that the writer is from the United States to avoid generalizing across cultures. Otherwise, the data includes people of many genders, ethnicities, and backgrounds. From the Q&A section, all comments that answered sixteen different questions were considered. There were fifty-eight comments from twenty-seven different people, with two comments made from deleted accounts, 4695 words overall.

5.2 Methods

The analysis was conducted on three levels following Fairclough's approach (2003): on the textual, the immediate context, and lastly, the wider sociocultural context. For the linguistic analysis of the data, the research draws some elements from Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, which is introduced below. It works well with CDA, as it too operates with the belief that the primary functions of language are "making sense of our experience, and acting out our social relationships" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014, 30).

CDA is, unlike most other discourse analysis, text-based (Lazar 2005, 231). Halliday's theoretical approach positions grammatical and lexical features as options, and meaning is made through choices between these options. "Language is, in the first instance, a resource for making meaning; so text is a process of making meaning in context" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014, 3). In other words, by analyzing the text, the analysis can make statements about the people and the setting, the ideologies and cultural norms immediately surrounding it. These aspects can and must then be situated into cultural context, both as reflections and modifiers of it.

Interpretations presented in earlier chapters about discourse on a macro level are in line with Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. It thus provides perfect tools for conducting analysis of the text. Halliday calls the different contexts that each text is located in field-tenor-mode (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014, 33). Field meaning "what's going on in the situation", tenor "who is taking part in the situation", and mode as "what role is being played by language and other semiotic systems in the situation" (ibid. 33-34). Transitivity analysis is concerned with the last.

This approach enables a researcher to categorize any situations, and they correspond with Fairclough's methodology (Fairclough 2003, 16-17). SFL's transitivity analysis, which is expanded upon later, was used for the text-level investigation of data. The stages of analysis—from linguistic features to text with immediate context to larger discourses of sexuality in the modern US—are reflected in the research questions of this thesis.

The profiles were read with the research questions in mind. These were, to reiterate, firstly, how is a bi-identity linguistically constructed by bi-identified people? Secondly, how do discourses of bisexuality interact with discourses of gender and other sexualities? And thirdly, how does bisexuality affect frameworks of sexuality?

The self-written profiles were the main focus of the study, with the questions and answers from the Q&A section used as firstly, a guide in what might be common themes brought up in the profiles, and secondly as comparative material to the profiles' handling of the same topics. All the profiles selected for the study were read manually, and clauses relating specifically to bisexuality and bisexuals were chosen for further analysis.

SFL's transitivity analysis views the clause as experiential and is used to categorize words and phrases for their function rather than form, as traditional grammar would do (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014, 211). Analysis is done on the lexical level, prioritizing "a view from above" (ibid. 49) meaning that "the grammar is seen as a network of interrelated meaningful choices" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014, 49). Looking for these

choices will reveal meaning: “since choice is moved by intentionality, it ultimately means that speakers word and organize their texts according to and in order to fulfill the expectations they put in them as conveyors of messages” (Lazar 2005, 231).

The clauses selected for further analysis were sorted into two categories: clauses which make statements about what bisexuality is and clauses which make statements about what bisexuality is not, with the hope that a comparison of the two could provide interesting observations. Additionally, clauses that described the lived bi-experience were gathered to provide more depth to the data.

After the division into two categories, both sets of data were further categorized. First, the Subject of the clauses was identified and categorized. Of special interest were nouns and pronouns which denote either inclusion or exclusion from a group. The purpose of this is to observe whether there are consistencies regarding which properties are designated as individual and which part of bisexuality by bi-identified people.

Second, the same treatment was given to the associated verbs, which were categorized into process types. When the clause is viewed as “a mode of reflection [...] of imposing linguistic order on our experience [...]” (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014, 213), it can be organized and analyzed with the system of transitivity into something meaningful for research purposes. Central here are verbs as processes of doing or happening.

Having identified and analyzed the subjects and verbs, they were examined more closely through comparison. Lastly, the rest of the clause i.e. the circumstantial information was manually sorted into recurring themes to identify which properties were brought up in relation to bisexuality most often. The additional clauses about the bi-experience and the questions from the Q&A section were used here to confirm and support conclusions.

With close reading it is important to note that other researchers might have chosen different pieces of text for further analysis and interpreted them differently. However, this is not a weakness of the study as no scientist or researcher can in any study claim to have discovered the ultimate objective truth. Hopefully, the transparency of the methods and the arguments given for why the research was done as it was is enough to satisfy the reader that this study is a truth based on good-faith analysis and critical thought.

6 Results and analysis

The profiles are structured around a set of questions. When filling in the profile, the writer can choose which ones to answer and in how much detail, causing great variation between profiles in content and length. For an analysis of the lived experience of a bisexual-identified person, especially the following questions provide relevant texts: What was your path to a bisexual identity? What is the toughest thing about being bisexual? What is the best thing about being bisexual? How have other people in your life reacted to your bisexuality?

The aforementioned questions justify the profile's use for analysis into bisexuality because they operate on the assumption that bisexuality does affect a person's life, and that there is something unique about it compared to monosexual people. Furthermore, they establish bisexuality as the dominant theme in the profiles on a clausal level. Hence, the clauses selected for further analysis are internally coherent in their theme—rheme structure (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014, 89).

This chapter is divided into three subchapters, focusing first on positive statements, i.e. clauses defining what bisexuality is; second on negative statements, i.e. those specifying what bisexuality is not; and third, general analysis with the research questions in mind on interesting, recurring topics in the text that provide information about bisexuality from the perspective of self-identified bisexuals.

6.1 Bisexuality is...

The one hundred profiles contain 156 clauses that were statements on what bisexuality is, either formulated as a personal opinion or as a general interpretation. These clauses are usually triggered by phrases such as “being bisexual means”, “bisexuality is”, and “we are”. The data is presented first with attention to the Subject of the clauses, second by categorizing the verbs using transitivity analysis. Third and last, the remaining components of the clause, those elements that follow the verb and contain semantic information tied to bisexuality, are categorized into dominant topics and analyzed.

As mentioned previously, the statements were selected based on the use of pronoun phrases and the use of the noun ‘bisexuality’. Variation in their use will theoretically provide answers as to what bisexuals see as individual aspects of their sexuality and as parts of a shared bi-identity. Additionally, the use of bisexuality without pronouns essentializes it as a thing considered real though not tangible, with properties regardless of the people ascribing the word to themselves.

In the 156 clauses, the most common noun is the first-person singular pronoun *I* with twenty-eight occurrences as the Subject of a clause that defines bisexuality. With twenty-six occurrences, *being bisexual* is almost as frequent. Most of these clauses were written underneath the subheading ‘What bisexuality means to me’, which arguably encourages the use of *bisexuality* as the theme, i.e. the known element, of the clauses. It occurs fourteen times, while *bisexual* as an identity occurs nine times.

In contrast, *bisexuals* as people occurs seven times, first-person plural *we* seventeen times, and the second-person singular *you* eight times. *It*, used eighteen times, both functions as a replacement for bisexuality and to refer to behavior related to bisexuality. Lastly, miscellaneous noun phrases and verb phrases occur as the Subject of a clause fifteen and fourteen times, respectively. These phrases are too few to be meaningful if categorized separately but include examples such as *the whole world* and *being attracted to*.

Table 1 Subjects in positive clauses about bisexuality

Subject of clause	Nr. of occurrences
Being bisexual	26
Bisexual	9
Bisexuality	14
Bisexuals	7
I	28
It	18
Miscellaneous noun phrases	15
Miscellaneous verb phrases	14
We	17
You	8

The semantic content of the clauses is presented and analyzed later in this thesis but what merits a mention right now is that firstly, there is no clear division between which properties were preceded by the first-person singular pronoun compared to the distancing nouns, for example *it*. In the former, the examples were occasionally more specific, but all attitudes were represented.

- (1) [I]t means comfort. I know who I am, I can be comfortable with who I am and who I love.
- (2) I'm attracted to both men and women.

The only exception is the group of statements marked by the first-person plural. These were all about convincing that bisexuals are just like everyone else, both heterosexuals and other minority sexualities:

- (3) We not only exist, but are human like our straight, gay, lesbian, or transgender brothers and sisters.

Using Halliday’s transitivity analysis, the verbs and verb phrases linked to the Subject are categorized into different processes. Out of the 156 clauses, 110 are relational, totaling 70,51% of all processes. Out of the relational verbs, 95,45%—67,30% out of all verbs—were intensive, used to demonstrate a connection between the two participants of the clause.

Table 2 Process types in positive clauses about bisexuality

Process	Nr.	%	Sub-category	Nr.	% of process	% of total
Relational	110	70,51	Intensive	105	95,45	67,30
			Possessive	4	3,63	2,56
			Circumstantial	1	0,90	0,64
Material	9	5,77				
Mental	33	21,15	Affection	25	75,75	16,02
			Cognition	6	18,18	3,84
			Perception	2	6,06	1,28
Existential	4	2,57				
Total	156	100				

Based on this, the profiles are focused on being rather than doing (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014, 259). The transitivity analysis supports the attitude that bisexuality is something someone is rather than something someone does. As such, it could provide one explanation for the issue queer theory has with bisexuality as an identity.

All relational verbs are furthermore attributive, “construing the abstract [relationship] of class-membership” (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014, 262), rather than bisexuality being a characteristic that can identify the other participant of the clause. In addition to the intensive relational verbs, the possessive and circumstantial relational verbs comprise only 2,56% and 0,64% of the total amount of verbs respectively.

The second largest process type is the mental, comprising 21,25% of the total amount, with affection being the most frequent at 75,75% of mental processes. In other words, bisexuality is characterized around feelings and attraction, rather than physical acts. Material processes describe something being done or something happening (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014, 226). They comprised merely 5,77% of all processes.

(4) Being bisexual gives me a chance to love everyone the same

The process types spread out evenly across the different subjects—also called Actors in transitivity analysis—that they were connected to. The only notable observations are that the first-person singular pronoun had the most varied process types, with nine relational processes, seven of which were intensive and two circumstantial, three material processes, and sixteen mental processes, thirteen of which were affectional and three cognitive. This can be compared with, for example, *being bisexual*, which was paired with a relational intensive process twenty-two times out of twenty-six.

On the other hand, *bisexual* is the only Actor only followed by relational intensive verbs. These clauses most resembled a dictionary definition, defining the Subject as a word or concept, though often hedged with a *to me*. Similar tactics are frequently used in the data to soften a clause otherwise written as an objective fact.

(5) Bisexual means to me that I love people.

(6) Being bisexual means freedom to me.

Choosing the first-person singular or plural already diffuses the generalizability of the claims made in the profiles. Additionally, clauses with other Subjects, such as *being bisexual*, which was the most popular Subject, contain hedging to signal that what followed was an opinion rather than a fact, as in example (6). This might seem contradictory considering that the most common verb process used is relational. However, these tactics cause the profiles to read more like blogs than information pamphlets.

What remains of the clause is the possible other participant—the Goal in relation to the Actor, or the Object in relation to the Subject—and the circumstantial information: the prepositional phrases, adjectives, and adverbials (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014, 223, and *ibid.* 335). Upon a close reading of the data, several topics emerge as common descriptions and definitions of bisexuals and bisexuality. These topics have been categorized into groupings and are introduced next.

The four major topics that arose from the clauses regarding what bisexuality is or what bisexuals are, are on the one hand bisexuality as an identity (who you are) or as a part of a person (what you are), and on the other hand as attraction to women and men (gender-specific) or as attraction to people (gender-blind). Mapping these categories,

provides an insight into the discourse concerning bisexuality and ties it together with gender discourses.

The two groupings of statements, bisexuality as an essential part of an individual and bisexuality as simply an aspect of the individual, both approach the topic with the basic assumption that bisexuality is not a choice, but a part of the person. Describing the best thing about being bisexual, one profile said,

(7) For me, it's knowing who I am 100%. I am bisexual, I always have been.

(8) Bisexual people are JUST like everyone else. No one's sexual preferences define who they are."

There are no conditionals or qualifiers in the statement. This contrasts with the people arguing for bisexuality as an aspect rather than the core of their identity. For example, in example (8), the statement is definitive in that sexuality does not define a person and assures that bisexuality does not make a person different from people with other orientations.

The opinion that bisexuals are just like everyone else is repeated by many of the people arguing that bisexuality is a part of their identity, not the core of it. For a significant portion of those who registered for the site and filled out their profiles, one of the aims was to iterate that bisexuals are just the same as monosexuals. In addition, there are several statements that specifically link bisexual people as part of the LGBTQ+ community.

(9) We are people just like everyone else.

(10) We are normal people.

(11) Bisexuals are queer just as much as gay and lesbian people are.

Clauses with this topic rarely contain hedging, which is otherwise common in the profiles. There are two contextual possible explanations for this. First, one of the missions of the website and the profiles is to normalize bisexuality, which is efficiently done by claiming that bisexuals are normal. Second, by claiming to be like everyone else, the clauses claim the diversity that everyone else are afforded and thus not limiting bisexuals to any specific characterizations.

In addition, normalcy is claimed with specific lexical choices that tie bisexuality to biology. There are multiple uses of the word *orientation*, as well as explicit references to

desires and attraction. This tactic connotes bisexuality with other physical traits such as hair and skin color: natural and unchangeable but not defining.

(12) Outside of a few things in the bedroom, we're exactly like you.

(13) [P]art of accepting my bisexuality was simply acknowledging my own desires.

Lastly, all statements regarding the variety of bisexuals were classified into the category of bisexuality as an aspect of an individual. Pointing out the differences within a group fractures the status of a solid in-group. Considered alongside the frequent hedging to highlight subjectivity and the preference for first-person singular pronoun over plural as the Subject of the clauses, this approach to bisexuality as what one is, is demonstrated on many levels in the data.

(14) [T]here's as much variation among individual bisexuals as there is variation among individuals worldwide.

There is both a theme of wanting to belong and of individualism in the statements in this group. Highlighting the commonalities with both straight and gay people, while also pointing out the differences within the bisexual community, both function to contradict the image of bisexuals as uniform and different. However, it must be repeated, that this group too denies that sexuality is a choice or a lifestyle.

(15) Like gay and straight people I can't help who I am attracted to.

The belief in the inherent nature of sexuality is what the previous group of statements has in common with those claiming that bisexuality is who, not what, one is. The statements in this group often described bisexuality as something abstract, such as freedom, truth, or comfort.

(16) [T]o be bisexual is to be truthful and free to one's self-identity.

(17) Being bi to me is not lying to anyone about who I am.

(18) I know who I am, I can be comfortable with who I am and who I love.

Another recurring theme in the grouping of statements at hand is the belief that bisexuality has a larger influence on a person's identity than simply regarding attraction. In other

words, bisexuality is more than a sexual orientation: it is an identity. This is a direct contradiction to the clauses that denied any difference between bisexuals and everyone else. In these statements, bisexuality isn't just a matter of attraction, but also of values, worldview, and interacting with the world.

(19) [Y]ou're more open-minded because now you understand more about both gay and straight relationships.

(20) Bisexuality also means, to me, a higher level of bonding with my own experience of male, female, and non-binary gender.

(21) my bisexual friends are the most understanding, the kindest, the most compassionate, and most truly egalitarian people I've ever met.

Before presenting the results of the two remaining categories, those which concern attraction rather than identity, a qualifying word on the categories is in order. The categorizations relate only to the statements, not the people doing them. Some statements that have been categorized differently were made by the same people. In other words, these groupings are an attempt to lend some cohesion to the different themes within the profiles, rather than dividing up the people who wrote the profiles into separate, mutually exclusive groups of thought. It is evident that different discourses of bisexuality, even contradictory ones, are in interaction and contest in the profiles.

The two remaining groupings are easy to contrast. They are a part of a debate active among activists, scholars, and laypeople regarding bisexuality, and of interest especially for a linguistic study. Is bisexuality attraction to two sexes, or attraction that is irrelevant to sex and gender?

The question might seem a matter of semantics, but there are two reasons that it is worth considering. First, defining bisexuality specifically as attraction to two sexes erases the gender experience of all the people who do not conform to the traditional—and frankly outdated—gender binary of man and woman. A multiple gender discourse is increasingly accepted as the normal, and bisexuality inevitably must reframe itself not to become obsolete.

This issue is solved by defining bisexuality as attraction to other genders in addition to one's own. The solution, however, does not eliminate the second reason for making this distinction between gender-specific and gender-blind bisexuality which concerns sexual orientation specifically. In modern Western culture, sexual orientation is classified by the gender of the subject and the object of attraction, thus requiring distinct genders

and giving them importance over other physical features such as eye color or length. If bisexuality does not relate to gender, then its status as a sexuality according to our current sexual framework is thrown into question.

Though bisexuality is often criticized for being too gendered, it is hard to argue that hetero- and homosexuality are not gender-specific—or binary, but more on that in the next chapter. But what about pansexuality? Is it different than bisexuality, or the same thing under a different label? In addition, if gender is not what is attractive to a person, then what is? These questions are further considered in the Discussion chapter because they do not only require consideration due to the data at hand but furthermore lead to a questioning of sexuality itself as a concept.

The first approach to sexuality as gender-specific includes both statements limiting the attraction to two genders and to several genders. Attraction was a few times specified into romantic and sexual, and sometimes the clause included circumstantial information of past relationships to people of both/all genders.

(22) I'm attracted to both men and women.

(23) Being attracted to more than one gender.

The unique aspect of the statements in this category is that several of them did not treat the gender of the partner as unimportant. If we consider the rhetorical questions posed in the previous to last paragraph about whether bisexuality is gender-specific, then here it seems to be. Gender is not completely relevant, but it is the specific differences of the genders that are attractive to some bi-identified people.

(24) Loving both genders for their likenesses and differences. Plus the fact that there are things to love that one gender has that the other does not.

This grouping of statements also included reflections on the fluidity of sexuality and whether attraction is an even split. Attraction in statements such as (25) is reminiscent of the Kinsey scale's categories, proving just how influential it still is, and how putting something abstract into terms of science affects how that abstract thing is perceived.

(25) You can be mostly attracted to one sex, but occasionally think the other is just as attractive.

(26) It's okay to prefer a gender over the other.

On the question of whether attraction is equal toward different genders, there is majority support for the norm to not be equal. Several statements include preferences to one sex over another, but also thoughts on how that has changed over time. The experiences of sexuality's fluidity are more apparent in the texts concerning the lived experience of bisexuality and is analyzed further in a later chapter.

Interestingly, none of the statements categorized as gender-blind include any immediate references to the fluidity or changing nature of sexuality. In these statements, bisexuality is most often coupled with the word *love* as exemplified by (28) and (29). There is a stress on loving the person for who they are, not what they are, sometimes coupled with a dismissal of their biological gender.

- (27) Bisexuality is a way of looking at people and seeing the beauty in them as fellow human beings.
- (28) Being able to love whoever I want.
- (29) [B]eing bisexual means nothing but love.
- (30) I love a person, who cares about what genitals they have.

The statements that do not fit into any one of these four categories varied. Some defined bisexuality broadly, others discussed it in the context of their own relationships. As an example, in (32), bisexuality includes an aspect of polyamory (multiple relationships simultaneously). However, the clause has the first-person singular pronoun as its Subject, implying that this is not something considered universal to all bisexuals or an attempt to define bisexuality in general.

- (31) Bisexuality is very real, and those who are bisexual are very human.
- (32) Being bisexual means that I am happily married to the greatest woman on earth, but that I have desires to be romantically involved with another person.

To summarize, the four major topics identified in clauses attempting to explain what bisexuality is are as a unique identity or a minor aspect of a person, and as gender-specific attraction or gender-blind attraction. The former two concern who bisexuals are, and the two latter groups are more concerned with what bisexual orientation is. Often, clauses from different categories were written by the same person. Hence, none of them can be attributed purely to an individual's conscious and rounded concept of bisexuality but

rather, should be seen as discourses of bisexuality, sometimes conflicting but all relevant in constructing it.

The following subchapter gives an overview of what bisexuality is not. The analysis was conducted in a similar method as to that used for the clauses covered in this subchapter: beginning with a categorization of the Subjects and the processes, comparisons, and analysis of the available cohesive groups that constituted the rest of the clause to identify themes within these statements, then investigating the contradictions within and between them.

6.2 Bisexuality is not...

In total, the profiles contain 103 clauses that directly define what bisexuality is not. The clauses all include a variation of *no* coupled with a Subject such as I, we, and bisexuals. To separate the clauses denoting what bisexuality is and what it is not, positive is used for the former and negative for the latter. Like with the positive statements, this subchapter starts with an overview of the Subjects as well as a comparison to the results from subchapter 6.1, followed by an analysis of the verb processes and the topics of the circumstantial information in the clause.

Unlike the clauses that define what bisexuality is, which predominantly featured the first-person singular pronoun, the clauses defining what bisexuality is not are most often constructed with the first-person plural pronoun. In the ninety-seven statements, it is used thirty-four times. First-person singular is used seventeen times. Miscellaneous noun phrases, such as *not every bisexual* and *my sexuality*, are second most frequent by twenty-three occurrences. *It* occurs thirteen times, and the rest under ten times, with both *being bisexual* and *bisexuality* at four, *bisexuals* at seven, and second-person singular *you* only once.

Table 3 Subjects in negative clauses about bisexuality

Subject of clause	Nr. of occurrences
Being bisexual	4
Bisexuality	4
Bisexuals	7
I	17
It	13
Miscellaneous noun phrases	23
We	34
You	1

As is explained in further detail later, the negative clauses are more specific in content than the positive clauses because they are overwhelmingly rejections of common stereotypes. The writers of the profiles deny certain stereotypes by offering their own experience as evidence. Additionally, these statements are made about and on the behalf of bisexuals generally as a group.

- (33) Explaining to men that, no, my wife and I don't automatically want to have a 3-some with them.
- (34) It does not mean that we are attracted to everyone or that we want to sleep with everyone.

Of the positive statements, only 10% contain the first-person plural compared to 33% of the negative statements. Whereas the positive statements are focused on the individual, the negative statements are about defending the bisexual identity. There are few to none culturally accepted positive stereotypes to embrace, and none identified in the statements. Thus, the positive aspects of the bi-identity must be built upon personal experience rather than shared cultural images, which explains the difference in pronoun use between the statements.

Moving onto the verb processes, like was the case with the positive clauses, the majority of the processes are relational. 82 of the 103, or 79,61%, of the verbs created a connection between the Subject and the second participant, or rather, denied that connection.

- (35) Bisexuality is not a choice.

As with the positive clauses, all relational verbs were attributive, and most were intensive at 74,75% compared with possessive only constituting 3,88% and circumstantial 0,97%. This is consistent with the distribution of the relational verbs in the positive clauses.

Table 4 Process types in negative clauses about bisexuality

Process	Nr.	%	Sub-category	Nr.	% of process	% of total
Relational	82	79,61	Intensive	77	95,45	67,30
			Possessive	4	3,63	2,56
			Circumstantial	1	0,90	0,64
Material	12	11,65				
Mental	8	7,76	Affection	6	75,00	5,82
			Cognition	0	0	0
			Perception	2	25,00	1,94
Existential	1	0,97				
Total	103	100				

The most significant difference between verbs in the positive and negative clauses is the frequency of material and mental processes. While mental processes were the second biggest category in the positive clauses, in the negative clauses they fall to third place with 7,76%. More frequent are material processes, which comprised 11,65% of all verbs. Theorizations of why will be provided in the next subchapter.

With relational intensive processes being overwhelmingly the most common, there is no significant variation between the distribution of the processes across different Subjects. As was the case with the positive statements, the first-person singular has the most variation of processes. Out of seventeen instances, eleven are relational with one possessive and circumstantial each, four mental and two material processes.

The first-person plural, despite occurring the most frequently at thirty-three times, was followed by a material and a mental affection process only once each. *Being bisexual*, *bisexuality*, and *it* were the only subjects to only appear with relational verbs. The miscellaneous noun phrases, most likely due to the variation within the category, were followed by various processes. Out of the twenty-three verbs, fourteen were relational, six material, two mental affection processes and one existential.

Switching attention from the subjects and the verb processes, the circumstantial information of the negative clauses following the verb are categorized into three recurring topics, with nearly a fourth left uncategorized. Out of the uncategorized statements, several fit into the two identity-related categories introduced in the previous subchapter.

(36) Bisexuality is not a choice.

(37) [W]e are no different than anyone else.

In addition, there are examples of the two other categories as well, gender-specific and gender-blind attraction, in the uncategorized negative statements.

Compared to the positive statements, the negative statements are significantly more specific. The three topics based on which the categorization was made are knowledge of sexual orientation, sexual behavior, and the determining nature of relationships regarding sexuality.

In the first grouping, the central topic is proclaiming the certainty of the writer's own sexuality. The most common lexical feature of the statements is the use of the word

'confused' with a relational verb. Additionally, the clause often contains the assurance that bisexuality is not a phase.

(38) Bisexuals are NOT confused.

(39) We are not confused, going through a phase, or anything other.

These assurances most likely stem from the common stereotypes that bisexuality, firstly, is not real and, secondly, is either experimentation or someone afraid to come out. These stereotypes are explicitly referenced in a few statements in the group, and more often in the profiles in general.

(40) [W]e are not just gays or lesbians who don't want to come "all the way" out of the closet.

The statements in the second grouping focus on sexual behavior and activity. These are the clauses that contained material process verbs. There are three stereotypes represented: cheating, promiscuity, and threesomes. This is the only grouping in which the focus is on sex; otherwise, words such as attraction are favored when discussing interpersonal connection and relationships.

Many of the statements deny that bisexuality and infidelity had a connection. Being able to be attracted to more than one sex holds culturally connotations of specific sexual behavior. Based on the profiles, the opinion from within the community is quite unanimous, and the clauses in this category do not contain hedging words. Furthermore, the statements are made on behalf of bisexuals and bisexuality rather than focusing on an individual's experience.

(41) Yes some bi people cheat, but it's not because they are bi.

(42) Our sexuality does not make us promiscuous.

The most specific topic is that bisexual people, especially bisexual women, are not automatically interested in threesomes. This is repeated several times in the clauses at hand, but also in the profiles in general. All the stereotypes are addressed in the Q&A section as well, proving that they are prevalent in Western culture. The most common misconceptions about bisexuals are summarized well in this extract from one of the profiles:

(43) No I'm not a slut. No I don't want to be your third because your sex life has gotten boring. No I've never cheated. And no, I don't want to sleep with everyone!

It should come as no surprise that many of the profiles wanted to counter sexual stereotypes, as bisexuality is in Western modern society a highly sexualized orientation/identity. Furthermore, this could provide an explanation for why sex is otherwise so undiscussed in the profiles, as the reaction to the stereotype could be the unconscious effort to erase sex altogether. This argument is returned to later in the thesis.

The last category is focused on non-sexual aspects of interpersonal relationships. The gender of a bi-identified person's partner does not change their sexuality according to the profiles. This identity-based conception of sexuality is usually not questioned when it comes to monosexuals.

(44) And we are not gay when in a gay relationship, or straight when in a straight relationship.

Additionally, the data argues that there is no need to “try” all genders to know whether one is attracted to them. This is a question often aimed at gay and lesbian people as well, but a misconception specific to bisexuals is that they would need to be with both a man and a woman—according to a binary view of gender—to be satisfied.

(45) [P]eople tend to think that you need both to be happy.

To summarize, based on the data, bisexuality is not as sexually active as it is believed to be. Bisexuality has little to do with sexual behavior and all with sexual attraction. The profiles made more specific statements about what bisexuality is not than what it is. Furthermore, the negative clauses were more likely to be presented as a fact about all bisexuals and bisexuality than the positive clauses, which were framed as personal opinions.

The three most significant themes of the collected clauses regarding what bisexuality is not are firstly, that bisexuality is not a phase nor an option for someone insecure in their “real” sexuality, secondly, that bisexuality does not lead to promiscuity and sexual activeness or an attraction to everyone, and thirdly, that bisexual people are as monogamous and active in engaging in threesomes as monosexual people are.

6.3 Further analysis

To reiterate, the research questions of this study are first, how is a bi-identity linguistically constructed by bi-identified people; second, how does this discourse of bisexuality relate to discourses of gender and other sexualities; and third, what does bisexuality reveal about sexual frameworks from an epistemological angle? I start by answering the first question by looking at the text, then move from there to immediate and cultural context to answer the second and third questions.

As would please postmodernists wary of essentializing cultural concepts, the data is most absolute in what it is not. Clear themes in negative stereotypes were identified, most notably bisexuals being promiscuous, unreliable partners, and into threesomes because of a need to have “both” genders simultaneously. These stereotypes concerned both sexual behavior and the personality and morals of bisexuals.

In statements denying such behavior, the use of the first-person plural was used most often, followed by the first person singular. General statements about what bisexuality is not or what bisexuals are not were common and definitive. When stereotypical behavior such as cheating was admitted to occur, it was always distanced from bisexuality and framed as an individual trait.

One aspect of sexual behavior closely related to bisexuality is polyamory. In the Q&A section of the website, it is one of the common misconceptions of bisexuality expressly denied. Both those mentioning it in their profiles out of their own volition and those who had replied to the “question” in the Q&A section denied any correlation, whether they were themselves polyamorous or not.

- (46) Bisexual people can be polyamorous (or any other version of ethical non-monogamy), the same as straight, gay, asexual etc. people can be, and they can all be monogamous too.
- (47) I personally would like to try a polyamorous relationship but that has nothing to with my bisexuality.

In contrast, those who were interested in pursuing multiple partners connected it with their sexual identity in their profile:

- (48) being bisexual means that I am happily married to the greatest woman on earth, but that I have desires to be romantically involved with another person.

Comparing the profiles and the Q&A section, it could be postulated that replying to the questions in the Q&A section serves as a platform for defending and defining bisexuality itself as something separate from the other aspects of one's identity while the profiles main function is to act as personal stories. This could explain the discrepancy in attitudes toward certain topics, such as polyamory. In fact, many of the replies to the polyamory question "Are all bi people polyamorous?" were outright judgmental in tone.

(49) I'm bisexual and NOT polyamorous. I can't even imagine that kind of lifestyle.

The method familiar from the profiles of comparing bisexuals to people of other sexual identities is common in the Q&A section as well, as can be seen in extract (46). Another study with more data on the subject might reveal if there is a strong correlation between bisexuality and polyamory but based on the data at hand, it is inadvisable to make such claims.

Based on these stereotypes, bisexuality is closely tied to sexual behavior. With the exception of disputing the immoral sexual behavior typically associated with bisexuals, sexual activity was notably absent from the profiles. Abstract concepts such as freedom and truth were more closely linked to bisexuality than past or current experiences and relationships. The noun love was preferred over desire.

One explanation could be that distancing the identity from sexual activity is a counter reaction to the oversexualization of it by dominant discourses. Another relates more to identity itself as a concept: it is not about what we do but who we are. When the function of the profiles is to introduce bi-identified people, they will talk about their identity.

Two competing discourses of bisexuality that appear in the data are those of sexuality being who you are versus a part of you, i.e. what you are. In other words, bisexuality as an identity versus a sexual orientation. Though sexual orientation is presented as more fluid than usual sexual narratives by monosexuals, for example as changing preferences over time, it is all treated as natural in the profiles.

In Lauman et al.'s study in 1994, respondents defined their sexual orientation based on desire, sexual acts, and self-identification. The data collected for this study shows that for bisexuals, desire and self-identification are the most important aspects.

If we consider sexual acts first, there is a consensus that who a person engages in sexual activities with or has engaged with does not define their orientation. Experiencing sexual desire towards more than one gender qualifies for self-identification as bisexual.

(50) Even though I'm happily married and monogamous, I'm still bisexual, it is my orientation

(51) My past of not dating women is due to lack of effort, not lack of interest.

With regard to desire and self-identification, in the analyzed profiles, self-identification is often made based on desire.

(52) Having grown up in a conservative community that really didn't acknowledge female desire of any sort (let alone lesbian desire), part of accepting my bisexuality was simply acknowledging my own desires.

In the second chapter of this thesis, the question is posed of how relevant sexual activity is for identity. Based on the data, it can be argued that for many engaging in sexual acts with more than one gender has helped them feel more comfortable in their identity, but that the desire existed before engagement and hence the sexuality did too. In the data, there was not a single mention of having to have experience with all genders to be 'allowed' the title of bisexual.

More often, however, the realization that lead to a bi-identity was tied to receiving information about bisexuality from friends or family, from the LGBTQ+ community, or after a move to a bigger city. Several profiles were written by someone from a smaller town or a religious background, who had never considered the possibility of being bi due to not knowing it was an option.

(53) After months of internal turmoil about my sexuality, following years of denial, I just sat down and discussed my feelings with a friend who was already out as bi.

Unlike the clear topics in the negative statements, there are no common topics within the circumstantial information of the clauses in the positive statements. The only use of the first-person plural was in clauses assuring that bisexuals are human too or no different from people of other sexualities. In these statements, bisexuality is treated as a sexual orientation that does not constitute a basis for a separate bi-identity. Furthermore, there appeared a need to justify the existence of bisexuality as a sexual orientation. Bisexuality

is described as something innate that exists in people before they gain knowledge of bisexuality, manifesting in feelings of not belonging:

(54) [A]ll you ever heard people talk about was straight and gay - and I wasn't really either of those. When I went to college, I had an important day of discovery [...] I walked to the student library and read through Human Sexuality textbooks for an entire afternoon. Seeing "Bisexuality" listed as a valid sexual orientation in a peer-reviewed university textbook was reassuring to me.

7. Discussion

In this chapter, the analysis and results of the data is brought into the larger context of bisexuality and sexuality studies. Out of the three subchapters, the first focuses on findings related to bisexuality as a sexual identity. The second subchapter approaches bisexuality as a sexual orientation through current different sexual frameworks.

Moving to the third and final subchapter, what has been learned about bisexuality is applied as an etymology to discuss sexual orientation, attraction, and gender frameworks. A new visualization of sexual attraction is proposed together with alternative frameworks suggested by other bisexuality research.

7.1 Bisexuality as an identity

This subchapter is divided into two parts. The first part analyzes bisexuality as a member of the LGBTQ+ group of identities and considers the discursive functions of the data. The second part interrogates bisexuality as a modern identity through different approaches and what strategies were identified in the data as pertains to identity construction.

7.1.1 Bisexuality as the B in LGBTQ+

The macro-level organization of the data was into two groupings of statements: what bisexuality is and is not. To begin, the reasons for the existence of the latter category should be examined. Due to the strength of the negative statements this is a legitimate inquiry, as usually things are defined by what they are. When it comes to bisexuality, the opposite appears to be true.

An essential part of power is the control over discourse by controlling the media that spreads it to assure ideological dominance (Van Dijk 1989, 20-21). Traditionally, those with wealth have had control over newspapers, legislation, and other institutions that establish cultural norms. The internet, however, has become an accessible place for spreading competing discourses and reach like-minded people. The bi.org website is an example of this power being taken advantage of to create and spread counter-discourses (Van Dijk 1989, 21). Despite this, the traditional institutions of power remain influential.

In Western countries, including the United States, the group with the most institutional power regarding sexual discourses has been the heterosexual majority. Due to the power held by the social groups controlling the dominant discourse, their interpretations of sexual minorities have become the truth. This interpretation aligns with

Fairclough's position on discourse as a tool for constructing reality rather than reflecting it (Fairclough 1992, 3). These narratives and stereotypes have been harmful and most often negative—either overtly homophobic or condescendingly patronizing (compare the older homosexual predator with the flamboyant gay best friend).

Though bisexuals have been less visible, there exist these stereotypes for that sexual minority group as well. This is clearly evidenced in the prevalence of the “bisexuality is not” statements, because, without stereotypes to argue against, these arguments wouldn't need to exist.

To recapitulate, the three most common topics in the negative statements were knowledge of sexual orientation, sexual behavior, and the determining nature of relationships regarding sexuality. It was argued that bisexuals are not confused, are not inclined to sleep around or cheat, and remain bisexual even when in a monogamous relationship. Interestingly, an aspect that differentiates bisexuals from queer monosexuals (gays and lesbians) seems to be that some of these harmful beliefs are held by other members of the LGBTQ+ community in addition to the heterosexual majority. There are several instances in the data of examples when a bisexual has experienced prejudice from others within the community and of attempts to equate bisexuals with other minority sexual identities.

Based on Foucault's conceptualization of power as a dynamic force that creates rather than simply forbids, oppression creates a group that can unite to fight the oppression (Hall 2002, 66). The site from where the data was gathered has as one of its defining purposes to “share accurate information” (bisexual.org, 2013). Without the marginalizing, there might not be such a thing as a queer/bisexual identity. Unfortunately, it appears that bisexuals are not only fighting discrimination from the heterosexual majority but also from within the LGBTQ+ community.

Though there were positive experiences of being accepted, many people had encountered prejudice from family and friends and felt excluded from both mainstream culture and LGBTQ+ spaces. The most common negative stereotypes—promiscuity, the need for “both” at the same time, deceitfulness, being just a phase—were easily identified in the data, and align with the two categories of inauthenticity designated to bisexuals if read through a hetero/homo binary framework: bisexuality as a transitional phase or as “fence sitters” who cannot be trusted (Wilde 2014, 323-324).

The data contained several direct statements regarding feelings of exclusion and lack of resources. Especially for bisexuals who grew up in rural areas or had strict

religious upbringings or were writing their profiles at an older age having grown up without easy access to the internet, the lack of information delayed the formation of their sexual identity. There were cases of identifying as heterosexual because of other than same-sex attraction, and of identifying as homosexual because of same-sex attraction.

Confusion and ignorance are phases shared with other sexual minorities (Plummer 1995, 54) but for bisexuals, the cause is normative monosexuality rather than compulsory heterosexuality. Because bisexuals in a committed relationship are read as straight or gay based on their and their partner's gender (Whitney 2001), they are harder to correctly identify in everyday life.

Part of lesbian and gay activism has been applying labels on past and present public figures who engaged in same-sex behavior before such labels existed or never identified as gay or lesbian. Unfortunately, the historical work of uncovering past bisexuals has been difficult when those people have been claimed by the gays and lesbians first—people such as Oscar Wilde and Freddie Mercury are still often called gay. Additionally, such identity-focused projects have since the postmodern shift in academia been less prioritized.

Experiences that connect bis and other queer minorities were common in the data and have been confirmed by other research interested in narratives told by bisexuals (e.g. Knous 2006, Floyd and Stein 2002). These include coming out about their sexuality, the feeling of exclusion and not belonging, the discovery and later acceptance of oneself at some point in life, for example (Plummer 1995, 54). Though these appear less linearly and consistently, they are commonalities that bisexuals share with other sexualities under the queer umbrella and thus justify the B's place in the LGBTQ+ acronym.

7.1.2 Bisexuality through different lenses

This subchapter takes advantage of different approaches for analyzing and understanding the bisexual-identity. Whereas in the previous subchapter, the focus was on bisexuality as a minority identity, now it is approached as its own entity. Bisexuality as an identity is considered through the properties that were attributed to it by bi-identified people and the reasons for why there were so few clear properties. Additionally, the attempts to reframe negative stereotypes about bisexuals and what role established discourses play in such attempts is scrutinized. Finally, bisexuality is approached as a performative identity from an absolute postmodern perspective.

Hemmings said that “[o]ur “bisexual subject,” [...] cannot be understood as an adult sexual identity” (2002, 27) because it lacks the stableness of other sexual identities, not with regard to relationships but historicity and gender. Gender and its relevance will be revisited in the next subchapter. Based on the data and other literature on the topic, it is clear that though there are some efforts to stabilize a bisexual identity it is ontologically empty. Because “one cannot deconstruct a subjectivity one has never been fully granted” (Braidotti 2011, 268), we must first look at the context before focusing in on the subjectivity at hand to see if there is something to deconstruct.

Bierasure is the “tendency to omit bisexuality from history, the media and other discourses. Bisexual erasure can [...] manifest as a denial of the actual existence of bisexuality” (Stange et al. 2011, 159-160). On a metafunctional level, the purpose of the website from which the data was gathered, and thus the purpose of the profiles, is to fight this erasure by firstly, existing, and secondly, offering narratives and examples of bi-identified people. The site’s objective is to “give a voice to the bisexual community, share accurate information, answer questions, and provide resources to learn more” (bisexual.org 2013). If there were more resources available and representation present in mainstream media, there would be no need for a website purely dedicated to this purpose.

Spivak’s strategic essentialism, which was actively pursued by lesbian and gay activists in the 1980s, is not evident in the data. Postmodern theorists would be pleased with the lack of essentializing in the data as the most definitive, concrete statements regarding bisexuality were made about what it was not. Placing a focus on differences and non-properties is a technique utilized to avoid essentializing something. This is especially useful when discussing people and identities, which inherently are diverse and changing.

The profiles, though assuring that bisexuals were human too, avoided making further claims to commonalities between bi-identified people than that. Bisexuals are attracted to more than one gender, nothing more or less. Even when denying negative stereotypes, there was often an admittance that some bisexuals did do those things though the cause was not their sexuality. It should come as no surprise that a sexuality characterized by fluidity and multiplicity would be portrayed in similar language.

(55) Outside of a few things in the bedroom, we're exactly like you.

Another angle of interrogation into the negative statements (“bisexuality isn’t”) is that they are reactionary. The discourse in power claims that bisexuals are untrustworthy so

hence a counter-discourse is born to protest that trustworthiness is an individual characteristic, not one of a sexual minority. This is an example of how “individuals actively engage with discourses in order to forge particular positions of identity for themselves” (Mills 2005, 81). The conversation is still held within the established discursive structures as one cannot function outside of them. However, as Mills points out, this does not mean that the discourse of truth cannot be changed. It simply needs to be changed from within with the discursive tools at disposal.

The same applies to forming and inhabiting social identities in the material, lived world. “A continuous sense of self [...] is a precondition for social processes of self-identification, the construction of social identities, including social identification in discourse, in texts” (Fairclough 2003, 160). These aspects all interact with each other. The lack of information and cultural imagery associated with bisexuality affects the formation of a bisexual identity, and vice versa. This is reflected in the discourses, which struggle in turn to describe the lived experiences of bisexuals.

The data affirmed the lack of positive shared cultural imagery for bi-identified people to draw from when describing their sexual identity. When asked what bisexuality was, most defined it as their orientation, who they were attracted to. Even those who framed it as who they were used mostly abstract adjectives like freedom, truth, and honesty.

A few attempts at defining bi-identity as more influential than simply a sexual orientation were made. The negative image of a bisexual as “straddling the fence” was reframed as a positive position that allowed bisexuals to have a diverse worldview:

(56) [Y]ou're more open-minded because now you understand more about both gay and straight relationships.

This is an approach similar to that of academics using bisexuality to theorize sexuality from a wider perspective. The idea that minorities offer a double perspective is already familiar in academia (Harding 1991, 142). Bisexuality offers this on monosexuality which has not been actively questioned by mainstream sexuality studies. However, there were not enough instances of positive reframing in the aforementioned manner to support a strong conclusion, but it would be an engaging line of inquiry to pursue.

Then what about gender as understood as a cultural concept along the lines of Butler’s performativity (Butler 1990)? Butler’s performativity requires repetition of cultural signs that have gendered meanings: clothes, body language, even tone of voice.

But as established, there are few culturally coded signifiers of bisexuality. Though bisexuals have begun to claim certain signifiers for themselves—rolled up pant legs for example—none are exclusive enough to carry significant weight.

This was acknowledged in the Q&A section as the editors admitted that there is no way to tell if someone is bisexual by their appearance. The site focuses on how this contributes to bierasure but it also proves that expressing a bi-identity is impossible. Second, repetition and continuity are not possible for bisexuals if they wish to enter into a monogamous relationship, meaning that the most relevant sexual signifier is impossible to obtain without polygamy.

The conclusion that has been reached so far is that bisexuality is a sexual orientation. It inches closer to the biological than the cultural, and queer theory deals in the cultural. Perhaps in this sense, Sedgwick was right: if there are no sociocultural aspects to bisexuality then it is not an identity.

7.2 Bisexuality as a sexual orientation

If bisexuality is defined as Angelides did not as attraction to two genders/sexes but as both hetero- and homosexuality, the problem of definition shifts in reference to multiple genders/sexes. Homosexuality and heterosexuality are both monosexualities, the former defined as attraction to people of the same sex, the latter as attraction to the opposite sex. What is the opposite sex if there are more than two sexes? Perhaps heterosexuality should be defined as attraction to other than same-sex people. Then it would only exclude people of same sex, but not limit how many sexes there are. Bisexuality then would include attraction to all sexes, i.e. both hetero- and homosexuality. If the queers wish to deconstruct the gender binary, it is heterosexuality that should be attacked, not bisexuality.

A possibility to reframe sexuality to be less dependent on gender but not divorcing them completely would be to theorize orientation as monosexual and plurasexual. Monosexuality would include everyone attracted to one gender, whether it be female, male, genderfluid, or anything else. Plurasexuality would include all attraction toward more than one gender regardless whether that encompasses every gender.

The problem is that such as theory in practice would equate heterosexuals and homosexuals with each other, and though bisexual literature often does this, the hierarchy between the two is an unavoidable reality in Western culture. To ignore heteronormativity

and straight privilege would be to divorce research from the people it is researching even further, something queer theory has been heavily criticized of doing (Hall 2002, 107).

There were many examples in the data of people demonstrating their bisexuality by stating that they did not care about or fall in love with a person's genitals. However, and it seems obvious to state this, but neither do hetero- and homosexuals. Of course, love and attraction are two separate things.

Is it then the biological aspects of a person we are attracted to or the culturally determined performance of them? If the first, whether it be pheromones or a desire to mate or not to, it would naturalize orientation even further. Biological determinism applied to all attraction would equalize them. But as queer theory has pointed out, biology only applies as proof when the dominant groups frames it as such. The need to justify bisexuality as a sexual orientation was a theme in the data, proving that it has yet to be accepted as one.

When we talk about sexuality, we are rarely talking about the capability of sexual feelings, but of a combination of sexual orientation and sexual identity. However, unlike with monosexualities where attraction to a certain gender either exists or does not, bisexuality as an 'and'-sexuality creates a continuum in the Kinseyan fashion. The question arises whether there can be more or less attraction to a gender.

This was one of the questions posed in the Q&A section: "Are bi people equally attracted to both men and women?", proving that it is an essential mystery of bisexuality. Many of the statements from the profiles verified that there could be, with samples such as:

(57) I tend to flock to men more than I do with women.

On the other hand, the opposite attitude was evidenced as well:

(58) No one of any sexual orientation is attracted to one sex more or less than another. They are capable of being attracted to a sex or they are not.

The replies in the Q&A section predominantly suggested that there were differences between people and that for some it could be an even split, for others it varies through life. This reflects well the diversity of answers from the profiles. Statements differed and even contradicted each other, and some even admitted the difficulty of a simple definition.

(59) Sexuality is a complex mix of love, attractions, emotions, lust, fantasy, and ideals - it is far too complex to be 50/50 anything.

If several bi-identified people attest that they have experienced a difference it might seem like conclusive evidence. However, it could be argued that due to the heterosexual norm people are unconsciously predisposed to opposite attraction and better at identifying it, in addition to it being easier to find relationships with another sex. On the other hand, some bi-identified lean more toward same-sex attraction, which would shift the cause to monosexual normativity.

Alternatively, we could accept that attraction is quantifiable, not numerically but preferentially. Such an epistemological approach poses interesting questions for monosexualities. To not lose sight of the data at hand and the ongoing analysis, these questions are considered when problematizing sexuality later in the thesis.

In the profiles, most people who only learned of and embraced their bisexual identity later in life nevertheless knew that they were attracted to more than one gender before having a term for the experience. Hence, it could be argued that orientation comes before identity. After all, sexual identity is a concept both bound by time and place—late twentieth-century Western countries in this case. As Wilde explains,

One may be able to apprehend the existence of these non-normative desires, but such apprehension cannot be extended to recognition and legitimation within the hetero/homo framework that currently governs sexual norms. A different framework is needed for bisexual lives not only to be visible, but also to be recognizable within the domain of the human *as lives*. (Wilde 2014, 324)

It can thus be convincingly demonstrated that sexual orientations exist without sexual identities. Identities are about meaning, and what it *means* to desire certain people and not others. It is a product of culture and thus changeable. Sexual orientation—interpersonal attraction—as the main qualifier for a sexual identity, as it currently is in modern Western cultures, has proved to be a flawed metric with regards to bisexuality.

Bisexuality is ultimately unreadable within a hetero/homo framework, which in turn is built upon a binary gender framework (Hemmings 2002, 24-25). One of the definitions of bisexuality that arose from the data was that bisexuality is gender blind attraction. If bisexuality is not defined by gender but sexuality is, then the question arises: is bisexuality even a sexual orientation? Because if sexual orientations are embedded within frameworks of gender then a sexuality cannot be conceived of outside them.

This is an etymological question rather than an identity question as it is clear that people who are sexually attracted to more than one gender exist. We call bisexuality—and/or pansexuality—sexualities because that is the framework to which we have tied our understanding of interpersonal desires.

Having failed to find a succinct answer to what a bisexual identity is and having problematized it as a sexual orientation, the next subchapter focuses on sexual attraction and gender, which seems to be the root of all problems when it comes to sexuality.

7.3 Bisexuality and gender

To reiterate, the gender of the object of attraction and the subject's gender determines a person's sexuality in Western culture. It has also been established why this is problematic when it comes to bisexuality as both a sexual orientation and an identity in practice, though it is easy in theory.

This subchapter explores different possibilities of conceptualizing gender and thus sexual attraction. It begins with a recounting of the analysis of the data that relates to gender, followed by an interrogation of pansexuality and what a gender-blind approach means for sexuality. Alternatives to visualizing bisexuality are offered together with comparison to Wilde's dimensional sexuality model. Lastly, secondary and alternative sexualities are theorized within the larger framework of sexuality.

The data revealed two different linguistic forms of bisexuality: gender-specific and gender-blind. For the moment, let us ignore the gender binary debate. What gender-specific means here is attraction specifically to male and female and other biological sexes, and recognition that genders have differences. In this case, those differences were all attractive to the bisexual. Gender blind attraction was defined by a disregard for gender differences, physical and cultural.

A term that is often posed as a competing one for bisexuality is pansexuality. A pansexual person "can develop a physical attraction, love, and sexual desire for people regardless of their gender identity or biological sex" (Marshall Cavendish 2010, 593). It is usually connected to the changing gender discourse and posited as the preferable alternative because it disregards the gender binary.

The rhetoric of gender-blind attraction seemingly fits the definition of pansexuality, but many bi researchers and activists have taken umbrage with the claim that bisexuality is an outdated, binary-upholding term. In the data, there were people who defined

themselves as pansexual. The fact that they had signed up to a site for bisexuals proves some evidence that the line is not as clear.

If the line is drawn between attraction to all different genders and attraction regardless of gender, rather than between attraction to two genders and all genders, both terms can survive. Bisexuality as attraction to men and women will ultimately become obsolete as the discourse of multiple genders becomes normalized.

Considering a hypothetical in which the world accepts a multitude of genders, but bisexuality remains the attraction to only men and women, new terms for sexual orientation would need to form. Homosexuality would still be attraction between two men or two women. But what about attraction between a man and an intersex person? Or a genderfluid person and a woman?

Pansexuality would appear the obvious answer as it covers all of the above, but because there would be sexualities that exclude people who are not men or women, the birth of sexualities that exclude women or men would become a conceptual possibility. The same process that gave birth to heterosexuality and bisexuality would create more sexualities that currently exist in our language (see Angelides 2001, 15).

Considering how resistant culture has been to accept new sexualities and genders historically, one can only imagine what tens or even hundreds of new labels would cause. Such diversity would eventually make them as irrelevant as hair color or length, and consequently, rearrange our whole society. A sexual revolution at its truest.

By theorizing bisexuality, recent research has proposed different models for understanding sexuality and sexual orientations that would make their full diversity easier to codify. One such specific to bisexuality is Wilde's dimensional sexuality (2014). She proposes organizing sexual orientations along three axes: heterosexual—homosexual, monosexual—bisexual (meaning fluid object choice), and monophilic—polyphilic to distinguish between monogamous and polygamous sexual orientations (Wilde 2014, 328-330). This dimensional sexuality model addresses many of the aspects brought up in this thesis but erases gendered differences as meaningful signifiers completely.

As has been stated, one of the interests of this thesis is to investigate how a changed gender framework affects bisexuality, how bisexuality, in turn, affects sexuality frameworks, and in turn how they affect gender. We have already established that bisexuality cannot be defined without gender and if we try, it ceases to be a sexuality. Next, a theory of sexual attraction that includes existing gendered signifiers while simultaneously destabilizing the gender binary is suggested. Wilde's dimensional

sexuality is compared when useful, as these two models could serve as complementary rather than competing.

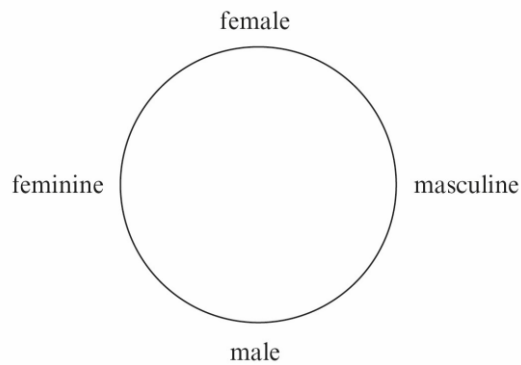
Writing this thesis in the 21st century, theorizing bisexuality along the gender binary would make it outdated immediately. Instead, rather than a mutually exclusive binary line with woman on the other end and man on the other, let us consider it as it is more dominantly visualized: a continuum that one can move along, with either non-binary genders or intersex people at the middle or off the continuum. But this continuum is still linear, and either focuses on sex (female to male) or gender (man to woman). If one were to criticize it, one could point out that it cannot contain both aspects at once.

Bear is queer lingo for a big and hairy gay man. When we have talked about how sexuality is defined in this thesis, we have been talking about the primary determinant of sexual orientation or primary sexualities. As can be guessed by the use of 'primary', there are others as well. They are sometimes referred to as preferences but when it comes to sexual identity, they can be just as meaningful. In the gay community, there are people who limit their attraction specifically to bears. This has been called the gender orientation of a person rather than a sexual orientation (Yoshino 2000, 361). Similar gender identities and attractions exist for lesbians, most commonly butch and femme. These labels in themselves contain more information about gender and the gender of the object of sexual attraction than gay or lesbian do.

Because we presently cannot conceptualize a sexuality orientation outside of the gender framework but neither can we deny that bisexuality is not a sexuality in function, then perhaps redefining it as a gender orientation rather than a sexual orientation would provide answers to many of the questions encountered when analyzing the data, and provide solutions to many of the misconceptions bisexuals struggle with in their lives.

I propose that rather than visualizing sexual attraction as a linear continuum between male and female object choice, it would be visualized as a circle. On the top and the bottom, the sexes female and male, and between all the biological variations of biological sex, such as intersex people. This would also allow for smaller variations within biological sex categories that are rarely accounted for. On the left and the right, femininity and masculinity, i.e. those coded traits that signify our gender. Again, between them all variations.

Figure 1 A circular model of attraction



One might point out that such a circle still depends on oppositions within sex and gender along the binary gender. Though it would be tempting to deny gender and sex and any sort of binary relationship between and within them, it is impossible without disregarding both biological properties, how they are codified, and the cultural context in which they exist (Elliot 2010). Moreover, a continuum makes the pair relational rather than oppositional, allowing for the choice of both.

The strength of a circular conception is that it combines biological sex and gender and makes all variants within the spectrum possible to reflect existing diversity in people. Furthermore, it avoids the problem of prioritizing sex or gender over the other, which both modern and postmodern research has been prone to do.

Accepting that gender and sex exist and are codified in certain ways does not require an acceptance of the hierarchy between them. Masculine values are generally valued above feminine in modern Western culture, but it is not an inherent property of these values (Fuss 1991, 3). But even without that problematic hierarchy they still exist, we still use them to interpret our world. They mean something even if we rather they did not (Fairclough 2003, 8).

Butler's performativity argued convincingly that gender, or what we have identified as masculinity and femininity, are available to everyone. A woman can be masculine, a man can be feminine, and some women are more feminine than others. The repetitive "performance" of coded traits constructs our gender identity. If gender is framed as a circle, the causative link between sex and gender can be deconstructed.

Another facet highlighted by bisexuality is the fluidity of sexuality. There were many examples in the data of changing objects of attraction regarding gender. Within a circle, movement is easy. The subject feeling the sexual attraction would be in it, drawn towards the objects of sexual attraction. For asexual people, there is no such circle, as

they do not experience sexuality though the framework is still available to them. Pansexuals, people who see no importance in or distinction between genders, would be firmly in the middle. Straight women attracted to masculine men would be in the same area as gay men attracted to ‘bears’.

Defining sexual attraction based on shared features rather than differences would be useful in legitimizing bisexuality as a sexual orientation. Taking advantage of the concept of familial resemblance originally proposed by Wittgenstein, different sexual orientations, though not all sharing a single aspect, would between them share enough to be grouped under one term: “social group identities are also made up of relationships among people who, instead of sharing one thing in common, share various different kinds of commonalities and resemblances” (Hames-García 2011, 21).

A circular representation of gender to map sexual attraction would open up the framework for infinite sexualities but does not fracture them so small that they cease to be meaningful. Like Wilde’s dimensional sexuality, a circular model of sexual attraction would “by being less determinate than oppositional sexuality, [allow] sexuality to be more realistic” (Wilde 2016, 332).

It was evidenced in the data for this study as well as in other testimonies by sexual minorities that finding the label that feels right is often an important step in accepting oneself. As people, we understand and categorize the world through labels and language so removing them completely would arguably be impossible.

Where does this leave a bisexual identity? Bisexuality seems to currently be a matter purely of sexual orientation. If it were to be redefined as a gender orientation, it would lose the need to define the subject’s gender, an aspect which has disqualified it from being a “stable adult sexuality” thus far (Hemmings 2002, 27). Additionally, the prejudices related to sexual activity could be fought more convincingly as it allows for more specificity in self-identification.

The question that we arrive at lastly is this: Is one unified bisexual identity even possible? If we consider gays and lesbians, their sexual identity is built around their genders and the tensions between sex and gender in both themselves and their objects of attraction. But bisexual as a label does not say anything about the gender of the person. A bisexual can be a person of any gender attracted to any genders. There is an infinite number of possible intersecting power dynamics (Crenshaw 1989) within bisexuals as an identity group. Perhaps finding commonalities within the group is too huge of an ultimately unimportant task. Ignoring the differences in favor of a unified bi-identity

would simply repeat mistakes previously done by other minority activism and ultimately represent no one.

One of the criticisms towards both gay and lesbian studies (and activism!) and queer theory has been the prioritization of sexuality over other intersecting identities: gender, ethnicity, economic class and other (e.g. Nagoshi et al. 2014, 107). The early feminist movement was criticized for only driving the causes of white middle-class women; the gay liberation movement cared little for the issues of transmen even though they are both gay and men.

Taking these historical examples into account, building a unified bisexual identity appears even more challenging because there are no other aspects to use as a category for inclusion or to signal exclusion from the identity. For example, a homosexual is not only someone who is interested in men, he is also a man. Though many other identity aspects still remain undefined to cause intersectional trouble, it is more than bisexuals can claim.

Perhaps constructing one acceptable and unified bisexual identity is inadvisable with everything in mind. This thesis, at least, struggled to find one, and those struggles, when analyzed closer, proved quite convincing. But what has been proven about bisexuality and stated beautifully in one of the profiles included in the data is this:

(60) I believe that bisexuality is a truly revolutionary idea that has the power to transform the way that we think about sex, gender, relationships, and monogamy.

8 Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to identify a modern bisexual identity as defined by bisexuals, and place that identity into a wider conversation of sexuality and gender. Much of the discussion centered around bierasure and -invisibility, finding that the causes of the exclusion of bisexuality both from research and LGBTQ+ communities stem from a binary sexual framework that relies on a binary system of gender. Though gender frameworks are changing to allow for multiple genders, the same change is not reflected in sexuality discourses.

If considered from a poststructuralist lens, with an identity defined as something performative that can be “read” by other people, then we must conclude that bisexuality is not an identity. There are no cultural signifiers or a shared imagery that bisexuals can draw from to be bisexual. The common aspect shared by bisexuals is the sexual attraction to more than one gender: the only way to have a bisexual identity would be to engage in relationships with more than one gender at the same time.

However, it is clear that not all bisexuals are polygamous. In fact, polygamy and other non-monogamous behavior is a common misconception of bisexuals contested in the profiles. There were several other negative stereotypes as well that create a shared experience for bisexuals: having to defend one’s sexuality, turn down threesomes, and assuring people that one can stay faithful. In contrast, there was no positive shared imagery to draw from when describing bisexuality. The only exception was that several people felt that bisexuality granted them a deeper understanding of people and relationships in general.

When taken into account that the website’s function is to provide a platform for counter-discourse of bisexuality, it is surprising that there were fewer attempts at taking advantage of this. If we momentarily separate identity from orientation, then it is clear that there is little (successful) interest in essentializing a bi-identity but that the focus is on naturalizing bisexuality as an orientation. Otherwise, it seems that bisexuals would rather be considered the same as everyone else.

There were many experiences that bisexuals shared with other identities under the LGBTQ+ umbrella, including coming out, feelings of exclusion and displacement, and prejudice. Bisexuality as justifiably a part of the sexual minorities and seek assimilation to the group in addition to the heterosexual mainstream.

The question of whether bisexuality is a sexual orientation was also posed. If defined as not bound by biological sex, then as long as sexuality as defined within a

gendered framework, it cannot be a sexual orientation. However, when considered by familial resemblance, it clearly is.

Bisexuality offers possibilities for deconstructing sexuality and gender frameworks. The first is built on a hetero/homo binary, the latter on a woman/man binary, and since bisexuality does not conform to these binaries, being an “and” rather than an “or” sexuality, new frameworks must be constructed to make bisexuality conceivable as both an orientation and an identity.

Based on the critique of separating biological sex and culturally bound gender, and inspired by secondary sexual identities such as butch lesbians or submissives in the BDSM community, one possibility for redefining sexual attraction presented in this thesis is to conceptualize bisexuality as a gender orientation rather than a sexual orientation. Combining biological sex and gender into a circular model would give bisexuals the possibility to narrow down their choice of object of attraction to something more than “everyone”.

As evidenced by the work done in this thesis, bisexuality offers a lot as an epistemological approach. It is clear that binary frameworks for gender and sexuality ignore much of human experience, not only that of bisexuals but of other nonconforming sexual and gender identities as well. Luckily, much such research is being done and more is encouraged. However, the living real-life bisexuals should not be forgotten. One important question to keep in mind is whether building a cohesive bisexual identity is worth erasing the differences within the group of bisexuals.

As it stands, bisexuality is fluid, diverse, and inclusive. Bisexuals are not anything else so they must be bisexuals, defined by what they are not. And perhaps that is the value of it. Maybe

(61) [b]isexuality means that I am not going to be placed under a specific label to fit the expectations of the straight or gay communities,

and maybe that is enough.

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Appendix 1 The questions from the Q&A

1. All women are bisexual, but bi men don't exist, right?
2. Are all bi people polyamorous?
3. Are bi people all swingers?
4. Are bi people equally attracted to both men and women?
5. Are bisexual people more promiscuous than other people?
6. Can you tell a person is bisexual just by looking at them?
7. Do bi people all like threesomes?
8. Do bisexual people really exist?
9. Does identifying as bisexual reinforce a false gender binary?
10. Don't bi people just want to "have their cake and eat it too?"
11. Is bisexuality a choice?
12. Is bisexuality all about having sex?
13. Is bisexuality complicated?
14. Is everyone bi?
15. To be bisexual, does a person have to be with a man and a woman at the same time?
16. Why can't you bis just make up your mind and pick one [gender]?

Appendix 2 Sample profiles from the data

Sample Profile 1

One thing about me is that I'm a writer, I love to write so much that I will take it to an extreme and not leave the house for an entire day without even realizing it. Another thing is that I love to just sit and think, think about life and social issues in the world, I'm applying to colleges to study Philosophy, a degree I know will get me nowhere in life, but I think it is fun to dream and try my hardest to live up to my own aspirations. I've identified as bi since fifth grade and I know it is not a choice or a phase, this is who I am and also who I aspire to be.

o What being bisexual means to me

What being bi means to me. As I hope you know, bi is a word used to categorize someone that likes both men and women, but like with everything, I think it goes deeper than just a meaning. To me, being bi is a freedom, no longer saying I'm straight, but being able to love who I wish to love. Being bi to me is not lying to anyone about who I am and if they don't like it, well, they can leave. This is what being bi means to me.

o What I would like the world to know about bisexuals

We are not fake! Not some kind of unicorn that everyone just made up for fun. Some people identify as straight or gay or anything else! But just like a lot of people also identify with them, I identify as bi. No, I am not confused, no I don't cheat on my significant other, I will love both men and women regardless of who I may be dating because they are them and I am who I am and my sexuality is not dependent on their gender!

o What was your path to a bisexual identity?

My path was surprisingly smooth. At first I was very confused, I was only ten and didn't know that bisexuality existed so my mind was always running in circles, that was until I met my best friend. She introduced to me this new thing called bisexuality, she was bi herself, and I thought about it realizing it was the answer to all my questions. That was when I came to terms with who I am, not caring what other people thought of me because my best friend was always there to support me if someone dared to speak up against us and who we are. One thing I learned was to love yourself and the hate from everyone else will only come in if you let it.

- o What is the toughest thing about being bisexual?

I'd say the lack of trust. For me everyone thinks I'm either a person who sleeps around or is completely unfaithful and will love you and leave you. This is not true, but I do feel like it is a common problem in our community. Everyone thinks I'll hurt them and so it's hard to find any kind of love, but like I said, people will believe what and it's hard for you to change it.

- o What is the best thing about being bisexual?

Almost everything. I love the freedom of being able to scream from the roof tops that I'm bi and no one can stop me! To be able to have my identity out for people to know and not care what they think about it because it's who I am. I also love how when I tell people they usually ask questions and I can explain to them that I am as real as everyone else.

- o How have other people in your life reacted to your bisexuality?

Yes, my mother who I have disowned is a Christian extremist and she doesn't like the fact that I'm not straight, but I don't really care. She tried to put me down and say I'm going to hell, but I looked through the bible and found that unless she's following the Old Testament (she doesn't) what she says is not valid one bit. Jesus says to love one another and I believe he is overall practically a hippie which is great. I'm not trying to bash religion, I'm just saying it's not good when it goes to far. Other than her, everyone had been accepting and fine about it which just makes me feel loved all over.

- o What advice do you have for someone who thinks they may be bi or who is in the process of coming out as bi?

If you are bi, but you think everyone will hate you if you tell them, start small with the people you know are going to be okay. If they're not okay with who you are, you don't need them. Just remember, be yourself because everything will be okay in the end.

Sample Profile 2

I am from Colorado, love the outdoors but am also an avid gamer. My spirituality is very important to me. I love taking care of my pets.

- o What being bisexual means to me

It means coexisting with one another. You can love both sexes equally without shame.

- o What I would like the world to know about bisexuals

We are not confused!

- o What was your path to a bisexual identity?

My last ex opened me up to my bisexuality. I found that it made me feel whole as a person.

- o What is the toughest thing about being bisexual?

Telling my mom. She is very religious.

- o What is the best thing about being bisexual?

Being true to myself and not hiding my true self from the world. It is the best feeling in the world!

- o How have other people in your life reacted to your bisexuality?

They have accepted me, except for my brother who apparently thinks I'm going to hell. I told him that if God would send me there because I am able to love either a female or a man, then I will walk to hell with my head held high.

- o What advice do you have for someone who thinks they may be bi or who is in the process of coming out as bi?

Just follow your heart, experiment, and never be ashamed of who you are.

Sample Profile 3

I am a 34 year old out bisexual male. I am an English teacher and I live in California. Theatre, literature and film are my passions. I have a BA in English and theatre and an MA in education. I am very outgoing and at the same time, very introverted. I am genuine and I take friendships and relationships very seriously.

- o What being bisexual means to me

I don't feel there is anything truly unique about bisexuality. I am one among many and like gay and straight people I can't help who I am attracted to. I just happen to have more to choose from. I am open about my sexuality and I wish more bisexual people were as well. I think bisexuals provide a unique outlook on attraction that the gay and straight community don't quite understand.

- o What I would like the world to know about bisexuals

Bisexuality exists. It is not a half-assed way of proclaiming homosexuality. It is not a label that people use because they are afraid of saying they are gay. There are more of us out there than you know. That being said, it is sad that I am the only bisexual person like me that I know.

- o What was your path to a bisexual identity?

I've been bisexual since 7th grade. I just didn't really understand what to call it until I was 17. I think I was in my early twenties when I was sure it was bisexuality.

- o What is the toughest thing about being bisexual?

The attitude that other communities (gay and straight) have towards it despite their shared views on equality. There's a lot of hypocrisy where bisexuality is concerned.

- o What is the best thing about being bisexual?

Sometimes I feel like I have a more concrete idea about who I am than gay or straight people do.

- o How have other people in your life reacted to your bisexuality?

Mostly negatively. A few welcomed me with open arms.

- o What advice do you have for someone who thinks they may be bi or who is in the process of coming out as bi?

Just come out. Embrace it and don't let anyone tell you that there's no such thing.

Sample Profile 4

I'm a 20 year old from northwest Georgia. I'm taking life as it comes, and I'm always searching for new adventures. I love shoegaze and dream pop, and one day I hope to start my own band. I'm also really into divination/witchy stuff, painting/art, and poetry writing. I have a cat called Bowie. I'm considering attending college soon, and I want to major in either music, art, philosophy, or sociology. I'm autistic, and I have bipolar disorder, PTSD, OCD, and anxiety.

o What being bisexual means to me

For me, being bi is about love. It's about seeing someone and knowing you can fall in love with them no matter what their gender is.

o What I would like the world to know about bisexuals

We're much more than just our sexualities. We're teachers, students, doctors, retail workers, friends, family, coworkers... We're people just like you. We could be anybody. And of course, we're not just in a phase, and bi people are bi no matter the gender of our partner.

o What was your path to a bisexual identity?

I'd had crushes and relationships with both men and women throughout my life, so I guess I'd just always known. Despite the fact that I never knew there was a name for it until middle school. I first began to call myself bi, at that time, to mixed results. After that I began to call myself everything in between, from asexual to lesbian. I even went through various bi+ identities such as pansexual and polysexual, but each time I always came back to the bi label.

o What is the toughest thing about being bisexual?

People thinking you're going through a phase, people who think you're gay or straight depending on the gender of your partner, people saying you're greedy, a slut, confused... Biphobia in general. On a less serious note, there's at least twice as many chances of being rejected on a Saturday night and at least twice as many more crushes to deal with than a straight or gay person!

- o What is the best thing about being bisexual?

Freedom! Loving who you want, with no regard to their gender or what other people think. Oh, and the puns. So. Many. Puns.

- o How have other people in your life reacted to your bisexuality?

Reception has been very positive in my experience. People used to be really upset about it but I've learned to disregard them and live how I want to.

- o What advice do you have for someone who thinks they may be bi or who is in the process of coming out as bi?

Take your time. Figuring out who you are shouldn't be a race, it should be on your own terms. Also, it's okay to try on labels to see how they fit. All that matters is how you feel at the moment. It's also okay to be bi with a preference. It's okay to fit stereotypes. As for coming out, come out only if it's safe and on your own terms. Also, coming out doesn't have to be serious, throw a coming-out party if you want to!

Appendix 3 Finnish summary

Johdanto

Käsitys länsimaisista moderneista seksuaali-identiteeteistä juontaa juurensa katolisen kirkon valta-aikaan Euroopassa. Kirkko jakoi seksuaaliset teot hyviin ja pahoihin ja tuomitsi ihmiset niiden perusteella, liittäen nämä ihmisen olemukseen (Foucault 1978, 17). Kirkon vaikutuksen laantuessa tietyt seksuaalisuuden muodot on luokiteltu rikollisiksi ja mielenterveyden ongelmiksi. Vasta 1960-luvulla aktivistiryhmät tietoisesti muovasivat vähemmistöseksuaalisuudet identiteeteiksi etnisyyden ja sukupuolen tapaan ja tältä ajalta ovat peräisin nykyiset käsitykset seksuaali-identiteeteistä (esim. Murray, 1979). 1990-luvulta eteenpäin vaihtoehtoiset käsitykset seksuaalisuudesta muuttavana ja luotuna ovat nousseet vastustamaan perinteisempää näkemystä, luoden ristiriitaa mielipiteiden, tulkintojen ja diskurssien välille.

Kun aktivistiryhmät määrittivät homoseksuaalisuuden, siitä piti tehdä yhtenäinen. Tämä saavutettiin muun muassa asettamalla se heteroseksuaalisuuden vastakohtaksi ja piilottamalla muita vähemmistöseksuaalisuuksia tai sulkemalla niitä ryhmän ulkopuolelle. Biseksuaalisuus, joka perinteisesti katsotaan sijoittuvan homo- ja heteroseksuaalisuuden väliin, ei näin ollen saanut omaa poliittista identiteettiään.

Tutkimuksen tavoite on selvittää nykyisiä biseksuaali-identiteetin muotoja analysoimalla biseksuaaliseksi itsensä identifioivien henkilöiden tuottamaa tekstiä identiteetistään. Aineisto on kerätty nettisivulta, jonka tavoite on lisätä näkyvyyttä ja tietoa sekä normalisoida biseksuaalisuus. Lisäksi tutkimus vastaa kysymyksiin biseksuaalisuuden suhteesta moderniin sukupuolidiskurssiin ja mitä biseksuaalisuus voi kertoa laajemmasta seksuaalisuuden viitekehystä. Tutkimuskysymyksiä on kolme: millä lingvistikkeilla keinoilla biseksuaaleiksi identifioivat rakentavat omaa seksuaali-identiteettiään? Miten sukupuolidiskurssit vaikuttavat biseksuaalidiskurssiin? Miten biseksuaalisuuden määritelmät vaikuttavat seksuaalisuuteen tiedollisena viitekehysenä?

Tutkimus sijoittuu postmoderniin teoreettiseen viitekehykseen. Yhteiskunta, mukaan lukien identiteetit, on sosiaalinen konstruktio ja kaikki sen sisällä saa merkityksen kulttuurin kontekstissa. Postmodernismi kieltää essentialisten totuuksien olemassaolon ja uskoo, että kyseenalaistamalla totuuksina pidettyjä konsepteja niitä voi muuttaa.

Tutkimukselle keskeisimmät teoriat yhteiskuntatieteistä, seksuaalisuuden tutkimuksesta ja kielitieteistä jakavat nämä perusolettamukset. Kriittisen diskurssianalyysin lähestyminen tekstianalyysiin, Foucault'n teoriat vallasta ja

seksuaalisuuden historiasta, Halliday'n systeemis-funktionaalinen kielioppi, ja toisinaan toisiaan kritisoivat queer-tutkimus ja postmaterialistinen kirjallisuus seksuaalisuudentutkimuksen alalta tarjoavat merkittävimmät teoriat ja metodit tutkimukselle.

Pro gradu -tutkielma on jaettu viiteen osaan. Näistä kolme ensimmäistä esittelevät kattavasti seksuaalisuuden ja seksuaalisuudentutkimuksen historian sekä nykytilanteen, diskurssintutkimuksen olennaisimmat teoriat ja teokset, ja miten niitä voi hyödyntää biseksuaalisuuden analysoinnissa kielenkäytön kautta. Tutkielman neljännessä osassa tutkimuksen materiaali ja metodit esitellään, minkä jälkeen tutkimuksen tulokset analysoidaan. Viidennessä osassa tutkimuksen tuloksia verrataan olemassa olevaan kirjallisuuteen ja niitä hyödynnetään vaihtoehdoisen seksuaalisen viihdekehityksen teoretisointiin.

Seksuaalisuuden historia ja tutkimus

Seksuaalisuus määritellään tutkielmassa tietämyksen viitekehityksenä, joka muovautuu kulttuurin ja asenteiden mukaan (Wilde 2014, 335). Sitä ei nähdä puhtaasti biologisena omaisuutena ja näin ollen sitä voi tutkia kielen kautta. Tiivistettynä, seksuaalisuus ja seksuaali-identiteetit ovat sitä mitä niiden sanotaan ja yhteisesti yhteiskunnassa hyväksytään olevan. Näin ollen niiden määritelmät ovat ajasta ja kulttuurista riippuvaisia.

Dataan valitut tekstit ovat amerikkalaisten 2000-luvulla tuottamia, joten tutkimuksen tuloksia ei voi yleistää muihin kulttuureihin tai aikakausiin. Tulosten tulkitsemiseksi on olennaista ymmärtää seksuaalisuuden historiaa länsimaissa ja erityisesti Pohjois-Amerikassa. Lisäksi on huomattava, että tutkielman väitteet ja johtopäätökset tehdään tässä kontekstissa.

1960-luvulla alkanut tietoinen työ luoda heteroseksuaalisesta enemmistöstä erillinen seksuaali-identiteetti piilotti vähemmistöryhmän sisäiset erot ja keskittyi ajamaan muilla tavoin etuoikeutettujen ihmisten, valkoisten miesten, tavoitteita. Suurin osa seksuaalisuudentutkimuksesta ja aktivismista onkin perinteisesti keskittynyt valkoiseen homoseksuaalisuuteen jättäen muun muassa transsukupuoliset, ei-valkoiset ja biseksuaalit vähemmälle huomiolle. Intersektionaalisuus tarkoittaa identiteettien risteystä ja yhteisvaikutusta yksilössä (Crenshaw 1989). Yhtä identiteettiä tarkasteltaessa, kuten biseksuaalisuutta tässä tutkielmassa, on otettava huomioon, että se on yhteisvaikutuksessa muiden identiteettien kanssa muovatessaan ihmisen käsitystä itsestään ja ympäröivästä maailmasta.

E erityisen keskeinen seksuaalisuudelle on sukupuoli-identiteetti, sillä seksuaalinen suuntautuminen määritellään henkilön ja henkilön viehätysten kohteen sukupuolen perusteella (Cameron and Kulick 2003, 7). Biseksuaalisuus on joko viehätystä molempiin sukupuoliin tai sukupuolesta riippumaton viehätys. Ero näiden kahden määritelmän välillä on, että ainoastaan jälkimmäinen huomioi useamman kuin kahden sukupuolen olemassaolon. Muuttuva sukupuolidiskurssi ja sen vaikutus biseksuaalisuuteen on ajankohtainen aihe ja tutkielmalle mielekäs teoretisoinnin kohde sekä osoitus siitä, miten kieli vaikuttaa siihen miten todellisuutta tulkitaan ja toisinpäin.

Selkeä identiteetti seksuaaliselle vähemmistölle mahdollisti poliittisen aktivismin ja teoreettisen kirjallisuuden sekä seksuaalisuudentutkimuksen synnyn. 1990-luvulla akatemiassa tapahtui muutos, inspiroituneena sekä aktivismista että erityisesti sukupuolentutkimuksen suuntauksista ja postkolonialismin teorioista. Uuden viitekehyksen nimeksi tuli queer-teoria, jonka nimekkeen alle asetettiin postmodernit lähestymistavat ja teokset. Kritiikin kohteeksi tuli nimenomaan yhtenäinen homoidentiteetti, joka piilotti ihmisten eroavaisuudet ja epätasa-arvon, ja yhteiskunnan heteronormatiivisuus kaikissa rakenteissa (Cameron and Kulick 2003, 149).

Yksi queer-teorian tärkeimpiä teorioita on Judith Butlerin performatiivisuus. Performatiivisuus lähti sukupuolentutkimuksesta, mutta sen keskeisin havainto soveltuu kaikkeen identiteetti-ilmaisuuksiin. Butler toteaa, että identiteettejä esitetään, näytellään, ja että esityksen eleet tulkitaan johtuvan identiteetistä vaikkakin todellisuudessa identiteetit rakentuvat näistä eleistä (Butler 1990, 25).

Tämä konsepti on postmodernin teorian ääripäässä, ja monet vaikutusvaltaiset queer-tutkijat ovat omaksuneet vastaavan lähestymistavan. Tällöin, seksuaalinen identiteetti ei ole millään tavalla biologista tai synnynnäistä, vaan puhtaasti jotakin mitä ihmiset tekevät. Queer-teoriaa onkin kritisoitu sen teoreettisesta asenteesta, joka jättää huomiotta fyysisen maailman ulottuvuuksia, jotka vaikuttavat henkilön käsitykseen omasta ja muiden identiteeteistä.

Tätä vastasuuntausta luonnehtii postmaterialismi, paluu fyysisiin ja biologisiin aspekteihin antamatta niille ylivaltaa kulttuurin aspekteista, mikä hallitsi akateemista tutkimusta ennen queer-teoriaa. Sen sijaan suuntauksessa korostetaan sosiaalisten ja fyysisten aspektien yhteisvaikutusta. Tämä mahdollistaa monipuolisemman ja inklusiivisemmän tutkimuksen ja mahdollistaa bi-identiteetin lähestymisen uusista näkökulmista (Monro 2015, 55).

Diskurssintutkimus ja identiteetti

Diskurssi määritellään tutkielmassa ryhmittymänä toteamuksia, jotka ovat olemassa tietyssä sosiaalisessa kontekstissa sen kanssa vuorovaikutuksessa sen määrittelemänä ja sitä määrittävinä (Mills 2004, 10). Kriittinen diskurssianalyysi analysoi tekstejä kontekstissa keskittymättä lause- tai kielioppiin. Tutkielmassa käytetty Halliday'n systeemis-funktionaalinen kielioppi on Halliday'n määritelmän mukaan semanttinen kielioppi, joka keskittyy sanan semanttiseen funktioon kieliopillisen sijaan (Halliday ja Matthiessen 2014, 49).

Kriittisen diskurssianalyysin mukaan kieli on todellisuutta heijastava ja luova voima ja tutkimus suoritetaan deskriptiivisenä eikä preskriptiivisenä. Näin ollen identiteettejä voi tutkia kielen kautta, sillä kieli paljastaa mitä tietyt identiteetit ovat ja mikä niiden suhde on yhteiskuntaan (Fairclough 1992, 3). Lisäksi tutkimalla totuuksina pidettyjä asioita ja paljastamalla miten kieli ylläpitää näitä totuuksia, diskurssianalyysi esittää, että kieli on myös väline, joilla niitä on mahdollista muuttaa (Mills 2004, 81).

Lisäksi diskursseja on useita, vuorovaikutuksessa ja kamppailussa keskenään (Mills 2004, 17). Yksi tutkielman tavoitteista on identifioida olemassa olevat diskurssit biseksuaalisuudesta. Jo edellä mainittu on ero suhtautumisessa sukupuoleen, mikä havainnollistaa hyvin diskurssien vuorovaikutusta toisiinsa ja tulkintaan todellisuudesta.

Olenaisia käsitteitä kriittiselle diskurssianalyysille ovat valta ja ideologia, erityisesti Foucault'n määritelmä vallasta paitsi kieltävänä myös luovana voimana. Valta on Foucault'lle olennaisesti sosiaalisessa kanssakäymisessä toteutuva voima, joka vaikuttaa ihmisten välillä eikä ylhäältä alas, kuten esimerkiksi kuninkaan valta alamaisistaan (Foucault 1980, 119). Valta liittyy tässä määritelmässä ideologiaan. Ideologia on tiedon viitekehys, joka sisältää arvot, normit, ja muut sosiaaliset ulottuvuudet, jotka hyväksytään totuuksina (Van Dijk 1989, 24).

Diskursseja analysoitaessa vastakkain ovat eri ideologiat eivät ihmiset. Näin ollen aiheita käsitellään rakenteellisina, jolloin kritiikin kohteena tutkimuksessa on aina yhteiskunta. Seksuaalisuuden tutkimus ja queer-tutkimus kritisoi heteronormatiivisuutta eivät heteroseksuaalisia ihmisiä.

Biseksuaalisuuden tutkimus

Vaikka jo ensimmäisissä seksuaalisuuden tutkimuksissa 1940-luvulla Alfred Kinsey esitti, että seksuaalisuus on jatkumo ja muuttuva, biseksuaalisuus jäi huomiotta (Weinberg 1994, 4). 1970-luvulla kiinnostusta syntyi hetkellisesti, mutta vasta 1990-

luvulla tieteellinen biseksuaalisuuden tutkimus saavutti vakituisehman aseman tosin edelleen ainoastaan siihen erikoistuneissa piireissä (Storr 1999, 309-310).

Samaan aikaan kun biseksuaali-identiteettiä vasta alettiin teoretisoimaan, queer-tutkijat keskittyivät dekonstruoimaan identiteetikategoriat kauttaaltaan. Muun muassa tästä syystä biseksuaalisuuden tutkimus on erillään sekä queer-tutkimuksesta että sitä edeltäneestä homo- ja lesbotutkimuksesta (Angelides 2001, 6-7). Biseksuaalisuus on vastaavasti ollut näkymätön myös aktivistiliikkeissä ja seksuaalivähemmistöyhteisöissä.

Biseksuaalisuuden piilottamista (*bierasure*) on teoretisoitu sen pohjalta, että sekä hetero- että homoseksuaalisuus vaativat biseksuaalisuuden piilottamisen ollakseen olemassa (Yoshino 2000, 388). Hetero- ja homoseksuaalisuus määritellään toistensa vastakohtina, ja biseksuaalisuus niiden välissä hämärtää niiden eroa. Biseksuaalisuuden alkuperäinen määritelmä oli homo- ja heteroseksuaalisuutena (Angelides 2001, 15). Lisäksi se on määritelty jatkumossa niiden välillä, ja nykyisin bi etuliitteenä käsitetään tarkoittavan viehätystä kahta tai useampaa sukupuolta kohtaan. Määritelmiä onkin monia, aina ääripäästä, jossa kukaan ei ole biseksuaali toiseen, jossa kaikki ovat. Molemmat määritelmät demonstroivat osaltaan biseksuaalisuuden piilottamista ja havainnollistavat sen postmodernia olemusta moninaisena konseptina (Yoshino 2000, 370).

Seksuaalinen suuntautuminen määritellään nykyään henkilön ja viehätysten kohteen sukupuolen ja perusteella. Tässä viitekehyksessä, jossa seurustelukumppanin sukupuoli kertoo henkilön sukupuolen, biseksuaalisuus on mahdotonta paikantaa, ellei hän harrasta polygamiaa (Hemmings 2002, 24-25). Lisäksi biseksuaalit ihmiset osoittavat kertomuksissaan omasta identiteetistään enemmän vaihtelua ajallisesti viehätöksessään verrattuna homo- ja heteroseksuaaleihin ihmisiin (Storr 1999, 315). Nämä ominaisuudet osoittavat biseksuaalisuuden postmodernin luonteen ja mitä mahdollisuuksia se tarjoaa uudelle tutkimukselle. Viimeisen vuosikymmenen aikana, tutkijat ovat käyttäneet biseksuaalisuutta dekonstruoimaan monoseksuaalisuuksien naturalisoitunutta tilaa ja kyseenalaistamaan nykyisiä oletuksia seksuaalisuudesta tiedollisena viitekehysenä, toisin sanoen lähestyen biseksuaalisuutta epistemologiana eikä identiteettinä (Monro 2015, 13).

Tutkimus ja merkittävimmät tulokset

Tutkielman data on kerätty bisexual.org-sivustolta maaliskuussa 2019. Sivuston tavoite valistaa biseksuaalisuudelta ja tarjota biseksuaaleille paikka, jossa he voivat jakaa kokemuksiaan. Sivustolta löytyy profiileja, jotka ihmiset saavat täyttää vastaamalla

vapaasti kysymyksiin. Näiden profiilien lisäksi, tutkielmassa hyödynnettiin usein kysytyt kysymykset -osiota tukena muun muassa yleisten teemojen identifioimiseksi. Yhteensä sata profiilia valittiin tutkimukseen. Ainoa ehto valinnalle oli, että profiiliin vastanneet ovat Yhdysvalloista.

Tutkimus suoritettiin seuraamalla Fairclough'n kolmea analyysin tasoa (2003) keskittymällä ensin tekstiin, sitten tekstin lähikontekstiin ja viimeiseksi laajempaan yhteiskunnan kontekstiin. Myös tutkielman tutkimuskysymykset heijastavat näitä kolmea tasoa. Analyysissä kieli nähdään merkityksiä tuottavina valintoina. Tekstin analysoimisessa lingvistisellä tasolla tutkielmassa hyödynnetään Halliday'n transitiivista analyysiä.

Profiileista tarkempaan analyysiin valikoitiin lauseet, jotka joko sanovat mitä biseksuaalisuus on tai mitä se ei ole. Lauseiden subjektit luokiteltiin inklusiivisiin ja eksklusiivisiin sekä yksikkö ja monikko persoonapronomineihin, ja verbit luokiteltiin transitiivisiin prosesseihin Halliday'n menetelmällä. Elementit verbin jälkeen on kategorisoitu yleisten teemojen perusteella. Ensin analysoitavana ovat ns. positiiviset lauseet, jotka kertovat mitä biseksuaalisuus on, toisena ns. negatiiviset lauseet, jotka kertovat mitä se ei ole.

Ensimmäinen persoonapronomini yksikössä on positiivisissa toteamuksissa yleisin. Lauseiden sisältö huomioonottaessa subjektien välillä ei ole merkittäviä eroja. Myös lauseet, joissa biseksuaalisuudesta puhuttiin erillisenä asiana, väittämiä lievennettiin viittaamalla omaan mielipiteeseen tai kokemukseen. Ainoa poikkeus tähän on lauseet, joissa subjektina on ensimmäinen persoonapronomini monikossa, jolloin kaikki toteamukset vakuuttivat samanlaisuutta.

Verbiprosesseissa relationaaliset prosessit olivat yleisempiä, kolme neljäsosaa kaikista. Näin ollen biseksuaalisuuden voidaan todeta olevan olemista, ei tekemistä. Yleisin mentaaliprosessi liittyi tunteisiin, vahvistaen että itseidentifikaatio tehdään viehätysten perusteella. Materiaaliprosessit eli verbit, jotka kuvaavat tekemistä tai tapahtumista, käsittivät vain viisi prosenttia kaikista prosesseista. Monipuolisimmin prosesseja oli *minä*-subjektilla. Datasta ilmenee, että profiileihin vältettiin kirjoittamasta ehdottomia väittämiä biseksuaalisuudesta monin keinoin.

Verbin jälkeen sijoittuva informaatio jakautuu neljään kategoriaan, joista kaksi liittyvät biseksuaaleihin ihmisiin ja kaksi biseksuaalisuuteen viehätystenä. Ensimmäiset kategoriat käsittävät biseksuaalisuuden joko identiteettinä tai pelkkänä osana ihmistä. Jälkimmäiset kategoriat määrittelevät viehätysten joko sukupuolispesifinä eli

viehätyksenä kahteen tai useampaan sukupuoleen, tai sukupuolisokeana, eli viehätyksenä sukupuolesta riippumatta.

Kahdella ensimmäisellä kategorialla on yhteistä se, että molemmat pitävät biseksuaalisuutta luonnollisena, synnynnäisenä ja muuttamattomana asiana. Lauseet, jotka pitivät biseksuaalisuutta osana ihmistä enemmän kuin määrittävänä tekijänä painottivat useimmiten, että biseksuaalit ihmiset ovat samanlaisia kuin kaikki monoseksuaaliset, sekä hetero- että homoseksuaaliset ihmiset. Lisäksi ryhmän sisäisiä eroavaisuuksia korostettiin. Nämä toteamukset olivat kaikista positiivisista lauseista absoluuttisimpia.

Biseksuaalisuutta identiteettinä määrittelevät lauseet olivat usein adjektiiveissaan abstraktimpia. Toisin kuin lauseet, jotka korostivat biseksuaalien samankaltaisuutta muihin ihmisiin, identiteettinä sitä pitävät määrittelevät biseksuaalisuuden vaikuttavammaksi osaksi itseään. Se on identiteetti, joka vaikuttaa käsitykseen itsestä ja maailmasta, ei ainoastaan kehen on viehätynyt.

Viimeiset kategoriat, jotka määrittelevät biseksuaalisuuden joko viehätyksenä kahteen tai useampaan sukupuoleen ja viehätyksenä sukupuolesta riippumatta kuvastavat hyvin keskenään ristiriidassa olevia diskursseja. Ensimmäinen sisältää jo ristiriidan itsessään liittyen sukupuolien määrään. Jälkimmäinen johtaa kuitenkin mielenkiintoisempaan ongelmaan. Nykyisin seksuaalinen suuntautuminen määritellään oman sukupuolen ja viehätyksen sukupuolen perusteella. Jos biseksuaalisuutta ei määritellä sukupuolten perusteella, sen asema seksuaalisuutena voidaan kyseenalaistaa.

Lauseet biseksuaalisuudesta sukupuolet huomioon ottavana viehätyksenä korostivat kiinnostusta ja viehätystä nimenomaan sukupuolten välisiin eroihin. Viehätyksen muuttuminen ajan kuluessa nostettiin esiin, samoin kuin jonkun sukupuolen suosiminen. Vaikkakin mielipiteet vaihtelivat, aiheet olivat selkeästi edustettuna ainoastaan tässä kategoriassa.

Verraten tähän biseksuaalisuutta sukupuolisokeana viehätyksenä edustavat lauseet totesivat viehätyksen tasaiseksi ja muuttumattomaksi. Näissä lauseissa biseksuaalisuus liitettiin useimmiten rakkauteen ja vapauteen. Tiivistettynä, biseksuaalisuus määriteltiin ihmisen rakastamisena hänen itsensä vuoksi sukupuolesta välittämättä.

Negatiiviset lauseet eli ne, jotka toteavat mitä biseksuaalisuus ei ole, analysoitiin samalla tavalla kuin positiiviset lauseet aloittamalla subjektista, siirtyen verbiin ja viimeiseksi keskittymällä yleisiin teemoihin.

Subjekti on negatiivisissa lauseissa useimmiten ensimmäinen persoonapronomini monikossa, noin yhdessä kolmasosassa lauseista, kun taas yksikössä noin yhdessä viidesosassa. Merkittävä ero monikon käytössä verrattuna positiivisiin lauseisiin selittyy mahdollisesti positiivisten mielikuvien puutteella. Suurin osa negatiivisista lauseista vastusti negatiivisia stereotyyppioita biseksuaaleista, jolloin lause muotoiltiin helpommin yhteisen identiteetin puolustuksena. Sillä länsimaisessa yhteiskunnassa ei ole myönteisiä mielikuvia biseksuaaleista, niitä jouduttiin profiileissa esittämään omasta kokemuksesta käsin.

Verbiprosessit vastasivat positiivisten lauseiden jakautumaa. Lähes neljä viidesosaa prosesseista olivat relationaalisia eli kiistivät yhteyden subjektin ja verbiä seuraavien ominaisuuksien välillä. Merkittävin ero positiivisiin lauseisiin on materiaaliprosessien yleisyys. Negatiivisissa lauseissa niitä käytettiin useammin kuin mentaaliprosesseja.

Lauseiden aiheet kategorisoitiin kolmeen yleisimpään. Ylijääneet lauseet vastasivat sisällöltään positiivisten lauseiden kategorioita. Yleisimmät aiheet olivat kuitenkin tieto omasta seksuaalisuudesta, seksuaalinen käyttäytyminen ja seurustelukumppanin sukupuolen vaikutus omaan seksuaalisuuteen.

Ensimmäisen kategorian lauseet kiistävät, että biseksuaalit olisivat hämmentyneitä tai jotakin muuta seksuaalisuutta mutta epävarmoja tai liian pelokkaita myöntääkseen sitä. Toisen kategorian lauseet sisältävät suurimman osan materiaaliprosesseista ja ovat ainoat seksistä puhuvat lauseet datassa. Länsimaissa biseksuaalisuus on nykyään hyvin seksualisoitunut suuntautuminen, mikä selittää sekä ehdotonta stereotyyppien kieltämistä sekä seksin puutetta muualla datassa. Kolmannen kategorian lauseet kiistävät, että seurustelu yhden henkilön kanssa poistaisi potentiaalisen viehätyksen muita sukupuolia kohtaan. Yleisesti ottaen negatiivisten lauseiden väittämät olivat tarkempia kuin positiivisten ja useammin yleistettyjä koskemaan muita ja biseksuaalisuutta suuntautumisenä kuin ainoastaan itseä.

Biseksuaalisuus kyseenalaistettuna ja kyseenalaistajana

Pro-gradu tutkielman viimeinen osio lähestyy biseksuaalisuutta analyysin tulosten pohjalta kolmesta eri näkökulmasta: identiteettinä, seksuaalisena suuntautumisenä ja etymologisena lähtökohtana. Tuloksia verrataan ja tuetaan ajankohtaisella tieteellisellä tutkimuksella.

Vertaamalla profiilien narratiiveja ja analysoiduissa lauseissa usein ilmeneviä teemoja, voidaan todeta, että biseksuaalisuus kuuluu seksuaaliseen

vähemmistökulttuuriin. Useat kokemukset ja kamppailu näkyvyyden sekä hyväksynnän puolesta yhdistävät biseksuaalit muihin seksuaalivähemmistöihin (esim. Knous 2006, Floyd and Stein 2002). Hyväksyntää haetaan myös muilta vähemmistöiltä. Biseksuaalisuus on kuitenkin ensisijaisesti ristiriidassa normatiivisen monoseksuaalisuuden kanssa eikä normatiivisen heteroseksuaalisuuden.

Aikaisempi tutkimus on osoittanut, että biseksuaalisuus on näkymättömäksi tehty. Postmodernin tutkimuksen ja queer-tutkimuksen dekonstruointia ei voi kohdistaa biseksuaalisuuteen sillä sitä ei ole olemassa (Braidotti 2011, 268). Tästä huolimatta datasta löytyi hyvin vähän yrityksiä rakentaa vakaata identiteettiä. Ainoastaan ihmisyyys ja olemassaolo esitettiin ehdottomina toteamuksina.

Sillä biseksuaalisuus itsessään on muuttuva sekä ajallisesti että ihmisten välillä siitä on vaikea puhua vakaana. Tämä taas tekee mahdottomaksi sen selkeän määrittämisen, mikä vuorostaan vahvistaa sen asemaa määrittelemättömänä asiana. Jos identiteettiä pidetään performatiivisena, voikin todeta, että biseksuaalisuus ei sitä ole. Monipuolisuutensa takia biseksuaalisuuteen ei ole liitetty merkkejä tai fyysisiä ominaisuuksia, joten sitä ei voi ”esittää” tavalla, joka olisi kulttuurissa ymmärrettävää.

Vakaana pidetään ainoastaan viehätystä useampaan sukupuoleen. Seksuaalisena suuntautumisena biseksuaalisuus on määritelty monin eri tavoin. Alkuperäinen määritelmä homo- ja heteroseksuaalisuutena ylläpiti alun perin sukupuoli binaaria. Tämä määritelmä tulee kuitenkin vanhentumaan samalla binäärisen sukupuoli käsityksen kanssa. Yksi mahdollisuus on erottaa se binääristä ja käsittää pluraseksuaalisuutena vastakohtana monoseksuaalisuudelle, eli hetero- ja homoseksuaalisuudelle. Tällöin kuitenkin hetero- ja homoseksuaalit asetetaan samaan asemaan, mikä ei ottaisi huomioon ryhmien eriarvoisuuksia.

Eryteisesti sukupuolisokea diskurssi korostaa, etteivät biseksuaalit rakastu sukupuoleen vaan henkilöön. Tämä pätee kuitenkin kaikkiin muihinkin seksuaalisuuksiin. Viehätys ja rakkaus ovat eri asioita. Seksuaalisuudesta puhuttaessa ei puhuta kyvystä tuntea viehätystä yleensä. Datassa oli kuitenkin lauseita, jotka vakuuttivat, että viehätys useampaan sukupuoleen on mahdollista, mikä puolestaan osoittaa, että biseksuaalisuus ei ole täysin vakiintunut hyväksyttynä suuntautumisena. Lisäksi biologia ja luonnollisuus ovat kyseenalaisia argumentteja, jotka toimivat vain valtaapitävien käsissä (Monro 2015, 22).

Osa profiilien kirjoittajista myönsivät seksuaalisuuden määrittämisen vaikeuden. Mahdollisuus viehätysten muuttumiselle ajan kuluessa ja preferenssin tiettyyn

sukupuoleen muuttuvan tai edes olevan mahdollista jakoi mielipiteitä. Luottamus ihmismielen oikeaan tulkintaan on myös kyseenalainen, sillä yhteiskunnan heteronormatiivisuus saattaa kannustaa tulkitsemaan omaa viehätystä eri tavoin kohteen sukupuolesta riippuen, joten oikeaa vastausta on mahdotonta todeta varmuudella. Yleistä oli kuitenkin kokea viehätystä useampaan sukupuoleen tai tuntee itsensä erilaiseksi ennen kuin osasi identifioida itsensä biseksuaaliksi. Vasta tieto biseksuaalisuudesta ja siitä mitä se tarkoittaa mahdollisti itsensä tuntemisen ja sitä kautta identifioitumisen (Fairclough 2003, 160).

Seksuaalinen suuntautuminen johtaa siis kulttuurissa merkityksensä saavaan identiteettiin. Seksuaalinen suuntautuminen puolestaan määrittellään oman sukupuolen ja viehätyksen kohteen sukupuolen perusteella (Hemmings 2002, 24-25). Biseksuaaleille ei kuitenkaan ole onnistuttu paikantamaan vakaata identiteettiä ja suuntautumisena se ei toimi sukupuolen perusteella määriteltynä, sillä minkään osapuolen sukupuolta ei ole määritelty (Wilde 2014, 324). Biseksuaalisia ihmisiä on silti olemassa, mikä johtaa kyseenalaistamaan sukupuolta määrittelijänä. Biseksuaalisuus on hyödyllinen epistemologisenä välineenä tarkastelemaan sukupuolta.

Biseksuaalisuudesta keskusteltaessa nostetaan usein esiin modernimpana vaihtoehtona panseksuaalisuus. Tällöin panseksuaalisuus määrittellään sukupuolisokeana viehätyksenä ja biseksuaalisuus kahteen sukupuoleen kohdistuvana. Datan perusteella paikannetut linjaukset vastaavat näitä, jos biseksuaalisuudelle sallitaan useampi sukupuoli, jotka erojensa takia eivät niistä huolimatta viehättävät. Toisaalta, jos biseksuaalisuus säilyy viehätyksenä vain naisiin ja miehiin, mutta useampi sukupuoli normalisoituu, syntyy tila ja vaatimus uusille seksuaalisuuksille samalla tavalla kuin homo- ja heteroseksuaalisuuden määrittely loi biseksuaalisuuden (Angelides 2001, 15). Kymmenet ellei sadat uudet seksuaaliset suuntautumiset tekisivät lopulta seksuaalisuudesta merkityksettömän identiteetin määrittelijän.

Tuoreessa seksuaalisuudentutkimuksessa on esitetty useita vaihtoehtoisia tapoja organisoida seksuaalisuus, muun muassa keskittymällä sosiaaliseen sukupuoleen biologisen sijaan tai luokittelemalla seksuaalisuudet yhteisten tekijöiden perusteella ”perheiksi” (Yoshino 2000, 361, Hames-García 2011, 21). Datan pohjalta, tutkielma teoretisoi vaihtoehtona pyöreää mallia, jonka laidoilla on neljä pistettä: alla ja päällä mies ja nainen; ja sivuilla maskuliininen ja feminiininen. Ympyrän sisällä näiden ääripäiden välissä sijaitsisivat kaikki sekä sukupuoli-ilmaisun muodot että biologinen variaatio.

Kritiikkinä pyöreälle mallille sen voisi todeta edelleen tukevan perinteistä sukupuoli käsitystä. Vaikkakin olisi ihanteellista unohtaa sukupuoli kokonaan tulkitsemme maailmaa ja ihmisiä niiden kautta (Elliot 2010). Jatkumot sallisivat kuitenkin suurempaa variaatiota kaikista näkökulmista, ja ympyrä sallii kaikki ilmaisun muodot. Tämän mallin perusteella seksuaalisten suuntausten määrittely objektin sukupuolen perusteella antaa tarpeeksi yhteistä piilottamatta eroavaisuuksia. Lisäksi ympyrämalli kannustaisi poistamaan syyseuraussuhteen miehen ja maskuliinisuuden sekä naisen ja feminiinisuuden välillä, sallien ihmiselle suurempaa variaatiota sukupuolenilmaisussaan. Ympyrämalli auttaisi biseksuaalisuutta, joka sijaitsisi jossakin ympyrän keskellä, vakiinnuttamaan itsensä seksuaalisena suuntauksena, mikä puolestaan mahdollistaisi tunnistettavan identiteetin muodostamisen.

Lopuksi

Vaikeus identifioida biseksuaalisuus identiteettinä kumpuaa sen piilottamisesta homo- ja heteroseksuaalisuuden vahvistamiseksi. Jos identiteetiltä vaaditaan, että se voidaan tunnistaa kulttuurin asettamista tuntomerkeistä, biseksuaalisuus ei ole identiteetti. Seksuaalisena suuntauksena biseksuaalisuutta on vaikea, ellei mahdoton määrittellä sukupuolen ja viehätyksen viitekehyksillä, jolloin se ei myöskään ole seksuaalinen suuntaus. Nykyään ei kuitenkaan ole muuta tapaa sitä käsitellä, joten ongelmaksi muodostuu sukupuoli määrittelevänä järjestelmänä.

Tulosten perusteella biseksuaaliseksi itsensä identifioivat eivät yrittäneet määrittellä biseksuaalisuutta vakaana erillisenä ja tunnistettavana identiteettinä, vaan hakivat hyväksyntää sekä yhteiskunnassa että seksuaalivähemmistöissä. Enemmistö ei kokenut eroavansa muista ihmisistä seksuaalisuutensa takia. Ainoa poikkeus tähän oli syvempi ymmärrys maailmasta, ihmisistä ja ihmissuhteista. Negatiiviset stereotypiat ovat selkeästi tunnistettavissa, sillä ne kiellettiin varmasti. On huomattavasti selkeämpää mitä biseksuaalisuus ei ole kuin mitä se on.

Tutkielma ehdottaa pyöreää mallia seksuaalisuudelle, joka huomioisi paitsi biologisen sukupuolen myös sosiaalisen sukupuolen. Pyöreä malli lisää liikkuvuutta ja variaatioita kuvastaakseen todellisuutta tarkemmin, mutta sallii tarpeeksi yhtäläisyyksiä identiteettien muodostamiseksi. Vaikka biseksuaalisuus tarjoaa epistemologiana mielenkiintoisia teoretisoinnin mahdollisuuksia, on tärkeää muistaa, että kyseessä ihmiset ja heidän elämänsä. Tällä hetkellä biseksuaalisuus määrittyy siitä mitä se ei ole. Ja koska se ei ole mitään muuta, sen on oltava biseksuaalisuus.