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“Telling our stories, making it real.”
Young bisexual women’s experiences in
New Zealand secondary schools

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education
The University of Auckland 2015

Abstract

There is minimal New Zealand and international research with an exclusive focus on young bisexual women at school. To redress this paucity, this study acknowledges and examines the experiences of young bisexual women as they negotiate their bisexual identities at secondary schools in New Zealand. The study extends existing literature by uncovering how some participant notions of bisexual identity include a sense of fluidity within bisexuality. It also notes positive ways young bisexual women manage challenges generated by societal misrecognition of their identity (Fraser, 2013) within the contexts of school culture and curriculum-based sexuality education. Strategies include peer education about bisexuality in sexuality education classes and ensuring bisexual visibility in school diversity groups.

New Zealand and international research documents a prevalence of heteronormative attitudes and practices in educational institutions (Allen, 2005 and 2011; Barker, 2007). The current study identifies there is a societal misrecognition of bisexuality that manifests in bi-misogynistic attitudes towards young bisexual women. The presence of these attitudes and practices is investigated in schools via the sexuality education curriculum and school culture. This study focuses on young bisexual women's negotiation of these practices and how they legitimate bisexuality in these realms. Drawing on Warner's (1993) concept of heteronormativity this study depicts heterosexuality as normal, natural and acceptable and non-heterosexuality as abnormal, unnatural and deviant. This research employs the concept of heteronormativity to highlight the erasure experienced by young bisexual women at school. It also reveals the practice of bi-misogyny, a term coined by this study to represent an oppressive type of discrimination practiced at school against young bisexual women by some non-bisexual staff and students.

This thesis engages with and employs bisexual theory (Baumgardner, 2007) and feminist qualitative methodology (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Methods include focus groups, reflective journals and individual interviews. Data is examined through thematic analysis in order to draw out in rich detail the experiences of participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The research reveals participants' experiences of bi-misogyny and ways their bisexuality is misrecognised and erased. It also offers strategies and recommendations made by participants for meeting the schooling needs of young bisexual women.

Acknowledgements

The doctoral journey is long and tests a candidate on all levels of wellbeing, mental, emotional, physical, social and spiritual. The journey is made richer by the support provided along the way, support which lightens the traveller's load and provides respite from the solo trek. My own journey has been so, and I wish to thank and give thanks for the many souls who have, through their presence and thoughts and words, contributed to my wellbeing.

The participants: what a fabulous mix of positive and enthusiastic young women who gave of their time and shared their experiences so willingly and so openly. Thank you for trusting in me. I wish you well as you endeavour to change society's perception of bisexuality.

Dr Margaret McLean, my second supervisor, whose wisdom and patience was endless.

John and Sherry Sinclair for the shop counter on which a good deal of this work was written, and the encouragement to keep going.

Family members and friends including Carol, Jenny, Dell, Toni, Karina, Elizabeth, Louisa's Larrikins and CRSTIE staff who supported me over the years, especially during the final stages where external circumstances dictated considerable and challenging adaptation and change.

My own children; Tim and Jo, Scotty, and Natalie, Sheena and Garth, some of you busy on your own academic journeys, and managing the obstacles life throws us, never ceased to encourage, support and amaze me. I love you all to pieces and thank you for believing in your old mother.

Louisa, my supervisor and friend. Your knowledge, your compassion, your gentle but firm direction, your unwavering support and belief in my ability through it all helped make this journey possible.

Neil. My rock, there at every turn, constant and dependable. Without you I couldn't have done it. Thank you.

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Chapter One

Introduction to the study

In sexualities research, bisexuality has historically been assigned a lower profile than heterosexuality and homosexuality (Angelides, 2001; Garber, 1995; McLean, 2003; Rust, 2002; Zaylia, 2009).

Researcher interest continues to focus upon a sexual dichotomy, involving a binary of hetero- and homosexuality. According to McLean (2003), the focus on hetero- and homosexuality as opposites suggests they are “mutually exclusive states of being” (p. 2), disallowing space for those who do not identify as either (Hemmings, 2002; Zaylia, 2009). This notion of sexual dichotomy is reflected in the common societal assumption one’s sexual identity is determined by the gender identity of one’s partner (Butler, 1993; Hartmann, 2011). People identifying as bisexual may challenge this assumption through their physical and emotional attractions to people of any gender including transgendered people. Regardless, society continues to either invisibilise bisexuality by attributing it as a passing phase from homosexual to heterosexual or vice versa, or erases bisexuality altogether (Carr, 2011; D’Augelli, 2003; Diamond, 2003; Rust, 2000).

According to Pallotta-Chiarolli (2006), the notion of being bisexual appears to confuse and blur boundaries in a way which “messes up” (p. 81) that exclusive hetero-homo binary. This confusion may cause societal misunderstanding of bisexuality, creating the notion of misrecognition (Fraser, 1998, 2001, and 2013). Non-bisexual misrecognition of bisexuality stereotypes bisexuals as untrustworthy in relationships, promiscuous and unable to decide if they are heterosexual or homosexual. Fraser (2013) claims “misrecognition constitutes a fundamental injustice” (p. 177) by denying not only equal social participation but also institutional participation. Although she highlights the presence of heterosexist misrecognition which denies parity of societal participation to gay and lesbian people, Fraser (2013) does not mention bisexuality. This study attempts to add to the literature on misrecognition by adopting and extending Fraser’s (1998, 2001, and 2013) theory to include bisexual people, in particular young bisexual women. The term misrecognition is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter (see section Introducing heteronormativity, misrecognition and bi-misogyny p. 6).

This study focuses specifically on young bisexual women’s experiences of being bisexual at secondary school in New Zealand. Such a focus contributes to a paucity in educational literature nationally and internationally; some past studies have included young bisexual women as part of a lesbian cohort yet few have addressed issues specifically faced by young bisexual women (Russell & Seif, 2002). This thesis argues that bisexual misrecognition occurs for study participants in school cultural contexts such as student relationships with peers and teachers, curriculum interpretation in relation to sexuality education, and policies. The thesis examines how these practices create challenges for young bisexual women who are left attempting to negotiate their bisexual identity in this environment. Identification of

misrecognition, exclusion and erasure of bisexuality from school contexts such as policies around safety and discrimination, teaching practice and curriculum create the foundation for this study's research question:

How do young women experience and negotiate their bisexual identities in New Zealand secondary schools?

The thesis explores this question with participants aged 16-24 years through three schooling contexts: school culture, student/teacher relationships and sexuality education. First, participants' notions and portrayals of bisexual identity are examined (see Chapter Four). The study then explores these notions and portrayals through the curriculum area of sexuality education (Chapter Five), and contexts of school culture including school policies on discrimination, practices in relation to these policies and student/teacher relationships (Chapter Six).

Aims of the research

This study employs a feminist qualitative methodology (Baumgardner, 2007; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Pillow & Mayo, 2007; Reinharz, 1992) to explore young bisexual women's notions of bisexual identity through their lived schooling experiences. Evidence (Bradford, 2006; Hillier et al., 2010; Russell & Seif, 2002) suggests reported statistics lump any 'non-heterosexually identified' young women into one group, then classify this amorphous collection a 'sexual minority'. This lumping not only dichotomises sexual identity as heterosexual or homosexual, but also hides important results about young bisexual women by inaccurately subsuming and invisibilising them under a range of misleading descriptors. By addressing this misrecognition of bisexuality, this study attempts to provide opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of this identity and the schooling needs of young bisexual women.

This introduction is as much a personal as an academic beginning to my thesis. In accordance with the feminist methodology embraced by this study, I seek to explore the experiences of young bisexual women through a variety of inclusive methods to determine how these young women know what they know (Harding, 1987) about being bisexual at school. The following sections consider the relationship of my personal and professional interests to the study and my motivation for undertaking it. The study's theoretical framework is then briefly introduced as is a notion of bisexuality as captured in the existing literature.

Researcher's motivation for the research

For many years I taught Health Education in a New Zealand secondary school. My role as a Health teacher informally included supporting many young people questioning their sexual identity and their developing senses of attraction. I often witnessed the precedence personal sexuality and relationships took over other aspects of students' lives such as sporting prowess or educational achievement. For instance, the importance of resolving personal relationship conflicts resulted in missed sports practices or games and concerns over personal sexual identity were often raised during discussions in Health classes. These observations gave direction to my passion for positive and inclusive sexuality education (Allen, 2004, 2005b, 2007a; Helmich, 2009; Jackson & Weatherall, 2010). I eventually left the classroom to become a Health curriculum specialist. This new position included professionally supporting many secondary school teachers in their delivery of Health topics such as drug education, mental health and sexuality education, the latter being an area restricted to physical development and safety. During my time in this role I noticed that a sense of bisexuality as a valid sexual identity constituted a silence and absence from many school sexuality education programmes.

To improve my understanding of youth health I enrolled in a Master of Health Science degree. My thesis investigated the schooling experiences of young lesbian and bisexual women (McAllum, 2008). My Masters highlighted a lacuna of New Zealand-based research around female bisexuality although the term 'bisexual' appeared in some New Zealand research (Allen, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2006b, 2008, and 2011; Broome, 2005; Diorio, 2006; Donovan, 2005; Henrickson, 2008; Ingram & Guild, 2007; Quinlivan & Town, 1999; Smith, 2006; Vincent & Ballard, 1997). All research appeared inclusive, consistently using the identifiers gay, lesbian and bisexual; however, there was no specific contextual focus on bisexuals or bisexuality, ultimately invisibilising bisexual participants.

My Masters research established the foundation for the current study by giving some participants an opportunity to be heard as bisexual instead of being tagged as 'sexual minority' or lesbian. Instead of discussing being bisexual and being lesbian as if they were the same identity, my aim was to differentiate between the two and avoid a sense of bias by researching and writing about "lesbian and bisexual...*identities*" (McAllum, 2008, p. 6).

My earlier research around young lesbian and bisexual women provided a platform from which to explore the notion of bisexuality at doctoral level. Baumgardner (2007) states "it is...a feminist act to firm up the existence of bisexuality... it mean[s] telling our stories – and taking them seriously" (p. 218). A small aspect of my research includes a bid to change social expectations of bisexuality through the reiteration of participants' stories and experiences. This attempt to foster positive change for women is an integral aspect of feminist methodology (Hess-Biber, 2007).

From my own position as a feminist bisexual woman, I recognised the presence of discrimination in the form of societal misrecognition of bisexuality in my social and working environments (Fraser, 2013; Garber, 1995; Taylor, 1994). Responding to personal challenges to the validity of my bisexual identity was a regular occurrence in my working and personal life and I was often asked to explain and justify my attraction to people of all genders including transgender people. While, as an adult, I was more than able to meet these challenges, I began to think about ways young bisexual women experienced and negotiated similar challenges in today's school environments.

In their examination of research dilemmas, Floyd and Arthur (2012) explore the difference between external and internal ethical engagement, a difference the researcher must tend to once they are in the 'field'. External engagement concerns the "traditional, easily identifiable issues that insider researchers attend to" (p. 171) in their official applications for ethics approval. Such issues may include methods for sourcing participants, anonymity of participants, and provision of safe spaces and support. Internal engagement involves such aspects as the relationship between researcher and researched in terms of insider knowledge (Floyd & Arthur, 2012). I was aware I could be somewhat of an "insider researcher" (p. 171), my 'insider knowledge' having been acquired through my own lived experiences as a bisexual woman.

Some researchers suggest a shared sexual identity may be beneficial in the acquisition of knowledge; participants may feel more at ease knowing the researcher may have experienced similar social and sexual injustices (Allen, 2010). There are, however, other mitigating factors such as difference in age, social status and the possibility of a lack of "common understandings and empathies" (Allen, 2010, p. 152). This raised the dilemma of self-disclosure (Reinharz, 1992) for me in my research. My 'shared sexual identity' would not automatically privilege me to participants' knowledge. I felt my initial relationship and ensuing rapport with any participants could be enhanced through my coming out as bisexual to them; however, because I did not want to appear to be assuming researcher privilege (Alice, 2003) by using my bisexual status to expedite knowledge, I decided to come out only if any participant should question my sexual identity status (McLean, 2007).

From this methodological standpoint, one important objective of the study was to give these young women their own voices and to construct their experiences through a bisexual feminist lens as opposed to ubiquitous and socially-defined perceptions of bisexuality (Baumgardner, 2007; Jones, 1992). These perceptions of bisexuality (discussed further in Chapter Four) include the view that bisexuals are sexually indecisive, promiscuous and untrustworthy. In the light of my own bisexual identity this objective suggested I would be adopting a political partiality, therefore opening myself up to those vagaries of bias and subjectivity. I allowed myself to access this partiality to enable conversations with participants who might provide rich data (Schultze & Avital, 2011).

The importance of the research topic

Traditionally, research has included young bisexual women in the same statistical category as young lesbian women (Carr, 2006, 2011; Russell & Seif, 2002). This combination suggests young bisexual women have the same needs, thoughts and feelings as do young lesbian women (Bradford, 2006). It is also a combination that negates acknowledgement of the different issues faced by young bisexual women such as societal beliefs that bisexuals are untrustworthy, promiscuous, and incapable of maintaining a monogamous relationship (Bradford, 2006; Carr, 2006; Heldke, 1997). One aim of this thesis is to explore young bisexual women's notions of bisexuality through their own sense of self-identification. This study attempts to add to the literature by providing new knowledge about young bisexual women's beliefs concerning what, for them, constitutes a valid and legitimate bisexual identity.

The current study also investigates the effects of practices which misrecognise young bisexual women in schools and the means by which young bisexual women may resist these practices.

Acknowledgement is made of the ways participants negotiate the validity of their bisexuality in schooling environments, adding to the body of knowledge about their schooling experiences *as* young bisexual women. It is hoped the results from this study may be employed to raise teacher awareness of the presence and learning needs of young bisexual women in secondary schools. In addition, some teachers may learn more about the ways in which young bisexual women experience heteronormative and other exclusionary practices and the societal assumptions that underpin these practices.

Introducing heteronormativity, misrecognition and bi-misogyny

This thesis employs a number of concepts and practices which shed light on how bisexuality is understood and experienced by participants. These concepts reveal the way that bisexuality is sometimes recognised but assigned to an 'other than heterosexual' status, or reveal the way the notion of bisexuality is challenged as a sexual identity. Such concepts include heteronormativity (Warner, 1993), misrecognition (Fraser, 2013) and bi-misogyny (this term is coined by this researcher to describe a type of discrimination experienced by its young female participants); their function in this thesis is to characterise types of invisibilisation, exclusion and erasure experienced by participants at school.

Heteronormativity

According to Warner (1993), heteronormativity is a theoretical concept describing an organising principal of social life which presumes desire, sexual practice and identity are universally heterosexual.

Sharma (2009) emphasises it is important the concept of heteronormativity is clearly articulated and understood because of its possible use in negotiating hegemonic norms that attempt to support existing frameworks of power such as compulsory heterosexuality. Other academics have adapted Warner's (1993) concept to describe heteronormativity as "an overarching system for organizing and regulating sexuality where certain ways of acting, thinking and feeling about sex are privileged over others" (Cameron & Kulick, 2006, p. 9). This study describes some of the school policies and practices experienced by its young bisexual participants that can be understood as heteronormative.

New Zealand and international research suggests educational institutions are heteronormative spaces (Allen, 2005b; Barker, 2007; Carpenter & Lee, 2010; Ellis & High, 2004; Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Kehily, 2002a; Quinlivan, 2004). Carpenter and Lee (2010) claim the "influence of heteronormative attitudes, values and prejudices extends into education and, by default, into curriculum" (p. 99). Heteronormativity may be evident through language used in textbooks (Hickman & Porfilio, 2012), teaching practice (Ferfolja, 2007), curricula such as sexuality education and school policy around, for example, partner attendance at school balls (Allen, 2005b, 2011; Kangasvu, 2003; Quinlivan, 2004; Smith, 2012).

Heteronormativity marginalises young bisexual, gay and lesbian people through the official and unofficial school curriculum (Carpenter & Lee, 2010; Epstein & Johnson, 1998), constituting them as 'other'. This process occurs through various schooling sites such as legislation, curriculum content or within the classroom or playground in social contexts (Allen, 2005b; Elia, 2010; Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Kehily, 2002a; Toomey, McGuire & Russell, 2012; Wilkinson & Pearson, 2009). More specifically, the official school curriculum is comprised of prescribed learning as documented in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). It may be described as 'explicit' and encourage conformity of beliefs, attitudes and values such as those promoted in sexuality education around safe sex practices and sexual identity. This current study examines participant narratives in an attempt to find experiences of explicit practices of this conformity in relation to the official school sexuality education curriculum and the inclusion or exclusion of the topic of bisexuality.

The unofficial school curriculum, often referred to as the hidden curriculum, is informal learning about sexuality and gender which may be impromptu, unplanned, implicit and occurring in informal situations such as playground discussion (Kehily, 2002; Wren, 1999). A hidden curriculum may also subtly encourage 'heteroconformity' through practices (Wren, 1999) where hegemonic heterosexuality is encouraged as the 'norm'. Examples of these implicit practices include regulated and policed separate gender seating in school assemblies, and separate gender classes in Health and Physical Education (Paechter, 2003, 2012). This study explores participants' experiences of these practices

which operate by limiting and stigmatizing opportunities for young bisexual people in schooling culture, where young ‘non-bisexual’ people purposely practice bullying and exclusion based on bisexual identity (Wilkinson & Pearson, 2009). These are examples of “institutionally legitimated and enforced” heteronormativity (Wilkinson & Pearson, 2009, p. 547) and render bisexual youth as ‘other’.

The constitution of ‘other’ is in itself unethical, rendering gay and lesbian young people at school as less than heterosexual (Ferfolja, 2007; Kehily, 2002; Quinlivan, 2006) and relegating bisexual young people to an even lower level than gay or lesbian. Britzman (2000) claims “education’s present [heteronormative] structure and modes of thought resist ethical actions” (p. 35). However, because of the insidious nature of heteronormative practices, little to no action is taken and these practices are rarely challenged. Hegemonic heterosexuality and lack of understanding by non-bisexuals may also be responsible for another oppressive practice, misrecognition of bisexuality.

Misrecognition

Challenges to bisexual validity are widely perpetuated by some non-bisexuals (Bradford, 2006; Hemmings, 2002; Hutchins & Ka’ahumanu, 1994; Israel & Mohr, 2004; James, 1996; Kennedy & Fisher, 2010; Klesse, 2005; Lingel, 2009; McLean, 2001; Ochs, 1996; Rust, 1993; Sweeney, 2011; Udis-Kessler, 1996; Weise, 1992; Young, 1997). These challenges stem from constant misrecognition (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Fraser, 2001) of bisexuality through myths and stereotypes (Angelides, 2001; Garber, 1995; Hutchins, 2006; Israel and Mohr, 2004; Rust, 1993).

In this study misrecognition (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Fraser, 2001; Taylor, 1994) signifies misinterpretation of what bisexuality is as an identity and how it is lived by young women in this study. As a consequence, misrecognition challenges the essence and the validity of bisexuality. Examples of bisexual misrecognition include believing bisexuality to be only a passing phase as part of sexual development, leading to a heterosexual or a homosexual identity (Garber, 1995). Non-bisexuals may also misrecognise bisexuality as a set of promiscuous practices coupled with the inability to maintain a long-term monogamous relationship due to a perceived innate desire to have sex with ‘anything that moves’ (Baumgardner, 2007; Esterberg, 2007; Israel & Mohr, 2004). Bisexual misrecognition may occur within schooling contexts, such as the Health curriculum in relation to sexuality education, where bisexuality may be conflated with lesbianism by staff and students alike (Elia, 2010; Elia & Eliason, 2010). In addition, some adults within the school community such as teachers, misrecognise bisexuality, believing female students identifying as bisexual must be segregated from other female students in spaces such as sports changing rooms (Elze, 2003; Newman, Rosen, Ogden, & Lule, 2013). This may result in bisexual students experiencing lowered self-esteem and social exclusion at school (Elia, 2010; McLean, 2001). Furthermore, a clearly overt and possibly more damaging form of bisexual oppression occurs through bi-misogyny.

Bi-misogyny

Some psychology-based studies present a deficit view of young bisexual women as being constantly at risk of harm and victimisation (D'Augelli, 2003). Herek (2002, quoted in Hutchins, 2006, p. 73) suggests, for accurate research “hostility directed specifically at bisexuality must be distinguished from antigay hostility” (p. 265). This comment raises the possibility that bisexuals may experience sexual discrimination and heteronormativity in different ways to gay and lesbian people (Ault, 1996b; Heldke, 1997; McLean, 2003; Saewyc et al., 1998). The current study addresses young bisexual women’s school experiences of discrimination, suggesting there is a specific type directed towards them within the school environment. This study attempts to differentiate between bisexual hostility and anti-gay hostility (Herek, 2002) by describing this practice as ‘bi-misogyny’.

The term ‘bi-misogyny’ is coined here to illustrate a process which specifically targets *females who self-identify as bisexual*, or may be perceived as ‘bisexual’ by non-bisexual people. Bi-misogyny may be practiced by males and females (see Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2014). In addition, this definition posits negative response by some lesbian women to an acknowledgement of bisexual women’s identity as for example declaiming bisexuality as only a passing phase, or assuming bisexual women are pretending same-sex attraction to please heterosexual males. These types of invalidating responses may reflect the broader patriarchal system in their tendency to be complicit within patriarchal and masculinised norms of subjugation and oppression (Israel & Mohr, 2004; Rust, 1993). Further discussion of these practices at school occurs in Chapter Six. Interpreting the notion of bi-misogyny as a negative response from some lesbian women towards bisexual women contributes to the early development of this concept. Pallotta-Chiarolli (2014) has previously employed this term to describe “patriarchal behaviours and attitudes that some bisexual men display towards their women partners” (p.14). For example, “female partners not having the same rights to independent socialising and /or outside sexual partners” and “indifference, harassment or neglect in response to their women partners’ sexual needs and desires” (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2015, p. 272)

In its advancement of this notion of bi-misogyny this thesis argues it is important not to conflate meanings of the terms bi-misogyny and heteronormativity. Heteronormativity ‘others’ any sexuality which is not heterosexual, positioning heterosexuality as the ‘norm’ and all else as deviant. Both terms are used in this study to describe different types of discrimination experienced at school by young bisexual women.

Having introduced three concepts employed in the analysis of participants’ schooling experiences, the thesis now considers the theoretical framework for the study.

Theoretical framework for the study

According to McLean (2003), “in terms of sexuality research, qualitative research is...useful in examining how the meanings attached to one aspect of self-identity – sexuality – impact on people’s everyday lives” (p. 87). Feminist qualitative research aims to provide understanding of social issues impacting on women (Hesse-Biber, 2007). As one of the aims of this study was to explore participant notions of bisexual identity, a feminist qualitative approach supported by bisexual theory was appropriate.

The need to give women’s voices egalitarian representation with men within research gave rise to feminist qualitative methodology. This paradigm was intended to protect the female voice from marginalisation within academic research (Gorelick, 1991; Harding, 1987). Recent feminist research posits the existence of “multiple feminist lenses” (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 4), extending research opportunities for exploring previously ignored minority groups such as young bisexual women and giving voice to those who might have been perpetually silenced by factors such as societal misrecognition of bisexuality (Fraser, 1998, 2001, and 2013). This thesis gives voice to young women as they negotiate their bisexual identities through the contexts of school culture and formal learning in New Zealand secondary schools. It assumes bisexuality to be a romantic and/or sexual attraction to any person of any gender (Diamond, 2008; Klein, 1993; Russell & Consolacion, 2003; Rust, 1992); however, the notion of bisexuality begs further explanation. The next section now attempts to describe how a core focus of this thesis, bisexual identity, is understood conceptually in this study.

Bisexuality: a bi-focal perspective

The study introduces the theoretical notion of bisexual identity used by theorists. Participants in this study were invited to consider this notion and explained how they interpreted it through their own experiences of being bisexual at school. The nature of bisexuality, its very existence and where it sits within the wider field of sexual politics have been topics of much academic debate (Baumgardner, 2007; du Plessis, 1996; Fahs, 2009; Hartmann, 2006; Rust, 2000; Steinman, 2000); however, there is minimal literature on what it means to ‘be’ bisexual. According to Borver, Gurevich and Mathieson (2001), in fields such as history, psychoanalysis, gay and lesbian studies, cross-cultural inquiry and sexual behaviour many theories posit bisexuality as merely a transition between homosexuality and heterosexuality. These essentialist theories invisibilise bisexuality within research, refuting the many factors that may constitute a bisexual identity or how an individual ‘knows’ or understands herself, her self-concept, her capacities as ‘bisexual’ (Diamond, 2003). Endeavouring to “articulate bisexuality as an identity and a way of life” (McLean, 2003, p. 30), this section briefly investigates *female bisexual identity*, exploring its depiction and definition within sociological and psychological literature. Being able to clearly articulate her own bisexuality may contribute to a young woman’s self-confidence,

helping her manage her social relationships and her formal learning at school. This discussion links to the thesis' exploration of young bisexual women's notions of bisexual identity and is a prelude to further exploration of these notions, including fluidity within bisexuality, as occurs in Chapter Four.

The work of two theorists informs this study's initial exploration of bisexual identity. Rust (2000) considers what factors may constitute bisexuality while Bradford's (2004a) theoretical model of bisexual identity provides a space for the development of such factors. Rust defines bisexual identity as having:

capacities to fall in love with either men or women or both, regardless of whether those feelings are ever expressed through sexual behaviour and regardless of the relative strength of these feelings for women and men (2000, p. 212).

Participants in Rust's (2000) study asserted their bisexual identity "was not a combination of attractions to women and to men but an attraction to *people regardless* of their gender" (p. 213). More specifically, female bisexuality may be, according to Rust (2000), a reflection of a woman's sexual behaviours and feelings intertwined with social, romantic and political relationships. Rust's (2000) observations define bisexuality but do not describe possible stages of self-recognition as bisexual. However, in her study of female bisexuality, Bradford (2004a) posits a theoretical model of female bisexual identity development. Briefly, Bradford's (2004) model is linear, firstly questioning reality then creating a bisexual identity. This bisexual identity must be maintained to support transforming adversity. The model suggests a need for constant affirmation of bisexual identity to help combat the isolation and invisibility imposed on bisexuality by societal misperception. The current research notes participant recollections of isolation and invisibility at school resonate with Bradford's (2004) model as participants experienced a lack of affirmation as bisexual from peers and teachers at school.

Some sexualities theorists suggests bisexual identity may be socially constructed, being actively created within a socio-political context (Borver, Gurevich & Mathieson, 2001). Other theorists see bisexual identity as often understood as a series of sexual behaviour stereotypes including promiscuity and sexual transience (Bradford, 2006; Brooks, 2008; McLean, 2001; Meyer, 2009). Pallotta-Chiarolli (2006) lists the disadvantages stereotypical constructions of bisexual identity may have for young bisexual women, based on assumptions regarding this group's sexual behaviour. These stereotypes include the assumption bisexual women merely experiment with lesbianism, and will eventually reclaim their 'true' heterosexual identity (McLean, 2001). Therefore, relying solely on stereotypical societal constructions of bisexuality to portray a true and accurate model of a self-identified bisexual person restricts any focus on bisexual identity to the narrowest of margins. Data in this current study include references to this assumption as young bisexual women relate how they are approached at

school for information about being bisexual, including requests from non-bisexual female students to share physical sexual activity to ‘test’ those students’ own sexual identity.

According to Gammon and Isgro (2006), bisexuality cannot be isolated from political and theoretical issues around diverse sexualities. Bisexuality has the capacity to challenge categories such as gay, straight and lesbian (Garber, 1995; Rust, 2000); yet, in the essentialist view of sexuality where sexual identities are fixed, labelled and categorised, bisexuality is often constructed as a nebulous blend of homo- and heterosexuality (Weinberg, Williams & Pryor, 1994). From this standpoint bisexuality lacks its own centre or locus rather than being seen as a site of resistance (Berenson, 2002). This study aims to challenge this standpoint through the experiences of its young bisexual participants, paying particular attention to ways these young women actively resist harassment from some non-bisexual students and teachers regarding their bisexual identity (see Chapter Six).

Nonetheless, essentialist identity categories of bisexual, gay and lesbian may be necessary to support understanding in contexts such as education where recognising and meeting the needs of all students is imperative. This study employs the terms ‘bisexual’ and ‘lesbian’ to emphasise the differences between young bisexual women and lesbian women. This emphasis is important as these differences are often ignored in research, assuming the learning needs of bisexual and lesbian young women are the same (Elia, 2010; Russell & Seif, 2002). Some studies, however, argue essentialist terminology is outdated due to young peoples’ increasing rejection of labelling in current research (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2006; Russell & Seif, 2002; Savin-Williams, 2005). Although some researchers such as Hemmings (2000) suggest bisexuality may be “fluid and transgressive” as opposed to “static and conservative” (p. 5), shifting within itself and challenging to other sexualities, the issue of what terminology to employ remains. Alternately bisexuality may actively reject those categories such as ‘same-sex attracted’ or ‘sexual minority’ owing to a paucity of terminology which is limited to either/or options of sexuality (Berenson, 2002). This study uses prompts in reflective journals around bisexual identity to seek participants’ ideas of what constitutes bisexuality and the words they use to self-describe.

Young people’s rejection of sexual categorisation is described by Hammack, Thompson and Pilecki (2009) as “emancipation” (p. 868). This may suggest they prefer to take responsibility for their individual sexual identity depiction (Savin-Williams, 2005). Indeed, the ‘bisexual’ label may be rejected by some young people, but not because they are rebelling against the constraints of categorisation; rather they refuse to be categorised by society as belonging to a group perceived as confused, not trustworthy and non-legitimate (Berenson, 2002; Klesse, 2011; McLean, 2001; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2006). For some young bisexual women this may be a political choice for, as Bedecarre (1997) suggests, female bisexual identity resists simplification. Bedecarre (1997) claims bisexuality is a “deeply subjective, particular, embodied” sexual identity (p. 194) which cannot be reduced to a simple

formula. So, the debates both outside and within academia continue to help clarify identity and contribute to a collective pride and political purpose, making bisexual identity politics a vital aspect of the politics of recognition (Battle et al, 2002). Evidence of such categorisation is presented in the current study where some participants identify as bisexual and also pansexual, the latter possibly seen to portray someone potentially mysterious and intriguing (Callis, 2014). Sometimes generalised categories are allocated for research purposes, one example being a term in current use: ‘same-sex attracted’ (Hillier et al., 2010).

This study resists using the term ‘same-sex attracted’. In a study of Australian youth and sexualities (Hillier and Mitchell, 2008) the use of this term suggested possible shifts in young people’s sexual attraction before they reached a point of sexual self-identification, therefore young people’s sexual futures were not being foreclosed by using a firm identity. However, ‘same-sex attracted’ may presuppose attraction based solely on gender whereas bisexuality’s notion of attraction is fluid, unrestricted and not gender-based (Baumgardner, 2007; Diamond, 2008a; Fahs, 2009; Ross & Paul, 1992; Ross, Daneback & Månsson, 2012; Weinrich & Klein, 2002; Zaylia, 2009). Use of ‘same-sex attraction’ may reinforce bisexuality as a subset of lesbianism by erasing bisexuality’s attraction to all genders. Conflating bisexuality and lesbianism through the ‘same-sex attracted’ descriptor may distort understanding and knowledge of bisexuality (Carr, 2011), promoting the notion of bisexuality as a passing phase. Some current research around young people and sexual identity continues to see the value in employing essentialist labels in order to quantitatively categorise and to render categories as recognisable by research stakeholders. While this may be politically useful in situations such as research funding applications which rely on statistics and population health outcomes, it shrouds issues specifically facing young bisexual women, like those divulged by this study (see Chapters Five and Six).

Some sociological studies on young people and sexualities acknowledge and report a high percentage of female self-identified bisexual participants (Hillier, Dempsey, Harrison, Beale, Matthews and Rosenthal, 1998; Hillier, Turner & Mitchell, 2005; Hillier et al., 2010; Robohm, Litzenberger & Pearlman, 2003). An Australian national survey of young people of diverse sexualities showed 42% of participants were self-identified bisexual young women compared to 39% as lesbians (Hillier et al., 2010). This percentage suggests an increase in the numbers of young women now coming out as bisexual rather than ‘not sure’ or ‘gay’. Flying in the face of those claims today’s youth are rejecting labels, Russell, Clarke and Clary (2009) state “it is wrong to conclude that gay, lesbian and bisexual identities are irrelevant to contemporary youth” (p. 888). In this vein, via the narratives of participants, the current project attempts to demonstrate the importance of sexual identity to young bisexual women. For the young women in this study identifying as bisexual it provides a specific space for them to

occupy (Hemmings, 2002). Subsequently, this thesis argues bisexual identity is an authentic category by inviting participants to consider and discuss their own notions and experiences of identifying as bisexual.

Fluidity within bisexual identity

Rust (1992) proposes sexual identity is produced through a social-psychological process, with social and political consequences. However, queer theory advances the concept of fluidity in sexual identity (Paz Galupo, 2011) challenging essentialist notions of fixed sexual identity. From a queer perspective the term 'bisexuality' may foster a reconsideration of binaries and opposites (Lorber, 2005) by disrupting those "familiar opposites" (p. 450) of normal/deviant, dominant/repressed and hegemony/other. Pallotta-Chiarolli's (2010) application of Anzaldúa's (1987) theory of *mestizaje*, for example, locates bisexual identity in the "borderlands" where the either/or of sexual dichotomy becomes "fluid, transitory, fragmented, episodic" (p. 29/30). Indeed, Diamond (2008) describes sexual fluidity as "situation-dependent flexibility in women's sexual responsiveness" (p. 3) and suggests this flexibility enables some women to feel desire for either men or women "under certain circumstances" (p. 3). In the current study, some participant evidence suggests cognisance of fluidity; however, rather than seeing fluidity as an alternative to a fixed sexual identity, these participants locate fluidity within their own bisexual identities. As Pallotta-Chiarolli (1996) claims, "bisexuality itself is fluid, meaning different things to different people identified as or identifying as bisexual" (p. 8). Through the interpretations of bisexuality offered by its young bisexual participants this study argues the possibility that bisexual identity may encapsulate the notion of fluidity as an integral part of bisexuality.

While notions of fluidity and diversity in sexual identity, attraction and behaviour are prevalent in research analyses and discussions, many researchers continue to directly ask participants how they sexually self-identify. Some researchers claim today's adolescents still connect and identify with bisexual, lesbian and gay identity labels (Chung & Katayama, 1996; Russell et al., 2009; Saewyc et al., 2009). This current study focuses on young women who self-identify as 'bisexual', suggesting a continuing connection with traditional 'labels'. Indeed, in a California study on school harassment which gathered over 2500 responses in the years 2003-2005, Russell, Clarke and Clary (2009) found the majority (71%) of 'non-heterosexual' youth upheld the use of traditional sexual identity labels, with 9% indicating possible fluidity of sexual identity. Overall, the results indicated the continued relevance of bisexual, lesbian and gay labels for current youth; indeed, according to Diamond (2000), most female sexual minority adolescents may eschew the lesbian label, claiming 'bisexual' offers a less precise definition and the fluidity for change to suit circumstances. Chapter Four examines participants' connections with sexual identity labels in more detail.

Regardless, there remains a lacuna of accounts of bisexuality in the literature, in particular in the field of education (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005; Russell & Seif, 2002). The literature review in Chapter Two notes a paradoxical presence yet absence of bisexuality in research, noting practices which invisibilise and exclude bisexuality from education literature. This study aims to contribute to education literature by examining young bisexual women's experiences of negotiating their bisexual identity in schooling contexts such as teacher/student relationships and in school sexuality education classes. Many participants report teacher resistance to their attempts to learn more about being bisexual. Participants relate their own strategies to challenge this resistance. The study also attempts to extend education literature by including participant advocacy and recommendations regarding their schooling needs as young bisexual women, "giving voice" (Kehily, 2002a, p. 2) to a minority group of students who are curriculum recipients but excluded from lesson planning and delivery.

School culture and sexuality education were selected as significant contexts of study based on research highlighting these as areas where the needs of bisexual youth are not being met (Elia, 2010, 2014; Elia & Eliason, 2010; Ellis & High, 2004; Fields, 2008; Kangasvu, 2003; Malinsky, 1997; McLean, 2005; Quinlivan, 2002; Smith, 2006). This study endeavours to add to the literature by exploring these contexts from a New Zealand perspective. To foreground further discussion, a summary of New Zealand school sexuality education and school culture follows, including a brief outline of New Zealand school legislation around discrimination.

Conceptual contexts for the research: Sexuality education

Sexuality education in New Zealand schools appears in the New Zealand Curriculum as a key area of learning in Health Education. Its very inclusion has been cause for controversy, some deeming this a social issue (Culpan, 2004). A strong challenge to its inclusion was issued by the New Zealand Business Roundtable and the church (Tasker, 2004). This challenge was thwarted by Dr Gillian Tasker, principal writer for the health curriculum who produced substantial evidence of the efficacy of sexuality education programmes (Allen, 2011; Education Forum, 1998; Sinkinson & Burrows, 2011; Tasker, 2004). Sexuality education became a part of the *Health and Physical Education Curriculum (HPEC)* (Ministry of Education, 1999). Delivery of the subject in New Zealand schools was subsequently mandated as compulsory up to Year 10 (students aged 14-15 years) (Ministry of Education, 1999). However, the 'compulsory' mandate did not direct teachers to deliver specific topics within the subject, creating potential for exclusion of those deemed inappropriate. This exclusion would include topics such as sexual diversity (ERO, 2007), effectively rendering young bisexual women invisible. In this study, participants' sexuality education teachers are likely to have used both the *HPEC* 1999 and *NZC* 2007 documents.

In response to a promise made by the New Zealand government, and after a series of subject area revisions, the *New Zealand Curriculum (NZC)* (Ministry of Education, 2007) was released to schools. As a result of a decision to include all eight subject learning areas in one document, *NZC 2007* contains shortened subject learning area statements and wider interpretative opportunities but fewer determined learning contexts than its predecessor, *HPEC 1999* (Weir, 2009). This decision required a truncation of the 64-page *HPEC 1999* document, yet many schools and pre-service institutions continue to refer to *HPEC 1999* for its detailed explanations of underlying concepts, key areas of learning, and contexts for teaching health including inclusive practice (Weir, 2009). *HPEC 1999* provides a wealth of support, especially for teachers of sexuality education. *NZC 2007* however is less directly supportive of sexuality education; the lack of sexuality education contexts may give those teachers planning lessons covert permission to exclude any focus on sexual diversity.

On the one hand, the *NZC 2007* includes general statements informing users of its Vision, Principles and Values for teaching and learning, emphasising values such as diversity. Students are “encouraged to value diversity as found in our different cultures, languages and heritages” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 10). Other values important to sexuality education such as “social justice” and “integrity” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 10) are included. On the other hand, mention of diversity of *sexuality and gender* are a noticeable absence in the main body of the 2007 document. The invisibility of these terms may be particularly detrimental to sexuality education and to young people of diverse sexualities as some teachers may assume because there is no explicit statement around it, the topic of sexual diversity is not relevant within their sexuality education programmes. As a consequence, some teachers may exclude relevant and useful discussion and information around sexual diversity. This exclusion creates further consequences: first, it denies all young people information important to their personal identity development. Also, it covertly suggests being anything other than heterosexual is unacceptable. This study addresses aspects and some consequences of this exclusion as experienced at school by young bisexual women.

Both pre- and post-*NZC (2007)* New Zealand research (Allen, 2005b; Donovan, 2005; Duff, 2011; Education Review Office, 2007) highlights the absence of teaching of sexual diversity in sexuality education programmes. Jackson and Weatherall (2010) claim a strong influence on the taught content of New Zealand school sexuality education is

moral conservatism in broader society... in particular, its influence can be seen in our young people’s accounts of an emphasis in their programmes on ‘bad sex’– unwanted pregnancy, rape, STIs and suppression of a discourse of pleasure and oral sex as ‘slutty’ (Jackson & Weatherall, 2010, p. 181).

Moral conservatism and traditionalism continue to covertly influence the omission of more than a

passing mention of homosexuality, and even less mention of bisexuality; Roberts (1998) describes this as “hiding unwelcome truths” (p. 36). Kennedy and Fisher (2010) suggest this avoidance of bisexuality specifically may be due to heterosexual adult moralist presumptions that bisexual students are “more preoccupied with sex, more promiscuous and more polyamorous than their peers” (p. 474). A heteronormative emphasis may be found in these “moralist constructions of sex as heterosexual, coital and confined to marriage, such that all forms of sexual expression other than these are consigned to the margins as deviant” (Jackson & Weatherall, 2010, p. 167).

This lack of direct curriculum reference to sexual diversity and particularly bisexuality may be seen to provide teachers with a legitimate ‘out’, an excuse to erase anything more than a passing reference to sexual diversity from their programmes. Some schools appear to view this passing reference as enough to claim a programme’s ‘inclusive’ status (Education Review Office, 2007). The Education Review Office’s (2007) investigation into the sexuality education programmes in 100 New Zealand secondary schools revealed 80% of those schools were unable to show evidence their “sexuality education programmes provided opportunities for students to explore and challenge issues such as homophobia, diversity and acceptance” (p. 24). The ERO report also found most of the schools surveyed appeared to assume their students were heterosexual. Some participants in this current study describe how their teachers deliberately exclude sexual diversity by suggesting students pretend they are attracted only to males. Unfortunately it is those diverse young people who are excluded, including bisexual youth, meaning the *NZC* (2007) may contribute to the practice of bisexual erasure. This exclusion also suggests some teachers are not working to the Health curriculum statement in the *NZC* (2007); participants’ experiences include examples of personal attitudes and values displayed by some teachers alongside a disregard for the *NZC*’s exhortation to teach ‘positive sexuality’.

This statement intends students to develop competencies for “reproductive health and positive sexuality” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 22); however, in the 2007 document, as in the 1999 document, it remains the health teacher’s responsibility to interpret the descriptor ‘positive sexuality’. The curriculum does not provide a definition of this descriptor; this may inhibit any possible influence an understanding of the term may have on lesson content. As this thesis suggests, some health teachers may lack the skills to competently interpret the term. This lack of skill alongside an absence of professional development opportunities and authoritative support available for teachers of sexuality education contributes to a varied and inconsistent interpretation of ‘positive sexuality’. In turn this may inhibit teacher confidence in delivering the subject, as may personal attitudes and values regarding what may be regarded as appropriate-to-age-group sexuality education. Participants in this study recount their experiences of the consequences of sexuality education delivered by inexperienced or unconfident teachers who are unable to convey a positive approach to sexuality education, including

education around sexual diversity.

Munro (2003) describes sexuality education as a “potentially volatile area of the [New Zealand] curriculum” (p. 103), inferring a subject whose content and interpretation may be debated and argued over by those sometimes directed to teach it, and conflict over who will teach it. Indeed, the *NZC*’s (2007) notion of what may constitute ‘positive sexuality’ may challenge teachers whose personal morals, beliefs and principles are the antithesis of such a descriptor, regardless of the curriculum directive to provide students with “the knowledge, understanding, and skills to develop positive attitudes towards sexuality, to take care of their sexual health, and to enhance their interpersonal relationships, now and in the future” (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 38).

The question remains: how can a sexuality education programme be ‘positive’ when the curriculum it relates to is misinterpreted as discourses of avoidance in case of harm (Elia & Eliason, 2010; Sinkinson, 2009)? The Education Review Office Report (ERO, 2007) uses terms such as ‘effective’ and ‘appropriate’ sexuality education, but the term ‘positive’ appears generally only in relation to whole school culture supporting the development of “positive attitudes towards sexuality and sexual diversity” (ERO, 2007, p. 6, p. 28/29). Later in the report one indicator for measurement of effective learning programmes includes: “The taught programme provides students with opportunities for learning about positive sexuality education and opportunities to learn about aspects of sexuality other than physical changes at puberty” (ERO, 2007, p. 41). Again, the curriculum does not provide an explanation of what ‘positive’ means in pedagogical practice. It is, therefore, the teachers’ responsibility to interpret ‘positive sexuality’ as precisely the opposite of harm, providing a supportive programme with appropriate content that meets the needs of all students, including those of young bisexual women. This research intends exploring participants’ experiences of sexuality education, seeking evidence of ‘positive sexuality’ education. This search continues in the context of two curriculum reviews and implementations in 1999 and 2007, throughout which sexuality education in New Zealand secondary schools continues to invisibilise young bisexual women (McAllum, 2008; Smith, 2006). In Chapter Five participants recount their experiences of school sexuality education, describing what learning they found useful as young bisexual women, what was not helpful and what could be done to improve sexuality education for young bisexual women.

Sexuality education is but one context at school in which young bisexual women are invisibilised and erased. Another context which this thesis explores in Chapter Six is school culture and legislative policies which are meant to make it safe for young people of all sexual identities including young bisexual women. The next section outlines some of these policies to provide context for the discussion in chapter Six.

School culture and sexual diversity legislation

School culture provides several contexts for development of adolescent identity. For many young people, social culture at school is an important part of their lives. It provides a space for social development, where personal identity and behaviour may be influenced by friends and wider social networks (Giordano, 2003; Wilkinson & Pearson, 2009). According to Kehily (2002a), school allows students the opportunity to develop a “sense of self in relation to others” (p. 1). A major contributor to adolescent identity development is sexuality; however, many contexts of school culture reflect hegemonic societal beliefs about sexual identities (Epstein and Johnson 1998; Kehily, 2002a; Wilkinson & Pearson, 2009). This study addresses some young bisexual women’s experiences at school of the effects of these hegemonic beliefs, characterised by Eisner (2013) as bisexual oppression, a “problem without a name” (n.p.). Eisner explains that one form of bisexual oppression includes invisibilisation involving apparent inclusion through alphabetisation showing B (GLBT) or the terms ‘lesbian/bisexual’ and ‘lesbigay’ yet exclusion of bisexuality as an individual category (Eisner, 2013). This project examines outcomes of school policies on discrimination where the terms ‘bisexual’ and ‘inclusive’ appear but are ignored in their practical application. Participant narratives of their experiences as young bisexual women in school cultural contexts provide rich data around this practice of invisibilisation, in some cases revealing teachers’ attitudes and values as they ignore participant reports of harassment from non-bisexual peers at school.

According to van Houtte (2005), school culture is a term often used to describe the “character...of a school” (van Houtte, 2005, p. 74). School culture encompasses relationships, traditions, moral codes, rituals and laws or policies which may be found in all schools and which determine what may happen in all schools (van Houtte, 2005; Wilkinson & Pearson, 2009). In New Zealand, schools are governed through laws and policies (Ministry of Education, 2009a). However, while school policy is often informed by moral code, relationships and traditions within the school community may unwittingly flout policy through practice, compromising the safety of young people of diverse sexualities and more specifically, young bisexual women at school. To support participants’ narratives around their experiences of how policies of protection are not always put into practice, the study now introduces the legislative foundations which inform those policies intended to protect students and create a ‘safe’ school culture for them.

In New Zealand, the Human Rights Act 1993 (Ministry of Justice, 2011) is the foundation document from which all further legislation around safety evolves, including school legislation. Three specific sections are relevant to this current study. Section 21 of the Act, Prohibited grounds of discrimination, includes 1(m) discrimination based on “sexual orientation, which means a heterosexual, homosexual, lesbian or bisexual orientation” (Ministry of Justice, 2011:n.p.). Educational establishments are covered

in Section 57, 1(d): “to exclude a person as a pupil or a student or subject him or her to any other detriment by reason of any of the prohibited grounds of discrimination” (Ministry of Justice, 2011: n.p.). Section 62, Sexual harassment (1, 2), details activity and language, visual material or physical behaviour of a sexual nature that “(a) is unwelcome or offensive...and (b) is...repeated or of such a significant nature, that it has a detrimental effect on that person in respect of...(3j) education” (Ministry of Justice, 2011). This study examines school cultures of discrimination, exclusion and harassment in the guise of misrecognition by non-bisexual adults and students of young women’s self-identification as bisexual.

New Zealand’s Education Act (1989) requires all schools to provide a safe and secure physical and emotional environment for all students (Ministry of Education, 2009a). In 1993 the Ministry of Education implemented 10 National Education Goals (NEGs) and 6 National Administration Guidelines as tools for effective school governance and management (NAGs) (Donovan, 2005; New Zealand Post-Primary Teachers Association (NZPPTA), 2012). The NAGs support and enable achievement of the NEGs. One NEG specifically relevant to this study aims for “equality of educational opportunity for all New Zealanders by identifying and removing barriers to achievement” (Donovan, 2005, p. 6). The intention of the NAGs is to “set out statements of desirable codes or principles of conduct or administration for specified kinds or descriptions of person or body” (Parliamentary Counsel Office, 1989, n.p.). Codes of conduct include inclusive teacher practice; here the study focuses on teacher conduct in response to participants’ bisexual identity and ways in which equality of educational opportunity is compromised.

Although all schools must function under these ‘desirable codes’, challenges to young bisexual women’s personal safety continue to lurk within schooling spaces. This project seeks knowledge of those social spaces and strategies employed by young bisexual women to create that safety. Donovan’s (2005) definition of the term ‘safety’ is applied to legislation created for the purpose of protection from discriminative practices for everyone within a school community. ‘Safety’ may also refer to social spaces where sexually diverse young people are free from physical and/or emotional challenges (McInnes & Davies, 2008).

To be effective, the concept of safety must be understood by staff and students as applicable to self, others and the school community. Although the legislative definition of ‘safety’ seems inclusive and implicit in the legislation, school statements on safety and indeed ‘safe’ practices inside the classroom and in the wider school community may differ greatly from school to school (Davis, Ruhe, Lee & Rajadhyaksha, 2007; E. Meyer, 2010; Short, 2008). School culture and sexuality education share similar discourses of safety, for, as Allen (2001) indicates, schools are “risk-conscious spaces” (p. 134). Understanding the term ‘safety’ may positively influence cultural practices such as a teacher and class

co-constructing and agreeing to abide by a set of classroom values (E. Meyer, 2010). Also, it may influence a whole school approach whereby all stakeholders are invited to contribute to the construction of school anti-bullying policies. However, a recent study by the New Zealand University of Otago Medical School (UOMS) discovered these policies are not borne out in practice, placing staff and students alike at risk (Barback, 2012). Indeed, it appears schools' individual interpretations and practical application of the Education Act (1989) may not extend as far as young bisexual women as some research reveals a lack of culture of inclusive practices in many schools (Education Review Office, 2007). Young bisexual women's experiences of 'safe' practices at school and ways in which they managed their own safety are discussed in Chapter Six.

If permitted and recognised, the diversity of people in school communities may contribute to rich learning experiences (Alton-Lee, 2003; Donovan, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2007). This study attempts to argue young bisexual women at school may experience specific challenges which pose risks to their bisexuality as a legitimate sexual identity. If a school's moral code restricts knowledge and learning about sexualities and sexual diversity is not countenanced or recognised, safety may be compromised (Allen, 2005; Epstein & Johnson, 1998; NZPPTA, 2012). Cultural practices such as a school declaring itself 'free of homosexuality' may place some sexually diverse students at risk through a diminution of their status (Pascoe, 2005; Short, 2008). Some young women identifying as bisexual endure ongoing challenges at school to their bisexuality through culturally deficit attitudes, beliefs and practices of teachers, peers, policies and the curriculum (Elia, 2010; McLean, 2001). Research indicates all young people of diverse sexualities are subject to these challenges at school (Clarke, 2012; Ellis & High, 2004; Holmes & Cahill, 2003; Pratt & Buzwell, 2006; Thurlow, 2001).

Chapter synopsis

The chapters are now introduced, including a brief description of content and relation to the research question.

Chapter Two

The Literature Review examines literature concerned with female bisexual identity and bisexual theory (Baumgardner, 2007; Callis, 2013; Fahs, 2009, aligning this with the small space occupied in academic research by studies of young bisexual women. The study notes and emphasises the paucity of research, in particular literature around young bisexual women's negotiation of their identities within school culture and school based sexuality education. Then a conceptual framework is instituted whereby Rust's (2000) categories of research practice are employed to explain different types of invisibilisation and erasure of bisexuality from some critical sexualities literature; these practices include "ignoring",

“lumping” and “exclusion” (Rust, 2000, p.209). To demonstrate the breadth of evidence of these categories literature is drawn from the fields of psychology, sociology, public health and education.

Three sections make up the chapter, beginning with a short reiteration of theories around bisexuality and bisexual identity in order to provide a foundation for understanding bisexuality. Next, a brief exploration of the historical development of academic research on bisexuality and young bisexual women in schools occurs to reveal a paucity of literature around this topic. This is followed by the application of Rust’s (2000) categories to reveal invisibilising practices in literature focusing on female bisexual identity and contexts of schooling such as school culture and sexuality education. These contexts form the basis of sites of investigation for young women’s experiences of negotiating their bisexual identity at school. This literature is foundational for making links between discriminative practices within school culture, sexuality education and the lived experiences of young bisexual women at school.

Chapter Three

The first section of Chapter Three describes the methodology and methods used in the study which utilises bisexual theoretical and feminist lenses. Qualitative methods (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Leavy, 2007) were preferred as they facilitated a personal focus on young bisexual women and their lived experiences as bisexual at school. In this section, an explanation of the combination of bisexual and feminist theories is proffered, arguing the appropriateness of this combination for this study.

In the second section feminist qualitative methods used to gather information about participants’ schooling experiences as young bisexual women in New Zealand are discussed. These methods include focus groups, reflective journal writing and individual interviews. To enable the provision of rich data, questions and prompts were designed to encourage participants to think critically about bisexuality in relation to themselves and their schooling experiences.

The chapter then moves into descriptions of the sample, recruitment process, ethical considerations and data analysis. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is used to define data sets (themes) emerging from verbal and written narratives. These narratives depict participants’ lives as young bisexual women and the ways in which they understand their bisexuality, including their experiences of school culture and the formal sexuality education curriculum.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four is the first of three data chapters. This chapter examines how young women in this study understood their bisexual identity, negotiating this understanding through their experiences of bisexual misrecognition practiced by some teachers and students at school. These experiences include beliefs by

non-bisexual peers that bisexuality is merely a behaviour. Some participants use the term 'bisexual' to self-identify, along with terms such as 'pansexual' to promote themselves as mysterious and interesting (Callis, 2014). This chapter argues participants' use of the term 'bisexual' may strengthen their notions of an authentic bisexual identity. The notion of fluidity contained within bisexual identity is addressed.

An argument in this chapter is that bisexual misrecognition and erasure may hamper young bisexual women's opportunities to formulate a confident and positive bisexual identity in several schooling contexts, namely school culture and sexuality education. Participant views on the relevance to bisexual identity of 'girl/girl' public displays of affection and 'bisexual experimentation' are compared with stereotypical societal views such as 'all bisexuals are promiscuous', such views contributing to societal misrecognition of bisexual identity. The chapter's final discussion addresses the disadvantages of a lack of definitive bisexual visibility as experienced by participants.

Chapter Five

The thesis aims to illustrate ways in which some New Zealand secondary school sexuality education programmes do not meet young bisexual women's learning needs. Sexuality education is compulsory in New Zealand schools yet evidence in this chapter suggests many programmes do not affirm and recognise student's bisexual identities; neither do they affirm the existence of bisexuality. This reported paucity of affirmation illustrates the challenges facing young bisexual women when attempting to acquire accurate information about their sexual identity. Teachers' non-affirmation also suggests their lack of knowledge and understanding may invisibilise bisexuality, compromising the learning needs of any young bisexual students in their classes.

Chapter Six

Chapter Six addresses participants' experiences of school cultures of heteronormative and bi-misogynistic practices and attitudes. This chapter attempts to contribute to the literature by acknowledging these bi-misogynistic experiences such as exclusion from sports changing rooms. The narratives focus on relationships between the young bisexual women in the study, their non-bisexual peers and their teachers at school, providing evidence of exclusion and erasure in school cultural contexts. This evidence is reflected in the policies and procedures and curricula in some schools attended by participants. Some participants reported feelings of acceptance as bisexual amongst their school peers, yet other participants spoke of their struggles for inclusion as bisexual. Those participants questioned their visibility at school as bisexual (Lasser & Tharinger, 2003), suggesting the lack of a stereotypical bisexual 'look' is a barrier to non-bisexual's acknowledgement of participants' bisexual identity.

Chapter Seven

This final chapter draws conclusions from all previous chapters about the experiences of young bisexual women at school. The thesis aim was to provide young bisexual women with an opportunity to recount their experiences in different schooling contexts, giving them a voice with which to raise non-bisexuals' awareness of the challenges they face. Attempts to meet that aim were made through analysis of these experiences gathered in focus groups, reflective journals and individual interviews. Recommendations informing young bisexual women's learning needs at school are made, including some drawn from participants themselves. The chapter closes with a brief review of limitations and suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two

Literature review

Introduction

This chapter explores literature focusing on female bisexual identity and young bisexual women's negotiation of their identities within school culture and school based sexuality education. School culture, according to van Houtte (2005), is a useful term when describing the organisational features of a school. In the context of this current study, this may include the organisation around the content and delivery of school-based sexuality education programmes. In addition school culture may consider more personal contexts such as teacher/student interactions in and outside of the classroom, and levels of teacher engagement with New Zealand schools safety legislation when reacting to bisexual harassment. The literature is drawn from the fields of psychology, sociology, public health and education.

Noting the paucity of research on young bisexual women in schools, this chapter argues some existing research employs silencing practices such as "ignoring", "lumping" and "exclusion" (Rust, 2000, p.209) that invisibilise bisexuality in academic literature. Each practice is applied here as an analytical tool, endeavouring to highlight the range and degrees of bisexual invisibility in critical sexualities literature.

The chapter comprises three sections; the first is a short reiteration of theories around bisexuality and bisexual identity including a closer reading of the history that influenced these theories. This closer reading is important, highlighting such factors as popular culture and resulting societal attitudes towards bisexuality. These theories are a starting point from which to consider notions of bisexuality as explained by participants in this study. Following on, a brief exploration of the historical development of academic research on bisexuality and young bisexual women in schools is undertaken; this illuminates the development of the research practices defined by Rust (2000) above, considering the mechanics of each practice separately. The third section attempts to show how these three invisibilising practices may be partly responsible for the lacuna of literature on young bisexual women.

Bisexual identity: a short reprise

Attempts to define bisexuality and bisexual identity are creating increasing debate between some sexualities theorists (Baumgardner, 2007; Hartmann, 2013; Zaylia, 2009). Essentialist theorists position bisexuality as a fixed and labelled identity (Weinberg, Williams & Pryor, 1994) while social constructivists view bisexuality as actively produced by society (McLean, 2001). Queer theorists suggest sexual identity is fluid and shifting, rendering redundant all essentialist notions of 'fixed'

identities and challenging the heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy (Paz Galupo, 2011). Alternatively, bisexual theory suggests fluidity is the essence of bisexual identity (Baumgardner, 2007; Garber, 1995; Rust, 2000; Zaylia, 2009). Some theorists perceive bisexuality as merely a hetero/homosexual blend (D'Augelli, 2003; Rust, 2000; Weinberg et al., 1994) but in resisting efforts to invisibilise it, other theorists position bisexuality within that “rarely acknowledged space between binary divisions” (Hartman, 2006:75; see also Hemmings, 2002). This chapter argues bisexual identity is not defined by exclusive gender boundaries as are heterosexual and homosexual identities (McLean, 2005; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2010); nor is it contingent on the presence of erotic or sexual desire.

One bisexual theorist, Halperin (2009) suggests “bisexuality is a matter of definition” (p. 451); he offers thirteen definitions, claiming the term ‘bisexual’ is interpreted in as many ways as there are people discussing it. For some individuals, identifying as bisexual may prove empowering as it may both define their sexual identity and contribute to their self-portrayal in society. Indeed, Baumgardner (2007) claims “our (bisexual) individuality is part of our power” (p. 221). Although some researchers suggest young people’s reluctance to commit to a fixed sexual identity (Diamond, 2008; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2006; Savin-Williams, 2005), many young women continue to self-identify as bisexual (Russell, Clarke & Clary, 2009), understanding their attraction to others regardless of gender as a way of defining themselves sexually. This interpretation of ‘bisexual’ as unrestricted by attraction to a singular gender is a notion promoted by a number of theorists as its very foundation (Baumgardner, 2007; Hemmings, 2002; McLean, 2003; Rust, 2000; Zaylia, 2009). To encourage and facilitate participants’ critical thinking around ‘being’ bisexual this study assumes bisexuality to be a romantic and/or sexual attraction to any person of any gender (Diamond, 2008; Klein, 1993; Russell & Consolacion, 2003; Rust, 1992). The review now examines historical perspectives of bisexuality in academic literature, endeavouring to track the development of practices contributing to bisexuality’s research status as invisible.

Changing perspectives on bisexuality and bisexual youth in academic literature

Reviews of the development of lesbian, gay and bisexual research over the past 80 years note the under-representation of bisexuality from psychology, sociology, public health and education literature (Angelides, 2001; Bowman, 2003; Elia, 2010; Gammon & Isgro, 2006; Griffin & Ouellett, 2003; Israel & Mohr, 2004). In comparison, gay and lesbian and queer literature is considerably further developed, with the Stonewall riots of 1969 being seen as a definitive historical and political commencement point (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; Carter, 2004).

Some researchers suggest this time difference between gay and lesbian and bisexual political development may have contributed to the imbalance in the amount of gay and lesbian and bisexual literature (Baumgardner, 2007; Phillips, Ingram, Smith & Mindes, 2003; Zaylia, 2009). Furthermore,

myths informing the societally perceived notion of bisexuality (see Chapter Four) may have significantly influenced not only the amount of bisexual academic literature produced but the ways in which the academic world realised bisexuality (Angelides, 2001; Paul, 1984; Phillips et al., 2003; See & Hunt, 2011; Weise, 1992). According to Storr (1999) post-Stonewall academic interest in bisexuality soon dissipated due a lack of belief in bisexual identity amongst academia, in particular gay and lesbian studies. The small amount of psychology-based research on bisexuality during the 1960s and 1970s focused on adult bisexuals in the belief adolescent identity development was merely transitional (Meeus, Iedema, Helsen & Vollebergh, 1999; Russell & Seif, 2002).

In 1973 the American Psychologist Association removed homosexuality from their list of mental illnesses, prompting a shift in health-based perception of homosexuality as a mental illness to one considering the mental well-being of same-sex attracted people. Loftus (2001) suggests this shift was prompted by more recognition through education of civil liberties associated with homosexuality. Eventually, possibly because of societal views of the “morality” associated with homosexuality (Loftus, 2001, p. 764) the shift led to an increase in deficit-based mental health research. Ensuing health and psychological literature moved into the 1980s with a new focus on gay and lesbian youth as data sources.

In the early 1980s gay and lesbian youth were considered ‘at risk’; increasing reports of young gay and lesbian people engaging in high drug and alcohol use, unsafe sexual activity and suicidality generated the notion of youth health ‘risk’ behaviours (Bontempo & D’Augelli, 2002; Garofalo, Wolf & Kessel, 1998). These behaviours were seen as consequences of victimisation and harassment endured at school. Subsequently the small amount of literature produced focused on their health and social and psychological development, disregarding harmful attitudes existing within schooling structures and processes (Rofes, 1989).

Towards the end of the 1980s homosexuality began to appear in school sex education under the guise of HIV and AIDS education (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003), problematizing homosexuality through an assumed deficit association with disease, illness and death (Jones, 2013). Advocates for gay and lesbian students began to recognise schools as sites of bullying, harassment and victimisation, dangers which inspired the development of programmes designed specifically to address gay and lesbian student needs in schools (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003; Rofes, 1989). That bisexual students might also need the information in these programmes went unrecognised and unacknowledged except in relation to the male-to-male transmission of the HIV virus (Rofes, 1989).

The 1990s saw an increase in academic research on gay and lesbian issues in education, spurred by emerging evidence of increased levels of ‘risk’ behaviours and suicide attempts within these groups than reported in the 1980s (Bontempo & D’Augelli, 2002; Garofalo et al., 1998). Bisexuality began to

appear sporadically in academic research, still subsumed by the focus on gay and lesbian youth and a misperception of bisexuality as a passing phase towards being gay, lesbian or heterosexual (Russell & Seif, 2002). Bisexuality was excluded from research on visibility of diverse sexualities within school environments, this being one of four categories of educational research on sexually diverse youth in the 1990s (Tierney & Dilly, 1998). The other three categories included school climate studies, ways to improve educational organisations for gay and lesbian young people, and the schooling experiences of gay and lesbian young people. The literature advocated school tolerance and acceptance of sexually diverse young people through civil rights and the tenets of social justice (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003; McCabe & Rubinson, 2008). Rofes (2000) describes such literature as prescriptive, its aim to effect positive school environmental change through policies and interventions; however, this literature appears concerned with the safety and well-being only of gay and lesbian young people. Bisexual young people are not mentioned.

The presence of bisexual youth in the literature only began to emerge in the late 1990s and 2000s. Around this time, educational literature was repositioning its focus onto the need to accept and empathise with sexually diverse students. Adults in school communities were being tasked to take responsibility for their school environments through a discourse of safety in learning based on a person's right to education. However, despite the gradual emergence of bisexual youth into the field, the literature maintained a dominant focus on gay and lesbian young people. Bisexuality was yet to become accepted whereas gay and lesbian youth were more accessible for research purposes (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003).

Around the same time American education researchers such as James T Sears and Eric Rofes uncovered discourses of exclusion within the school curriculum, exposing a heterosexual perspective including teachers' reluctance to incorporate sexual diversity into their programmes (Elia & Eliason, 2010). Irvine (1997) compares the willingness of schools to adopt policies of protection for gay and lesbian students to their unwillingness to include sexual diversity in lessons. In New Zealand, Jenny Rankine's 1992 survey of lesbian and bisexual women included participant evidence of bullying during their school days and the lack of inclusion in school formal sex education about being lesbian (Rankine, 2001); however, bisexuality continued to exist yet not exist, invisibilised in school policy and school curricula in New Zealand and internationally. This quasi-existence denied bisexual youth the "opportunity to be heard" (Quinlivan & Town, 1999, p. 521). Even the USA-based organisation Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) established to address 'LGBT' issues in schools in the USA excluded the term 'bisexual' from its title, continuing to do so in the present day.

GLSEN has conducted national surveys on 'LGBT' students and their schooling experiences since 1999 (Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen & Palmer, 2012) yet continues to amorphously

alphabetise all sexual and gender identity categories. Although the 2011 *GLSEN National School Climate Study* (Kosciw et al., 2012) states 61% of participants registered as gay or lesbian, with 29% as bisexual, consistent use of the 'LGBT' acronym invisibilises the B, suggesting bisexual (and transgender) students experience the same issues as gay and lesbian students at school. Although the 2011 GLSEN Study comprehensively covers all aspects of school climate, the report's paucity of differentiation between the L, G, and B invisibilises the 29% of GLSEN's bisexual-identifying students. In short, bisexual invisibility within research may have significantly contributed to the dearth of understanding of bisexual identity; to gloss over or ignore this suggests bisexual identity is merely a subset of homosexuality with little to contribute to academic literature particularly in reference to education. This study attempts to combat this notion by focusing on young bisexual women's experiences of education, investigating the presence of young bisexual women in research from the early days of bisexual emergence in the literature to the present day. The following section takes a closer look at the inclusion and exclusion of young bisexual women in academic literature.

The 1990s saw an increase in the amount of education literature centred on the victimization of sexually diverse youth in schools, how they were targets for discrimination and harassment and the resultant effects on their behaviour. As in the 1980s, the literature ignored the origins of this ongoing victimization. Education historians Griffin & Ouellett (2003) suggest the victimization of sexually diverse youth was a consequence of a lack of protective infrastructure in the way of policies and practices informing abusive behaviour in schools. Some education literature assimilated young bisexual women's experiences into the 'gay' experience creating the assumption these experiences are the same (Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2003; Cochran, Stewart, Ginzler & Cauce, 2002; Remafedi, Farrow & Deisher, 1991; Rosario, Schrimshaw, Hunter & Braun, 2006).

The credibility of the 'passing phase' notion gained momentum as early research into female bisexuality suggested bisexual identity was adopted by females only when they were between steady heterosexual relationships (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1976). Furthermore, evidence from a 1980s study exposed the overt attitudes of many lesbian participants who described bisexuality not only as a passing phase but as "a way of denying one's true sexuality" (Rust, 1993, p. 214). This Sapphic platitude shifted from sentiment into theory, appearing in research in the mid-1980s (Hutchins & Ka'ahumanu, 1991; Zinik, 1985). Indeed, this current study attempts to show how this attitude persists, as evidenced in young bisexual women's schooling experiences.

Other research considered bisexuality a stage between hetero- and homosexuality, relegating bisexuality to 'hiatus' status (Chapman & Brannock, 1987). The notion of bisexuality as passing was rarely discounted in research, ensuring its survival even into the 21st century. Indeed, one recent study called for young self-identified bisexual female participants, yet included as bisexual only those young

women “whose sexual orientation was not more heterosexual than lesbian”, aiming to “create a more homogenous sample of females” (D’Augelli, 2003, p.12, quoted in Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2010). This categorisation suggests evidence from lesbian participants may be considered of greater relevance and applicability than that of bisexual participants, bisexuality being considered merely a phase in lesbian identity development. It also suggests the ‘homogenous’ sample mix had been pre-determined, relying on a ‘lesbian’ percentage to validate the research, erasing the bisexual presence even prior to beginning data analysis.

Apparent trends in research and subsequent literature to create homogenous samples saw an increase in the use of descriptors such as ‘sexual minority youth’. This term is often used in research as a space-saver, precluding the need to repeat ‘bisexual, lesbian, gay, transgender, intersex, queer, and questioning’. Its intention is inclusion; however, describing a homogenous group of sexual identities as a ‘minority’ emphasises the marginalisation experienced by those groups as an entirety, simultaneously minimizing the potential in-group differences. One such difference may be the tension surrounding the validity of bisexual identity which exists between some young lesbians and young bisexual women (Lock & Steiner, 1999; Russell, Seif & Truong, 2001). The term ‘sexual minority youth’ may be used because researchers have not asked individual participants to self-identify sexually (Allen, 2006; Russell et al., 2001). It may also suggest researcher acknowledgement of participants’ different stages of personal sexual identity development within a cohort (D’Augelli & Grossman, 2006). Regardless of reason, this chapter argues research on ‘sexual minority youth’ restricts opportunity to examine within-group differences (Dugan & Yurman, 2011; Russell et al., 2001), preventing issues specific to young bisexual women from being acknowledged, addressed and resolved.

Some studies heteronormatively position young bisexual women as high risk takers along with young gay males, as both groups “are apt to fail to practise safe sex, exposing themselves to HIV infection” (van Wormer & McKinney, 2003, p. 415). This apparent misunderstanding appears to bolster the assumption that HIV is a ‘gay’ disease (Fields & Hirschman, 2007; Kosciw et al., 2012; Wright Jr, Mulick & Kincaid, 2007; Zukoski & Thorburn, 2009). It also embodies a deficit depiction of bisexuality in which bisexual women are seen as a different “risk category” in comparison to lesbians (Richardson, 2000, p. 35/36). The greater risk is implied through societal beliefs that perceived proclivity for promiscuous behaviour will see bisexuality “infiltrate and contaminate” society (Richardson, 2000, p. 35/36). These collective misunderstandings may result in the positioning of bisexuality in academic research as a “residual category” (Wilton, 2000).

Although this discussion has provided evidence of rising interest in educational, psychological and social research on adolescence and bisexuality, to date there is little indication of an advance in understandings of young bisexual women’s identity (Klein & Dudley, 2014; Russell, 2011). The

current study attempts to contribute to this understanding by examining participants' notions of bisexual identity. While the amount of emerging sexualities and resultant literature, including possible new ways of understanding fluidity in sexual identity may be increasing, bisexuality as a personal identity continues to remain important for many people (Russell, 2011). This importance, however, is not generally reflected in the broader literature. Such a lack of reflection may be a result of invisibilising practices occurring within research (Klein & Dudley, 2014; Russell, Seif & Truong, 2001). The next section of the review turns to the three research practices of ignoring, lumping and excluding bisexuality and young bisexual women from literature.

Research practices: introducing the invisible, perfunctory and passing Bs

This review suggests a blindness to the untapped research possibilities of a group societally stereotyped as 'promiscuous' and 'untrustworthy' may have contributed to the invisibility of bisexual presence in the literature (Angelides, 2001; Callis, 2014; Israel & Mohr, 2004; Garber, 1995). Underpinning this stereotyping sits the notion of bisexuality as merely a passing phase to becoming lesbian or straight (Rust, 2003). Lack of understanding and misinterpretation of a notion may contribute to an overall lacuna of comprehension of bisexuality manifesting within academic research. This lacuna occurs in the literature via three recurring practices of ignoring, lumping and excluding bisexuality (Rust, 2000).

These research practices obfuscate the presence of bisexuality within the literature, resulting in "bisexual neglect" (Carr, 2007, p. 31). Bisexual neglect arises through misleading and inaccurate depictions of bisexuality (Carr, 2011; Hutchins, 2006) strewn across disciplinary areas such as public health, sociology, psychology and education. Such depictions may compromise bisexuality's status, value and visibility within academic literature (Rhoads, 1997). The practices mostly invalidate bisexual identity and possibly marginalise the safety of young bisexual women in schools. In an attempt to render visible the often unseen presence of bisexuality and young bisexual women in research, this chapter employs Rust's (2000) ignoring, lumping and excluding practices as the 'invisible B', the 'perfunctory B' and the 'passing B', examining literature encompassing bisexual identity, sexuality education and school culture in accordance with each invisibilising research practice. The examination begins with a search for the 'invisible B' in the literature.

The 'invisible B'

Some research purposely excludes bisexuality as it focuses on specific sexualities such as lesbianism or heterosexuality (Giddings & Pringle, 2011; Quinlivan & Town, 1999). The researcher's intent may be to explore a particular context in depth, purposely excluding related aspects of that context without intending offence to those excluded. In this case, although bisexuality is invisible the practice is non-discriminatory. Several studies in sexualities such as Altemeyer (2002), Chapman and Brannock (1987), Chauncey (1994), Jackson and Gilbertson (2009) and Solebello and Elliott (2011) have this specific focus.

Bisexuality is invisible in some studies because participants may not have been asked to self-identify or state their sexual orientation. Known colloquially as "coming out of the closet" (Rasmussen, 2004, p. 144), this term describes the way in which an individual informs themselves, family, friends and others of their sexual identity (McLean, 2007). It is noted this term generally refers to people of diverse sexualities as most people in society assume others are heterosexual (McLean, 2007; Rasmussen, 2004; Rhoads, 1995; Rust, 1993). In some schools, some teachers advocate coming out to friends, family and the community, with support in schools available from organisations such as the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). This act of coming out may be seen as a means of empowerment, and on occasion politically disruptive, for individuals and for gay and lesbian communities.

On the other hand, in relation to education and schooling, coming out may invite negative responses at school such as persecution and victimisation for teachers and students (Henrickson, 2008; Rasmussen, 2004). While Rasmussen's (2004) article refers to the dilemma faced by some teachers and educators of coming out at school, through her emphasis on the individuality of the act the author's comments include students. The discussion encourages teaching activities which provide opportunities to disrupt the hetero/homosexual binary, including the place of bisexuality in relation to that binary. Also, the notion of sexual identity negotiation may help strengthen understanding of bisexuality as a flexible, fluid identity which may change over time.

In some studies the process of invisibilising the B begins with acknowledgement of bisexual identity through coupling it with 'lesbian' to read as 'lesbian and bisexual'. It is noted the term 'bisexual' rarely precedes 'lesbian' in any literature. The next stage combines the terms, inciting a perception of sameness of identity yet not accounting for the differences. Then, although some studies refer to LGB or include statistics revealing bisexual data, the B is further absorbed into 'lesbian' and subsumed beneath 'lesbian and gay' before becoming invisible amongst 'sexual minority youth'. Many studies discuss 'sexual minority youth', a term intended as all-inclusive yet because of their visibility as

organised groups, the focus of these studies remains on gay and lesbian youth populations (Russell, Seif & Truong, 2001).

Invisible: bi but really gay or lesbian

Some sexualities literature does not include bisexuality, focusing on only gay and lesbian issues; this, however, does not always indicate a deficit attitude towards bisexuality. Some researchers may understand bisexuality as a separate identity, for this reason deliberately not including it with gay or lesbian identity material in the knowledge the resulting data may provide inaccurate evidence of all groups involved (Dugan & Yurman, 2011). Focusing on only one or another sexual identity may be necessary to provide workable boundaries for research purposes (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005). Because of their visibility as gay and lesbian members of organisations such as community or school diversity groups, the focus of many studies remains on these youth populations (Lock & Steiner, 1999; Russell, Seif & Truong, 2001), resulting in less research on bisexual youth.

While the B can be understood as invisible in some literature, it is merely unseen, not absent. The invisible/unseen B suggests the inherent power of the sexual dichotomy, guiding the focus to heterosexuality and homosexuality, rendering all other sexual identities unseen and invisible (Barker & Langdrige, 2008; Bradford, 2004). As Kaloski Naylor (1999) observes, this is “a curious disappearing of bisexuality, at once accepting and dismissive” (p. 56). Those more socio-politically positioned sexual identities simultaneously smother bisexuality (Gurevich, Bower, Mathieson & Dhayanandhan, 2007) and any opportunity within the research paradigm to increase awareness and understanding of bisexuality. This study aims to contribute to that understanding through examining young bisexual women’s experiences in the negotiation of their bisexual identity in aspects of schooling such as sexuality education.

Evidence of heteronormativity and questionable teaching practice has been exposed in some school-based sexuality education research. Opposite-sex relationships and marriage are taught as the norm and homosexuality depicted as deviant or pathologised (Allen, 2006b, 2011; Elia, 2010; Elia & Eliason, 2010; Fields, 2008; Kangasvuo, 2003; Linville, 2011; Quinlivan & Town, 1999). Bisexuality, however, is often unseen, silenced or invisible in research (Elia, 2010; Elia & Eliason, 2010; Goldfarb & Constantine, 2009; McAllum, 2008). Pallotta-Chiarolli (2005) posits bisexuality “messes up” (p. 17) the hetero/homosexual binary upon which school policy, practices and programmes depend, especially in subjects such as health and sexuality education. This ‘messing up’ covertly challenges policy makers and programmers who exclude bisexuality from school guidelines, lesson content and non-inclusive teacher attitudes and practices yet include reference to gays and lesbians (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005).

The *New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) positively positions sexuality education to support knowledge and understanding of diverse sexualities. Remembering this positioning, the review now discusses literature focusing on sexuality education, beginning with New Zealand literature.

Sexuality education: a 'silence in the curriculum'

In 2008 the New Zealand Ministry of Health commissioned a report entitled *Literature Review and Critical Appraisal - Sexuality Education: Best Practice* (Fenton & Coates, 2008). The report focused on the teaching of sexuality education, the New Zealand Curriculum and the general school environment and identified a roaring silence around issues relating to 'homosexuality' (Fenton & Coates, 2008). The review employed terms such as 'non-heterosexual', 'alternative sexuality', 'homosexual', and 'gay and lesbian youth' throughout, suggesting a 'bisexual' presence within 'non-heterosexual' and 'alternative sexuality'. Through its non-appearance bisexuality appeared relegated to sub-status through 'homosexual' and 'gay and lesbian youth'. Such relegation proclaims an invisible B in literature addressing teaching and learning in New Zealand school sexuality education.

Similarly, Macgillivray and Jennings (2008) searched for the presence of 'GLBT' topics within selected American school sexuality education resource texts. Although the term 'bisexual' was included in topic searches, the reviewers found "none of the texts defined or discussed what it means to be bisexual or offered perspectives shared by many bisexual individuals" (Macgillivray & Jennings, 2008, p. 181). Although homophobia and transphobia were discussed in some resources, biphobia (fear of bisexual people) (Elia, 2010; Wright Jr, Mulick & Kincaid, 2007) or any other mention of bisexuality was excluded.

Exclusion of bisexuality from sexuality education resource content suggests pressures from external factors such as individuals, parent groups and religious groups, or school or state policies and laws prohibiting discussion of anything other than heterosexuality (Elia & Eliason, 2010; Goldfarb & Constantine, 2011; Temple, 2005). The invisible B may disadvantage teachers seeking information about bisexuality for inclusion in their school sexuality education programmes (Elia & Eliason, 2010; Laajasalo, 2001; Nelson, 2009; Temple, 2005). This disadvantage transfers to those young bisexual and bi-curious women requiring information to support their personal development. In their study of young bisexual women and men at school, Klein and Dudley (2014) emphasised the difference between bisexual youth and non-bisexual students at school. Closer regard of the two groups found clear evidence that "bisexual college students, particularly bisexual women, have more challenges to optimal performance in college and may need special consideration" (Klein & Dudley, 2014, p. 402).

Furthermore, the study revealed that those programmes aimed to meet the perceived need of the general 'LGB' college population would not address the unique needs of young bisexual female students, and

made recommendations to create and maintain a more appropriate learning culture (Klein & Dudley, 2014).

Student learning in sexuality education and indeed in all learning at school is enhanced by a safe and supportive physical and emotional environment (Denny, Robinson, Milfont & Grant, 2009; Ministry of Education, 2009a). School culture contributes to this environment; this study explores the importance to young bisexual women of feeling safe at school, and examines relevant literature in the next section.

School culture: there one minute, gone the next

School culture reflects the values created by its staff and students (Wren, 1999); these values may be reflected in curriculum construction which in turn may influence the inter-relationships between staff and students within contexts of teaching and learning (Ferfolja, 2007; Kehily, 2002a). School climate is defined as the degree of physical and emotional safety for all persons within a school environment (Clarke, 2012; Denny et al., 2009). School culture and school climate are often conflated; however, MacNeil, Prater and Busch (2009) cite Hoy, Tarter and Kottcamp's (1991) distinction between the two, climate being seen as the psychological perspective such as behaviour of staff and students, while culture from an anthropological perspective is the norms and values of a school. This current study considers school sexual culture through the values expressed by young bisexual women and others within a school community such as teachers (Allen, 2011; Russell et al., 2001) while acknowledging the interdependence of climate and culture (van Houtte, 2005). This review attempts to visibilise the invisible B in some research on school culture by exploring different practices which exclude the bisexual presence from this research.

Many studies have examined school culture in relation to the physical and emotional safety of sexually diverse young people (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2003; Bortolin, Adam, Brooke & McCauley, 2009; Denny et al., 2009; Ellis & High, 2004; Hillier et al., 2010; Kosciw, Greytak & Diaz, 2009; Lasser & Tharinger, 2003; Meyer, 2008; Russell et al., 2001; Rossen et al., 2009; Rostosky et al., 2003). Some school culture studies invisibilise the B by providing statistics of bisexual participation then homogenizing the B with other identities in the statistical analysis. Statistics in one study showed the percentage of participant attraction to both sexes as 33% of the total, being 32 participants out of a possible 98. The absence of the term 'bisexual' in the ensuing discussion subsequently invisibilised that 33%, also silencing the bisexual voice. Another study claimed 41.6% of its participants identified as bisexual yet discussed only lesbian and gay 'statistics'. Pallotta-Chiarolli (2010) describes this practice as "exclusion by inclusion" (p. 78).

Another research practice involves ‘lumping’ (Rust, 2000) in which the ‘B’ is perfunctorily or occasionally acknowledged yet excluded. The following section attempts to expose and explore this practice.

The perfunctory B

Some research practices lump or homogenise sexual minority groups, ‘alphabetising’ them into one category and identifying this category through various combinations of GLBTQQI (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning and Intersex) (Elia, 2010) or ‘GLB’ (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual) (Ellis & High, 2004; E. Meyer, 2010). Kosciw, Greytak and Diaz (2009) emphasise ‘LGBT’ youth are “far from being a homogenous population” (p. 977) due to varying experiences in life, while Elia (2010) likens homogenising to an “alphabet soup approach to inclusion”, describing the ‘B’ as “an empty ‘B’” (p. 457).

In addition to general homogenisation, some lesbian and bisexual data is often lumped into one category, named ‘lesbian’, excluding the bisexual element (De Visser, Smith, Rissel, Richters & Grulich, 2003; Heath, 2005; Hutchins, 2006; Mathieson, Bailey & Gurevich, 2002; Ministerial Advisory Committee on Gay and Lesbian Health, 2002; Russell, 2011; Russell & Seif, 2002; Schwartzkoff et al., 2003). This review will now examine possibly the most common practice in sexualities research associated with health and education.

Lumping, glossing and compromising

In some research described as ‘inclusive’, the term ‘bisexual’ appears only in titles, abstracts and key word lists, subsequently becoming invisible in the discussion (Barker et al., 2012). Several studies claim issues faced by bisexual youth are different to those faced by gay and lesbian youth; however, those ‘different issues’ are rarely itemised, or itemised then dismissed without further discussion (Dugan & Yurman, 2011; Hutchins, 2006; Klein & Dudley, 2014).

This failure to address bisexual issues suggests bisexuality is less important and relevant than other sexualities, regardless of statistics showing a higher percentage of bisexual participants than gay and/or lesbian participants. *Youth07*, a New Zealand study of the health and well-being of secondary school students, lumped all same-sex attracted and both-sexes attracted young people into one group (Rossen et al., 2009). Statistical analysis of participant attraction indicated numbers in the both-sexes attracted category (3.3% or 270 students) were much higher than those in the same-sex attracted category (0.9% or 73 students). Although deeper investigation into the complete data may yield separate results for ‘same-sex attracted young people’ and ‘both-sexes attracted young people’, *Youth07* appears to homogenise all data gathered from the two groups. Bisexual statistics are subsumed within other

categories, relegating bisexuality to subset status, erasing that sense of validity which helps young bisexual women negotiate multi-directional challenges to their sexual identity (Barker et al., 2012).

Research misperception prevails in the lumping together of bisexual and lesbian data and naming the lumped result 'lesbian' (Barker et al., 2012; Dugan & Yurman, 2011; Le Brun, Robinson, Warren & Watson, 2004; Mathieson, Bailey & Gurevich, 2002; Rust, 2000; SFHRC, 2012). This 'result' is misleading, suggesting being bisexual is the same as being lesbian, erasing the separate issues faced by young bisexual women. Although descriptors such as 'LGBT' may signify inclusivity, subsuming bisexual statistics invalidates bisexuality. Relegation ensures focus remains on heterosexual and homosexual categories, continuing to dichotomise sexuality within academia (Carr, 2011).

Other literature such as *Writing Themselves In 3 2010 (WTI2010)* (Hillier et al., 2010) lists participants' reasons for identifying (or not) as bisexual. These reasons include bisexuality being/not being a transitional phase, being uncertain of a definitive identity, identifying as bisexual but preferring to use gay/lesbian because it was more socially acceptable, preferring 'bisexual' because it was less challenging than gay/lesbian, and identifying privately as bisexual but eschewing a public sexual identity as a political choice (Callis, 2013; Israel & Mohr, 2004). Some of these reasons reflect the misperception noted by D'Augelli and Grossman (2006), interpreted elsewhere in this study as misrecognition (Fraser, 1998) of bisexuality.

The *WTI3 2010* report uses the descriptor 'same-sex attracted' young people, this term occurring frequently across a range of sexualities-related literature (Russell, 2011). Categorising bisexual youth as 'same-sex attracted young people' is a common practice (Hillier et al., 1998; Hillier, Turner & Mitchell, 2005; Hillier et al., 2010); however, this study argues same-sex attraction is but one facet of bisexuality. The research practice of counting bisexual participants as 'same-sex attracted' or 'SSAY' does not acknowledge the completeness of bisexuality and may indeed reinforce the lack of academic credibility attributed to bisexuality (Angelides, 2001; Heath, 2005). As Heath (2005) observes, this lack of credibility may result in the production of "poor" or misleading research which may limit "the richness of the wider queer community" (p. 88).

Homogenised data also fails to highlight the differing levels of responses to issues such as the greater likelihood of young bisexual women engaging in high risk activities than young lesbian women, these activities including such deficit practices as high alcohol consumption, unsafe sexual activity and self-harm (Cochran & Mays, 1996; De Angelis, 2009; Fenaughty, 2004; Heck, Flentje & Cochran, 2011; Hughes, Smith & Dan, 2003; King et al., 2008; Klein & Dudley, 2014; Rivers, 2004; Russell & Seif, 2002). In addition, non-acknowledgement of bisexual youth as a separate group in research such as the *Youth07* survey suggests inaccurate data and possibly lack of representation of this group in the data. As the data generated by these surveys is widely used to inform youth health and education, this

invisibility may detrimentally influence the attitudes and actions of professionals in those fields towards self-identified bisexual youth. On the other hand, naming and discussing issues unique to young bisexual women formally and publicly acknowledges there are differences between being gay/lesbian and being bisexual resulting in different outcomes (King et al., 2008; Whiting, Boone & Cohn, 2012). Giving visibility to those differences may help provide an appropriate perspective from which to address those issues.

The *Youth07* survey includes a schooling focus. Other research into school culture and sexuality education at school suggests evidence of the perfunctory B.

Bisexuality at school: is there any 'bi' there?

In the preceding section this review examined literature typifying the invisible B. While the literature broadly addresses sexually diverse young people, bisexual women appear only sporadically within New Zealand and international studies; indeed, as Smith (2006) astutely observes, “there are no studies that document the experiences of female bisexual students [in New Zealand]” (p.23). This section therefore seeks the perfunctory B within New Zealand and international literature on school culture and sexuality education.

At school sexually diverse young people are subject to various forms of discrimination and harassment, compromising their physical and emotional safety, often resulting in risk-taking practices (Rossen et al., 2009). Much research focuses on sexually diverse young people and these deficit practices, often concluding with the ubiquitous call for a more inclusive school environment (Holmes & Cahill, 2003; Lock & Steiner, 1999; van Wormer & McKinney, 2003; Wilkinson & Pearson, 2009). Data on physical and emotional safety at school for ‘same/both-sex attracted’ young people was included in the New Zealand *Youth07* statistics.

Lumping together data from young lesbian and bisexual women suggests school safety issues are uniformly experienced throughout the group (Herek, 1996, 2002; Jordan, Vaughan & Wentworth, 1997; Nairn & Smith, 2003; Sharpe, 2002); however, *Youth07*'s previously-noted higher percentage (3.3%) of both-sex-attracted young people (see page 39) suggests this group is at greater risk of discriminative treatment in New Zealand schools. Failure to associate young bisexual women with school policy and practice around discrimination leaves them unprotected and possibly vulnerable to threats to their physical and emotional well-being at school, compromising their right to education (Klein & Dudley, 2014).

Uniformity of experiences is easily assumed when reading research around the culture of school bullying; however, this overlooks the issue whereby heteronormative attitudes may triply subject young bisexual women to physical and emotional harm at school from some heterosexuals, from some lesbian

and gay youth and from non-specific policies of protection (Nairn & Smith, 2003; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2010). Elia (2010) describes the “insidious binegativity, biphobia that undoubtedly continues to exist in school culture” (p. 456), emphasising a necessity for interventions which combat the hierarchies of sex and gender which “stress heteronormativity with all of its attendant proscriptions” (p. 456). New Zealand-based researchers Nairn and Smith (2003) advocate raising awareness of the need for attitude change in schools through “a multi-method approach to safety in schools...that includes both the paradigm of problematizing heteronormativity and the equity paradigm of all students’ rights to feel, and be, safe at school” (p. 134). This current study attempts to raise the reader’s awareness of the experiences of young bisexual women in relation to attitudes within school culture and the strategies they use to manage these attitudes.

This section of the review has considered the research practice of lumping and the presence of the perfunctory B in relation to school culture. The review has shown how studies may appear to exclude bisexual youth and more specifically young bisexual women through lumping, yet, as Nairn and Smith (2003) emphasise, some study findings around school culture are inclusive and relevant when considering youth in New Zealand of any sexual identity. When addressing heteronormative practices within school culture, strategies such as the implementation of school Gay Straight Alliance groups may be considered; however, while these groups may informally raise awareness of bisexuality, similar strategies need to be operating within formal teaching and learning. School sexuality education programmes may appear an appropriate starting point for linking such strategies to the formal curriculum. This review now considers the perfunctory B within New Zealand and international literature on school sexuality education.

Data regarding the usefulness of sexuality education to young lesbian and bisexual women appear in some New Zealand-based literature (Allen, 2005b; 2011; Elliott, 2003; Quinlivan, 2006; Smith, 2006). Jones (2013) describes bisexuality’s presence in some research as an “emancipatory paradigm” (p. 6) which advocates meeting the perceived needs of the homogenised ‘GLBT’ category. One such need is culturally appropriate and inclusive sexuality education (Jones, 2013; Szalacha, 2003a), delivered through a “well intentioned pedagogy” (Ellis & High, 2004, p. 221) which would meet the needs of all sexually diverse young people; however, Jones’s (2013) paper which reviewed 30 research projects on ‘GLBTIQ’ young people and sexuality education found not one project had pinpointed the needs of bisexual youth. The literature describes the lack of attention paid in sexuality education to same-sex attraction and desire but neglects the needs of young bisexual women who may be considering concurrent sexual relationships with women and men, or managing a monogamous relationship as a bisexual person partnering with a lesbian or a heterosexual.

Furthermore, some researchers may argue sexuality education does indeed cater for the ‘straight’ aspect of bisexuality (Weinrich & Klein, 2002), revealing a misunderstanding of what constitutes bisexuality; in return, some bisexual participants argue their lessons centre only on heterosexual intercourse to the exclusion of any consideration of same-sex sexual activity (McAllum, 2008; Smith, 2006). Formby (2011) reports a perceived hegemonic heterosexual bias in Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) in England where some teachers heteronormatively ‘other’ sexually diverse young people by emphasising the normalcy of marriage for family life and child rearing. A participant in Formby’s (2011) England-based study noted the dearth of reference to lesbian and bisexual women in a lesson on physical STI transmission:

They didn’t say anything about lesbian and bisexual women at all so it was just like kind of giving the impression that they’re immune or they didn’t exist. (City 1, focus group participant in Formby, 2011, p. 258)

Although the bisexual presence is meagre, Formby’s (2011) investigation, as does this current study, visibilises young bisexual women in a positive sense, as proprietors of their own identity.

Up to this point, this review has examined two research practices which erase and silence the presence and voices of young bisexual women in the literature. The third practice, the ‘passing B’, misinterprets bisexuality either by calling into question its very existence or dismissing it as a passing phase.

The passing B

Bisexuality? That’s just a passing phase...

The third research practice discussed in this review rejects and excludes the notion of bisexuality as a valid and stable sexual identity. Rejection of bisexuality weakens bisexual validity, simultaneously strengthening and privileging the sexual hetero-homosexual binary (Hemmings, 2002). To protect and maintain this rejection, bisexuality and bisexual identity must be depicted in a manner which prevents any positive recognition. This depiction/rejection may occur in sociological, educational and psychological academic literature, pop culture and social media, and practices deployed within education contexts such as school environments and teaching programmes (San Francisco Human Rights Commission, 2012). Fraser (1998) claims rejection destabilizes positive recognition and creates misrecognition, a form of “social subordination” which prohibits positive engagement on an equal basis with others (Fraser, 2001, p. 24). In addition, Bourdieu and Passeron (1997, p. xii) quoted in Pajak and Green (2003, p. 394) state “all cultures and societies depend to some degree... on misrecognition, ‘the process whereby power relations are perceived not for what they objectively are but in a form which renders them legitimate in the eyes of the beholder’”.

This section of the review posits misrecognition of bisexuality in research literature is discriminatory. When bisexuality is considered it is often in a patronising or dismissive manner or from a negative standpoint. Barker et al. (2012) claim this practice invalidates and excludes bisexuality, and is based on the societal assumption that bisexuality is merely a passing phase, a stage between becoming heterosexual or homosexual.

In some research misrecognition of bisexuality characterises young bisexual women as sexually irresponsible (van Wormer & McKinney, 2003), or as “transient bisexuals” who have public sex with other girls to arouse and attract heterosexual men after which they resume “normal heterosexuality” (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2006, p. 82). This information is inaccurate and misleading (Heath, 2005).

Other examples of bisexual misrecognition appear in statements such as:

Sixteen percent of males and 24% of females said they were bisexual, but mainly gay or lesbian. One percent of males and 16% of females identified as bisexual, equally gay/lesbian, and heterosexual. (D’Augelli et al., 2002, p. 151)

The study appeared to base criteria for participant sexual identity on Alfred Kinsey’s continuum of sexual identity (Weinberg et al., 1994) in which bisexuality is defined as a combination of heterosexual and homosexual:

(b) Bisexual, but mostly gay or lesbian

(c) Bisexual, equally gay/lesbian and heterosexual

(d) Bisexual, but mostly heterosexual (D’Augelli et al., 2002, p.152)

All responses from potential participants who chose criterion (d) were excluded. While the study appears to endorse the notion of bisexuality, these identity descriptors misrecognise bisexuality as merely a blend of other identities, not as an independent identity. Given the considerable influence research results can exert on societal belief (Tolich & Davidson, 2003), especially when publicised by popular media, if these results exclude bisexuality because of the notion bisexuality is a passing phase or a mixture of gay/lesbian and straight, a reader may assume this is factually correct which in turn escalates misrecognition of bisexuality. This misrecognition exists within research into school culture.

The bisexual misrecognition found in some school culture literature may promote the notion of bisexuality as a subgroup of homosexuality and unworthy of inclusion, inferring “they are and ought to remain invisible” (Loutzenheiser & MacIntosh, 2004, p. 155, quoted in Elia, 2010). This message may be literally interpreted by those professionals associated with school culture such as school counsellors and other health professionals resulting in young bisexual women’s emotional and physical safety at school being compromised.

Another form of bisexual misrecognition in school culture-based literature may be the question structure used in the data gathering process. Questions such as “what is it like to be gay at your school?”, “do you know other gay students?” and “in what way are gay boys treated differently to lesbian girls?” (Lasser & Tharinger, 2003, p. 236) invisibilise the presence of any bisexual students at school and in the research. These questions provide a succinct example of the invisible B in which bisexuality is excluded because its inclusion may distort otherwise straight-forward comparisons between homosexuals and heterosexuals (Diamond, 2005; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2006). Furthermore, these and other questions such as “were lesbianism or homosexuality discussed in school?” and “describe the general attitude towards homosexuality at your school” (Malinsky, 1997, pp. 40/41) silence the bisexual voice and deny bisexuality equality with all other sexual identities at school in learning and in social contexts (Fields, 2008; Flowers & Buston, 2001).

Some research recognises the invisibility of same-sex attraction in official school culture and in sexuality education (Elia, 2010; Hillier & Mitchell, 2008). The next section argues bisexuality is often treated as passing in school sexuality education.

Bisexuality in the classroom: it's really semantics...

In school sexuality education bisexuality, if it is acknowledged, is often portrayed as a phase (D'Augelli, 2003). Sexuality education research may express concern regarding same-sex attracted young people's 'tuning out' from classes on safe sex, “generally leaving them also ill-equipped if they had sex with members of the opposite sex” (Hillier & Mitchell, 2008, p. 213). This concern is germane; many studies contain statistics indicating a higher reported rate of STIs and pregnancy among young women who were sexually active with young women and with men (Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; Heath, 2005; Hillier et al., 2010; Rust, 1995). On the other hand, the absence of bisexuality from some research on school sexuality education may merely reflect observations made in the research environment rather than the research practice. Research environment in this instance refers to the teaching and learning conditions and practices observed in the classroom and discussed in some studies.

Teachers may be inadequately resourced personally and professionally to discuss bisexuality; however, in a study by Hillier and Mitchell (2008), one of the participants made this observation regarding her school sexuality education:

They (the sexuality education teachers) talked a little bit about homophobia etc. but the concept of 'bisexuality' is ignored, sometimes there is less of an understanding or tolerance of that rather than homosexuality itself. (Kelley, 18 years, in Hillier & Mitchell, 2008, p. 220).

Kelley's comment suggests she recognises this 'bisexual ignorance' more as evasion, clear to her through teachers' attitudes being less than tolerant of bisexuality. Being less than tolerant may result in the withholding of relevant knowledge which could contribute to young bisexual women's greater understanding of themselves as bisexual. An observation such as Kelley's suggests a teacher's lack of understanding or tolerance may result in erasure of the B; in addition it suggests the needs of young bisexual women in school sexuality education and indeed school communities is being ignored. Literature such as this has a distinct place in pre-service teacher education as it raises awareness of some sexuality education classroom climates and the power of non-inclusive education.

Choosing to erase topics by evading them highlights the power wielded by sexuality education teachers. Some research participants provide evidence of teachers "modelling prejudice...towards lesbians/gay men" (Smith, 2006, p. 77); however bisexual students are subjected to a different type of prejudice, that of erasure (Kennedy & Fisher, 2010). This may prove damaging to not only those students already publicly self-identifying as bisexual, but also many other students who may be exploring the potential of a bisexual identity. Kennedy and Fisher (2010) note educators and teachers may work with all sexual minority students, but "it is critical that they understand the unique experiences of bisexual students" (p. 473). Lack of documentation of these unique experiences creates barriers for educators seeking more detailed information on bisexuality for their lessons. These barriers include invisibility and misrecognition of bisexuality and young bisexual women, jeopardising this group's right to social and sexual justice (Fraser, 1998, 2001, and 2013).

In their exploration of school-based sexuality education, some studies are inclusive of bisexual youth (Elia & Eliason, 2010; Kennedy & Fisher, 2010; Oswalt, 2009). A wide literature search attempting to uncover studies with anything more than a passing acknowledgement of young bisexual women and their school sexuality education has been unsuccessful. This failure compromises teacher and educator opportunities for learning about bisexual identity and ways of being bisexual including healthy well-informed management of self and possible romantic relationships with others of any gender.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued there is a paucity of literature with specific focus on young bisexual women. New Zealand-based research in particular yields minimal literature with such a focus. While some education and health studies include statistics and evidence of young women identifying as bisexual, a major project has yet to centre exclusively on female bisexuality in New Zealand. This paucity, therefore, justifies further study in this area, as little is known about bisexual women's notions of bisexuality and their experiences of being bisexual in New Zealand schools. This current study aims to add to the literature through young bisexual women's collective voice as they explain lived experiences of their bisexual identity. In addition, this research attempts to raise awareness of possible elision

between teacher attitudes and practices around young bisexual women and New Zealand education policy, and around school-based sexuality education, filling a perceived gap in academic literature.

On examining a range of literature from the fields of psychology, sociology, health and education, this chapter has uncovered evidence of research practices which invisibilise and erase bisexuality and young bisexual women from a significant amount of research. In some cases the practice of homogenising or lumping together different sexual identities blurs any possibility of difference between being bisexual or lesbian. In addition, terms such as ‘LGB’ youth or ‘same-sex attracted young people’ fail to identify and discuss specific issues relevant to young bisexual women (McLean, 2001). These issues, such as combining a healthy relationship with a bisexual identity, being perceived as lesbian while in a same-sex relationship, and negotiating societal myths misrecognising bisexual women as ‘slutty’ and ‘promiscuous’ are overlooked, ignored or glossed over, writing young bisexual women out of the literature.

Using three research practices which may invisibilise and erase bisexuality from the literature, this chapter has examined the current situation regarding the presence of bisexuality and young bisexual women within existing health and education literature. In an effort to delve deeper into the experiences of young bisexual women, the following chapter lays out the methodology and methods involved in this study, including bisexual theory and discussing aspects of the methods including ethical considerations and data analysis.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

Through feminist (Better, 2006; Fonow & Cooke, 2005; Hesse-Biber, 2007) and bisexual theoretical lenses (Baumgardner, 2007; Bradford, 2004; Hartmann, 2013; Lingel, 2009; Zaylia, 2009), this study qualitatively considers the presence of young bisexual women and their schooling experiences in New Zealand secondary schools. The point of difference between this study and others investigating sexually diverse youth is this study's specific focus on young bisexual women and their lived schooling experiences. This focus inspires the adoption of a bisexual theoretical approach underpinned by feminist methodologies as an appropriate foundation for the study. The chapter begins with the thesis' interpretation of bisexual theory including the notion and application of bisexual feminist theory.

The second section describes feminist qualitative methods used to gather information about participants' schooling experiences as young bisexual women in New Zealand. Reinharz (1992) states "feminist researchers combine many methods so as to cast their net as widely as possible in the search for understanding critical issues in women's lives" (p. 201). Using a variety of methods may increase the researcher's understanding of the topic. In this study these methods include focus groups, reflective journal writing and individual interviews. As the area of young bisexual women's schooling experiences has had minimal investigation, these qualitative methods seem appropriate as they provide opportunities for critical thinking and in-depth discussion around bisexuality for both the researcher and participants.

The chapter continues with descriptions of the sample, recruitment process, ethical considerations and data analysis. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe & Yardley, 2004) is applied to verbal and written narratives depicting the lives of these young women and the ways in which they understand their bisexuality, in particular through their experiences of school culture and the formal sexuality education curriculum.

Bisexual theory and research

According to Lingel (2009), bisexuality is a sexual identity granted "temporary status" (p. 387), a suggestion reflected in general societal perception (Garber, 1995; Rust, 2000a). This prompts consideration of legitimacy in according a theoretical basis to something which appears nebulous, fluid and mercurial. According to Layton (2000), bisexual theorists such as Michel (1996) posit a bisexual narrative is an "ongoing construction" (p. 58), differing from heterosexuality which is generally unquestioned by researchers and theorists. Layton (2000) maintains bisexuality is too specific to be reduced to either heterosexual or homosexual desire; indeed, du Plessis (1996) claims "bisexuality

achieves its meaning through its refusal of both adjacent terms ‘straight’ and ‘gay’” (p.22). Layton’s (2000) theorised bisexual specificity is reinforced by a number of other theorists who define bisexuality as “fluid object choice” (p. 41/42); furthermore, Young-Bruehl (2001) describes bisexuality as a “category shifter, the category that never quite fit with any of the general categorical schemes for thinking about sexuality” (p. 180). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, bisexual theory is defined as an epistemological notion that has the power to stabilise or destabilise sexual identity, bearing some resemblance to the destabilising nature of queer theory, but working without the boundaries of homo- and heterosexuality.

Halperin (1995) has suggested queer identity is “without an essence” (p. 62). This study argues bisexuality and therefore bisexual theory may encapsulate an identity *with* an essence, that essence being fluidity; the argument will be tested by participants’ descriptions of ‘being’ bisexual. Hartman (2006) posits “bisexual identity can be a source of both knowledge that one does not fit into the system and agency in not trying to fit in” (p. 75). Signalling what these young women experience through ‘being’ bisexual may reveal ways in which they give bisexuality meaning in particular contexts. Furthermore, bisexuality may provide a convenient location both epistemologically and ontologically from which fields such as feminist or queer studies may be critically examined (Hemmings, 2002). Locating female bisexuality either outside or inside conventional categories of sexuality, or determining it as ‘other’ in an oppositional sense may suggest participants in this study are determining bisexuality as “sexual non-conformity” (Beemyn and Eliason, 1996, p. 164). Therefore, where is their knowledge coming from to enable this determination?

Female bisexuality requires investigation as it sits outside prevailing identity categories (Marinucci, 2010). Situating bisexuality within the binary that queer theory seeks to disestablish creates opportunities to engage with bisexual theory (James, 1996). In addition, combining bisexual theory with feminist theory encourages a consideration of the validity of bisexuality as itself as opposed to part of a binary over-laden with hierarchical thinking (Eisner, 2013). Marinucci (2010) suggests feminism’s task is to promote “diligent application of reason as a means to achieve truth and justice” (p. 95). In this study, while it may not be possible to fix bisexuality as an identity in a permanent sense, combining a characteristically fluid bisexual perspective with feminist theory may enhance the possibility for negotiation of bisexual identity as a singular entity in order to “manifest a degree of scalability” (Lingel, 2009, p. 285).

This study’s task is to explore participants’ different bisexual knowledges, what participants as bisexual allow or disallow themselves (Sedgwick, 1991) and what their school contexts allow or disallow them as young bisexual women. Through a combination of bisexual theory and feminist qualitative methods

(bisexual feminist theory), this study examines ways young bisexual women negotiate their identities within formal learning and social cultures at school.

What is bisexual feminist theory?

In contemplating a bisexual feminist theoretical approach (Baumgardner, 2007; Bradford, 2004; Eisner, 2013; Hayfield, 2011), this study embraced the term ‘bisexual’ and welcomed all interpretations. The research intention was not to seek a simple formula depicting bisexuality. This was important to the nature of the research as a feminist “ethics of care” (Edwards & Mauthner, 2002, p. 15) which suggests providing a specific definition of bisexuality may place constraints on participant reflexivity or “self-gaze” (Powell, 2010, p. 71). Constraints may have deterred prospective participants as they may not have perceived themselves as matching a specific definition. This constraint may be viewed as a form of exclusion; however, because feminist theory actively seeks to enable reliable knowledge, attempts are made to avoid this exclusion (Lather, 1992) through exercising deliberate inclusivity.

Smith (1990) claims that “for feminists, the known are also knowers, research objects are their own subjects” (p. 11). This study investigated the notion of bisexuality as it was ‘known’ by the female participants in relation to themselves for, as Berenson (2002) claims, because of their being “located outside of dominant ways of being and knowing”... “bisexual women are strategically located to provide unique insight and knowledge” (p. 11) into bisexuality. Participants were invited to share how they understood themselves as bisexual, what they did in order to ‘appear’ bisexual to themselves and others, and how they asserted their bisexual agency, or the ways in which participants expressed their bisexuality. It was anticipated this expression would become visible through participants’ choices such as resistance to social structures including heterosexual and homosexual assumptions around bisexual behaviour (Powell, 2010) and heteronormative practices (Hemmings, 2002).

Telling our stories and taking them seriously

Bisexual feminist theory may be applied as an active method; indeed, Baumgardner (2007) claims “it is a feminist act to firm up the existence of bisexuality... by telling our stories – and taking them seriously” (p. 218). The ethics involved in such a practical method may emphasise at all times the safety and protection of the participants. For example, active listening during focus groups and interviews includes a consideration of the physical location; in this study spaces for these activities were sourced away from passing onlookers and interruptions. The researcher undertook all transcribing to check accuracy and to preserve confidentiality as far as possible. In an attempt to avoid any bias towards social injustice (Fraser, 2001) participants were not positioned as victims of their own circumstances. A strengths based approach helped to design the questions (Milstein & Henry, 2007) with prompts such as “what was most useful to you in sexuality education” or “can you tell me the best

thing about being bi at school” helping to avoid inferences that participants were merely victims of heteronormative practices that pervade schooling contexts (Epstein & Johnson, 1998). All questions in focus groups, reflective journals and individual interviews were constructed to encourage participants to think critically about their lived experiences (Clarke, Ellis, Peel, & Riggs, 2010; Storr, 1999) so as to be “active in the knowledge of construction about their lives” (Fonow & Cooke, 2005, p. 2220) (see Appendices B, C and D).

According to Pillow and Mayo (2007), feminist theory is founded on responsible research around the lived experiences of gender for the benefit of women. This responsibility disrupts the binary between researcher and researched and makes the “attention to and concern about relationships with [participants]...uniquely feminist” (p. 163). It is difficult to specify the qualities of a feminist relationship with research participants as the power relations or equilibrium within such a relationship may shift in response to a variety of factors; however, as Pillow and Mayo (2007) suggest, finding a balance may be achieved through the researcher recognising when to observe, participate or collaborate. The researcher is primarily responsible for maintaining equilibrium of power (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002).

In this current study, that equilibrium could have shifted due to a factor such as the differences in generations between researcher and participants. Also, some participants were being asked to share personal thoughts with someone they were barely acquainted with. In addition, participants may have provided responses they thought the researcher wanted to hear (Miner-Rubino, Jayaratne & Konik, 2007). All of these factors were mitigated in some way through rapport established and built on throughout the process, “respectfully and ethically” (Miner-Rubino et al., 2007, p. 209). A researcher’s respectful attitude may be determined in a number of ways such as what she may say (or not) during an interview, by not pressuring a participant to respond to a sensitive prompt, and by ensuring she understands and acknowledges all participant contributions. A respectful attitude may help positively strengthen the equilibrium of power between researcher and participants.

The researcher initially sought to initiate a positive relationship with participants through appearance (differently-hued hair, jeans and Doc Martin boots; Hayfield (2011) lists these items as stereotypical indicators of diverse sexual identity) and discussion prior to beginning focus groups or interviews. Such discussions included topics of interest to young people such as attendance at the Big Day Out [an annual international music festival] or how participants were dressed themselves and where they acquired clothing items. Naples (2003) suggested that meeting participants on middle ground conveyed researcher interest in them, as people, rather than information providers and helped set an atmosphere of acceptance and encouragement. During the process, if a participant appeared to be struggling to find words, the researcher was careful to not provide those words or finish her sentences as this may have

created misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the participants response; in addition the practice is disrespectful. Alongside these methods it remained important to trust that participants were answering spontaneously rather than providing responses they thought would ‘fit’ the questions (Kirsch, 1999).

Another aspect of feminist methodology involves advocating for social change as a way of resisting gendered oppression (Fonow & Cooke, 2005). This study offered participants opportunities to advocate for changes in schooling contexts to benefit young bisexual women. These changes could occur through addressing inclusivity within sexuality education and through implementing sexuality diversity groups within schools, requiring collaboration with school officials responsible for curriculum and pastoral care. Participant recommendations for change are discussed in later chapters.

Allen (2005b) suggests a “defining point of feminist research is the reflexive way in which the researcher locates themselves in the research process” (p. 18). This study embraced a reflexive approach, the researcher openly and willingly sharing knowledge and experiences with participants in order to foster and strengthen relationships (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). Short descriptions of each participant such as appearance, attitude to the study and general opinions, and interview observations were recorded. Was the participant calm, nervous, or relaxed and confident in her responses, and how was the nervousness alleviated? Contact with many participants was maintained through emails and through attendance at their community group sessions where a warm welcome was extended to all those present. A personal reflective journal, recording impressions and thoughts about the process, was kept by the researcher; this research process was not only about the participants, it was also about the researcher’s “active participation in the research process” (Hartman, 2011, p. 65).

The researcher role

Kumashiro (2005) coined the term “identity-based activism” (p. 117), indirectly suggesting the researcher role includes becoming an identity-based activist. According to Kumashiro (2005), a researcher needs to be able to represent participants by “learn[ing] to think as others have thought before” (p.116) and to actively question those others’ thoughts (Finlay, 2005). As bisexual women, the researcher and the participants had experienced social victimisation (Birden, 2005); sharing an awareness of this and other issues such as bisexual invisibility with participants was essential (Finlay, 2005; Liamputtong, 2007) as it created opportunities to discuss ways of actively resisting such experiences. However, the study’s first task was to trouble the foundations of bisexuality which included a challenge to the researcher’s personal self-identification as ‘bisexual’ over other possible terms such as pansexual, omniseual, polyamorous and queer (Barker & Langdrige, 2010; Rodriguez Rust, 2009).

Some researchers suggest some participants may assume researchers are heterosexual unless otherwise indicated (Hayfield, 2013; Herdt & Boxer, 1993). According to Herdt & Boxer (1993), “when our identities remain hidden to the reader, it is difficult to both understand the conduct and validity of the research and to compare the results to other studies” (p. xix, quoted in McAllum, 2008, p. 48). As Rasmussen (2006) points out, a shared sexual identity does not guarantee a rapport between the researcher and the researched as rapport consists of connections made on a range of levels (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002); however, through appearing comfortable with her own sexuality the researcher may have imbued participants with a sense of safety and trust, erasing the notion of insider versus outsider (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002; Finlay, 2005; Floyd & Arthur, 2012; Hartman, 2011; Pitman, 2002).

This concludes the introduction and discussion of bisexual feminist methodology underpinning this study. The next part of the chapter addresses the methods used in data collection including details of each, justification for choice of method and how they were employed. Recruitment, data analysis, ethical considerations and limitations are also discussed.

Method

Introduction

In the previous section the methodology chosen for this study was outlined. This section describes the processes which followed the gaining of approval for the study from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee. These processes included participant selection and recruitment, and methods employed such as focus groups, reflective journals and individual interviews. Thematic analysis of the data, ethical considerations and limitations of the study conclude the chapter.

Research methods

Focus groups, reflective journals and individual semi-structured interviews comprised the research methods. The methods were designed to be mutually supportive and conducive to critical thinking about participants' schooling experiences. The focus groups began the process, providing opportunities for participants to review their memories and to hear others' experiences (see Appendix B). Beginning with focus groups also provided the researcher with the opportunity to meet and hear participants' different perspectives (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999) on bisexuality, and through this a chance to review interview prompts.

The intended use of focus groups in this project was to encourage collective discussion (Allen, 2005; Frith, 2000) where all members, participants and researcher, interact with each other, sharing experiences and information (Leavy, 2007, Wilkinson, 1998). It is the specific use of group interactions that produces data that may not be revealed in individual interviews (Kitzinger, 1994). The study used focus groups as a way of giving voice to minority groups. Focus groups may also allow participants who may be intimidated by individual interviews to explore their 'voice' in safe surroundings. This method needs to accommodate a politics of voice where silence is a naturally occurring aspect of the group interaction (Hyams, 2004); however, these silences may also be caused by other factors such as intimidation and vulnerability, factors which a sensitive facilitator must be attuned to and manage.

At the conclusion of each focus group, participants were invited to take a reflective journal with the aim of recording their schooling experiences in addition to responding to further prompts about their notions of bisexuality (see Appendix C). Reflective journals provide opportunities to record personal thoughts and feelings about an event, a discussion or specific learning. Journaling offers a means of privately expressing oneself which for some 'journalers' is a type of therapy (Boud, 2001). Simons and Harris (2002) claim reflective journals are a "development tool to ...extend and deepen knowledge" (p. 1), journals being used throughout industry and education training by adults and in classrooms by

school students (Park, 2003; Saleh & McBride, 2005). In her study into teaching and learning about disabilities in New Zealand, Margaret McLean (2005) described reflective journaling as a method of helping an individual clarify their personal insight into issues or topics; a “formative and confidential tool recording [an individual’s] own understandings” (McLean, 2005, p.78). In some New Zealand secondary schools, Health Education students use reflective journals to help clarify their understanding of a topic. Usual practice is for the student to respond to a series of questions or prompts provided by the teacher.

In this study the reflective journal also provided prompts for some individual interviews (see Appendix D), as during their interviews participants were invited to show the contents and explain their journaling if they so wished. The interview process was also intended as a means of following up some of the topics discussed in focus groups. According to Hesse-Biber, “interviewing plays an important role in better understanding the human condition” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007, p. 114). Having common interests in this ‘condition’ may foster a sharing of information and knowledge, therefore the interview process may be seen as “an encounter between women with common interests” (DeVault & Gross, 2007, p. 178). Considering the interview as a search procedure may help produce a satisfactory account of an experience, especially if the facilitator regards the procedure as a way of seeking meaning as a partnership (Paget, 1983). One means to this is to interview subjects from many perspectives (DeVault & Gross, 2007).

Transcribing all focus groups and interviews took place as soon as possible after each event in order to recall the atmosphere, energy and details of each occasion. The process of collating journal responses was subject to delays due to late journal returns from participants; however, this did not impede the overall collation process as the journal returns were staggered over the general data collection period. Interview transcriptions were emailed back to participants for checking and approval. Journals were posted back if a participant had requested this.

Questions and prompts for all three data gathering methods were created with regard to participant safety. Through astute facilitation skills including close listening, nonverbal confirmation and statement clarification, focus groups and individual interviews could provide inclusive and encouraging environments in which young bisexual women could safely share and discuss their schooling experiences. The reflective journal also provided opportunities to privately record deeply personal opinions and thoughts. These contributing factors reflected a feminist approach where a series of interactive methods could be utilised to gather information (Reinharz, 1992). The conditions also presented opportunities for the participants to become “active in the construction of knowledge about their lives” (Fonow & Cooke, 2005, p. 2220).

Application of research methods

The fieldwork began with eight focus groups in various locations across the country; these group meetings took place at sites accessible to all participants such as a community house or support group meeting room (Allen, 2006; Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999; Valentine, Butler & Skelton, 2001). In order to accommodate all those who wished to take part, meetings were held during school or work lunchtimes, after school, in between university lectures and in the evenings with meetings being a minimum of one hour duration to ensure adequate discussion time. Those present were reminded of the meeting objectives and were given Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms to read and sign (see Appendix G). Participants were also reminded about the digital audio recorder and their rights to have this switched off during the discussion without having to provide a reason.

After signing Consent Forms, the meeting began with an icebreaker activity where participants paired up and pair-shared their names, the origins of their names, and how they felt about their names. Pairs then introduced each other to the group with the researcher assuming the role of facilitator rather than interviewer. A discussion on safety guidelines for the group (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999) culminated in a group agreement on appropriate safety guidelines such as one speaker at a time, no put downs, and respect each other's experiences (see Appendix D).

According to Savin-Williams (2005), people who are openly 'out' as sexually diverse are often confident and out-going. If Savin-Williams' (2005) observation was accurate and as participants in this study were publicly out as 'bisexual', there should be little difficulty in encouraging discussion within focus groups. Indeed, in groups where participants knew each other, discussions were lively and enthusiastic; however in two focus groups the participants did not know each other, initially hesitant until some level of engagement was found. Engagement was fostered using prompts about negative media attitudes to bisexuality which quickly provoked lively discussion around the meaning of the term 'bisexual', the nature of social/sexual justice and participants' schooling experiences as young bisexual women.

All focus group participants were offered the opportunity to be interviewed individually. For undisclosed personal reasons, eleven participants chose to participate only in a focus group or in an individual interview. At the conclusion of the discussion, those wishing to take further reflective opportunity were given a pre-prepared journal, later to be used as a discussion prompt in individual interviews. A total of 25 journals were issued; participants were invited to regularly record their thoughts in the pre-prepared reflective journal from the time of their group meeting until their individual interview. Each journal entry would reflect a point in their lives as bisexual (Aerts et al., 2012). This was to be a period of up to six weeks. The journal included space to incorporate various

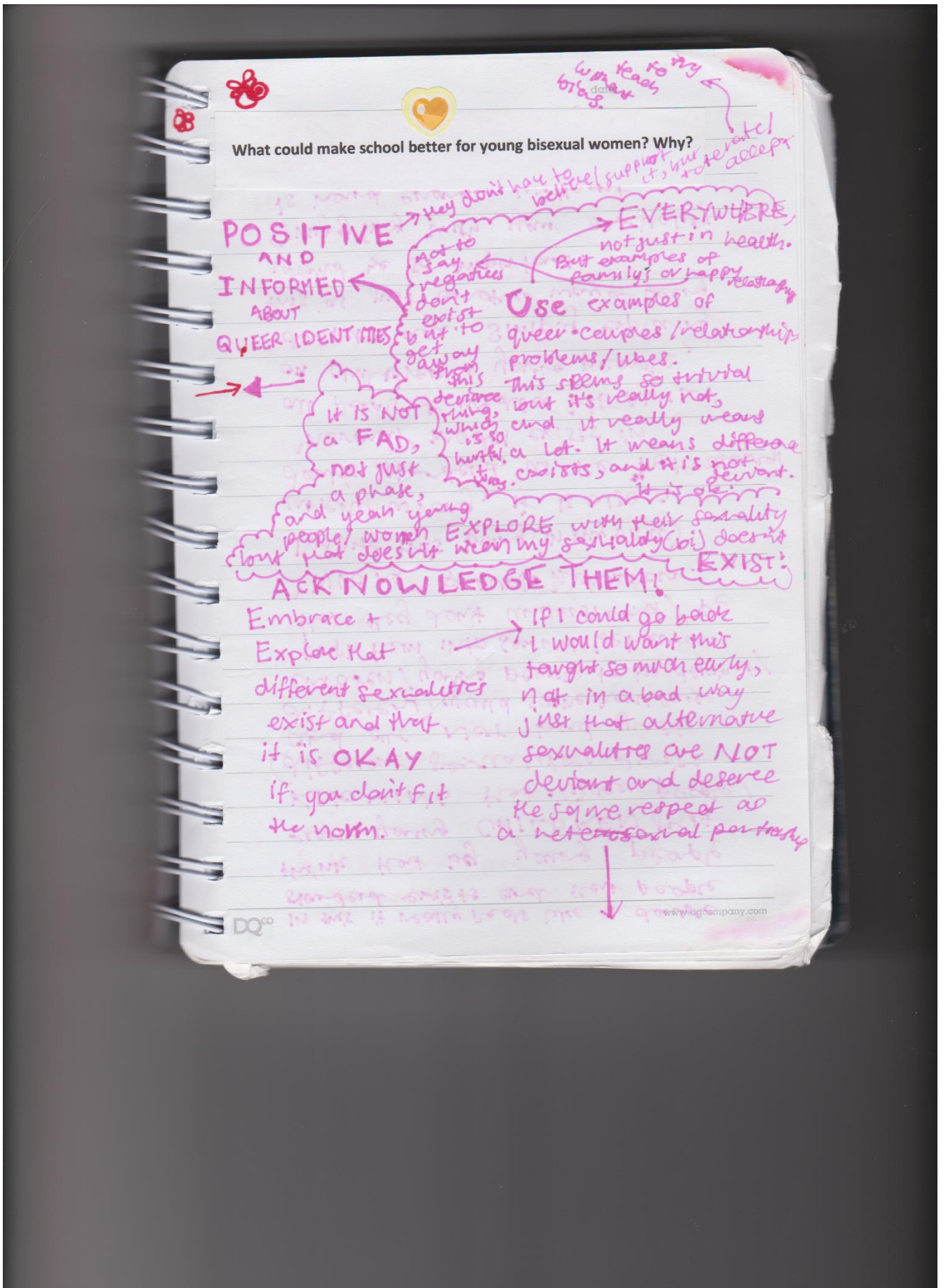
forms of expression such as media images. Each participant was asked to select her own pseudonym and to write this into her journal.

Each journal carried instructions for use on the first page and a series of prompts throughout (see Appendix E). Instructions included the aim of the journal, “to record thoughts and ideas about [being bisexual] and understandings about [bisexuality]” (M. McLean, 2005, p. 64). Participants were advised they could share their journal with others or keep it private, but the prime intention was to bring it to the individual interview to share with the researcher.

Prompts for the journal included questions such as what does it mean personally to the participant to identify as bisexual, the participant’s experiences of being bisexual, and what happens at school in relation to being bisexual. There were comments and questions about being bisexual from internet blog sites, to which participants could respond with their own thoughts and feelings. The reflective journal was also used to record and develop impressions and thoughts from the focus group, or to record questions or experiences related to being bisexual such as discrimination at school. Some participants used a variety of methods to express their feelings about their bisexuality such as song lyrics, poetry or images, or comments from internet blog sites.

A total of 36 journals were offered; 25 journals were issued. Fourteen were returned, mainly from older participants who were currently studying at university. Participants had been asked to bring their journals to their interview. To ensure researcher understanding of content meaning, the journal was not reviewed prior to the interview; however, each participant was invited to explain the contents as the interview progressed. Participant permission was sought to keep the journal with the promise of returning it after completing the research. Most participants asked that their journals be eventually returned to them.

If a participant did not produce their journal at their interview, no reason was asked; instead the researcher asked about the possibility of posting it, providing a stamped addressed envelope. Three journals were returned by post, some barely completed. Overall, the quality of grammar and language used suggested low literacy levels, yet these same participants had clearly verbally expressed themselves during focus groups. Yoni was unable to participate in a focus group due to geographical isolation; however, she was interviewed via Skype and completed a reflective journal in considerable depth. *Figure 2* provides an example of Yoni’s critical thinking in response to the prompt ‘What could make school better for young bisexual women? Why?’



What could make school better for young bisexual women? Why?

with leads to my blog

POSITIVE AND INFORMED ABOUT QUEER IDENTITIES

they don't have to believe/support it, but to accept

EVERYWHERE not just in health. But examples of families or happy relationships

Use examples of queer couples/relationships problems/lives.

It is NOT a FAD, not just a phase,

This seems so trivial but it's really not, and it really means a lot. It means difference exists, and it's not deviant.

and yeah young people/women EXPLORE with their sexuality that does it mean my sexuality (or) doesn't EXIST?

ACKNOWLEDGE THEM!

Embrace + Explore that different sexualities exist and that it is OKAY if you don't fit the norm.

I could go back I would want this taught so much early, not in a bad way just that alternative sexualities are NOT deviant and deserve the same respect as a heterosexual partnership

DQ

www.dqcompany.com

Figure 1: Example of a comprehensive response in a reflective journal

Interviews mostly took place in environments chosen by the participant. These spaces included personal living areas, classrooms, offices and quiet corners of cafes. In each location, a sense of privacy was paramount. Where possible the area was made secure from sudden intrusion and all parties positioned away from windows or viewing areas. The interview opened with thanks to the participant for her interest in the study. If the participant had not taken part in a focus group the study was explained, emphasising the value placed on each participant's contribution. This was followed by an explanation of the Information Sheet and Consent Form, including the fact the participant could ask for the audio recorder to be switched off at any time. After checking the participant was aware of the conditions, and that she had signed the Consent Form, the interview proceeded.

There were times during an interview where participants diverted from the topic. In all instances, these diversions were due to new interest and possibilities of knowledge advancement in areas such as sexuality education. During the first two interviews it became obvious both participants were oblivious to the existence and use of dental dams; this factor emerged from a discussion about school sexuality education and the lack of information provided about female/female sexual activity and protection from STI transmission. From that point on, a question about dental dams was specifically included as knowledge (or not) about dental dams appeared to signify the depth of sexuality education experienced by each participant. All participants responded in a thoughtful manner, often taking care to ensure their observations and comments had been interpreted as they wished. At the conclusion of their interviews, many participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to talk candidly about their personal and school experiences of being bisexual, saying they now felt less invisible and more empowered as a young bisexual woman.

Criteria for participation

Adolescence has been characterised by many researchers as a time of instability, centring on a sense of sexuality and sexual identity (D'Augelli & Grossman, 2006; Hillier, Dempsey, Harrison, Beale, Matthews & Rosenthal, 1998; Kehily, 2002). Historically, being young and being gay has been linked with being 'troubled' (Savin-Williams, 2005). Some studies regard adolescence as a turgid time of personal development, promoting a message of teenage inconsistency and vacillation. Saewyc (2011) states "measurement of any developmental aspect across the intense physical, cognitive, and behavioural transformations of adolescence is fraught with difficulties and limitations" (p. 258). She also claims the "later pubertal stages" are the times when romantic feelings and sexual attractions have become developed and behavioural changes take place; this suggests a developmental stage where some young women are ready to recognise and embrace an innate bisexual identity. Furthermore, this age group may provide an appropriate research cohort because participants may produce a range of young bisexual women's recent and current experiences of schooling in New Zealand.

The criteria for participation in this project included being female, aged between 16-24 years and a self-identified bisexual. For this study the age of 16 years was selected as the younger end of the age scale as parental permission would not be needed to take part in research; this factor is an integral aspect of institutional ethical regulations (David, Edwards & Alldred, 2001). The upper age of 24 years was selected in the belief that memories of experiences at school would not be too retrospective (Libby & Eibach, 2002). Thirteen participants were still attending school, fourteen had recently left, while nine had been out of a school environment for 4 to 7 years.

All participants were publicly 'out' (known to others) as bisexual. This was an important factor as it would avoid inadvertent 'outing' which could create personal issues for a participant (Rasmussen, 2004). In some instances participants knew each other as friends at school; others attended the same community group and had encouraged each other to participate. Savin-Williams (2005) believes including participants who have public status as 'out' bisexuals suggests the coming out process may help strengthen their self-confidence. In turn, confidence in one's own bisexual identity may have encouraged active participation in this study (Hutchins & Ka'ahumanu, 1991; Rostosky, Riggle, Pascale-Hague, & McCants, 2010).

Recruitment of participants

Approaching sexualities research in schools

Combining research on schools and sexual identity means entering a field fraught with difficulties (McInness & Davies, 2008; Savin-Williams, 2005). Many schools in New Zealand do not respond to research invitations in the field of sexualities (Allen, 2005b; Allen, 2011; Quinlivan, 2004; Smith, 2006); some schools may regard sexuality suspiciously as disturbing and disrupting their core business of education of young people (Rasmussen, 2006; Rivers, 2000). This suspicion may be exacerbated by researchers attempting to gain access for sexuality-related research.

As Allen (2011) explains, sexuality research focused on young people "becomes particularly contentious" (p. 21) when some adults believe the research process and the research topics may potentially influence their supposedly sexually innocent and 'vulnerable' students (Allen, 2011; Fields, 2008). If the research involves questions and discussions focusing on bisexual, lesbian and gay issues, some schools, because of a possible reluctance to acknowledge anything other than heterosexuality, may be even more hesitant to allow outsider researchers to access their students (Allen, 2005b; Smith, 2006).

Some researchers discuss the positive attitudes of young people towards participation in research on sexuality issues (Russell, 2011; Savin-Williams, 2005), indicating an innate wish to be heard and frustration at the silence imposed by schools (Hillier, Turner & Mitchell, 2005; Quinlivan, 2006). This

study investigated ways in which bisexuality was erased from school culture and the strategies participants employed to reverse that erasure such as joining school diversity groups or speaking to classes about bisexuality during sexuality education programmes.

The sample

Invitations and information packs were initially sent to 56 secondary schools throughout the upper half of the North Island of New Zealand, and the larger urban centres and also in the north and east of the South Island of New Zealand. They ranged in decile ratings [a ratings scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the highest, which indicates each school's local physical community's perceived high socio-economic status] (Ministry of Education, 2009). Deliberately included were schools with known diverse sexualities alliance groups or peer sexuality support groups operating within their communities. The targeted schools were a mixture of single sex, co-educational, urban, rural, state and special character (religious affiliation). This mix was intended to capture a richer variation in participants' personal and socio-economic backgrounds. It was hoped these variations might produce diverse data regarding schooling experiences based on being young bisexual women at school.

The information packs sent out included a letter/information sheet addressed to the school principal, an information sheet for the guidance counsellor or health teacher, consent forms for both parties and the one page advertisement (see Appendices A and G) carrying a project-dedicated email address. Researcher and supervisor contact details were included in all correspondence. Although return rates of school consent forms were initially positive with twelve immediate responses, it became apparent that due to the sensitive nature of this project, and the levels of bureaucratic negotiation required, a low school response rate was most likely (David, Edwards & Alldred, 2001; Donelson & Rogers, 2004; McAllum, 2008).

Out of the 56 schools approached, 6 schools responded positively, 2 schools said 'no' and 48 schools did not respond. From the positive responses, 5 participants were sourced from 3 schools. Three other schools advertised the study with no results, while one school had responses from students who then withdrew from the study. Those students withdrawing were not required to provide a reason for their decision. Although the overall number of participants currently attending school was 14, the majority of them heard of the study through their community diversity group or while attending a national *hui* for queer youth facilitated by an organisation for queer and questioning youth.

Information packs were re-sent to 25 targeted 'gay friendly' schools, this time including personal letters to principals. None of these schools responded. In retrospective discussion with some secondary school executive officers and managers, it transpired most schools have principals' Personal Assistants (PAs) who may prioritise incoming mail before the principal actually receives it, the result being a reduced

amount of correspondence for consideration (Wanat, 2008). Anecdotal evidence suggested the possibility of the principals' packs having been opened by PAs who prohibited the research request from progressing further as it was not seen as relating to the school's core business of education.

The four schools which said 'no' via email or hard copy indicated a busy schedule as their reason for non-participation. This was due to term time constraints imposed by an international sporting event taking place in New Zealand and the resultant pressure of less teaching time. One of the schools had willingly provided participants for earlier research (McAllum, 2008) yet this time the invitation was immediately declined with no reason provided.

Information packs were also sent to community sexuality diversity groups (see Appendix G for the Community Group letter). Many participants were sourced through community (13) or university based (11) groups. One group facilitator attended a presentation of the study (McAllum, 2011) at an international Human Rights conference during the 2nd AsiaPacific Outgames in Wellington, New Zealand. She immediately responded, enlisting six more young women who met the research criteria. Some group facilitators emailed asking permission to advertise the study on their group internet social network pages. The posting consequently appeared on several New Zealand-based diversity group home pages, resulting in a positive response.

University-based diversity groups throughout New Zealand were approached by meeting with key people where geographically possible, and through emailing information about the study to co-ordinators of each group. In one area some groups were very supportive, placing advertisements on their notice boards and mentioning the research at social functions; however, there was no response from any other university groups outside that area. Advertisements were manually placed on various university notice boards in high traffic areas, with positive results. Some respondents had heard of the study from bisexual friends and emailed accordingly.

Focus groups and interviews took place in school meeting rooms, lecture halls, community diversity group rooms and empty coffee shops. All sessions were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Participants totalled 37. There were six focus groups comprising 27 participants and 32 individual interviews. 25 participants requested a reflective journal; 14 were completed, returned and collated over a period of 11 months. Some more remote areas had insufficient participant numbers to form focus groups, but individual interviews went ahead. The table on the following page shows participants' chosen pseudonyms, ages and school types.

Name	Age	School
Alice	18	Girls/state/urban
Alwyn	24	Co-ed/state/urban
Allie	18	Girls/state/urban
Amethyst	24	Girls/state/urban
Andy	18	Co-ed/state/urban
Anita	24	Co-ed/state/urban
Annabelle	24	Co-ed/girls/urban/state/religious
Annie	16	Girls/state/urban
Artemis	21	Co-ed/state/urban
Ashlin	18	Girls/state/urban
Beena	19	Co-ed/state/urban
Blake	20	Co-ed/state/urban
Captain Fantastic	16	Girls/state/urban
Fleur	16	Co-ed/state/urban
Freddo	16	Girls/state/urban/private
Gage	20	Co-ed/state/urban
Heidi	24	Girls/co-ed/urban/rural/state/private
Jane	22	Co-ed/state/urban
Jaydie	17	Co-ed/state/rural
Joanna	16	Co-ed/state/urban
Katie	16	Co-ed/state/urban
Kelly	18	Boys/co-ed/religious/state/ urban: 3 schools
Kitty	16	Co-ed/state/urban
Lee	19	Co-ed/state/urban
Lisa	22	Co-ed/state/urban
Liv	23	Girls/state/urban
Polly	16	Co-ed/state/urban
Rhiannon	16	Co-ed/state/rural
Rose	18	Girls/integrated/urban
Scarlet	24	Co-ed/state/girls/private/urban
Stacey	23	Co-ed/state/urban
Sunday	17	Girls/state/urban
Tabby	18	Co-ed/state/urban
Xena	17	Girls/state/urban
Yoni	20	Co-ed/state/urban
Yusef Islam	18	Girls/state/urban
Ziggy Stardust	19	Co-ed/state/urban

Table 1: the participants

Co-ed = co-educational schools with female and male genders

Employment of methods

Focus groups

In the first few minutes of each focus group the facilitator described her role as being responsible for ensuring speaking opportunities for all participants. In three of the groups, collegial links were obvious; this created a sense of a shared ‘bisexual solidarity’ which positively promoted further and deeper discussion. Some participants in this study appeared initially unsure of what to expect, possibly because they had not previously participated in a focus group. In addition, their group may have had several more vocal participants which may be intimidating (Michell, 1999). To counter this, and to help negate any initial feelings of insecurity, negotiating a set of safety guidelines (see Appendix B) about disclosure was undertaken prior to discussion (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999).

Questions for focus group discussion (see Appendix B) were open-ended; the intention was to explore participants’ school experiences as young bisexual women and included strategies they employed to negotiate misunderstandings of bisexuality in differing school contexts. Prompts printed on large cards suggesting ‘bisexuality is a passing phase’ or ‘bisexuality is an act put on to attract heterosexual men’, invoked intense discussion of participants’ notions of bisexuality (see Appendix B). Some of these quotations were repeated in the reflective journals and interviews as not all participants attended focus groups.

Reflective journals

Reflective journals were chosen as another method for gathering participants’ personal views about bisexuality that may not have been shared in focus groups or interviews. In a semi-structured situation such as a focus group or interview some participants may feel too shy or overwhelmed to provide an immediate verbal response. Journaling may offer such participants the opportunity to record responses they may prefer not to openly share with other participants. This material may be recorded in a journal through various word forms such as poems or prose. Visual material such as cartoons, comic strips or images which resonate with a participant’s opinion may be included.

Participants were given the opportunity to examine their private understanding of being bisexual through thinking critically (Cottrell, 2005; Moon, 2008; Ruggiero, 1998) and journaling their responses to statements such as ‘bisexuality is halfway between gay and straight’ (see Appendix C). Several journals included data of a deeply personal nature; this data was not aired in a focus group but was carefully managed during the interview through facilitator sensitivity to participant comfort.

Anticipated time for journal completion was three months, to allow participants time to think critically about the prompts. Throughout this time the researcher emailed ongoing encouragement to all

journaling participants. The rate of journal return in various stages of completion was around 45%. The highest rate of return was from those young women currently studying or having recently graduated from tertiary education (Blackburn, 2002; Birr Moje & MuQaribu, 2003). The high rate of non-return or non-attempt at journaling was from younger participants, and those working in low paid employment or currently between jobs. Towards the end of three months a time was negotiated for the individual interview along with a reminder to bring the reflective journal to the interview.

Individual interviews

Opinions and thoughts expressed in focus groups may be those which participants believe fit the situation, not necessarily their own opinion. In Michell's (1999) research, several participants were silent in the focus groups but "in the interviews [these participants] revealed certain feelings and experiences which would have remained untold if they had taken part only in focus groups" (p. 45). An individual interview could provide a safer, more secure environment in which to voice thoughts and feelings. This was indeed the case in this study. Some of the younger participants had been silenced in the focus groups by more vocal members but individual interviews enabled them to describe their personal notions of bisexuality and bisexual identity.

Each interview took between 1-2 hours. In accordance with the research topic, participants were invited to describe their experiences of being bisexual at school in relation to school culture and formal learning contexts. Questions on school culture explored participants' school relationships including the responses from some teachers and other students to participants' bisexual identity. The discussion around formal learning fostered considerable reflection on what might improve sexuality education for young bisexual women (see Appendix D).

All data was transcribed and collated by the researcher who then analysed it using thematic analysis. This process is outlined next.

Data analysis: thematic analysis

Thematic analysis organises and details data themes (sets) that relate to one idea. According to Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis offers a "way of seeing ... a process for encoding qualitative information ... and ... a way of making sense out of seemingly unrelated material" (p. 4). Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a flexible instrument which allows researchers to determine themes in a number of ways, using their own judgement as to what constitutes a theme. This study attempted to analyse patterned responses from participant experiences arising within each theme or set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes may be pre-determined by the open-ended questions and prompts used as a basis for focus groups, reflective journals and interviews; they may also be influenced by prior learning, relevant literature and indeed by societal perceptions of bisexuality (Perry, Thurston &

Green, 2004). The list of themes is not closed and may be added to as new themes may appear. While themes and prevalence of themes may be determined in several different ways, the importance of researcher consistency is crucial.

In order to uncover meaning from themes or sets, a feminist/activist approach such as this study adopts offers two possible options. The first is to wait for themes to emerge from the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) term this “passive” (p.80) research. The inference is the researcher is not fully engaged with the data and the nature of the research; therefore lack of engagement within ‘passive’ research contradicts the intent of a feminist approach. The other option is “active” research (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 80) in which themes or sets may be actively sought rather than waiting for them to emerge.

Further options arise such as whether to utilise an ‘inductive’ analysis (Joffe & Yardley, 2004) where data is taken from the ‘raw’ material or a ‘deductive’ approach wherein a theme may be “drawn from existing theoretical ideas that the researcher brings to the data” (Joffe & Yardley, 2004, p. 57).

Deducing themes from theory may allow the researcher to challenge and refute existing beliefs about bisexuality, or perhaps validate those same beliefs (Boyatzis, 1998). On the other hand, Joffe and Yardley (2004) suggest more inductive themes may be useful in new research. It was possible some data in this study might require both inductive and deductive approaches to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive outcome. As argued in Chapter Two, the Literature Review, young bisexual women’s experiences at school appear under-documented in a range of academic literature; consequently actively seeking new data contributing to literature on young bisexual women’s schooling experiences was imperative.

The analysis began with transcription of the focus group recordings. As claimed by Roberts and Brodie (1992), “findings do not speak for themselves but require intelligent interpretation” (p. 95). The researcher’s direct involvement with the transcription process provided opportunities to “‘hear’ and ‘see’ what the data mean from the perspective of those ‘telling the story’” (Perry et al., 2004, p. 144). The primary expectation was that first data sets or themes would appear in the focus groups transcriptions.

Questions and prompts for focus group discussion grew from the initial research question about experiences at school as a young bisexual woman. Prompts such as “tell me about a typical day as a bi person at school” could lead to subsets which explored being bisexual and resulting curriculum issues. One example of an emerging theme was how their experiences of non-inclusive sexuality education disempowered some young bisexual women. A very strong subset possibility involved the lack of knowledge of methods of protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in same sex relationships. Another subset within the theme of sexuality education was the presence of heteronormative practices resulting in the erasure of bisexuality by teachers and by other students.

Another theme/set emerged from a question about a typical day as a bi person at school. This set focused on the actualities of 'being' bisexual within school culture and how participants negotiated experiences outside formal learning situations such as peer and teacher acceptance/non-acceptance and resulting treatment. In turn this created a third set, personal interpretation of the term 'bisexual'. All three sets were investigated consistently, appearing as prompts such as "what was the best thing about being bisexual at school" and "how do you portray yourself as bisexual?" in the reflective journal and the interviews.

Following the completion of all transcriptions, in depth data analysis commenced, beginning with a focus on participant experiences of their sexuality education at school. Over several months, data *corpus* or all data connected to sexuality education was collated (Braun & Clarke, 2006) from focus groups, journal writing and individual interviews. Each area of investigation such as hearing or learning something about bisexuality at school, or support systems at school, formed a data *set* (Braun & Clarke, 2006). From each set, *subsets* (Braun & Clarke, 2006) were actively identified and selected such as those within the sexuality education set: (a) general recollection, (b) the 'best part' or what was helpful, (c) what was not helpful, (d) suggestions for improvement, (e) a discourse of safety and (f) heteronormativity. Reading the transcripts revealed data *items*, individual snippets of data which together constitute the data corpus (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and from these items came data *extracts*, "individual coded chunk[s] of data which ha[ve] been identified within, and extracted from, a data item" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). A noted emergence was the fluent use and apparent understanding by several participants of the term 'heteronormativity'.

Other data sets included support and safety at school and 'being bi' at school. Questions were designed to place participants as power feminists fighting victimisation (Harris, 2001). Inviting participants to suggest changes to sexuality education opened up opportunities for them to exercise resistance against the current situation by taking action for themselves and other young bisexual women, if not globally then in their immediate environment (Harris, 2001).

Ethical considerations

Creating boundaries and safeguards for research in the area of sexualities is imperative as this area can be fraught with sensitivities. Sexuality research may be often linked closely with a social stigma that renders sexuality and associated topics such as pleasure or same-sex attraction as challenging (Allen, 2005b; Quinlivan, 2006). Sexuality research associated with young people has often taken a deficit approach; teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and sexual behaviour influenced by alcohol and drug use are foci, portraying a youth culture of irresponsibility and inability to cope with the stresses of the current day (D'Augelli & Grossman, 2006; Education Review Office, 2007).

Research into young people and sexuality becomes even more fraught when education and schooling is included.

Protection of participant identity

Due to societal sensitivities around sexualities research it was important to offer anonymity to the people and institutions taking part (Walton, 2005). Participants, counsellors, school representatives and support group facilitators were advised their own names would not be used in any transcripts and final reports; neither would their school names or any other names that were revealed in any focus group, reflective journal or individual interview. Participants could select pseudonyms by which they would be known in the research writing. Pseudonyms would also be used in any consequent publications and discussions of research material (Dickson-Swift, 2005).

Anonymity was a compulsory ethical requirement of the institution overseeing the research (Human Participants Ethics Committee, 2013). As Allen (2015) indicates, anonymity is a “key concern of ethics committees” (p. 298) in their attempts to protect research participants from harm. Moore (2012) suggests this concern implies a danger in naming, for example a compromising of confidentiality and participant safety. Therefore, if participants’ identities are undisclosed, harm cannot occur. This phenomenon was found in Allen’s (2015) study which employed visual research methods. Ethics regulations prevented Allen’s participants or “photo-diarists” (p. 299) from identifying their human subjects and environments in photographs taken at school, requiring significant alteration to the photos to ensure anonymity. The photo-diarists therefore created ways to mask the identities of their subjects such as cropping individuals’ heads or by photographing subjects’ shadows.

In this current study, some participants pointed out their experiences of harm prior to the study suggested they were now impervious to further harm. Other participants objected to this enforced anonymity from a political stance, claiming using their own names would give them more of a sense of ownership and a voice. In response to the concerns voiced by participants in this current study, the researcher assured participants their voices and stories, not their names, would collectively speak for young bisexual women. Also, several participants reported a new sense of self-confidence through being able to tell their stories to someone.

All interviews and focus group discussions were digitally audio recorded. Participants could request the digital audio recorder be switched off at any time without providing a reason; no-one did request this. All participants were given the opportunity to read their transcript and to request changes or deletions. This procedure ensured she approved of her representation as bisexual in the study and was also an acknowledgment of her contribution to the project. The recorded material was transcribed by the

researcher. All transcribed material is being held in a secure location as required by the University of Auckland Human Ethics Committee for a period of six years, after which time it will be destroyed.

Confidentiality is a safety issue, especially when researching in the area of sexualities. As Liamputtong (2007) states, “confidentiality is extremely important with some vulnerable groups, particularly those who are marginalised and stigmatised in society” (p. 36). Liamputtong suggests people of diverse sexualities will not discuss their personal lives and experiences within an interview unless they feel safe. Some participants chose to reveal personal details about themselves. This may have indicated their degree of security in this research situation. Kong, Mahoney & Plummer (2002) see this as “going through another form of coming out” (p. 251).

For all participants involved in focus groups, confidentiality could not be guaranteed. This was stated in the Participant Information Sheet and reiterated prior to beginning the discussion. Participants were reminded that they had signed a Consent Form that promises confidentiality between the researcher and participants. While every step necessary was taken to ensure sensitive information remains within the boundaries of the research, it was not possible to ensure any outside disclosures were not made by other participants.

Providing participants with additional support

In research about personal issues such as sexuality it is important that researchers be prepared to provide additional support for participants (Liamputtong, 2007). In line with the feminist methodology underpinning this research the study aimed to “make sure that what [I] find in the study [would] not further marginalise [my] participants” (Liamputtong, 2007, p. 38; see also Dickson-Swift, 2005). Some participants could have experienced distress in their reflections of their experiences of various forms of discrimination at school. These forms could vary between verbal, non-verbal and physical discrimination, all of which may have long lasting effects. The aim was to ensure participants did not leave the interview or focus group in a more vulnerable state than when they arrived (Melrose, 2002). Before the interview or discussion began, the comfort status of the participants was checked. If anyone appeared unsure or reluctant to proceed, they could take the opportunity to withdraw, even if they had already signed the Consent Form; however, all participants appeared enthusiastic and excited at the prospect of being able to speak openly and at length about their perspectives on bisexuality and their associated school experiences.

If a participant was to indicate physical or emotional harm during an interview, if located at a school, this would have been reported to the appropriate health professional. In a school this was the guidance counsellor. For all participants, current information was available regarding support and contacts. Participants were advised of this information prior to beginning the interview to counter any possible

distress arising during discussion. A contact list of appropriate professionals included school counsellors, community organisations such as Rainbow Youth (Auckland), Family Planning, and telephone-based organisations such as Youthline. If the research location was outside Auckland the contacts related to the location of the interview or focus group.

Providing a safe space

At schools the focus groups and interviews were located in rooms that were removed from the main thoroughfare to avoid the attention of ‘interested passers-by’ (Green & Hart, 1999). The room was usually close to student counselling so support could be requested if required. Support was not required at any stage of the process, although some guidance counsellors appeared to be extremely conscientious and regularly checked in.

As the focus groups and interviews progressed, some meetings took place away from the school setting. This re-location was important for several reasons. The prime reason was the emotional safety of the participants. Meeting off site offered a safer space from which to reflect on school experiences. When the interview was located off site, it was held somewhere known as safe to the participant (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999). While the participant was not situated in the immediate school environment she would not experience associated feelings of site intimidation (Charania, 2009). Being physically distanced from school may have allowed her to focus more objectively on her responses (Liamputtong, 2007). Re-location may have provided privacy from intrusion such as other people walking into the interview room.

Some interviews took place after school hours. As all current school students were seniors, this timing suited them; they were not missing class, thus avoiding the stress associated with catching up on significant information. It also ensured they were not exposed to questioning from teachers and other students. Some studies show young people of diverse sexualities who are publicly out appear to manage discrimination and oppression (Kulkin, 2006; Savin-Williams, 2005). It fast became obvious that being ‘out’ as bisexual did not guarantee participants immunity from discrimination at school (Robohm, Litzenberger & Pearlman, 2003; Saewyc, 2011).

The next three chapters attempt to lessen the dearth knowledge and literature about young bisexual women by describing and examining the contributions made by the participants in this study. The study question, how do young women experience and negotiate their bisexual identity in New Zealand secondary schools, has conjured three main data themes/sets which are explored as such: chapter 4, participants’ own notions of bisexual identity; chapter 5, formal sexuality education at school and its application and relevance to young bisexual women; and chapter 6, bisexuality within school culture.

Chapter Four

Bisexual identity: young bisexual women's interpretations and experiences

Introduction

This chapter investigates young bisexual women's experiences of negotiating their own bisexuality through challenges from schooling and social contexts. The discussion draws upon participants' personal interpretations of the notion of bisexuality (Zaylia, 2009). Based on these interpretations the chapter argues participants' criteria for bisexual identification at school may be misrecognised by non-bisexuals through errors such as conflating bisexuality with the sociocultural practice of 'barexuality' or girl/girl public kissing (Rupp & Taylor, 2010). Participant data referring to bisexual identity focuses on personal notions and experiences at school such as questions from non-bisexual students about 'bisexual' experimentation and requests for physical sex. The chapter offers participants' notions of bisexual identity in an attempt to better understand their experiences of misrecognition of their bisexuality at school, discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

This chapter argues participants' use of the term 'bisexuality' may strengthen their own notions of bisexual identity, including ways in which participants relate to and interpret the term 'bisexual'. Limited societal understanding of the term feeds the misrecognition of bisexuality as being based only on desire, eroticism and non-monogamy (Autumn, 2013; Barker et al., 2012; Hartman, 2006). The chapter's final section addresses the disadvantages of a lack of definitive bisexual visibility experienced by some of the young bisexual women in this study. These disadvantages range from societal assumptions of sexual identity as either lesbian or heterosexual, based on a partner's gender, to lack of a stereotypical bisexual 'look' which creates barriers to gaining peer acceptance at school. The following section opens with the participants' understanding and application of the term 'bisexual identity'.

Participant notions of bisexuality: I am bi, what does this mean?

Bisexual identity in young women is often misrecognised societally and academically as a passing phase, a trend and sexual experimentation. Misrecognition may render bisexuality invisible as a valid sexual identity, often erasing it altogether (D'Augelli, 2003; Diamond, 2008; Erickson-Shroth & Mitchell, 2009; Hartmann, 2006; Klesse, 2005; Yoshino, 2000); however, Rust (1992) claims bisexuality is not temporary, or passing, but can be stable, and based upon an individual's personal experiences. To many people identifying as bisexual, the gender of one's partner is not an absolute defining factor (Callis, 2013; Rust, 1992, 2000, 2000a; See & Hunt, 2011).

Some research claims adolescents are constantly renegotiating their sexual identity, rendering labels such as gay or bisexual redundant (Blackburn & McCreedy, 2009; Diamond, 2008; Savin-Williams, 2005). This chapter attempts to counter this claim, arguing some young women are actively embracing a notion of fluidity within the bisexual 'label'. One specific criterion for participation in this study was self-identification as bisexual (Ault, 1996b; Feldman, 2012; Hemmings, 2002) (see advertisement Appendix A), the term 'bisexual' being open to interpretation and discussion by participants. Participant perspectives of bisexuality consistently describe a notion of bisexuality based on attraction which is shifting, not restricted by gender or sexuality, and may not necessarily include sexual attraction.

As possible participants responded to the advertisement, their self-identification as bisexual suggested they had already considered the term 'bisexual' and possibly what constituted bisexual identity. Participants shared their interpretations through focus group discussions, interviews and through reflective journal responses to pre-prepared prompts. All participants in this study claimed bisexuality as an identity based on attraction to *all* people, not as a phase and not as an 'either gay/or straight' binary. Alice thought the word 'bisexual' accurately described her identity:

Most people use the term as meaning being attracted to both guys and girls. But to me, bisexual means just attracted to people and personalities. I do use it to describe myself, because it is the most accurate term to describe my sexuality. (Alice, 18 years, Reflective Journal (RJ))

Alice understood the societal interpretation of bisexuality as gender-based. For Alice 'bisexual' described attraction to "*people*" in general with an emphasis on "*personalities*" (Rust, 2000). Another participant Ziggy Stardust also included '*people and personalities*':

For me, 'bisexuality' is a term used to describe people who are attracted to people and personalities rather than gender. (Ziggy Stardust, 19 years, RJ)

Her use of the term '*gender*' suggests Ziggy's perception of gender is not restricted to only male or female genders. Ashlin's interpretation indicated her disregard of '*gender as an issue*', suggesting she thought a specific gender was not as important as '*beauty in all forms*'. Ashlin also did not link gender or beauty directly to sexual attraction (du Plessis, 1996):

To me bisexual means that you do not see gender as an issue and can be attracted to beauty in all forms...I use bisexual to describe myself but normally elaborate due to most people have previously decided that it means I'll fuck anyone. (Ashlin, 18 years, RJ)

Ashlin added to the list of criteria with her category '*beauty in all forms*'. Her comment '*normally elaborate*' suggests Ashlin was aware of the societal misrecognition (Fraser, 1998) that bisexual women are promiscuous ('*due to most people have previously decided that it means I'll fuck anyone*') (Bradford, 2006; Comeau, 2012; Diamond, 2005; Garber, 1995; Klesse, 2005; Rust, 1996). Ashlin always anticipated a challenge from those people to who she described herself as bisexual.

Gage's use of the term 'bisexual' was a direct result of the violence she experienced when coming out at a younger age as lesbian; Gage thought it was prudent to use the term 'bisexual' in relation to her own personal safety (Barker et al., 2012; San Francisco Human Rights Commission, 2011). In her interview, Gage stated she felt more lesbian than bisexual (Rust, 1992). She identified as bisexual because she was attracted to males, but in her interview Gage emphasised her attraction to females outweighed her attraction to males (Weinrich & Klein, 2002). Gage had responded to the advertisement for participants because she saw 'bi' as a valid identity:

I describe it as what I use to be me or tell people who may be unsure about how they may react badly to me being gay. (Gage, 20 years, interview)

Gage and her lesbian mother had experienced strong homophobia in England and had moved to New Zealand because they had heard gay, lesbian and bisexual people were more accepted in this country. Based on people's reactions to her coming out as bisexual in New Zealand, including at her secondary school, Gage thought the term 'bisexual' was societally viewed as a passing phase and because of this it offered a greater degree of acceptance than 'gay' to '*people who may be unsure*' (Barker et al., 2012).

Artemis saw the term as '*mainstream*' and generally '*more well-known*' as a descriptor and therefore more easily understood:

To me, bisexual is the easiest 'mainstream' term of sexuality to describe myself. By mainstream, I mean it is a more well-known word than 'ambisexual' or 'pansexual'. I use this word to describe myself because of the above explanation, however, I feel like there are more negative connotations along with identifying as bi due to general ignorance of straight people. (Artemis, 21 years, RJ)

Both Ashlin and Artemis were aware of the societal '*negative connotations*' of promiscuity attached to the term 'bisexual' (Herek, 2002; Klesse, 2011; McLean, 2008). The latter's description of the '*general ignorance of straight people*' referred to the heteronormative misunderstanding of the term. This suggests Artemis believes that because 'straight' people lack understanding, they assume being straight is normal and anything else such as bisexual is abnormal. Based on her experiences, Artemis' description appears to stereotype *all* heterosexual people as knowing little about bisexuality.

Alternatively Artemis' description may have indicated her personal reluctance to engage in a discussion with anyone whose '*general ignorance*' rendered her powerless against any challenge to her bisexuality. This may have left the straight person with an invalid impression of bisexuality, reflecting poorly on Artemis. Tabby's observations concurred with Artemis. Tabby emphasised the difficulty in feeling societally credible when bisexual validity was challenged by misrecognition through stereotyping:

I also think there are a lot of myths and stereotypes around being bisexual which make it hard for someone who knows how they identify to feel like they are respected and taken seriously as bisexual. (Tabby, 18 years, RJ)

Lee thought bisexuality was influenced by situation and time, and feelings:

It doesn't necessarily mean that we are attracted to both parties, it is totally dependent on our circumstances and how we feel on the inside. (Lee, 19 years, RJ)

Attraction for Lee, therefore, was influenced by what was happening at one moment (Aerts et al., 2012) and by the environment of that moment. Emotional involvement was integral; however, Lee's comment '*attracted to both parties*' suggests none of this was dependant on the gender of that person. Lee's explanation of bisexual identity was enhanced by Amethyst's definition which included deeper perspectives of history, politics and sociology:

Bisexuality is a fluid sexuality and its definition is just as fluid for me. I self-identify as a bisexual because of its fluidity; its changes historically, sociologically and moves as my relationship as attraction changes...politically speaking, bisexuality and bisexuals has a special political need. (Amethyst, 24 years, RJ)

Amethyst's perception of bisexuality's '*special political need(s)*' indicated a sense of bisexual fluidity (Diamond, 2008), yet she understood bisexuality's ability to maintain a valid identity in the face of

change. Her statement suggests Amethyst sees bisexuality's fluidity as a form of political power which changes to meet her needs, fitting into spaces between other sexualities as required (Hemmings, 2002). Ashlin understood her own identity as natural, unfeigned:

I do not portray myself. I am what I am, and if others can understand that better if I say I am bi then I am open to be called that. (Ashlin, 18 years, RJ)

She accepted the bisexual label in order to help people understand her, seeing no need to *'portray'* or project a stereotypical bisexual image because that would be misleading and untruthful. Ziggy Stardust believed the term was used misleadingly:

I feel it is misused by popular society to describe people who are curious about sex with people of the same gender, but are straight. I do describe myself as bisexual. I feel it is the only recognised term that I match. (Ziggy Stardust, 19 years, RJ)

Ziggy's interpretation of the term went beyond just a description. She saw the term 'bisexual' as valid as it was *'recognised'* or known and it *'matched'* her self-identity, noting the term could be *'misused by popular society to describe people who are curious...but are straight'*. This misrecognition stems from the societal belief that bisexuality is a phase, merely experimentation before settling on a straight or a gay or lesbian identity (Diamond, 2008; Klesse, 2005).

Participants' interpretations of 'bisexuality' concurred on several points. Most participants interpreted bisexuality as being attracted to people and personalities rather than one or other gender. For some participants, this attraction was not shared equally between male and female but was fluid; there was always potential for the attraction to shift between genders through influences of situation, time and feelings. Bisexual theory suggests fluidity is the essence of bisexual identity (Baumgardner, 2007; Garber, 1995; Ross, Daneback, & Månsson, 2012; Rust, 2000; Zaylia, 2009); however, this study attempts to extend the notion of fluidity within bisexuality by suggesting evidence from participants' lived experiences not only identifies sexual fluidity within bisexuality as influenced by time, situation and feelings but also indicates these influences may be necessary catalysts for fluidity.

Use of the terms pansexual or omnisexual

The notion of fluidity within bisexuality did not appear to dissuade participants from self-identifying as 'bisexual'. The term 'bisexual' may be used individually, collectively or in academic literature as a general or 'umbrella' descriptor, covering terms of similar ilk such as pansexual or omnisexual. As demonstrated below, some of the young women in this study also used these terms. Autumn (2013) claims the term 'pansexual' developed as a reaction to the hetero/homosexual binary system, while

according to King (2011), a pansexual person enjoys “a wide range of sexual expressions and attractions” (p. 442). A pansexual could be attracted to someone who is male, female, transgender, intersex, or agendered/genderqueer (Soble, 2006); indeed, the term ‘pansexual’ is similar in meaning to ‘bisexual’ but is believed to be more inclusive of the transgender community (Autumn, 2013). ‘Omnisexual’ and ‘pansexual’ have different etymological bases but essentially the same meaning, omni- being Latin-derived and pan- being Greek-derived, meaning ‘all’ or ‘many’ (Soble, 2006). Although pansexual and bisexual share similar interpretations there are reasons why some people may prefer to describe themselves as pansexual.

Three participants in the study included the term ‘pansexual’. Jaydie and Artemis thought of themselves as *‘pansexual’* but used *‘bisexual’* when self-identifying to others to avoid having to explain the meaning of ‘pansexual’.

I’ve always used ‘bisexual’. I recently discovered the term ‘pansexual’ and I think I relate more to that, but ‘bi’ is a lot easier to say, and never needs explaining like ‘pansexual’ does. (Jaydie, 17 years, RJ)

Using ‘bisexual’ covertly suggests the participants were more convinced of the validity of the term ‘bisexual’, possibly describing themselves as ‘pansexual’ to some people because it sounded more mysterious or exotic (Callis, 2014). In this study, Annie described herself as *‘pansexual’* for reasons associated with societal misconceptions of bisexuality and promiscuity highlighted earlier by Artemis (Barker et al., 2012; Bradford, 2006; Diamond, 2005; Garber, 1995; Klesse, 2005):

I don’t like to describe myself as bisexual, as it has certain connotations that I don’t want associated with myself, like being a slut, or a straight girl who kisses girls to please straight men. If I use any term, I use “pansexual”, partially because it doesn’t have those connotations (although comes along with its own), and partially because I’m not attracted to specifically men and women, but to people regardless of their gender or sex. (Annie, 16 years, RJ)

Annie did not want to be seen as a *‘slut’*, suggesting she was aware of this possibility but had yet to experience that form of societal castigation. She hinted at the notion of *‘barsexuality’* (*‘a straight girl who kisses girls to please straight men’*) (Rupp & Taylor, 2010). Her response leaves the reader wondering what *‘those connotations’* attached to Annie’s notion of *‘pansexuality’* (Diamond, 2005) might be. She described her attraction to *‘people regardless of their gender or sex’*. By emphasising *‘specifically men and women’*, Annie was hinting at the presence of fluidity within bisexual identity (Weiss, 1992). Both Annie and Tabby thought the term ‘bisexual’ was limiting as they each saw their

sense of attraction as unrestricted by boundaries of gender (Callis, 2014; Diamond, 2008; King, 2011; Zaylia, 2009).

At the time of the research, Tabby used the term 'pansexual'. She initially used the term 'bisexual' to describe herself but thought she no longer '*identified with it strongly*'. She explained:

I feel like 'bisexual' is quite a limited term that means you are attracted to both males and females and I see myself as attracted to people rather than genders/sexes. (Tabby, 18 years, RJ)

Tabby appeared comfortable with her identity descriptor:

People often have to ask me what pansexual means and I think it shows that I'm sure of myself and have thought a lot about what terms I identify with. (Tabby, 18 years, RJ)

Although Tabby did not provide her interpretation of the term 'pansexual', she thought using it indicated her level of confidence and her ability to think critically. It may not have occurred to Tabby that people asked her '*what pansexual means*' because they were unfamiliar with the term, not because she appeared sure of herself (Callis, 2014).

One participant used the term 'omnisexual' (M. Meyer, 2010). Lisa likened herself to Captain Jack Harkness, a character in the popular BBC television series *Torchwood*. Captain Jack was a lover of all beings, female, male, alien (Ryan, 2007). Lisa wrote:

I think the problem with me is that I'm a hopeless romantic. It never seriously occurred to me to limit my options to 'male' so perhaps I might describe myself more as an omnisexual. (Lisa, 22 years, RJ)

The terms caused confusion, diverting any negative responses from other students. Annie used 'pansexual' as a form of protection:

I came out initially as bisexual, then chose pansexual because I was getting hassled by other girls at school for being bisexual, you know, slutty and all that. When I became pansexual, people would just say 'oh' and leave me alone, no more hassles (Annie, 16 years, FG)

Responding to the study's advertisement for bisexual participants suggested none of the participants who self-identified as pansexual or omnisexual had discarded the notion of bisexuality. All participants

had responded to the advertisement for young bisexual women *as* young bisexual women, not as pansexual or omnisexual. Some participants stated they personally preferred the latter terms, having self-described as such at school. In some cases their preferences were based partly on a need to prevent experiencing further harassment at school through misrecognition by other students and teachers and partly through their own changing perceptions of the term ‘bisexual’.

Bisexuality and misrecognition

This section now examines a range of challenges faced by the young bisexual women in this study. These challenges arose from societal misrecognition of bisexuality; however, participants were mostly challenged at school where they were known publicly as bisexual. Next, the section investigates some bisexual stereotypes and how participants negotiated their bisexual identity at school as non-bisexual students attempted to learn more about bisexuality.

Bisexuality is often “understood as a number of stereotypes” (McLean, 2001, p. 109). In turn these stereotypes encourage misunderstanding through images of promiscuity and unreliability within generally non-monogamous relationships (Klesse, 2005). According to Klesse (2005), this misunderstanding “presents one of the most pervasive anti-bisexual stereotypes” (p. 448). In recent years the increasingly publically visible act of girl/girl kissing has inflated this stereotypical image of the promiscuous young bisexual woman (Lannutti & Denes, 2012; Zaylia, 2009). Levy (2005) names this behaviour ‘raunch’ culture, suggesting girl/girl kissing is intended to excite heterosexual men and to attract general attention. Popular media promotes this act as a “fashionable (and fetishized) transient alternative” to straight and lesbian sex (Gurevich, Bower, Mathieson & Dhayanandhan, 2007, p. 218; see also Wilkinson, 1996).

Diamond (2008) claims women are more open to the integrity of girl/girl kissing because they have a sound understanding of sexual desire and identity as fluid. This claim does little to diminish societal misrecognition of bisexual women as promiscuous through perceived public actions; however, a self-identified bisexual woman does not define herself by specific behavioural criteria including ‘experimenting’ sexually with other women (Flanders & Hatfield, 2012; Gurevich et al., 2007; Rust, 1992). Through the experiences of this study’s participants, this chapter argues bisexual identity has a deeper foundation than behaviour and sexual activity (Rust, 1992).

In this study Rust’s (1992) observation is affirmed through participant responses about girl/girl sexual activity. Ziggy described how some of her peers at school saw her as an ‘out’ bisexual:

If anyone had questions, guys as well, they would come and talk to me at school... it was cool, I liked being able to help other people, I mean I didn't have a huge knowledge myself but I knew how I felt so and I think that was a lot more than a lot of people my age. (Ziggy, 19 years, interview)

Ziggy was seen by her non-bisexual school peers as an information provider; however, as more people learned of her bisexual identity, the focus of the requests changed:

By year 13 [age 17-18 years] at school I was like the go-to girl if you wanted to experiment? So I was like it was me and two other chicks that were gay or bi, you know? (Ziggy, 19 years, focus group)

The change in the nature of requests suggests non-bisexual students may have conflated bisexuality with physical desire. Ziggy indicated she was self-confident in her bisexual identity (*'I was quite sure of myself'*). She had enjoyed responding to earlier requests for information about bisexuality (*'It was cool, I liked being able to help other people'*), but the new requests for physical sex made Ziggy feel less valued:

It was you know like I kinda felt used almost? Because I was you know quite sure of myself but all of these girls were like you know... Just one time, it'll be alright it's like well actually... (Ziggy, 19 years, focus group)

Ziggy's questioners claimed the best way to find out if they were bisexual was to engage in same-sex sexual activity, publicly or privately and generally only once (*'just one time, it'll be alright'*). Being 'alright' could be interpreted in two ways. A questioner may have been attempting to reassure Ziggy there would be no adverse outcomes for her because she was bisexual and should be used to this kind of experience. On the other hand, the questioner may have been attempting to reassure herself of her heterosexual integrity in case she found the experience not what she expected; one experience may not disrupt established sexual identities (Gurevich et al., 2007; Wilkinson, 1996). Ziggy's response to this (*'it's like well actually...'*) suggests her understanding of bisexuality as more than just one physical same-sex experiment (Flanders & Hatfield, 2012). The high number of requests from non-bisexual female students for one-time physical encounters implied their misrecognition of bisexuality as purely physical sexual behaviour. This misrecognition exacted an emotional toll on Ziggy as she *'kinda felt used almost'* (Gilmartin, 2006), resulting in her truanting [absenting herself without permission] more often from school (Darwich, Hymel & Waterhouse, 2012).

A newspaper article reporting an apparent increase in female same-sex experimentation (Associated Press, 2010) became a prompt in participants' reflective journals (see Appendix C). Responses to the prompt indicated some participants complied with requests from other girls, publically and privately. Alice wrote:

I have lots of friends who have 'experimented' by hooking with girls this year...but I don't think it's because they see it as some kind of 'rite of passage'. It is more like they have met lots of new people. Their worlds have expanded and we are now at the age where we are trying to 'find ourselves', so experimenting is a big part of that. (Alice, 18 years, RJ)

Alice did not regard her friends' sexual experimentation as a means to a higher social status (*'some kind of "rite of passage"'*). Her belief appeared quite removed from this ritual interpretation. She saw girl/girl experimentation within a positive personal/social context, supporting young women to learn more about themselves and how to interact within their school social environments (*'we are trying to "find ourselves"'*). Tabby related the newspaper article to discussions in her school Health class of public girl/girl kissing. She observed:

We are living in a society where it is slowly becoming more and more acceptable to be queer so it makes sense that more women are having same-sex relationships, and more young women are experimenting and discovering their sexual identity. (Tabby, 18 years, RJ)

It appeared some of Tabby's non-bisexual classmates perceived public girl/girl kissing becoming more accepted as a means to sexual self-identification. On the other hand, Lee's response did not suggest a similar confidence in personal acceptance of the practice:

Experimenting with Bisexuality (writer's capital) is common today. A lot of my friends who are straight say that they're bisexual sometimes; however I don't seem to grasp what they mean by sometimes to be honest. Does it mean a break from their male partner/s? Kissing a girl at a party or club? (Lee, 19 years, RJ)

Lee's friends *'who say they are straight say that they're bisexual sometimes'* may have occasionally used the term to appear to others as somewhat mysterious with a hint of sexual excitement (Callis, 2014). Because of this Lee believed her friends did not interpret bisexuality as she did. She questioned this through her friends' actions, asking if engaging in public girl/girl kissing or *'having a break from a male partner'* gave them licence to claim a bisexual identity. Artemis also questioned this licence in reference to the journal prompt:

With this article, I wish the writers had not said “experiment with BISEXUALITY”... Just because they are “experimenting: with other girls doesn’t mean they’re bi. Some could be pansexual or straight up lesbian. (Artemis, 21 years, RJ)

Artemis believed young women may have access to other sexual identity options such as ‘*pansexual or straight up lesbian*’ through experimentation. She suggested the author of the article, by using the term ‘bisexuality’, infers all girl/girl kissing practices relate only to bisexuality. Artemis also felt strongly about further misrecognition:

Something else that annoys me is that stereotypically, if a girl comes out as bi, shes seen as ‘experimenting’ or straight up faking for attention. (Artemis, 21 years, RJ)

In her journal response Artemis claimed this bisexual stereotype challenges authentic bisexuality. The stereotype suggests even if a girl identifies as bisexual then engages publically in girl/girl kissing, she is still only pretending to be bisexual, ‘*straight up faking for attention*’, with the sole intention of attracting attention. Artemis included the following unacknowledged quote:

‘I wonder why there is so much doubt about us being real, as if bisexual people are some sort of mystical unicorn that only appears when straight couples clap their hands three times and wish for a third person to have a threesome’. (Author unknown, supplied by Artemis, 21 years, RJ)

Her quote suggests Artemis' frustration with the expectation of some heterosexuals (‘*straight couples*’) who appear to misrecognise bisexuality solely as an on-demand sexual practice (‘*wish for a third person to have a threesome*’) to fulfil sexual fantasies (Zaylia, 2009). Scarlet’s journal entry suggests popular movie culture has ‘*normalised*’ the attention being given to girl/girl sexual behaviour, adding to the misrecognition that all girls engaging in public ‘*same sex encounters*’ are bisexual:

I also think that bisexuality or same sex encounters for females between the ages of 14-26 has been normalised by American media, eg American Pie 2. It can often be difficult to distinguish between girls that have had same sex encounters emotionally and physically and girls who have had a couple of bar make outs and sloppy gropes for the benefit of the people watching (or for a dare) (Scarlet, 24 years, RJ)

Misrecognition may create confusion for some people around bisexual identity, especially when considering current trends which involve young women publicly engaging in same-sex affection in

order to attract the heterosexual male gaze (Jackson & Gilbertson, 2009). According to Thompson (2006), as the participating women who are performing and/or exploring also make known their sexual availability to men, bisexual chic (du Plessis, 1996) is ‘obviously’ more bisexual than lesbian. Some young bisexual women claim public girl/girl sexual acts undermine bisexuality by perpetuating stereotypical myths of promiscuity and unreliability surrounding bisexuals (Bower, Gurevich, & Mathieson, 2002; Paz Galupo, 2011). This study argues these myths may be further perpetuated at school in contexts such as teachers’ attitudes towards bisexuality in formal sexuality education. This perpetuation may result in reduced opportunities for young bisexual women to acquire correct information about bisexuality (Elia, 2010), whether directly from a teacher, through the formal school curriculum (Malinsky, 1997) or through personal investigation in textbooks or in the school library (van Wormer & McKinney, 2003).

Bisexuality is an act put on to attract heterosexual men

Also, this study suggests girl/girl public ‘bisexual’ activity may be an attempt to increase popularity status amongst school peer groups. Indeed, participants in this study claimed some other girls at their schools believed this behaviour indicated a bisexual identity but adapted it only to appear trendy (Callis, 2014). In an attempt to encourage participants’ deeper critical thinking around attitudes and experiences at school regarding same-sex experimentation (Paakkari & Paakkari, 2012), this study employed the researcher’s suggestion ‘*bisexuality is an act put on to attract heterosexual men*’ (see Appendix D) as a focus group prompt. Emotions ran high as participants debated the effects this statement could have on societal perceptions of bisexuality. Some participants agreed with the statement. Jane suggested:

Chicks do it just to look hot you know. (Jane, 22 years, FG)

In Jane’s opinion the statement held some truth for young women who were seeking approval and acceptance into a particular social group at school through same-sex behaviour. Jane’s choice of phrase ‘*do it just to look hot*’ suggests those ‘*chicks*’ (colloquialism meaning young women) were seeking a specific outcome (Wilkinson, 1996). They may have been attempting to project a sense of the daring and outrageous in the hope of attaining higher social status in their school peer group with the added bonus of attracting male attention (M. Meyer, 2010). Publicly invalidating a bisexual identity may not have been uppermost or even present in their intentions. Pollyanna and Alice also thought school social status was a motivator:

It can become a bit of a trend thing, like it’s kind of yep, I like, I’m bi, cos that makes you cool or something. (Pollyanna, 16 years, FG)

Trying to get attention from guys...it became a trend to be bisexual or lesbian at our school. (Alice, 18 years, FG)

Both comments suggest 'bisexual chic' was popular amongst many girls in their teen years and appeared acceptable within social groups at school.

Furthermore, participants appeared to agree overall that while girl/girl kissing was often employed as a means to attract male attention, it misrecognised bisexual identity by encouraging a negative and false image of young bisexual women's presumed promiscuous behaviour (Wilkinson, 1996). Thompson (2006) claims many young women engaging in girl/girl kissing have been or are currently friends at school where the social environment provides opportunities to begin girl/girl experimentation. Indeed, some young bisexual women in this study had experienced being asked at school about girl/girl kissing (see this chapter, pages 79-80). The association of promiscuity with bisexuality may have also influenced some teachers' decisions to exclude the topic of bisexuality from school sexuality education (Sherwin & Jennings, 2006). However, according to Bradford (2006), more spaces are opening up in schools for discussions about sexual identity, including this exclusion and what implications this may have for young bisexual women.

Some focus groups also discussed bisexual visibility and difficulties experienced in efforts made to visually project an image of bisexual identity. This arose in response to the prompt 'Are there any other things that you want to share about being bisexual at school?', this prompt being repeated in the reflective journal. At some schools, participants who attained senior student status were allowed to attend school in 'mufti' (self-selected clothing instead of school uniform) (Soutter, O'Steen & Gilmore, 2012). The following section explores the notion of a bisexual image and the difficulties in creating and maintaining a plausible bisexual appearance at school and outside school.

The visible bisexual

Bisexual appearance: 'I felt like I couldn't really come out cos I didn't look bi enough'

Two separate focus group prompts in this study exposed an issue around experiences of 'looking' bisexual to others at school (see Appendix B). The first prompt was: Are there any other things that you want to share about being bisexual at school? The second prompt asked participants to explain how they describe themselves as bisexual to friends, family, and other people. In both instances, participant responses included concern at the lack of stereotypical sexual identity markers available to bisexuals in

comparison with gay or lesbian people and how this lack of bisexual markers caused confusion around bisexual identification amongst non-bisexual peers at school.

Generally, a woman's visible appearance and dress denotes her biological sex and characteristics of her gender (Hawkes, 1995, cited in Tabatabai, 2010). Stereotypical appearances or 'looks' often contribute to societal perception of sexual identity (Clarke & Turner, 2007). While stereotypical, these 'looks' suggest valid gay or lesbian identity (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009). Elia (2010) describes bisexuality as "a concept familiar to most" (p. 453) yet some bisexual women continue to have difficulty visually expressing their sexual identity.

Society reads bisexual women visually as either lesbian or straight, the assumption made based on the gender of their current partner (Alarie & Gaudet, 2013; Bradford, 2006; Hartman, 2013; Lanutti & Deans, 2012; Ochs, 1996) and not on a bisexual appearance or 'look'. Indeed, Huxley (2013) states there is no such "archetypal bisexual look" (p. 8) while Hayfield (2013) claims the lack of a bisexual 'look' is evidence of bisexuality's socio-cultural invisibility. Bi Academic Intervention (1997) describes this as a "poverty of images of bisexuality" (p. 10). A lack of a definitive bisexual appearance challenges the issue of bisexual validity as visibility positively validates cultural, social or sexual identity (Hayfield, 2013). Some bisexual women adopt a stereotypical 'lesbian' appearance in an attempt to project at the very least a non-heterosexual identity.

In one study female bisexual participants specifically claimed to adopt "'dyke looks' into their own personal style" (Taub, 2003, p. 16). Some participants felt more comfortable with lesbian standards of appearance and did not enjoy the 'femme' (feminine) look. Other participants adapted their appearance in accordance with the community they were in, describing having "two different closets of clothes: my dykey clothes and my het clothes" (Taub, 2003, p. 17); however, many of those who moved within a bisexual community described just feeling comfortable with themselves and feeling free to be individual. One participant in this current study echoed this sentiment:

It doesn't matter what you look like sort of thing, or who you are, within society, I like that, that's cool. (Alice, 18 years, interview)

By asserting that *'it doesn't matter what you look like'*, Alice indicated a bisexual 'appearance' was not necessary to ensure bisexual identity; however, Tabatabai (2010) claims women use dress and appearance to portray themselves sexually and as women, suggesting appearance is an important factor in identity validation (Hayfield, 2013). Tabatabai (2010) claims this is particularly important for

“LGBQ sexual identities”(p. 54); bisexual participants in Tabatabai’s study with male partners claimed they felt less pressure to make a visual social statement about their sexual identity, entering a world of invisibility through assumed heterosexuality. There remained the issue of bisexual validation.

Abigail, one of Tabatabai’s participants, claimed on coming out as bi, she felt she needed to look more butch as she was aware of people questioning her validity as bisexual. She recalled how “I kinda felt like I had to put on a little show and play down my more feminine inclinations in order to look more sort of credibly queer” (Tabatabai, 2010, p. 61). Abigail’s comment reflects a stereotypical societal perception that most bisexual women are the same as lesbians as they exhibit masculine traits such as being more assertive and dominant or ‘butch’ (Rosario et al., 2009). This mis-perception further contributes to societal misrecognition of bisexuality.

In a personal narrative, Pajor (2005) describes how her visual appearance (short hair, piercings, jeans, boots) is misrecognised as lesbian by some heterosexuals:

They don’t understand the bisexual part. When you try to explain, their eyes glaze over. Then you get paranoid and wonder what they’re thinking...You want to say, *Just because in theory I can fuck everyone doesn’t mean that I want to or that I do.* (Pajor, 2005, p. 574)

Pajor (2005) describes bisexuals as “the white trash of the gay world, a group whom it’s socially acceptable to not accept” (p. 574); indeed, as Elia (2010) observes, “there is perhaps no more pernicious way to symbolically and materially harm a group of people than to systematically erase their existence” (p. 459). Pajor experiences bisexual erasure through invalidation of her bisexual identity (Yoshino, 2000).

Participants in the current study made no attempt to hide their bisexual identity (Lasser & Wicker, 2008). They were publically ‘out’ or known at school as bisexual but, as did Pajor, found their claims to a bisexual identity often refuted by their non-bisexual school peers. Eadie (1999) observes that “in the absence of a coherent identity, their expression of bisexuality (was) wanting” (p. 123). Some participants cited lack of a specific stereotypical bisexual appearance or way of ‘looking bi’ as a disadvantage. Artemis asked:

Am I not ‘bi’ enough because I pass off as a straight individual? (Artemis, 21 years, RJ)

Although Artemis was now in her early 20s, she had had difficulty in being taken seriously as bisexual at secondary school, and found this was an ongoing issue because *‘bi women my age are usually seen*

as “fake” bisexuals’ by non-bisexuals (Diamond 2005). Artemis wanted to actively participate in the ‘LGBT community’ as she thought it would ‘help me establish a bi portrayal of myself’, but she was hesitant:

I am also afraid of ...those who do not think I am ‘queer’ enough. (Artemis, 21 years, RJ)

Rose spoke scornfully of the social and sexual injustice meted out to bisexual people on the basis of a lack of stereotypical appearance:

Yeah there’s one that really like pisses me off. How come gay guys have like a stereotype and so do some lesbians, but bi people, how can you tell? It’s like we’re just obvious by the things people kind of think we do and they like prejudice? Like they’re like ‘oh, bi, yes you’re the greedy ones’ or ‘unreliable’ or ‘can’t be trusted in a relationship’? (Rose, 18 years, interview)

The lack of a bisexual ‘look’ made gaining peer acceptance as bisexual at school challenging for these participants. Acceptance as bisexual by peer groups and teachers was complicated by non-bisexual students’ perceptions of bisexuality based on behavioural premises such as sexual promiscuity and engaging in ‘threesomes’ (Klesse, 2005). Rose’s admission of *‘pretty much a single existence’* suggests a need to sacrifice personal integrity to group conformity when seeking acceptance or inclusiveness (Cole, 1998). Claiming to eschew conformity and embrace individualism is an adolescent trait; however, the need for social acceptance and validation of sexual identity at school is perhaps greater (Pascoe, 2005; Savin-Williams, 2005; Unks, 1995). As Tabatabai (2010) emphasises, “an identity is considered authentic only when it is...believed by others” (p. 62). The school experiences recounted by some of the young bisexual women in this study suggest some confusion over ways to convince their non-bisexual peers of their authenticity as bisexual when there was a lack of available contexts. Lee described her portrayal of herself as ‘bi’ as *‘not static’*. She wrote:

Depending on certain circumstances, I portray myself different in a way that’s not very visible e.g. I don’t dress up like a stereotypical ‘butch dyke’ if I’m into girls or over-do the makeup if I’m into a guy. (Lee, 19 years, RJ)

Lee chose not conform to societal expectations in her appearance. In their discussion regarding visibility management, Lasser and Wicker (2008) suggest youth of diverse sexualities manage their social environments through “actively regulat(ing) the degree to which others are aware of their sexual identity” (p. 114). For gay or lesbian youth, visibility as gay or lesbian may occur through their appearance and mannerisms. For young bisexual women, the lack of a stereotypical appearance may

inhibit their social expression as bisexual, as the possibility of identity misperception as lesbian or straight may depend on their very appearance and/or behaviour. Alice believed:

You are whoever you want to be. You can change your mind at any point! How do I portray myself as bi? I have no idea! (Alice, 18 years, RJ)

Alice came out as bisexual in her penultimate year at secondary school. After coming out, she did not think she looked, dressed or acted any different to the time in her life when she had identified as straight. There was nothing she did *‘that would make it incredibly obvious to a stranger that (she) was bisexual’*. Alice did not consider a bisexual ‘look’ a priority, claiming *‘you are whoever you want to be’*. The exclamation mark at the end of her sentence *‘You can change your mind at any time!’* suggests excitement at the freedom of personal expression that bisexual identity may bring; however, Alice also believed her bisexuality was pretty much invisible, writing:

Apart from liking both girls and guys, talking about both with my friend, there isn’t anything I do that would make it incredibly obvious to a stranger that I was bisexual. (Alice, 18 years, RJ)

Jaydie had come out as bisexual to her friends at school in Year 10 and was in Year 13 at the time of her interview. She also thought coming out as ‘bi’ amounted to little difference in any aspect of herself as *‘with being bi, you stay who you are’*, as opposed to coming out as gay:

I think ‘bi’ is a lot different to just coming out as ‘gay’. Gay is a life-changer. You’re viewed completely differently and you’re expected to act different, and if you don’t fit the stereotype, people are like ‘wait, aren’t you supposed to be gay?’ with being bi, you stay who you are. (Jaydie, 17 years, RJ)

According to Jaydie there was greater pressure on recently out gay people to meet societal stereotypes. Bisexual people were subject to different pressure as a stereotypical bisexual was based on sexual behaviour, not general behaviour to which Jaydie alluded (*‘you’re expected to act different’*). Fleur, however, had experienced considerable pressure from her non-bisexual school peers about her bisexual identity because she didn’t *‘look bi’*:

Well people have a kind of their own idea what a bi person looks like or is like, and if you don’t fit into it, they’re just like, they say things like ‘you shouldn’t be bi, you don’t look bi’, but this is how I am, just accept it, but they just go on and on about it so yeah. (Fleur, 16 years, interview)

Ziggy Stardust admitted to not having specifically considered a bisexual ‘look’ to convince non-bisexual peers at school of her identity:

I don’t know, I guess I don’t. I dress how I want to dress, act how I want to act and love who I want to love. I am me, bisexual or not. (Ziggy Stardust, 19 years, RJ)

However, Ziggy did claim increased self-confidence when those same peers at school and some teachers became aware of her bisexual identity. Some young women experience a desire to be seen by others as visibly different (Harris, 2001; Wilkins, 2004). Even in the face of some adversity experienced in some situations at school, the young women in this study were outgoing and open about themselves as bisexual. Indeed, Ziggy thought her bisexuality added to her social attraction at school (Callis, 2014):

It gives me a little mystery, and I love it when they ask me about it and I can educate them. I tend to be very open about it with friends and strangers, though no one ever guesses that I am bisexual, it always has to be me to bring it up. (Ziggy Stardust, 19 years, RJ)

Many participants appeared to see their ‘bisexual display’ (Hartman, 2013) as behaviour-based. Ziggy’s comment ‘*no one ever guesses that I am bisexual*’ suggests although physical appearance is not a reliable bisexual identity indicator, behaviour is, but Ziggy did not conform to behaviour expectations:

I think this is because I don’t “perform gay” – I do my own gender. (Ziggy Stardust, 19 years, RJ)

Ziggy thought ‘*being butch*’ was the most obvious way to portray same-sex attraction. She believed her bisexual self-identification at school confused some students who misrecognised ‘*being butch*’ as being only lesbian; Ziggy did not ‘*perform gay*’ which confused her peers as they knew of her attraction to girls as well as boys:

Not being butch made it tough for some people at school to believe that I like girls. (Ziggy Stardust, 19 years, RJ)

Lee relied on her personality to define her as bisexual, dressing as she chose and defying the need for a generic ‘bisexual’ appearance:

It's more of my personality that I present to other people and that's how I personally portray myself as 'bi'... personality lasts longer. (Lee, 19 years, RJ)

Accurately defining a specific bisexual 'look' may be difficult. Most participants spoke of the lack of this 'look' but felt how they dressed or appeared did not define their bisexual identity. Some participants mentioned a wish for a definitive stereotypical appearance to avoid being misrecognised at school as lesbian or straight yet others were unconcerned over this possibility. In Lee's words, '*personality lasts longer*', suggesting clothes maketh not the bisexual; however in some ways a lack of accessible bisexual markers proved a barrier to participants' portrayal of an authentic bisexual 'look', adding pressure to their visibility at school as young bisexual women.

Conclusion

This chapter explored and discussed young bisexual women's interpretations of the term 'bisexual' and the challenges they encountered from some non-bisexuals at school and in social environments in relation to bisexual identity validation. The recorded experiences suggest participant interpretations of what constitutes bisexual identity may vary; however, participants held firm to their belief in bisexuality as a valid sexual identity (Klein & Dudley, 2014) within which fluidity of attraction to others may occur (Callis, 2014; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2006, 2010; Ross, Daneback, & Månsson, 2012).

Also, the chapter highlighted participant views on the practice of public girl/girl kissing and the impact this practice appeared to have on the interpretation of bisexual identity by non-bisexual peers at school. Many participants claimed girl/girl kissing does not validate a girl's bisexual identity, suggesting attempts to 'appear bisexual' are often made to simply attract attention (Alarie & Gaudet, 2013; Callis, 2014). No participant reported personally engaging in girl/girl kissing for this reason; however, some participants were aware of the deliberate power of this activity to attract heterosexual male attention (Rupp & Taylor, 2010).

The general opinion amongst participants was bisexual identity was based on the notion of attraction to all people of all genders. This attraction was fluid, not being restricted to just one gender and subject to external influences such as time, emotions and situation. Bisexuality was not founded on specific behavioural trends; also despite some external pressure from non-bisexual peers to 'look' bisexual, participants were unable to access any form of stereotypical bisexual appearance as a means of physical identification. This hampered some participants' efforts to convince other people, in particular teachers and non-bisexual students at school, of the authenticity of bisexuality.

Participants expressed strong concern over the impact of misrecognition of bisexuality they experienced at school. This impact and its effects for young bisexual women are discussed in greater depth in the next chapter which explores participants' experiences of misrecognition and erasure in their school sexuality education classes.

Chapter Five

Sexuality Education: “Bisexuality? That’s just semantics”

Introduction

This chapter argues young bisexual women’s learning needs are not addressed by many New Zealand secondary school-based sexuality education teachers and the programmes from which they teach. Sexuality education is based around the framework provided by the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (2007). The Principles of the NZC (Ministry of Education, 2007) are the “foundations of curriculum decision making”, describing the curriculum as “non-sexist...and non-discriminatory” (p.9). The Principle of Inclusion recommends that “student’s identities... are recognised and affirmed and that their learning needs are addressed” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.9). Excluding reference to bisexuality in sexuality education suggests teachers and programmes disregard the NZC’s (2007) recommendation for recognition and affirmation of identity. In addition, heteronormative discourses in school sexuality education invisibilise young bisexual women.

Opening with a brief review of research into school sexuality education, the chapter then examines the notion of heterosexual ‘normalcy’ in relation to knowledge dissemination by teachers who may be struggling with personal beliefs. Participant recollections of their school sexuality education include a number of challenging factors such as bisexual negation and erasure, and heteronormative practices and attitudes. The chapter concludes with participants offering strategies which would promote inclusive and useful learning for young bisexual women in school sexuality education.

Misrecognition and exclusion of bisexuality in New Zealand school sexuality education

Research has documented the prevailing discourse of safety within school sexuality education (Allen, 2005 and 2011; Allen & Elliot, 2008; DePalma & Atkinson, 2009; Diorio, 2006; Ellis & High, 2004; Fields, 2008; Hillier & Mitchell, 2008; Jackson & Weatherall, 2010). Furthermore, many school sexuality education programmes provide only opposite-sex based information on contraception and STIs, sometimes including relationship issues and management (Ellis & High, 2004; Epstein, O’Flynn & Telford, 2003; Fields, 2008; Formby, 2010; Jackson & Weatherall, 2010; Nixon, 2010). Sexual activity is positioned as unsafe and lesson focus narrows to penis/vagina coital activity, ignoring non-penetrative sexual practices and their relevance to same/both-sexes attracted students (Jackson & Weatherall, 2010). Rarely do sexuality education programmes move beyond the boundaries of puberty, pregnancy and heterosexual relationships and the ‘risks’ associated with sexual activity. This heterosexual perspective leaves no space for bisexuality and indeed any *non*-heterosexual identity, excluding learning opportunities for young bisexual women.

In a recent study, Allen (2011) asked New Zealand secondary school students which topics were not included in their school sexuality education programmes; the students listed gay, lesbian and bisexual topics and homophobia. Similarly, the young women in this current study reported minimal programme content on same-sex relationships, and bisexuality. Little to no consultation about programme content is made with students (Allen, 2005a; Hirst, 2008; Mathews, Everett, Binedell & Steinberg, 1995). Programme content is often based on what teachers and other adults in the school community decide is ‘appropriate’ knowledge for young people (Allen, 2011; Malinsky, 1997; Russell, 2011; Sinkinson & Hughes, 2008); Allen (2011) describes this as “socially valued” (p.44) knowledge which may include issues such as rising Chlamydia rates, or high teenage pregnancy statistics.

Socially valued knowledge suggests a sense of heterosexual ‘normalcy’ because, as Allen (2011) states, “the type of sexuality most readily assumed and discussed in sexuality education is heterosexuality” (p. 44/45; also see Elia, 2010; Elia & Eliason, 2010; Linville, 2011). Heterosexual ‘normalcy’ excludes bisexuality. Any *non*-heterosexual identity is positioned as ‘other’, ‘deviant’, or ‘not normal’, immediately disadvantaging any *non*-heterosexual student (Quinlivan, 2006). This sense of ‘other’ may manifest through classroom teaching practice; the most heteronormative teaching practice assumes sexual activity and relationships occur naturally and normally between males and females (Allen, 2005; Elia, 2014; Epstein, O’Flynn & Telford, 2003; Temple, 2005).

A hegemonic heterosexual perspective, while appearing curriculum-based, may also reflect teachers’ personal moral beliefs associating bisexuality with deviance and immorality (DePalma & Atkinson, 2009; Fields, 2008). Personal beliefs, along with a lack of knowledge, non- inclusive preservice education and little to no ongoing professional support (Ollis, 2010) may leave teachers unwilling to answer participant questions about same-sex issues (Fields, 2008; McAllum, 2008; Sinkinson & Burrows, 2011; Smith, 2006). Often teachers problematicize same/both-sex attraction by referring students who ask such questions to counsellors (Kehily, 2002; Macgillivray & Jennings, 2008; Nairn & Smith, 2003; Quinlivan, 2002). Recalling the promise of inclusivity made by NZC (2007) these reasons do not justify the silence at school around bisexuality reported by many participants in this study. All of these points can prohibit effective teaching and learning inclusive of young bisexual women.

For many participants in this study, their school sexuality education focused on male/female sexual activity such as contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI) and getting pregnant (Sinkinson & Hughes, 2008). While these young women saw personal benefits in learning about opposite-sex based issues such as pregnancy and STI prevention, other topics such as same-sex prevention of STI transmission including the acquisition and use of a dental dam, attraction and relationships between same/all sexes and managing a bisexual identity were excluded from lesson content (Elia, 2010).

Excluding these topics erases vital opportunities to critically explore what it means to be bisexual, opportunities which may enable a sense of self-empowerment for young bisexual women, and sexual equality within the school community. The chapter now links points from this discussion to participant experiences to emphasise the effects of exclusion of bisexuality from their school sexuality education.

Initial recollections of school sexuality education: straight and unsafe

In this study, prompts in focus groups, reflective journals and individual interviews (see Appendices B, E and F) invited participants to recall memories of their school sexuality education. In the focus groups, the prompt “Think back to your sexuality education lessons at school. What do you remember about them?” (see Appendix B) generated an immediate simultaneous group reaction. Even if they didn’t know each other, participants spontaneously exchanged glances, rolling eyes and sighing, suggesting a mixture of disgust, sadness and frustration. Annie was a vibrant, enthusiastic young woman whose response to the prompt was an anguished wail:

Oh it was awful, it was soooo bad! (Annie, 16 years, focus group).

Other participants responded in a similar fashion. Some responses were delivered with fervour, such as Tabby’s:

It made me angry (Tabby, 18 years, focus group).

This anger stemmed from Tabby’s sense of social and sexual justice (Allen, 2011). She explained:

The whole health thing makes me angry because I mean even like so much of gender and sexuality that needs to be taught and um also I think it’s unfair that especially I guess people who do strongly identify as gay have to sit through lessons on heterosexual safe sex and all this kind of stuff, when it’s not beneficial to them or when they’re not learning how to take care of themselves and their relationships? It’s just so unfair! (Tabby, 18 years, focus group).

This participant saw a wider perspective surrounding the inequity of sexuality education delivered at her co-educational state school. This perspective included a need for more teaching about gender and sexuality, a topic not covered in depth until Year 12 (16-17 years) and only then if a student chose Health as an option (Sinkinson & Hughes, 2008; Weir, 2009). Tabby’s claim that *‘lessons on heterosexual safe sex’* were not useful was echoed by most participants in this study, based on their existing knowledge of heterosexual sex. She used the term *‘gay’* inclusively, suggesting an understanding of the disadvantages experienced through the lessons on safe sex not only by young bisexual women but all students of diverse sexualities.

Liv was disadvantaged in a different way. She felt *‘awkward’* in her girls’ class when the female teacher talked about protection from STIs:

It was really awkward sitting there like with your oh let's put the condom on the banana kind of thing you know and like don't get STIs from boys (Liv, 23 years, interview).

Believing her female teacher's comment '*don't get STIs from boys*' was unfair, Liv thought her teacher was positioning males purely as STI transmitters. She said the tone of voice used by the teacher inferred there might be other sources of STIs but no further information was provided:

I remember feeling frustrated about not learning anything about anything, like I didn't even know how gay people had sex... nothing stood out at all really, it was just all monotone stuff (Liv, 23 years, interview).

Liv was '*frustrated*'; she wanted to know more but was too shy to ask questions. Some participant responses suggested although teachers promoted condom use through often inappropriate practical demonstrations, most participants understood the importance of condoms as STI and pregnancy protection in opposite-sex activity. They found condom information useful as they were either in relationships with young men, or saw the possibilities of such relationships in the future; however, no information was provided about STI protection between females. Artemis was concerned about this lack of inclusive and specific information (Kehily, 2002, 2002a):

There's...sort of like a myth that kinda goes round like lesbians...can't get STIs? Say if there's a bisexual girl (in a) health class and if no one says anything like girls getting STIs from other girls, and she has sex with another girl and gets herpes, and she's like 'what? I didn't know this could happen', and like it could be so easily preventable (Artemis, 21 years, focus group).

Most participants reported little discussion of sexual diversity in relation to any topics covered in their sexuality education lessons. Fleur experienced discomfort during her Health class regarding self-exposure as bisexual:

I didn't enjoy the discussion we had in health cos like I was the only one (bisexual) and I just went all quiet (Fleur, 16 years, interview).

Fleur thought she was the only bisexual student in the class at her large co-educational state school. She was reluctant to share her thoughts with the class about being bisexual because she was frightened of being bullied by other students. She came out as bisexual to her health teacher, finding her very supportive at first; however, while the teacher began including the term 'bisexuality' alongside 'gay and lesbian' in sexuality lessons (Ngo, 2003), Fleur thought her teacher's use of phrases such as '*we have to accept it*' and '*we shouldn't judge*' were patronising and demeaning to anyone not claiming a heterosexual identity. The teacher's use of these phrases positioned bisexuality as 'other than normal'.

Fleur was still unable to garner any information about bisexuality:

My teacher was saying, she was just putting it out in the open and that it's okay and we have to accept it and we shouldn't judge, but we didn't really learn about [being bisexual] (Fleur, 16 years, focus group).

While Fleur's sexuality education teacher hinted at the presence of bisexuality yet avoided providing direct and useful information, Ziggy Stardust's non-bisexual peers expressed curiosity about bisexuality outside the classroom. Inside the classroom, however, they negated it:

It was like a taboo subject, and like everyone was curious about it but god knows they wouldn't bring it up because they'd just be like nullified by everyone else in the class (Ziggy Stardust, 19 years, interview).

In Ziggy's class, the students self-policed to avoid possible teasing and ostracism from peers. This negation demonstrated by students was mirrored by Ziggy's teacher who did not mention bisexuality once during sexuality education. Ignoring the topic imbued it with a somewhat 'taboo' or unsafe status, disadvantaging those students who were curious about bisexuality. Yoni also claimed her lessons depicted sex and sexuality as unsafe physically and emotionally, presenting a 'negative' view:

Sex and sexuality are only seen in relation to what STIs or when you get pregnant or you know you'll get pregnant or you'll be emotionally scarred and stuff and it was really negative especially if you were trying to figure out your sexuality as a queer person, cos you know, I want some positives out of this but you don't get that at all, it's really focused on what bad things are going to happen to you if you do this (Yoni, 20 years, interview).

Yoni felt this negative view did not help young women questioning their sexual identity ('*trying to figure out your sexuality as a queer person*'). Some participants thought the opposite-sex information was useful to them, but as bisexual, there was nothing to prepare them for managing sex and relationships with females:

Well I obviously did learn about you know, um, periods and stuff which I do deal with, and protecting myself when having sex with a guy, which is very important because they're the ones that can get you pregnant, so it was helpful to me, just nothing very helpful for the other side of my sex life (Beena, 19 years, interview).

These participants' general recollections of school sexuality education included mostly unhelpful lesson content delivered by teachers who appeared disinterested or uncomfortable teaching the subject. Sexual relationships involving oral sex and sexual intercourse between young people were depicted as dangerous and high risk, sometimes placing males as perpetrators. Any relationships education focused

only on heterosexuals leaving many participants feeling confused about bisexuality. Teachers endorsed heterosexual ‘normalcy’ in lessons by teaching only about male/female sexual activity and relationships. The next section addresses this endorsement and how young bisexual women negotiated male/female heteronormalcy in sexuality education.

Heteronormative attitudes and practices in school sexuality education

In sexuality education, many participants recalled teachers emphasising heterosexuality to the exclusion of any other sexuality (Elia, 2014; Ferfolja, 2007; Kehily, 2002). As Liv pointed out,

There was no mention of anything other than heterosexuality at all (Liv, 23 years, focus group).

Liv thought her teacher seemed reluctant to address any aspect of diverse sexualities, suggesting this reluctance was a result of her teacher’s *‘heteronormative’* attitude. This attitude seemed to disappoint Liv as she was hoping for positive validation of bisexuality from her teacher:

I thought she might have been more open and supportive of lesbian and bisexuality but apparently not...it was a bit heteronormative really (Liv, 23 years, focus group).

Annie, a self-proclaimed ‘nerd’ who loves science and chemistry, attended a girl’s school whose Values Statement promised “inclusion and equity, which includes embracing and celebrating diversity”. Annie spoke of her female Health and PE teacher’s reluctance to answer student questions about sexual identity:

That was the stage when I and people around me as well were figuring out sexualities and also I found that she was particularly unhelpful because I think it taught the other people in my class that it was okay to be completely and utterly okay to be heteronormative, and that was just not helpful (Annie, 16 years, focus group).

Kehily (2002) cites Trudell’s (1992) theory of ‘defensive’ teaching; “forms of pedagogy where teachers make the split between ideals and practice in order to control potentially uncomfortable moments” (p.217). To avoid having to manage these moments Annie’s teacher may have redirected any potential discussion of sexual diversity to heterosexuality. Alternately, the teacher may have recognised her students’ needs for information about diverse sexualities but was obligated by her school’s Board of Trustees [(BOT) elected representatives from the school community charged with governance of same] directives to restrict sexualities information to heterosexuality (Jones & Hillier, 2014). Epstein and Johnson (1998) describe this as attempts to impose “very narrow terms of sexual recognition upon a

sexually diverse society” (p.31). Annie saw the teacher’s restriction as *‘heteronormative’*, showing she understood how this discriminative practice ‘othered’ and erased any sexual identity that was not heterosexual, including bisexuality (Elia, 2014).

Ziggy Stardust confessed to irregular school attendance due to her general non-interest in school (Rossen et al., 2009). Year 10 Health lessons and sexuality education held little interest for both Ziggy and Artemis as young bisexual women because:

It was all about safe sex, heterosexual sex (Ziggy Stardust, 19 years, focus group).

When it’s taught it’s given that everybody is straight (Artemis, 21 years, focus group).

Both participants found some aspects such as information about condoms useful in the lessons covering opposite sex safety and relationships but felt disadvantaged by the heterosexual emphasis. As Ziggy remarked:

They didn’t have anything, not even glazed over what it is to be anything other than straight, like the dynamics of any like sex with anything other than straight, cos like they go into the details, with male/female relationships but nothing else, you know? (Ziggy Stardust, 19 years, interview).

Beena’s class teacher covered the same topics in both Year 9 and Year 10. Beena noticed:

There was a huge focus on heterosexual sex, like there wasn’t really anything about other sexes at all. I didn’t figure out how, didn’t figure out how girls had sex until the first time having sex with a girl, so yeah (Beena, 19 years, interview).

Because of the subject being “pretty much focused on opposite sex couples, heterosexual couples”, Beena felt disadvantaged by her lack of knowledge about same sex sexual activity. Fleur summed up Ziggy, Artemis and Beena’s experiences with her own comment:

It was only the male and female together...being anything else was just kind of ignored (Fleur, 16 years, focus group).

Heterosexual ‘normalcy’ was presented to Gage’s class as a metaphor:

You get a lot of ‘girls and boys are like a jigsaw puzzle, they fit perfectly together’ and we got that from like Year 5 (Gage, 20 years, focus group).

Thus far, participants’ sexuality lessons appear to have had a heteronormative focus. Anything other than heterosexuality was invisible:

What gay people? They don't exist for sex ed! (Amethyst, 24 years, focus group).

A recurring discourse in the data was participant use of the terms 'heteronormativity' and 'heteronormative', several participants reporting having discussed these in their community diversity groups. While sexuality education experiences were described as 'awkward' (Liv), 'unhelpful' (Annie), 'unbalanced' (Yoni) and 'uncomfortable' (Fleur), participant narratives reflected personal qualities of resilience and thoughtfulness.

In this section the young bisexual women in this study shared their experiences of secondary school sexuality education. Participants appeared to enjoy recalling and comparing these experiences with their focus group peers. Experiences appeared little different between older and younger participants, with a consensus of disappointment at the lack of information available to them as young bisexual women. Most participants described their teachers' emphasis on the risks of male/female physical sexual activity; this was helpful for sexual relationships with males, but not helpful for sexual relationships with females. Older participants had had time to distance themselves from their experiences yet recollections were still clear, suggesting some emotional impact as a result of being invisibilised through heteronormative practices.

Heteronormative relationships education

In many New Zealand schools sexuality education focuses on the biological and physical aspects of sex and reproduction, excluding relationships education (ERO, 2007). Although participants in this study were not directly questioned about the presence of relationships education within their sexuality education programmes, during some individual interviews the topic arose in response to the prompt "What wasn't as helpful or useful to you as a young bisexual woman?" (see Appendix F).

Several participants in this study described their relationships education as having heterosexual limits (Hirst, 2008; Measor, 2004); they felt issues such as how to introduce a bisexual identity into a relationship were ignored. Yoni saw exclusion from classroom lessons as "negative":

There was a lot of talk about having sex, in you know sex ed, about heterosexual couples for example, and problems with that but there was barely any talk at all about... I cannot remember any relationship (discussed in class) that wasn't a straight relationship, um, it was really kind of negative in a lot of ways (Yoni, 20 years, interview).

The diversity group at Yoni's school promoted sexual diversity through health promotions including formal workshops with school staff; however, lesson content about relationships continued to focus on heterosexuality. Yoni spoke of the difficulties this focus created, suggesting she may have found it easier to come to terms with her bisexuality if sexuality education classes had offered more support:

If you are queer and you have sexuality then you have to find information yourself... if I'd had like more kind of support say in health class if they'd told you about more that would have been really really good (Yoni, 20 years, interview).

According to NZC (2007), integrity is a Value in education “to be encouraged, modelled and explored” (p.10). Integrity involves “being honest...and acting ethically” (NZC, 2007, p.10). During a relationships activity in class, Annie’s Year 10 Health and PE teacher flouted this Value:

There was this one exercise and we had to you know fill in boxes or whatever about what we looked for in a um what we looked for in a man, whatever, and she goes ‘some of you girls, um, you might be ah romantically interested in women, but for the purposes of this exercise it will be best if you pretend it’s men’ (Annie, 16 years, interview).

The exercise can be seen as heteronormative in the way it encouraged gender stereotypes. The teacher’s suggestion to ‘*pretend its men*’ actively encouraged dishonesty, and, a bias to ‘either/or’ dichotomous attraction (Elia, 2010; Yoshino, 2000) erased any possibility of bisexual attraction. Annie was disappointed; she recognised sexual injustice in the teacher’s erasure of bisexuality (Elia, 2014; Elia & Eliason, 2010). An opportunity to discuss bisexual attraction and relationships was lost, denying any young bisexual women in the class a chance for further information and affirmation. In Annie’s opinion her teacher’s attitude promoted heteronormality:

[This] was the stage when I and people around me as well were figuring out sexualities and also I found that it was particularly unhelpful because I think it taught the other people in my class that it was okay to be completely and utterly okay to be heteronormative (Annie, 16 years, interview).

The reason behind Annie’s teacher’s denial of this significant learning opportunity may have been based not only on her personal attitudes but also due to the institution she represented. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, school management may influence staff attitudes (Hirst, 2013; Price, 2012). Rose described her school principal’s attitude to bisexuality and sexual diversity within her school:

A group of year 12 girls this year wanted to get someone from Rainbow Youth in Auckland into school to talk about like the whole bi and gay and trans thing but the principal said like no way. She said it would be like promoting homosexuality and that, and she wouldn’t even like discuss it with anyone. (Rose, 18 years, interview).

Rose’s school principal ‘*wouldn’t even like discuss it with anyone*’. Although she found this response ‘*disappointing*’, Rose realised the group’s request for more education and information about bisexuality

and diverse sexualities would not be approved as her catholic school responded to church directives (Hirst, 2013; Love, 2003; New Zealand Catholic Education Office, 2001). Rose received her sexuality education through religious instruction at a small urban catholic girls' school where bisexuality was never mentioned. She thought her relationships education was *'out of touch'*, describing how her female teacher emphasised the importance of women suffering menstrual pain and childbirth "because Jesus died for us":

Like you grow up, date guys but don't have sex with them, get married, don't use contraception, have as many kids as god decides, what a load of crap (Rose, 18 years, interview).

According to Rasmussen (2010) there is no definitive Christian statement on sexuality education; instead there is the possibility each institution uses sexuality education to "produce certain sorts of agentic subjects" (p. 702). Rose knew the emphasis on women's suffering was a part of the dogma associated with her school's faith, but strongly opposed (*'what a load of crap'*) her school's emphasis of the church's standpoint on women being submissive in heterosexual relationships (Love, 2003). These heteronormative and patriarchal attitudes invisibilised bisexuality in the school community.

Tabby said the only information about bisexuality in her sexuality education class came via a *'work sheet'* where bisexuality was defined as 'someone attracted to both men and women'. When asked about relationships education, she described it as *'very heteronormative'*:

That work sheet I mentioned was the only thing we got around sexual orientation, um, and the rest of it was very heteronormative, STIs etc, this is how to put on a condom, this is what your relationships should be like, all that kind of stuff (Tabby, 18 years, focus group).

Participants found teachers' avoidance of bisexuality by defaulting to heterosexuality in sexuality education disappointing. Yoni's face was sad as she wondered if bisexuality was not discussed because *'people might find it distasteful'*. Liv said, shrugging her shoulders and looking at the floor, *'there was nothing in it that interested me as myself'*. Ziggy's comment summarises this discussion:

The fact that they didn't have anything, not even glazed over what it is to be anything other than straight, like the dynamics of any like sex with anything other than straight, cos they like go into the details, with male/female relationships but nothing else, you know? (Ziggy Stardust, 19 years, interview).

When considering what was not helpful or useful in sexuality education to them as young bisexual women, most participants included their impressions of negative attitudes from their teachers and in Rose's situation, her school. Many teachers appeared to exhibit heteronormative attitudes and beliefs which influenced the content of sexuality education programmes. Several participants described their

Health teachers' approaches to sexuality education, questioning their teachers' effectiveness of delivery of topical information. As this chapter is arguing the apparent lack of teacher efficacy in meeting young bisexual women's learning needs in sexuality education, it is necessary to address the issue of teacher effectiveness. The next section considers what constitutes effectiveness in teaching sexuality education and the ensuing consequences for young bisexual women.

Teacher effectiveness in sexuality education

Positive teacher-student relationships are a key to effective sexuality education (Allen, 2011; Elia, 2010; Hirst, 2013; Kehily, 2002); however, some participants' teachers appeared to disregard this vital factor, taking an inappropriately casual attitude to sexuality education. Several participants spoke about varying degrees of teacher discomfort during sexuality education lessons (Allen, 2011; Jones, 2004; Munro, 2003). For these participants, this discomfort influenced their teacher's delivery and effectiveness (Allen, 2011; Formby, 2011; Haignere, Culhane, Balsley & Legos, 1996; Munro & Ballard, 2004). This attitude discouraged some participants, causing them to be critical of their teachers. Annie described her teacher as *'this awful woman'*. Some of the students in Annie's class responded to what they saw as the teacher's condescending attitude by posting her comments such as in the following quotation on an internet site set up to belittle teachers:

We had this awful woman as a teacher, every Wednesday after we had health, um there were quotes from her would go up on Facebook. A direct quote: 'now girls, real penises aren't made of wood.' She was terrible (Annie, 16 years, focus group).

Some participants also thought their teachers' lack of knowledge of bisexuality stemmed from an innate sense of security in their heterosexual identity, creating an inability to see beyond this identity: this suggests a subconscious heteronormative attitude. Allen (2006) describes this as a "way in which heteronormativity operates to discursively constitute heterosexual normalcy and render anything but thinking 'straight' unintelligible" (p.163). Pollyanna thought her teacher didn't have the understanding required to teach sexual diversity:

Well I just don't think she had a very good grasp on it and she just there wasn't in the curriculum like a lot of stuff that she had? She didn't have much material given to her and so I said, I asked her beforehand about helping and stuff and she said 'well there is some queer stuff but I don't feel overly confident' (Pollyanna, 16 years, focus group).

Pollyanna made an astute observation about her teacher's lack of resources (*'she didn't have much*

material given to her'). The Education Review Office report (ERO, 2007) highlights a lack of suitable teaching resources for sexuality education; however, as discussed earlier, lack of government funding and support restricts local production of resources designed to meet the diverse needs in New Zealand secondary school sexuality education. Polly's teacher's disclosure of her lack of confidence (*"I don't feel overly confident"*) regarding *"queer stuff"* suggests inadequate preservice education in sexual diversity within sexuality education and reinforces a need for ongoing external professional development and support for teachers of sexuality education in New Zealand (Ollis, 2010; Wyatt, Oswald, White & Peterson, 2008). A further issue in teacher effectiveness is the situation of some teachers who, as the result of a decision made in the 1990s by the Ministry of Education (Sinkinson & Burrows, 2011; Weir, 2009), have been pressured into teaching sexuality education.

As briefly mentioned earlier in this study, in New Zealand the two subjects Health and Physical Education have been combined into one curriculum learning area. Sinkinson & Burrows (2011) suggest the Ministry of Education's decision to combine Health and Physical Education does not appear to have improved the status or delivery of health education in schools. Tension exists between the two subjects, heightened by school staffing trends expecting all PE teachers to teach junior Health including sexuality education (Sinkinson & Burrows, 2009; Weir, 2009). McCaughy, Rocco Dillon, Jones, & Smigell (2005) claim some PE teachers participate in the subjugation of sexually diverse students, often unknowingly. This may be a major influencing factor in the inadequate provision of sexuality education to young bisexual women and poses the issue discussed in the next section.

Can PE teachers teach Health? Should PE teachers teach Health?

According to Sinkinson & Burrows (2011), "removing health education from specialist 'health' teachers has left it to the mercy of physical education teachers' whims, in many schools" (p.58). This removal has created a culture of male 'jock educators' where homophobia and misrecognition of bisexuality obfuscate relevant and appropriate discussion of diverse sexualities in sexuality education (Sinkinson & Burrows, 2011). Some school sexuality lessons often completely avoid the topic of diverse sexualities (Allen, 2005a; Epstein et al., 2003; Ollis, 2010). Katie asked her male Health and PE teacher about diverse sexualities including bisexuality:

Um I asked the teacher um what about bi, cos they were only teaching about straight sex, and um what if you're bi, or gay, or trans, or whatever, and they were like 'oh we don't need to talk about that, that's not necessary', I was like I didn't get why they didn't want to teach that? 'Cos not everyone's straight (Katie, 16 years, focus group).

Her teacher rebuffed her (*'oh we don't need to talk about that'*) and changed the subject, exercising teacher privilege (Rahimi & Liston, 2011). Katie, at that time a 14 year old Year 10 student, was

unaware of the discomfort this question may have caused her teacher (*'I didn't get why they didn't want to teach that'*). The teacher's refusal to acknowledge bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgender identities through a "code of silence" (Yoshino, 2000, p. 5) erased those identities (Quinlivan & Town, 1999), disadvantaging his students by denying important information about identity development.

Many participants noted the attitudes of their teachers who were required to teach both subjects, PE and Health including sexuality education:

Our health education got combined with physical education, taught under one teacher and I'm pretty sure those teachers were physical education graduates so they were quite reluctant to teach health education so it was usually 'okay for this health education we will be doing it out on the field, okay everyone get changed!' um and it was quite a bit of you know we skipped a lot of health ed (Amethyst, 24 years, individual interview).

Amethyst had little interest in physical education and found her teacher's attitude towards Health disappointing. She questioned pre-service education attitudes towards having to teach Health, suggesting these attitudes encouraged her teacher's dismissive attitude.

Xena, Yoni, Pollyanna, Yusef, Katie, Lisa and Captain Fantastic all had male Health and PE teachers who were required to teach sexuality education as part of the junior Health course. These seven participants were unanimous in their condemnation of the fact their male teachers appeared singularly uninformed about female sexuality and unwilling to engage in anything outside a heteronormative discourse of safety (Wyatt et al., 2008). The participants also thought having male teachers provide sexuality education to young women was inappropriate (Francis & Skelton, 2001). Pollyanna described a response from her Health and PE teacher to her question:

Why haven't you taught us about you know, gay and lesbian sex and stuff, you know, you told us what straight sex is and you've just had a big talk about that but you haven't said anything about gay and lesbian sex and he says 'we don't want to teach people how to get AIDS, and lesbian sex doesn't exist' (Pollyanna, 16 years, focus group).

At her school Pollyanna was well known as a sexual justice advocate. Her male teacher's response may have been a reaction to the challenge he felt from Polly's bisexual identity and her assertive nature, easily misinterpreted as belligerent. His response, through discourses of homophobia and misogyny, was to heteronormatively assert himself as "properly masculine" (Francis & Skelton, 2001, p. 10).

Pollyanna thought the teacher's response was inappropriate and told him she intended to *'take it [his inappropriate comments] up with someone'* such as a senior manager. The teacher then attempted to rescind his comments, claiming he was joking about the AIDS remark and suggesting Pollyanna was

always trying to take things too far. The matter went no further in an official capacity but that teacher lost an opportunity for some very valuable teaching and learning. Pollyanna, however, quickly took up that opportunity:

I think my class had it pretty well cos like I took over, I was like right, um, and I just asked if I could take a lesson or two, and so I just kind of let people ask questions about stuff and so that they could kind of get more what they wanted to hear, and stuff, cos I think that was more important (Pollyanna, 16 years, interview).

This comment reflected Pollyanna's wish for social justice for young bisexual women's education. She appeared to recognise how important teacher effectiveness was in relation to sexuality education, demonstrating her understanding through letting the students in her class ask her questions so *'they could...get more of what they wanted to hear'*.

There was no trace of arrogance in Pollyanna's narrative, rather an understanding of her peers' needs for correct information about sexual diversity delivered in a confident manner.

Other participants described their teachers' evasive actions when bisexuality was mentioned in sexuality education. Katie said when someone in her class asked why bisexuality hadn't been mentioned, her teacher said *'oh we don't need to talk about that'* and changed the subject. Kitty's teacher mentioned being gay or lesbian but when another student asked about bisexuality, the teacher said *'bisexuality? That's just semantics'* and changed the subject. Oxford Dictionaries (2013) defines 'semantics' as "the branch of linguistics and logic concerned with meaning" (n.p.). The teacher may have chosen the term 'semantics' to suggest bisexuality was merely a theory, using an unfamiliar term to distract the students from a topic which caused her discomfort; however, in doing so she banished bisexuality into theoretical oblivion. Kitty described how her teacher *'just kept going'* after that comment, rebuffing Kitty who wanted information about bisexuality but was now reluctant to ask.

In focus group discussion, Pollyanna thought teachers might believe that covering heterosexual and gay and lesbian sexualities might also cover bisexuality, suggesting the teachers' misunderstanding of bisexuality. Joanna and Fleur reported bisexuality being mentioned briefly in their classes in association with 'types' of sexuality. According to Joanna:

They just don't bring it up...they're trying to keep it under cover...our school doesn't really talk about that stuff? It's just the whole subject doesn't get talked about, it's introduced and then that's it (Joanna, 16 years, focus group).

Evidence presented here suggests a contributor to bisexual invisibility and erasure from sexuality education is the attitude displayed by some Health teachers. Many participants saw their teachers as ill-

informed about bisexuality. Other participants saw teacher discomfort over diverse sexualities and avoidance when approached for information about bisexuality (Sears, 1992). Several participants attributed this avoidance to the fact their teachers were male PE teachers, uncomfortable with the topic of bisexuality and sexuality education generally. Xena was succinct in her recommendation:

For a start don't have crusty old PE guys teaching sex ed to young chicks. It's not right (Xena, 17 years, interview).

Participant evidence suggests the *New Zealand Curriculum* (2007) cannot be held responsible for the apparent dearth in some school sexuality education programmes of information which is inclusive, appropriate and relevant to young bisexual women. To meet NZC's (2007) recommendation for inclusive education, sexuality education should be delivered by trained and qualified educators with knowledge, skills and empathy who actively choose to teach sexuality education and Health.

Countering bisexual invisibility through positive learning experiences

Recommendations for inclusive sexuality education

As a means of resistance against oppression and exploitation, feminist research methodology provides opportunities for participants to voice strategies for improvements (Hesse-Biber, 2007). This contributes to a feminist aim of improving social conditions for women by making situations more equitable (Alice, 2003; Hesse-Biber, 2007). Participants enjoyed making recommendations for more equitable and inclusive sexuality education which would recognise and validate bisexuality, basing these recommendations on their own positive learning experiences. Yoni saw a general starting point:

Oh there's just a whole lot of things that could be improved, um, and just starting first with just information, enthusiasm and trying to make this important supportive community the biggest (Yoni, 20 years, interview).

Some participants recalled helpful aspects of their sexuality education such as a class 'ask-it basket'. Via this tool, Scarlet's junior Health teacher included information about the dental dam, a form of STI protection unfamiliar to many participants. Scarlet also described a whole class activity she found useful, experiencing it at her private girls only school in Year 11 General Health, and again in Year 13 General Health:

Scarlet: We did this...scale in both Year 11 and Year 13 where they do this big talk about where everyone has some level of bisexuality in them?

Interviewer: the Kinsey Scale?

Scarlet: yeah possibly, it's from 1 to 10 and it's not like at 1 you're completely straight and at

10 you're completely lesbian, it's just that everyone fits on some scale whether you think it's okay to walk along the street holding your female friend's hand or anything like that, it's just a different level of the scale, and at some stage like bisexuality or lesbianism is your personal identity, it's got nothing to do with sort of a point where you can say where this person is completely lesbian or anything like that.

Scarlet emphasised the activity's usefulness as a general guide rather than a definitive:

No no no we didn't have to fit in, it was just an example, like it wasn't 'pick your number, you have to', it was like 'here's a scale to explain'... just to show us some of the tools people use to explain sexuality (Scarlet, 24 years, interview).

According to Scarlet, senior students at her school felt safe asking questions about alternative aspects of sexual health:

By that time it was really open and it was kinda fun, like it was a big break from studying to just get to talk about all the random issues that you were going through like (when) we got to the later years of school...a whole bunch of stuff, yeah, which was kind of cool (Scarlet, 24 years, focus group).

Most of the Health and PE teachers at Scarlet's school had attended professional development workshops for sexuality education and used current New Zealand teaching resources. A combination of this training and the teachers' knowledge and understanding of sexuality issues may have contributed to the positive classroom climate within sexuality education classes. Other participants also described positive teacher attitudes in sexuality education. Ashlin's co-ed school Health teacher was well liked and respected; she gave direct responses to direct questions:

When someone said 'how do lesbians actually have sex' she said you know, oral sex, you use toys or that kind of thing. She just said what you could use, she didn't say how to use them (Ashlin, 18 years, interview).

Fleur thought her teacher's relaxed attitude in class helped Fleur enjoy her Year 10 sexuality education. The teacher seemed comfortable discussing diverse sexualities especially bisexuality with her students. Fleur and Joanna both thought their school tolerated sexual diversity but had yet to openly acknowledge its presence, suggesting 'they' (school senior management) were '*trying to keep it under cover*'. Joanna described their school situation:

Gay and lesbian kinda get more attention than bi, sort of, but they don't cos our school doesn't really talk about that stuff? It's just the whole subject doesn't get talked about, it's just introduced and then that's it (Joanna, 16 years, focus group).

Fleur addressed this lack of acknowledgement by suggesting:

I reckon if they talk more about it, like make it as common as what like whatever else they talk about, because they're more like open about it because it would make it feel normal for other people? (Fleur, 16 years, focus group).

In Fleur's eyes being bisexual was '*normal*'. She had a group of supportive female friends, many of them also identifying as bisexual. She described how their group would talk about being bisexual and thought talking was helpful as it helped ease people's discomfort (Letts & Sears, 1999):

Like some people may feel embarrassed but if they bring it up in a subject like for everyone else they might wanna you know they can join in, they can ask questions on what they're curious about, they'll just open up? But because it's not talked about they don't talk about it (Fleur, 16 years, focus group).

Fleur wanted more acknowledgement of the existence of bisexuality in all classes, not just in Health. Some teachers at Fleur's school sometimes referred to being gay or lesbian; however, familiarity with these identities may have facilitated this. Bisexuality was usually ignored. Both participants thought more informed classroom discussion would facilitate greater understanding of bisexuality which might help debunk societal misrecognition, as did Ziggy and Artemis:

I'd have to say more diverse teaching, yeah; I mean like they should do it, not everyone's straight, so why are they only teaching that one thing? (Ziggy Stardust, 19 years, interview).

I just think that the lack of like knowledge in sex ed about bisexuals is sort of what perpetuates so many like myths and stuff about you know, like same sex relationships, like how women can't have sex because they don't have penises and they just do this (scissoring with hands)...you know like just be clearly if it was gone over in sex ed (Artemis, 21 years, focus group).

Gage agreed, suggesting a provision of greater depth of information about STI transmission such as female to female transmission and protection:

Knowing about female and female protection would have been...that you can still get STIs if you're bi through same sex relationships would have been useful (Gage, 20 years, focus group).

Ziggy also thought it would be useful to learn more about sexual identity than the biological aspect of sex:

I think they [teachers] need to concentrate less on sex, and more on sexuality, because you have to figure out your sexuality before you're going to have sex, well you don't have to, but I think

that's how it should work, yeah (Ziggy Stardust, 19 years, focus group).

Ziggy had shared with the others in her focus group how it felt to be the school 'go-to' girl for sexuality advice. She said many girls at her school had asked to have physical sex with her to satisfy their curiosity about how girls 'made out'. Ziggy thought including more detailed information in sexuality education about being bisexual was needed, including STI information as Gage had mentioned, and strategies for managing relationships when coming out as bisexual to friends at school. This would result in young bisexual women being better informed about their own sexuality, which should enhance their sexual and emotional relationships with partners. Stacey, currently studying to be a Health and PE teacher, liked Ziggy's idea and thought sexual diversity education needed to begin at least in Year 9 [ages 12-14]:

I think that what would be good...like someone actually coming in and speaking to the kids right early on, as soon as you know you can get a hold of them, right early like 3rd form (Year 9)...I reckon a whole unit should be on like sexuality like you would be able to get hold of someone, the kids could do heaps, like have them do a reflective journal on how they are actually thinking about sexuality and stuff and you could really – influence them, how they think about things (Stacey, 23 years, focus group).

Stacey acknowledged the process could take some time but providing correct information about bisexuality would help.

Many participants attributed teachers' dismissive attitudes towards Health and sexuality education to a lack of teacher training. They saw a need for more comprehensive preservice education with an emphasis on teaching sexuality education (Eisenberg, Madsen, Oliphant, Sieving, & Resnick, 2010; Sinkinson, 2009; Wyatt et al., 2008). Tabby suggested:

Health teachers should be, um, taught to deliver it...and to be able to do that they just need to provide lots more information...cos a definition of a word, an identity is nothing, it can be so much more on things like coming out, and it's okay, and the history even, how to keep safe (Tabby, 18 years, interview).

In addition, participants spoke of their wish to see sexuality education delivered by "queer" people. As Liv said:

I would have loved to be taught by someone who is an experienced queer, you know, who had had these feelings, had been in situations, could speak from experience. I think that would make people just feel safe and understand a lot more (Liv, 23 years, interview).

Pollyanna spoke of the '*need for specialists in the subject*', specialists being '*people that are trained in*

diversity (who hold) workshops in the wider community. Stacey suggested *'bringing someone in from outside the school to speak to students'*; Artemis added *'bi people in to talk to the kids'*. Lee developed this idea, claiming current useful information could be provided to schools by community organisations such as Rainbow Youth (an Auckland-based organisation working with queer youth ages 12-27). Groups such as this could be useful for young women wanting more information about bisexuality. Tabby elaborated on these suggestions:

There should be paid sexual and gender diversity educators in New Zealand who could come into your classes and teach it for you cos the teachers generally don't want to and don't know what they're on about um but also I mean even if it were something they were made to learn and teach I think that the affirmation coming from someone who's experienced it would be so much more useful (Tabby, 18 years, interview).

Rhiannon thought teachers should be able to

Let them [other students] know it's okay to be like who you are...and if you want to know things, ask questions, there's people out there that you can ask (Rhiannon, 16 years, focus group).

Xena explained the importance of being given accurate and relevant information in sexuality education:

We need to find stuff out so we don't mess up. I think just like talking about it like the different types of sex and teaching that and not pretending it's not around cos it is, just look at TV programmes and stuff! (Xena, 17 years, interview).

According to Heidi, it was important to make sexuality education directly relevant to young bisexual women:

So making it relevant and talking about um probably talking about putting emphasis on feelings and relationships more than ah just sexual behaviour I think?...research shows that people need more than just information, and people don't pay attention to health information unless it is based in context? (Heidi, 24 years, interview).

At Liv's school *'it was unheard of for queers to even have a place'*. She suggested comprehensive education might curb all forms of discrimination:

I think if people were educated properly there would be a lack of discrimination full stop, it wouldn't even just be homophobic discrimination (Liv, 23 years, focus group).

Tabby agreed with Liv:

I think if there was better sexuality education, even just in those junior health classes, Years 9

and 10, that's where it needs to happen, and then there'll be a lot less discrimination towards queer people because people would understand and see this is something we've been taught about, it does exist, it's okay (Tabby, 18 years, focus group).

Lisa and Blake described the attempts of their schools to provide '*useful life skills*' education to whole year groups, by inviting community health people in to speak at assemblies or by holding one day 'Health and Wellbeing Expos'. Both participants saw little to no advantage for young bisexual women in these methods, or indeed for any young people of diverse sexualities, as their schools avoided any speakers or workshops that might be seen by parents or media as 'controversial' or having 'questionable content' (Eisenberg, Madsen, Oliphant & Resnick, 2012).

Overall, participants thought their school sexuality education would have been of greater use to them had the following topics been included: what constitutes bisexual identity, acknowledging and affirming bisexuality as a valid identity, correct information about STIs in relation to same-sex sexual activity, and negotiating positive relationships as young bisexual women, regardless of a potential partner's gender. Amethyst offered a plan for inclusive sexuality education which could benefit students of all sexualities, and their schools.

In New Zealand state secondary schools, sexuality education is compulsory until Year 10 (Ministry of Education, 1999). According to Amethyst, implementing sexuality education as a compulsory and assessable subject at senior school levels would offer further opportunities for teaching and learning about sexual diversity. Most New Zealand secondary schools provide opportunities to gain credits towards the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA, a nationally recognised secondary school qualification). There is currently an NCEA Level 1 (Year 11) assessable unit of work in sexuality education, available to students choosing Health as a senior school subject. The standard covers the usual safety discourses around avoiding STIs and pregnancy and includes an equal focus on discrimination, relationships and social/sexual justice (NZC, 2007). This unit of work is not compulsory; indeed, some state secondary schools exclude this unit from their Level 1 Health programmes, citing parental pressure as the reason; however, Amethyst, unaware of this exclusion, thought a compulsory and assessable course in inclusive sexuality education would help raise student, teacher and community awareness of bisexuality:

The authorities who would see that there's a value in something that is valuable...assessment would include learning about safe sex and different sexualities, what being bisexual is about, and healthy relationships between people of any gender (Amethyst, 24 years, individual interview).

Conclusion

According to Sinkinson & Burrows (2011), many teachers are possibly unaware and ill equipped to manage the developing sexual identities which populate their health classrooms. Many teachers may have little awareness of the potential dangers to a developing female bisexual identity created by lack of information about same-sex sexual health and relationships (Formby, 2011; Loutzenheimer, 1996; Mikulsky, 2005). Indeed, the evidence from participants suggests the reluctance of many teachers to meet the learning needs of this group, including recognising and affirming bisexuality as a valid identity (Ollis, 2010). Young bisexual women's needs are ignored by teachers whose perception of bisexuality ranges from disbelief in bisexual existence to believing it falls between 'gay' and 'straight' and is therefore a gay/straight blend, to understanding bisexuality as a public sexual behaviour to attract attention.

Furthermore, 'awareness' of needs does not indicate an ability to teach. Some research reports student dissatisfaction and claims of inadequate and incorrect information being given regarding a range of topics within sexuality education (Allen, 2005a, 2011; Formby, 2011; McAllum, 2008). Also, in addition to a discourse of avoidance and lack of tolerance to sexual identity and diversity, a range of unprofessional pedagogical practices has been uncovered (Ollis, 2010; Sinkinson, 2009; Sinkinson & Burrows, 2011; Weir, 2009). The resultant mix is poor quality sexuality education which is discriminatory, disrespectful and demeaning to young people of diverse sexualities (ERO, 2007; Formby, 2011). As posited at this chapter's opening, this may suggest many New Zealand secondary school-based sexuality education teachers and the programmes they teach are failing to address young bisexual women's learning needs. In addition, these young women's bisexual identities are not being recognised and affirmed either through their school sexuality education programmes or by their teachers.

This chapter has provided some insight into the usefulness of school sexuality education programmes to young bisexual women. The data explored indicates considerable teacher reluctance to acknowledge sexual diversity in the classroom, both amongst the students and within the formal curriculum. The following chapter considers bisexuality in school cultures as the participants describe their lived experiences of bisexual discrimination and erasure.

Chapter Six

Young bisexual women's experiences of misrecognition in school culture

Introduction

This chapter argues young bisexual women are invisibilised and negated through misrecognition as bisexual in some contexts of New Zealand school culture. While values of inclusiveness may be apparent in school Mission Statements and policies, these values may not be actively supported by discriminatory attitudes and practices of some non-bisexual staff and students. Participants' experiences of these practices provide evidence indicating how a non-inclusive school culture may compromise the physical and emotional safety of young bisexual women at school.

One aspect of an effective school is a strong culture which supports diversity (MacNeil & Maclin, 2005). Once established, this culture can positively influence social attitudes and behaviours providing these are negotiated and agreed on by the school community (Sergiovanni, 2001). According to Meyer (2009) "schools are microcosms of the communities they serve and thus often reflect the culture and values of the dominant group in the school" (p. 23). Personal beliefs, attitudes and values around difference may reflect in a school's culture, influencing teachers' interactions with students (Carrington, 1999).

Most of the young bisexual women in this study reported experiencing a culture of discrimination against their bisexual identity at school (Blackburn, 2004; Eliason, 1996; Grossman et al., 2009). Participants were subjected to bisexual identity-based bullying by some teachers, young males and same-sex attracted (SSA) women (Bradford, 2006; Fairington, 2008; Hartman, 2006; Rust, 1993). As an extensive literature search failed to produce an adjective for this type of misrecognition, for the purposes of this chapter it is literally defined as 'bi-misogyny'.

According to Angelides (2001), negation is "erasure of bisexuality in the present tense" (p. 135). When a female student is bullied because she identifies as bisexual, a teacher may ignore the situation because s/he conflates bisexuality with promiscuity. The teacher is *misrecognising* bisexuality. Fraser (1998) defines misrecognition as "a matter of justice...a status injury... a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem" (p. 4). Societal misrecognition (Fraser, 1998, 2001, 2013) of bisexuality is a form of sexual and social injustice. In this study misrecognition negates young women as bisexual; although this chapter provides evidence of misrecognition in school cultural contexts, also included is participant resistance to misrecognition within school culture, suggesting attempts at positive self-management.

A school culture of misrecognition: intersections of hegemonic ‘normalcy’ and bisexuality

Exclusion and negation at school by peers

The cultural context of exclusion due to perceived difference is defined by this study as a type of avoidance (Carrington, 1999). Exclusion is an action taken when an individual is deemed societally ‘different’ (Buhs, 2005; Rivers, 2000), the action ensuring that individual is purposely avoided, ignored or left out of activities. At school exclusion may include deliberate separation from other students such as being forced by peers and teachers to use separate changing/locker rooms (McCaughtry et al., 2005; exclusion socially and within the classroom by peers and teachers (Dessel, 2010; Holmes & Cahill, 2005); and having malicious and untrue gossip spread about individuals through school networks (Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006; Grossman et al., 2009) and social network internet sites such as Facebook and Bebo or by mobile phone texting (DesRoche & Sweet, 2008; Limber, 2006, Pascoe, 2005). Although no direct and immediate physical harm is done, the mental effects may be pernicious as the very act of exclusion deems a person socially abhorrent. This exclusion results in avoidance by peers and eventual social invisibility (Darwich, Hymel & Waterhouse, 2012; Kosciw et al., 2012; Toomey, McGuire, & Russell, 2012). Participant narratives in this study produced distinct evidence of invisibility through exclusion by some teachers and non-bisexual peers.

Several participants spoke of their experiences of an exclusionary school culture, claiming the act had a more powerful effect than direct harassment because retaliation was difficult (Toomey, McGuire, & Russell, 2012; Williams & Govan, 2005). The societal ‘difference’ (Buhs, 2005) in these experiences was perpetrator emphasis on participant ‘non-heterosexuality’. Yoni explained her experience of exclusion:

I think because the bullying that I had, like it’s not like, it’s not physical bullying and it’s not like often taunting and such like, I think exclusion is probably, like being excluded from things, and I don’t know what you can probably kind of do about that, like you can’t force people to be friends with me, like I mean, and I guess that’s kinda like how it felt like it was more like... it felt like bullying, like it was a damaging kind of thing to me (Yoni, 20 years, interview).

Yoni found difficulty in providing an accurate description of exclusion; to her it was neither a physical act nor a verbal act such as direct teasing or ‘*taunting*’ but personal pain was involved: ‘*it felt like bullying...a damaging kind of thing to me*’. For Yoni, there was no solution to exclusion. Yoni was a very gentle, soft-spoken young woman who became visibly upset as she described her experiences. She claimed being excluded from peer groups hurt as much as being physically harmed or verbally abused. Another participant, Pollyanna, was excluded from the girls changing rooms at her school.

Pollyanna describes the changing room experience she had in Year 9, her first year at secondary school:

You know I was actually asked not to change in the girls changing rooms, whatever? Because um they were worried that I was going to look at them, and because I was bi they told the teacher and the teacher asked me to change in the bathrooms, I said fuck you, um, yep so that was a really bad experience and I was like really outraged by it (Pollyanna, 16 years, interview).

Her classmates and teacher misrecognised Pollyanna's bisexuality as deviancy. The students assumed Pollyanna being bisexual meant she would want to watch them undress, associating this with sexual arousal (*'I was going to look at them'*). The teacher asked Pollyanna to *'change in the bathrooms'* rather than use the changing room, but did not discuss the situation with Pollyanna and made no further attempt to address the situation. Avoiding any discussion with the students meant Pollyanna's teacher missed an opportunity to engage her students in critical thinking around sexual identities leading to a possible repositioning of the changing room as an inclusive area for all students (Epstein & Johnson, 1998). Pollyanna actively resisted this exclusion, describing her refusal to participate in physical education lessons and the teacher's reaction to her refusal. The teacher did not ask her to explain her non-participation; he ignored her, invisibilising her. The entire situation was an act of exclusion by an adult legislatively responsible for student safety (Dessel, 2010). The situation was unresolved, leaving Pollyanna feeling humiliated, angry and as if she were being punished for an experience originating from her peers' myth-based complaints (Ollis, 2010).

Other participants described exclusionary reactions from peers to their bisexuality. Fleur was in Year 9 when she came out as bisexual:

When you come to school and the friends that you did have kinda snob you and don't wanna come near you ... that is kinda just shut you out. I reckon that's real...cos then sometimes you don't wanna go to the places they are or if you run around the corner and they're there, you just kinda hide away, I reckon that's real awkward, one of the awkwardest things about being bi at school is just the people you had a past with don't leave it in the past, they live off the past, and it gets stuck with you, that's one of the worst things (Fleur, 16 years, focus group).

For Fleur, a student at a large urban co-educational school, morning interval and lunch breaks had been filled with anxiety. When she came out as bisexual, her friends immediately shunned her, and she struggled to make new friends. She claimed dealing with exclusion was hardest when previous friends, *'people you had a past with'*, kept reminding her of her former straight identity instead of now supporting her as bisexual.

The belief that being bisexual meant wanting only to have physical sex (*'being hit on'*) with girls and with boys was one reason Freddo thought other girls at her all-girl school avoided and excluded her:

There's the people who just try to avoid you cos they're afraid of being hit on? (Freddo, 16 years, focus group).

Freddo's peers may have excluded her because they believed in the societal myth that bisexual people want to have sex with anything that moves (Garber, 1995; Klesse, 2011). A fear of "being hit on" by a bisexual person may also stem from an unwillingness to self-examine personal feelings about same-sex attraction including the possibility of recognising its existence within oneself (Rhoads, 1995; Troiden, 1989). Freddo was an outgoing young woman, who claimed her peers' avoidance of her was fine; she didn't want to have sex with anyone, especially no other girls at her school.

Exclusion was a regular occurrence for Kelly, a young transgender bisexual woman. When Kelly answered the advertisement for participants she asked if being transgender excluded her; it did not as being 'trans' related to Kelly's gender, not her sexual identity. She appreciated being included in the study as she had experienced considerable exclusion over the past few years including at school. Kelly had changed schools several times because she lived with her mother who was constantly relocating. She attended three secondary schools, the latter two as a female student, and described her reception at these schools as a new student:

Well they – cos I was new to both schools, they treated me as an outsider, and because I was bi that gave them an extra reason to treat me as an outsider (Kelly, 18 years, interview).

In each school, Kelly was twice excluded '*as an outsider*'; as a new student, and as bisexual. Kelly claimed her peers saw her bisexuality as '*an extra reason*' to avoid and ignore her. She did not relate the exclusion to her transgenderism and she also did not say how each school knew she was bisexual.

The issues Kelly faced at school as a young MTF transgender person are beyond the scope of this study, however, it is important to acknowledge that Kelly faced additional issues being both bisexual and transgender at school.

This section has considered participants' descriptions of feelings resulting from peer exclusion at school due to perceived differences (Buhs, 2005). Although schools may have procedures through which students may report incidences of bullying, the situations described were not reported as participants thought adults at school would fail to intervene, perceiving the exclusion as deserved due to difference (Toomey, McGuire, & Russell, 2012). The next section examines this treatment.

Exclusion at school by teachers

Some participants in this study pointed out their attempts to report personal bullying incidents to teachers. The participants described their teachers' impassivity; many teachers did not attempt to mediate or to report incidents onwards to school senior management (Broome, 2005; Crocco, 2001;

Dessel, 2010; Elia, 2010; Flowers & Buston, 2001; Goodenow et al., 2006; Kangasvuo, 2003; McAllum, 2008; Meyer, 2008; Pomeroy, 1999). Teachers ignoring bullying situations contravene New Zealand school safety legislation (Ferfolja, 2007). Ashlin had a pragmatic view of teachers' approaches to complaints about exclusion:

A lot of the time it wasn't reported, or when it was there wasn't really much they could do about it, cos the teachers could tell the girls to shut up; they couldn't tell girls to be friends with you (Ashlin, 18 years, interview).

Ashlin was correct, friendships cannot be dictated; however, some participants claimed their teachers appeared unaware or unwilling to acknowledge that impassivity, itself a form of exclusion, could affect a student's safety (Clarke, 2012). Xena described the attitudes of school management to sexuality-based bullying at her small school:

I know we aren't meant to do it and I don't like I know what it feels like and it hurts so like why would I want to do it to someone else? The principal talks about bullying in assembly but you don't see her down at the shops after school where like the very worst stuff happens. Teachers here are like if you don't see it happening then it doesn't (Xena, 17 years, interview).

Xena thought all bullying associated with sexual identity at her school was unacknowledged. As she claimed, *'teachers here are like if you don't see it happening then it doesn't'*. Many schools maintain this invisibilising attitude which threatens the safety of sexually diverse young people (Clarke, 2012; Ferfolja, 2007; Holmes & Cahill, 2003; Meyer, 2008). Some teachers may recognise bullying as sexual harassment yet hesitate to take action, letting their personal values and opinions make the choice for them (Dessel, 2010; McFarland & Dupuis, 2001; Meyer, 2008). Pollyanna's science teacher intimated she deserved the bullying by being out as bisexual:

I did get some negative response once from a male science teacher and um some kids were teasing me about my sexuality, like you know, being real dicks about it being like lalala and he just said [Pollyanna imitates the teacher's condescending tone of voice] why don't you just keep your mouth shut about it and then you won't get any hassle (Pollyanna, 16 years, interview).

Pollyanna's teachers' phrase *'why don't you just keep your mouth shut about it'* suggests the teacher recognised Pollyanna's sexual identity but maintained his distance, unwilling to get involved because sexual harassment was too difficult an issue to deal with. Suggesting Pollyanna keep silent about being bisexual was denying Pollyanna sexual equity. After the exchange of words the teacher ignored Pollyanna for the rest of the term, excluding then invisibilising her not only as bisexual but as a student (Holmes & Cahill, 2003). This action is an abuse of authority and of teacher privilege (Manke, 2010), suggesting the potential for some teachers to exclude young women at school based on misrecognition

of their bisexual identity. The following section considers some teachers' personal beliefs towards sexual diversity and how these were reflected in their attitudes to young bisexual women in this study.

A search through educational literature indicates considerable research addressing student cultures of exclusion of sexually diverse students at school. Little evidence, however, may be found of literature examining teachers' exclusionary attitudes towards this group (Dessel, 2010; Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010) including young bisexual women. Several participant reports in this study revealed a range of discriminative experiences in class from their teachers, including gestures such as withdrawal of attention and support, and derogatory comments about sexually diverse people (Holmes & Cahill, 2003). The gestures often followed such events as a student coming out as bisexual.

After she came out as bisexual at her co-educational school, Katie sensed a change in her Health teacher's attitude towards her (Dessel, 2010; Rahini & Liston, 2011):

I still tried to do my work, tried to complete everything, but it was harder cos I wasn't getting as much help from the teacher (Katie, 16 years, interview).

On learning of Katie's bisexual identity, her teacher distanced himself from her. She did not report this to anyone at the time, thinking other teachers would not take her seriously (Swearer et al., 2010).

Teacher withdrawal of support from a student is potentially damaging, as is publicly 'outing' a student, when a teacher abuses their authority by demanding a student state their sexual identity in front of a class. One participant in this study described how her teacher publically pressured her about her sexual identity, then misrecognised her by referring to her as 'gay':

Beena: There was this one teacher, Mrs R... I was sitting in class and she said 'what are you doing your project on' and I was doing it on gay rights? And she comes up to me, she walks up, and she puts her elbows on my desk, and she goes "Beena, are you gay?" Like in that exact way, and everyone in the class heard her, and this was before I was outed, and so my automatic reaction was "no! No I'm not, whaddya, what, no?" and I was just really upset about that, that she just asked me in front of everyone, and everyone's sitting there laughing and then she said 'how do you know?' And I said 'cos I like boys!' but then I like both, so she was kinda right I guess

Interviewer: Well yeah but...not in class in front of everyone?

Beena: Yeah to ask me in front of everyone? Cos everyone was quiet so everybody heard her, yeah...

Beena was unhappy about being called 'gay' when she knew she was bisexual, but felt powerless to correct 'Mrs R' in front of the class. The teacher's action exemplified public exclusion based on

assumed difference; she purposely exercised privilege as an adult and teacher over Beena (Blackburn & McCready, 2009; Friedman, 2008). Mrs R assumed Beena was gay because she had chosen gay rights as an assignment topic; however, to publicly ask Beena if she was gay compromised Beena's safety at school through attempted forced personal disclosure. Beena thought the teacher's choice of moment was poor:

I just don't appreciate that there were 25 other students that could hear her (Beena, 19 years, interview).

Also, asking Beena if she was 'gay' erased any possibility of Beena being bisexual. The question excluded and invisibilised bisexuality as the teacher's use of the term 'gay' inferred Beena could be only 'gay' or 'straight', binarising sexual identity (Angelides, 2006; Bradford, 2006). Beena knew she was bisexual but had not yet publically come out at school.

Beena denied being gay to her teacher: '*...my automatic reaction was "no! No I'm not, whaddya, what, no?"*' As she commented in her interview, what was she to do? The teacher asked her if she was gay, and persisted in her questioning: '*...and then she said "how do you know?" ...*' Mrs R's motives in questioning Beena's sexual identity were unclear; however her questions were unethical, disrespectful and unjust, setting Beena apart from her classmates and possibly positioning her for later bullying. Pressuring Beena to publicly declare her sexual identity to the class was a transgression of Beena's right to emotional safety and a safe learning environment (Ferfolja, 2007; Holmes & Cahill, 2003; Ministry of Justice, 2011; New Zealand Post-Primary Teachers Association, 2012). Mrs R effectively disempowered Beena who felt unable to defend herself, so becoming an object of vindictive amusement, her sexual identity being immediately misrecognised by her classmates (Fraser, 1998). The teacher did not ask any heterosexual students to come out as straight. The incident with that teacher pressured Beena to publicly come out as bisexual at school. She was quickly excluded by her peers:

After I came out I did notice that people were "oh man, I don't wanna be in Beena's group", it was just like being a leper, like I was contagious or something, 'don't touch her or you'll get the bi' (Beena, 19 years, interview).

According to Beena, Mrs R became a pastoral dean and moved up into senior management in the school. She held the school portfolio for student wellbeing, a management position requiring full understanding and active engagement with NAG5 (see Chapter One) and the Professional Standards for Teachers (Ministry of Education, 1999a). She may have never realised how her questions had compromised Beena's visibility as bisexual.

The section has examined participant experiences of bisexual exclusion at school. For some participants, their bisexuality at school was visibilised by negative and non-affirming actions such as teachers pressuring students to reveal their sexual identity, or ignoring or avoiding them once the student came out as bisexual. These actions took place in both single-sex and co-educational settings. Students in single sex schools in New Zealand are more likely to be bullied than students in co-educational schools (Broome, 2005). Broome (2005) suggests boys and girls tend to have a “moderating effect” on each other in coeducational schools (p. 5). This ‘moderating effect’ on each other is not apparent in ‘bi-misogynistic’ school situations. This chapter now defines bi-misogyny and presents participant evidence of bisexual invisibility, negation and bi-misogyny in school culture.

Bi-misogyny, discrimination and the changing room

Male-initiated bi-misogyny

In this study bi-misogyny is discrimination by some non-bisexuals against females who self-identify as bisexual, manifesting as a multiple system of social domination (Ault, 1996a). Bi-misogyny occurs when non-bisexual people actively misrecognise bisexual women as promiscuous, believing bisexuality indicates only sexual behaviour involving two or more concurrent partners of any gender.

Bi-misogyny is a form of gender injustice (Fraser, 1998), a human rights issue which sees bisexual women struggling for recognition of identity and difference (Fraser, 2007). Some males may employ bi-misogyny as a “way of policing gender roles and maintaining masculinities” (Atkinson & DePalma, 2008, p. 28). Bi-misogyny is not bi-phobia. Biphobia seeks to erase bisexuality altogether by deeming it non-existent, or possibly a phase (Elia, 2010; Paz Galupo, 2011; Sweeney, 2011; Welzer-Lang, 2008). Bi-misogyny does not seek to invisibilise or erase bisexuality; rather, it emphasises and misrecognises female bisexual sexual activity as promiscuous, un-natural and unacceptable to non-bisexuals, unless it is for the benefit of straight men and women. Bisexual (or ‘barsexual’) women are quite acceptable and even ‘natural’ then, especially for the pleasure of men.

This form of discriminative behaviour becomes bi-misogynistic when some males publicly proclaim that all bisexual females constantly engage in ‘threesomes’ or sexual acts involving two or more partners, at least one of which is male. When spoken within the hearing of, or directly to young bisexual women this can seem threatening or demeaning, and like sexual harassment. Bi-misogyny allows the male to fantasize a heightened sense of sexual satisfaction through domination over the two women, and activation of a male ‘gaze’ (Mulvey, 1989) whereby he participates passively as a watcher from without and actively from within as a member of the threesome. When bi-misogyny is male-initiated its key intent is patriarchal sexual domination over bisexual females.

Many schools have a “pervasive atmosphere of male dominance” (Crocco, 2001, p. 67); Paechter (2012) suggests this hegemony in school formal and informal contexts may be a reflection of “wider social structures” (p. 232). Indeed, power relations at school between male and female students may subtly reflect a patriarchal school culture which values male appointments to senior management positions (McLay & Brown, 2000), greater promotion of male school sports teams (Hickey, 2008) and directs female students’ selection of subjects to those deemed gender-appropriate (Smyth & Darmody, 2008). Such a culture of accepted and unchallenged male power may also surreptitiously affirm male sexual control over females (Redman, 2000; Wilkinson & Pearson, 2009). This affirmation can affect the experiences of females in a school community and can include covert sexual intimidation of girls with little action being taken by schools to address this imbalance.

One key finding in the data of this study was evidence in several participants’ narratives of bi-misogyny in some New Zealand secondary schools. Pollyanna, who had experienced considerable exclusion at school, describes how some male students treated her:

Mostly boys...girls excluded me, boys were really vocal about it, were really nasty, and you know they asked me if they could pay to watch me, um hook up with girls, and they’d ask me why, and they thought I just hadn’t had a good dick, and all sorts of crap like that (Pollyanna, 16 years, focus group).

Offering to pay to watch Pollyanna have sex with girls suggests the boys associated same-sex sexual activity with prostitution, both exhibiting low levels of moral decency (Garber, 1995). The boys’ claims that Pollyanna’s bisexuality could be changed by having ‘*a good dick*’ reflects bi-misogynistic and hegemonic masculine beliefs that female same-sex attraction can be ‘cured’ through male-female sexual intercourse (Bordo, 1993; Dworkin, 1987; MacKinnon, 1987; Rich, 1980); the boys may have believed their penises gave them the advantage in the balance of sexual power. Asking Pollyanna why she was bisexual was a form of verbal sexual harassment, as was the taunting through name calling.

Verbal abuse

Pejorative name calling is a deliberate action designed to hurt the recipient. Participants listed a range of pejoratives including ‘slut’, ‘fence sitter’, ‘rugmuncher’ and ‘bi-liar’ (Callis, 2013; McCormack, 2011), having been called one or several of these by non-bisexual students at school (Elia, 2010; Jones & Hillier, 2014; Robinson, 2014). Kitty described how, after coming out at school as bisexual, she was called ‘lesbian’, the young man speaking in a menacing tone.

This guy I used to go out with ...pointed at me and was like ‘oh I used to go out with that chick but now she’s a lesbian’ and I thought fuck you get me back because I broke up with you and actually you know I’m bi so like that really hurt (Kitty, 16 years, focus group).

Kitty knew her ex-boyfriend was deliberately insulting her by calling her 'lesbian', as she had told him she was bisexual. The young man's action was bi-misogynistic; he deliberately publicly misrecognised Kitty's bisexual identity as lesbian identity, invisibilising her bisexual identity and negating even the possibility of bisexuality. Publicly calling Kitty 'lesbian' may have also helped the young man reaffirm his heterosexual status, socially positioning him above and away from Kitty, having more social capital as heterosexual than her (Forrest, 2010; Pascoe, 2005; Plummer, 2001).

Ziggy endured constant verbal harassment from male students at her school. She recorded her feelings in her reflective journal:

I didn't like the names that less accepting people called me. Mostly the 'popular' boys (who were supposed to be my mates). Names like rug-muncher and other shit which really sucked, they didn't really get that I liked guys too – just made fun of me because I liked girls (Ziggy Stardust, 19 years, RJ).

Ziggy's narrative reflects her experience of bi-misogynistic power. '*Rug muncher*' is a homophobic pejorative, usually associated with female same-sex attraction (Pascoe, 2005; Thurlow, 2001); some males employ this form of pejorative, believing it a fast and efficient method for claiming and emphasising their masculinity (Phoenix, Frosh & Pattman, 2003). In both Ziggy's and Kitty's situations the young men were attempting to assert their power as heterosexual through their masculinity (Connell, 1995; Nayak & Kehily, 1996). Ziggy also felt the young men were confused over her attraction to males and females. This confusion suggests bisexual misrecognition may have caused the male students to default to insulting same-sex attraction, negating and invisibilising the girls' bisexual identities (Robinson, 2005). The participants in this study attending co-educational schools were subjected to more than one element of discriminative school culture. Perpetrated mainly by male students, participants recalled experiencing physical abuse mostly in their junior secondary school years

Physical abuse

Participants experienced physical forms of abuse from non-bisexual students at school such as hair pulling, being bumped while walking around school, or outright fist fighting. Katie, the youngest participant in the study, described her experiences:

I went out with a girl...when we started going out I thought I'd tell my other friends, and like some of them are guys, and like but other guys overheard it and it got round the whole school and everyone was like really horrible about it, like I got bullied and pushed round and stuff, and like I got pushed into lockers, like everyone was like really horrible and they just didn't understand (Katie, 16 years, focus group).

Katie's claim that *'they just didn't understand'* suggests her assailants were not interested in learning more about being bisexual, preferring to wield power over her by taunting her. Quinn (2002) describes this lack of interest as an act of ignoring as opposed to a state of ignorance, a deliberate strategy intended to emphasise masculinity. As happened with Ziggy, Kitty and Pollyanna, the *'other guys'* may have been attempting double domination over Katie as a bisexual female, exerting power through heteronormative masculinity and through heterosexuality (Connell, 1995; Nayak & Kehily, 1996).

Important factors in maintaining masculine privilege and dominance include "successful presentation of heterosexuality and heterosexual prowess" along with the "subordination of other ways of being sexual" (Solebello & Elliott, 2011, p. 296). A co-educational school heteronormative social environment may elevate this importance; some young males may see the presence of young bisexual and lesbian females as challenges to their masculinity, sufficient to "warrant retaliation" (Paechter, 2012, p. 234). In response to this challenge these young males take any opportunity to exercise and emphasise their 'straightness', or prove their masculinity to one another by "demonizing homosexuality" (Solebello & Elliott, 2011, p. 297). Bi-misogynist repudiation may do this, as it simultaneously subjugates femininity (Pascoe, 2005). Repudiation may be verbal or sometimes physical. Beena described an attack on her and her female partner outside the school grounds:

Um well after I broke up with my first girlfriend and we got outed together, I started going out with another girl from school and she was bisexual as well. And, we ended up getting gay bashed when we were hooking up. It wasn't at the school though; we were in a park, um cos her parents weren't okay with it... We got gay bashed by guys, actually...and they they beat us up and we were both bi (Beena, 19 years, interview).

Beena described feeling powerless at the time of the incident, and also later when her mother told Beena she had *'put herself up for it'* by being out as bisexual. The girls did not report the incident to their school or to the police as Beena's mother's reaction to their story suggested their story would not be believed (Bortolin et al., 2009). Even though they bore obvious physical marks from the attack and were both publicly out as bisexual, they also chose not to report the incident to their school as they were both truanting at that time in an effort to avoid abuse at school for being bisexual (Rivers, 2000; Russell et al., 2012). Young bisexual women's safety may be compromised through physical violence perpetrated by groups of young males or females of any culture or ethnicity; however, current research limitations preclude closer consideration of intersections of gender, race, culture and socio-economic perspectives (Elze, 2003; Deuchar, 2011; McCormack, 2011; Ward, 2008).

The section has described bi-misogynist practices of power by some non-bisexual male students in an attempt to assert masculinity and heterosexuality over young bisexual women. However, depicting young bisexual women in this study as oppressed under a male only regime would be misleading

(Eichner, 2009) as some participants described similar insidious and hurtful experiences at school with young women.

Female-initiated bi-misogyny

Non-bisexual women's denial of female bisexuality as a legitimate sexual identity is a bi-misogynistic action. As Rust (1992) suggests, for some SSA women "the concept of essential homosexuality retains currency" (p. 367). Some SSA women see female bisexuality as a political challenge to the feminist ideals of a SSA community, a form of homonormativity (Pallotta-Chiarolli & Martin, 2009; Tilson, 2010). Rust (1993) claims the hostility from SSA women towards bisexual women is founded on lesbian feminist resistance to patriarchy. McLean (2008) describes this discrimination as "antibisexual attitudes" (p. 67), suggesting some SSA people misjudge bisexuals as untrustworthy and unable to commit to monogamy (Hartman, 2006), and believing bisexuals exercise heterosexual privilege (Rich, 1980) in relationships.

Some SSA women believe any female bisexual in a relationship with a self-identified lesbian is most likely going to betray her partner by leaving her for a male (Fairington, 2008). The bisexual woman exercises heterosexual privilege by choosing heterosexual safety and comfort over homosexual challenge (Bradford, 2006; Hartman, 2006; Klesse, 2011). In this study some participants described how some young SSA women, in school and in their social lives, suggested they were fence sitting and exercising heterosexual privilege (Garber, 1995; Klesse, 2011; McLean, 2008; Rich, 1980). Amethyst told of her experience with some all-female groups:

I do find with, not with a gay group, a homosexual group when there are gays and bis or you know when there are gays and lesbians, I don't have a lot of problems coming from them as a mixed group, but with a lesbian specific group I find it incredibly difficult, um, I always seem to get the impression they think I'm not a proper lesbian, not properly for their cause, and if shit turns shit I could always go off and get a guy. And there is the sense that no matter how much I'm passionate about homosexual rights, and I am, I can never fully be a part of the lesbian community and I suppose I would never expect any support from the lesbian community (Amethyst, 24 years, focus group).

Amethyst never felt a sense of connection with female SSA students at her single sex school, nor with lesbian groups in a political sense (*'I'm not a proper lesbian, not properly for their cause'*). She acknowledged lesbian antipathy towards the possibility of her exercising heterosexual privilege (*'if shit turns shit I could always go off and get a guy'*).

Amethyst experienced female-initiated bi-misogyny at school and at university (Hartman, 2006). Another participant, Xena, recounted her school experiences which included her friend Kadee:

And that was the lesbian girls as well, they were like ‘ew don’t wanna get jumped by someone who sleeps with anything that moves’ ...It’s okay this year so far but like they used to like make it so we couldn’t like get around them on the path between classes. They’d take Kadee’s bag and empty it in the bin, they’d like bang into us in the corridor, pull my hair, no words, just like stuff that wasn’t like big enough to go to a teacher about? (Xena, 17 years, interview).

Xena tolerated this treatment because she didn’t think the teachers would do anything to stop the bullying. During her interview, Xena strongly emphasised the negative actions of some of the female students. While in Year 10 [14-15 years] she had been constantly targeted during school hours and after school down at the local shops but did not report the students because she thought the teachers would think she was ‘*telling tales*’. Teacher reluctance to take action to halt discriminative treatment contravenes legislation intended to provide appropriate and inclusive protection for school communities (Elia, 2014).

Many New Zealand schools foreground their values and attitudes on such legislation, publicly proclaiming a culture of safety through their Mission Statement (Boerema, 2006). This document may employ descriptors such as ‘security’, ‘concern’, ‘respect’ and ‘safe’, reflecting legislative terms around safety and inclusivity and also making transparent the values a school embraces (Davis et al., 2007). The chapter now frames this legislation around the discriminative culture experienced by young bisexual women in some New Zealand schools, arguing schools’ failure to encourage the values described in their Mission Statements may propel these students into a gap between the visibility of protective policy and the invisibility of practice.

School policy, Mission Statements and the changing room

The NZPPTA (2012) *Safe Schools Guidelines* state: “Boards of Trustees (BOTs) must ensure that the school is safe for students and staff of diverse sexualities and gender identities, just as for any other diversities” (p. 7). The term ‘safe’ suggests legislative and active protection from physical and emotional harm within the school environment, such legislation being embodied in the NEGS and NAGS (see Chapter One, Donovan, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2009a). Many schools in New Zealand identify school safety in their Mission Statement (also known as Values Statement, School Code or similar), which “articulates publicly the organisation’s commitments” (Davis et al., 2007, pp. 99/100).

The Mission Statement represents a school’s ethical and cultural philosophy. It also acknowledges legislative requirements of a safe and supportive physical and emotional environment (Meyer, 2008), and provides the legislative basis for decision making regarding the school community (Davis et al., 2007; NZPPTA, 2012). Mission Statements are created through consultation with all levels of a school

community with the final draft being determined by the BOT and may be visibly displayed in the school entrance foyer and on its website. This section examines excerpts from Mission Statements (see *Table 2*) from the schools attended by Amethyst, Xena and Rose in an attempt to highlight possible discrepancies between policy and these participants' experiences.

Table 2: Excerpts from School Mission/Values/Code Statements

School	Excerpts from Mission/Values Statement
Eastern High (“a supportive learning community”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairness and equity • Respect for self and others • Respect for difference and support for individuality
Dingledell High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable all students to gain self-respect, a feeling of security and a sensitive concern for others • Establish a caring atmosphere affirming students
Old Port High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop a school culture that encourages positive values, self-esteem and a sense of community • To develop a safe environment

Amethyst attended Eastern High, a large state urban girls' school. Eastern High offered a School Code, urging students to 'accept people for who they are', hinting at character trait development such as trust, honesty and compassion (Davis et al., 2007). The school's Values Statement suggested 'respect for others and support for individuality', yet Amethyst thought staff and students found her bisexual identity too different resulting in her being deliberately ignored by staff and students:

I think our school had very much a culture of 'they are different' we will ignore her and hopefully she will go away', so very much a school culture to ignore people (Amethyst, 24 years, interview).

Amethyst described coming out as bisexual at school and the subsequent exclusion by her classmates in the changing/locker room. Her experience was similar to Pollyanna's (see earlier, this chapter):

When I was 16ish, um, I came out with, I came out to a friend who then disclosed it to everyone and um then I couldn't get changed in the girls locker, the only locker cos it was an all-girls school, and everyone was like 'Oh no oh no how dare she!' 'What if she stares at my boobs?' 'Oh no I can't be seen in the same locker!' (Amethyst, 24 years, interview).

Bisexual misrecognition had Amethyst's classmates believe she would gain sexual pleasure from looking at their bodies. Her classmates refused to associate with her and complained to the PE teacher. The PE teacher escalated this exclusion by removing Amethyst from the main changing room and sending her to change in the disabled persons' toilet:

So I had to every single time we had to get changed I had a special toilet? And it was a disabled toilet, it was quite big but I can't get changed in the normal one with benches and stuff, because everyone just sort of turned, 'oh no hide!' I mean no-one actually physically did anything, but it was just sudden coldness as soon as I walk into the um changing room (Amethyst, 24 years, interview).

Eventually Amethyst's dean [a senior school manager in charge of students' pastoral needs] became involved in the situation:

It got to the point where the dean had to be involved because no-one wanted to play sports with me...I really did love my dean, I think she was one of the few people who sort of looked upon me in favour and so she sort of talked to the other girls but the atmosphere was still quite cold (Amethyst, 24 years, interview).

After discussing the situation with the dean, the PE teacher told Amethyst to share a changing room created for Muslim students:

And then they expanded the Muslim girls' locker room and so they told me 'go ahead and get changed in the Muslim girls' locker' (Amethyst, 24 years, interview).

The teacher did not ask either Amethyst or the Muslim girls if this was acceptable, failing to consider any exclusion as a form of discrimination. After being excluded by other students from the class group for being bisexual, and from the group and the changing room by the teacher for being bisexual and for causing a disruption, Amethyst was now excluded by the Muslim girls for being bisexual and for not being Muslim. However, the teacher thought the situation was now satisfactorily resolved. Not once throughout the process had the teacher consulted with Amethyst on the situation. The ongoing ignorance and exclusion compelled Amethyst to finally take action which was unsafe:

The physical energy I felt within the room makes me feel so bad I start to go out of the locker room and get changed in the playfield and I got quite skilled in the fact of changing without showing any important parts of my body (Amethyst, 24 years, interview).

The antipathy Amethyst experienced forced her to take inappropriate measures for her own safety. The teacher's exclusionary practice coupled with an apparent school culture of discriminative 'problem solving' appeared not to reflect the school's Values Statement and its claimed culture of 'respect for difference'.

At Old Port Girls High Xena had a similar experience when her peers refused to share the changing room with Xena and her friend Kadee:

When we had to get changed in the rooms they wouldn't change unless we left the room. The teacher asked what was going on and they said they didn't want to like share the room with perverts who like looked at them changing all the time. Neither me or Kadee were even interested in looking at them but it didn't matter so the teacher was like 'you two will have to change in the toilets or wait until the others have changed' (Xena, 17 years, interview).

Rather than addressing the situation as an opportunity for the class to learn about and acknowledge diversity, Xena's teacher excluded Xena and Kadee, believing this would solve the problem. Xena's school Mission Statement promised "to develop a school culture that encourages positive values, self-esteem and a sense of community" and "to develop a safe environment". This rubric suggests an inclusive culture; however, having students use a toilet as a sports changing room while the rest of the class change in the designated room openly contradicts any sense of an inclusive school culture or community. Xena did not say if her teacher had taken any action regarding the '*perverts*' pejorative; however, the teacher's action suggests a reluctance to address the underlying issue of bisexual misrecognition.

Teacher attempts to remedy Amethyst's and Xena's situations resulted in both young women feeling physically and emotionally unsafe within their school environments (Meyer, 2008). The attempts also contravened NAG 5 and the school Mission/Values Statements. The actions taken against Amethyst and Xena negated them as young bisexual women, deliberately excluded them, and then invisibilised them.

Alwyn experienced a more subtle form of exclusion at her school. Alwyn had attended Dingledeell High, a small rural co-educational school. Dingledeell's Mission Statement promised a caring atmosphere and a feeling of security. According to Alwyn,

There was no sort of thing of like anything other than being straight. It was like there was only one way to be and that was straight (Alwyn, 24 years, interview).

'Only one way to be and that was straight' suggests any divergence from '*straight*' was profoundly wrong. Alwyn's phrase infers a sense of 'other' (Allen, 2005 a/b; Epstein et al., 2003; Ferfolja, 2007). Alwyn was not familiar with the term 'heteronormativity' yet she conveyed her sense of a heteroconformative culture in her school. In this study heteroconformity is the silent pressure from hegemonic heterosexual culture to perform 'straight' (McLean, 2001); taking part in heteronormative practices such as homophobic anti-locution is one way of performing 'straight' (Fischer, 2013; Wood, 2005). Alwyn described her school's lack of vigilance regarding use of homophobic pejoratives in the school environment:

There was lots of words like ‘poofter’ and ‘faggot’ at school and everything was ‘gay’ but the teachers didn’t do anything about it (Alwyn, 24 years, interview).

Allowing the continued use of this discriminatory language at school suggests the teachers at Alwyn’s school silently endorsed heteroconformity within the school culture and compromised the school’s Mission Statement’s promises of a “caring atmosphere” and “feeling of security”. Although she was out as bisexual to her close friends, Alwyn knew her safety at school was assured only through maintaining silence about her bisexuality (McLean, 2001; Miceli, 2006; Wilkinson & Pearson, 2009). There was no opportunity for Alwyn to negotiate with peers or teachers over being visible as bisexual; however, other participants in this study were able to use school contexts as sites of negotiation of their bisexual visibility.

This study is mindful of the ways in which participants have worked towards positively enabling their bisexual visibility. The enthusiasm which generally infused focus group discussions and individual interviews far outweighed any perceived sense of negativity even when participants were recounting their more challenging experiences of being bisexual at school. Many experiences involved descriptions of ways participants managed some situations; indeed, Amethyst’s ‘solution’ to her exclusion from the changing room was, for her, empowering as she wryly described how she *‘got quite skilled in the fact of changing without showing any important parts of my body’*. For Amethyst, and for other participants who experienced a culture of exclusion in their schools, the only response was to claim their own power as bisexual through actively resisting this culture. The next section examines these acts of resistance.

Resistance to bisexual invisibility at school

Du Plessis (1996) states “we may well insist on our visibility by working through the conditions of our invisibility” (p. 21). This suggests there are various methods with which to resist bisexual invisibility. A bisexual student who is being abused or bullied may take the path of least resistance and start to truant from school (Bontempo & D’Augelli, 2002; Clarke, 2012; Rivers, 2000; Russell, Sinclair, Poteat & Koenig, 2012; Whiting, Boone & Cohn, 2012). *Youth07*, a survey of New Zealand secondary school students indicated 38% of same/both-sex-attracted students had truanted from school for a full day or more during that survey year (Rossen et al., 2009). The truancy figure was higher for same/both-sex-attracted young people (38%) than for opposite-sex-attracted students (25%). *Youth07* cited several reasons for truancy including not “feeling part of their school” and not “feeling that adults at school cared about them” (Rossen et al, 2009, p. 25).

These reasons were reflected in the current study where some participants claimed a lack of school support towards them as young bisexual women. The school culture of discrimination experienced by

some participants affected their overall feelings about school (Malinsky, 1997). Threat to personal safety at school was a dominant reason for truancy amongst same/both-sex-attracted young people (Broome, 2005; Hillier et al., 2010; Holmes & Cahill, 2003; McFarland & Dupuis, 2001). Ziggy often truanted from school to escape the increasing demands from other young women for sexual experimentation:

I attended the classes I wanted to at school which wasn't very often...sometimes I got sick of it and I went and did my own thing for a while (Ziggy, 19 years, interview).

Ziggy viewed her absenteeism as a break from school which held little interest for her. Alice had a similar attitude even though she described herself as a "gifted student":

After I came out at school as bisexual and my school friends began to exclude me, I wagged quite a bit more but that was mainly to practice music more I think. I was just kind of keen to start up a life outside of school, so that when I left school I'd be okay (Alice, 18 years, interview).

Alice truanted partly as a reaction to the in-school exclusion she experienced; however, music was the key to inclusion with her out-of-school friends and Alice truanted mostly to practice her performance skills. She thought her increased musical skill would help ease her acceptance into a new social space (Blackburn & McCready, 2009). Alice took considerable time away from school but her overall academic performance was not affected. She also moved on from the exclusionary treatment from her school 'friends'.

Other participants excelled in their academic studies, saying they preferred to leave their sexuality at the classroom door. They were not denying their bisexual identity; they simply did not correlate sexual identity with academic learning. Scarlet attended a private girls' school where the pressure to gain high academic results was unrelenting. She was comfortably out as bisexual and had little difficulty negotiating her own space as bisexual at school (Hemmings, 2002). Scarlet's power came through her confidence in her capacity to act, her agency (Rasmussen, 2010) as a young bisexual woman. She claimed a lack of interest in flirting and misbehaving at school:

It was always I was largely oblivious as to the social happenings around me because I didn't care? School was about extra-curricular activities and education, and hanging out with my mates, it wasn't really paying attention to all the crap that was going on. (Scarlet, 24 years, interview).

Two other participants viewed their experiences as bisexual at school as insights, appearing comfortably bisexual. Annie, a self-described 'nerd' who loved science and physics at school,

answered the advertisement for bisexual participants and also identified as queer. Although she was aware of discrimination at school her obvious self-confidence deterred any bullying:

Yeah oh I suppose there's the labelling and stereotypes, but um I don't get hassled, um, I think the reason, um cos often some bi people do get hassled from lesbians because they're all 'oh you need to decide', but most people don't know, like I don't go round saying 'I'm bi', I'm just queer, and they're just queer, and that's fine, so yeah there aren't really you know it's just sexuality, for better or worse (Annie, 16 years, focus group).

Annie was aware of bi-misogynist treatment directed at young women from some non-bisexuals in her girls' school but had not personally experienced it. Her queer agency was a way of resisting this treatment; her accepting manner of describing people (*'I'm just queer, and they're just queer, and that's fine...'*) was disarming, leaving little opportunity for negative response. Annie described a conversation with one of her male teachers:

I lead the Queer Straight Alliance at my school and I remember my physics teacher walking in on it and it was like 'oh what's this?' and I'm like 'the Queer Straight Alliance' and he's like 'oh' and walks off and um in physics he comes up to me and asks me about it and to be honest, I think he was kind of interested in it, he was just I think mildly surprised that one existed (Annie, 16 years, focus group).

This conversation between Annie and her physics teacher contrasts sharply with Beena's experience of being 'outed' by her teacher. Annie's physics teacher was curious, asked her a question and made no attempt to personalise the conversation. Annie's direct response ensured the teacher understood the nature of the Queer Straight Alliance group (a meeting group for people of diverse sexualities, not restricted to just gay, lesbian and bisexual (Banks, 2011)) and no further discussion ensued.

Annie's direct nature was similar to Kelly's. Kelly, a quiet young bisexual trans-woman had attended three secondary schools, one as male and the latter two as female. She summed up her experiences:

I think it's given me a unique insight into the school system, rather than being just straight or just gay, because I wasn't a part of many of the gay people were a bit distant with me because I was bi and some of the straight people were like I might hit on them? These were people I didn't really know, so I just sat...it gave me a unique insight (Kelly, 18 years, interview).

Kelly thought her bisexuality provided her with a perspective on school which she may not have had if she was *'just straight or just gay'*. She preferred to observe and learn rather than socialise with others, secure in her bisexuality.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the experiences of young bisexual women in contexts of school culture, namely discrimination through misrecognition of bisexual identity and bi-misogyny. Participants experiencing exclusion reported not being spoken to, being avoided socially at school and physical attack in a culture wrought with discriminatory attitudes and practices of ignorance and erasure of bisexual existence in school safety legislation (Elia, 2014; Jones & Hillier, 2014; Toomey, McGuire, & Russell, 2012).

Some participants described how their teachers ignored or dismissed student attempts to report the exclusion of bisexual identity and the occurrence of physical intimidation at school (Pomeroy, 1999). It is possible that these cultural constructions of difference and school success and failure that are represented in personal beliefs, attitudes and values, shape how educators interact with students (McCaughy et al., 2005). Bisexual misrecognition resulting in rebuffing and rejecting bisexual identity as legitimate were seen to endorse the erasure of bisexuality from school culture. Bi-misogynist treatment from non-bisexual staff and students confuted bisexuality as threatening. These attitudes and values not only restricted learning opportunities around bisexual perspectives for non-bisexual staff and students, they also prevented young bisexual women from full participation in learning and social situations at school.

A remedial action may be to create school policies which directly state expectations of bisexual inclusivity and respect (Elia, 2014). These expectations apply to all staff and students in the school community, and may be emphasised at the beginning of each school year through staff meetings and student assemblies. Any teacher or student ignoring or failing to attend immediately to situations arising through personal and/or societal misrecognition of bisexuality contravenes such legislation, suggesting not only policy but supportive practices must be transparent. Such obvious support may help young bisexual students experience a greater sense of connection at school.

This chapter has attempted to avoid depicting the participants as victims or as individuals who needed protection from themselves (Elia, 2010). The narratives were presented as snapshots or moments from participants' lived experiences of their bisexual identities within schooling contexts (Aerts et al., 2012). During the data gathering process, no participant imparted any sense of victimisation. Some spoke of a degree of oppression as an immediate reaction with a lingering sense of curiosity as to why an incident may have occurred; however, their narratives suggested an overall self-confidence in themselves as young bisexual women. A paucity of academic literature is noted throughout several disciplines to support this chapter on bisexuality and school culture is noted. The experiences related by participants in this study suggest a need for further research into the effects on young bisexual women of misrecognition and bi-misogyny at school and their strategies for managing these effects.

The following chapter summarises the findings presented in the thesis and draws the discussion to a conclusion. Limitations of the research such as recruitment methods are considered, and recommendations are made for future research into the schooling experiences of young bisexual women.

Chapter Seven

Summary and Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter concludes the research into young bisexual women's experiences in New Zealand secondary schools. Having revealed a paucity of academic literature regarding this topic (see Chapter Two Literature Review), the study has attempted to add to educational literature through a specific focus on the experiences of young bisexual women at secondary school in New Zealand. In doing so, the study has identified and named specific discriminatory practices as bisexual misrecognition and bi-misogyny and demonstrated how such practices possibly occurring in some schools may invisibilise, exclude and erase these young women as bisexual. The findings of the study also described how some participants experienced positive outcomes of acceptance and validation from within their school communities.

Evidence indicated by the narratives of young bisexual women suggested some schools' incognisance of issues faced by young bisexual women meant national legislative safety requirements were not being met. Also, some schools were making little attempt to foster social justice within their communities by ensuring positive inclusivity for all sexualities within policies and practices. These data highlighted a dearth of understanding surrounding bisexuality and young bisexual women's schooling needs exhibited by those administrators and teachers responsible for creating and maintaining safe and supportive learning and social environments in schools.

These data also highlight the role of essentialist and hegemonic beliefs about sexual behaviour in sustaining myths and misperceptions about bisexual identity and the manifestation of these beliefs in formal school curriculum areas such as sexuality education and in school culture. The consequences of discounting bisexual identity and rendering it invisible through exclusion are discussed. This chapter also addresses possible implications for educators and schools for creating school learning and social cultures that nurture the development of bisexual identity. Finally, the chapter addresses the limitations of this study and the possibilities for future research that it provokes.

Young bisexual women and sexual identity

Negotiating bisexual identity

This study interpreted bisexual identity as being emotionally, romantically and/or physically attracted to people regardless of gender identity. As there appeared to be little critical sexualities literature exploring young peoples' notions of bisexual identity, the study endeavoured to contribute to this field

by offering young bisexual women an opportunity to scrutinise and share their own notions of bisexuality as influenced by schooling experiences in contexts such as sexuality education.

As Paz Galupo (2011) points out, bisexual identity is “private self-identification...how it is experienced by the individual and read by others” (p. 546/7). Participant reading and experience of the term ‘bisexual’ appeared to resonate with Nathanson’s (2009) suggestion whereby bisexual people do not “make gender a category of exclusion with regard to personal relationships” (p. 76). In their attempts to describe the focus of bisexual attraction, participants frequently used the terms ‘people’ and ‘personalities’; however, this study emphasises the absence of any discussion of the practice of non-monogamy or concurrent emotional/sexual relationships with two or more other partners, often societally misrecognised as bisexual behaviour (Klesse, 2011; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2010). While most participants had reported being rebuffed by teachers when seeking clarification of bisexuality in their classes at school, they adeptly offered diverse views of bisexual identity as both sexual and political, demonstrating a consistency in their perceptions of bisexuality as a valid sexual identity which offers opportunities for fluidity in attraction. The notion of fluidity within bisexual identity extends the work of researchers such as Diamond (2008) whose longitudinal research had previously explored fluidity amongst bisexual-identified young women.

In addition, bisexual identity appeared to offer participants an epistemology which is distinctive, a unique space which involves choice, resists the sexual dichotomy and embraces fluidity (Carr, 2011). The notion of a fluid yet contained identity may seem somewhat paradoxical. The term ‘identity’ may imply the essentialist tendency to ‘fix’; however, claiming an identity that is seen by some as fluid and shifting, a ‘border’ identity (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2010) may also be an act of resistance against the hetero/homosexuality binary. This study notes the notion of bisexual fluidity within boundaries was introduced by older participants, suggesting they had had more experiences at school enabling a more critical reflection on the notion. Amethyst’s statement (see Chapter Four) exemplifies this suggestion; she notes the fluidity of bisexuality as it shifts *‘historically, sociologically’*, accommodating her experiences of attraction to different people. For Amethyst, age 24 years, her bisexual identity had become a political tool, making use of the spaces opening between other sexual identities whereas while she was at school, non-bisexual misrecognition of her identity created experiences of exclusion.

Fluidity as a post-modern effect

The notion of fluidity within bisexuality has considerable potential for ongoing academic debate. Indeed, Wilkinson (1996) posits academic literature has space for a “serious and engaged politics of bisexuality” (p. 299). There may be no specific definition for a diversity of attractions and behaviours which embrace fluidity in their shifts and change according to personalities and situations. However, participants in this study employ the term ‘bisexual’ to describe this diversity, fluidity and change. Three participants also claimed they were ‘pansexual’ and ‘omnisexual’ but came out to their school peers as ‘bisexual’ as they thought the term offered more protection than ‘lesbian’, and also suggested a fashionable sense of mystique and daring.

This thesis argues the existence in today’s society of a type of sexual hedonism which reduces bisexuality to a mere marketing tool for experimentation, ignoring its qualities of identity and activity and misrecognising it as a trend or a passing phase. Bisexuality thus becomes ‘fashionable’, at the expense of the legitimacy of its identity. Some young bisexual women in this study described situations at school where some non-bisexual female peers requested girl/girl physical sexual activity to see if they might also ‘be bisexual’. The participants saw these requests based on a misrecognition of bisexual identity. This suggests a potential for the “repoliticisation of bisexuality” (Wilkinson, 1996, p. 300), urging for an exploration of the political consequences of this fashionable bisexuality not just for bisexual women but for all sexualities.

Relying on the essentialist belief in identities that are fixed or ‘true’ provides nothing but the label, ‘bisexual’. This label is, however, useful as a point of reference, for if labels were to be dispensed with, how then would one refer to the categories of ethnicity, gender, religion? This study suggests maintaining the use of the term ‘bisexual’ in all relevant fields, as long as research on bisexuality includes a defined meaning of the term in a specified context (Fairington, 2008). Russell (2011) observes academic interest in bisexuality may be narrowing as opportunities increase to explore other ‘newer’ identities; however, this study argues bisexuality may be the key with which to open figurative doors to understanding more fluid and diverse sexualities; or as Berenson (2002) describes, to emerge from “confining, claustrophobic places” (p. 11) of misunderstanding.

Other bisexual activists and academics encourage further and ongoing research into bisexuality (Barker et al., 2012; Baumgardner 2007; Carr, 2011; Hutchins, 2006; Ochs & Rowley, 2009; Russell, 2011). Hutchins (2006) suggests “substantive research concerning disclosure of multi-sex/gender attraction in youth (i.e., bi) still remains to be done” (p. 74). Furthermore, researchers and theorists have, for some time, reached conclusions about gay and lesbian young people by using evidence from self-identified bisexual youth (Russell, 2006). There also remains the opportunity for future research into fluidity to shift its focus away from gender preference to other characteristics such as age, ethnicity and class,

hinting at the possibility these other characteristics may have been obscured in research. For future research, Russell (2006) recommends developing questions, guided by theory, and applying such questions directly to the populations upon which said theory focuses. This means of application may help allay some of the confusion around bisexuality by facilitating a clearer understanding in the academic world and eventually in the wider society of what may constitute bisexuality.

Misrecognition of bisexual identity: implications

All participants entered the current study self-identifying as bisexual, preferring this label over terms such as queer. This preference suggested each participant chose the term bisexual “as a meaningful term to account for their identity or their way of life” (Klesse, 2011, p. 231). Some participants had several reasons for using the term bisexual. Some participants felt they were less likely to be persecuted through naming themselves bisexual than lesbian due to current perceptions of bisexuality being ‘safer’ (see Chapter Four).

While protection against persecution was not the primary reason participants identified as bisexual, their experiences when publicly out as ‘bisexual’ suggested some non-bisexuals thought the term less threatening than the term ‘lesbian’ (Barker et al., 2012); however, according to several participants this did nothing to diminish the level of non-acceptance of bisexuality as a legitimate identity by some teachers and peers in schools. In this study, the application of Fraser’s (1998, 2001, and 2013) notion of ‘misrecognition’ to bisexual identity encourages re-assessment of the many beliefs and myths perpetuated through misunderstanding and moral misjudgement. Evidence of participant school experiences of misrecognition opens opportunities for this re-assessment and introduces fresh perspectives on bisexuality as interpreted by young bisexual women themselves. The next section considers some of those perspectives in relation to bisexual misrecognition.

‘All bisexuals are sex fiends’

A study of societal attitudes towards bisexuals found that on a cultural scale of acceptance bisexuals were rated lower than other groups such as religious, political, racial and ethnic; the only group less accepted socially were injecting drug users (Herek, 2002). One contributing factor was the essentialist tendency to “equate bisexuality with promiscuity” (Herek, 2002, p. 65).

Participants in this study did not recount experiences of accusations of promiscuity; they did, however, describe peer attitudes towards their coming out as bisexual. Several participants described how their publicly coming out at school appeared to tacitly grant other girls immediate permission to request private physical sexual encounters. While some participants complied on a one-to-one basis, they were cognisant of the possibility the requestors believed physical sex was all that constituted bisexuality. The

participants also thought some of these requestors were probably already experimenting with girl/girl kissing yet they believed their individual physical attentions and discussions were helping the girls gain an understanding of what it means to be bisexual. Thompson & Morgan (2008) describe individuals such as these requestors as ‘mostly straight’, suggesting this may be a different identity to bisexual or heterosexual; indeed, one participant described these girls as bi-curious.

Girl/girl public sexual activity is a debated topic, particularly when the activity is deliberately staged in public places such as bars. However, girl/girl public experimentation may indeed offer opportunities for women to consider their own attitudes towards bisexual or lesbian sexual identities. This activity may also trigger reflection on personal sexual identity. Diamond (2003) posits the possibility of “situational same-sex sexuality” (p. 353), suggesting this occurs more in adolescent years due to a “greater tolerance for experimentation”.

Participants in this study were divided in their opinions on public girl/girl experimentation. Some saw it as a means of education and encouraged it amongst their peers on the understanding it would help with sexual self-knowledge. This suggests participant belief in girl/girl public experimentation providing a degree of sexual self-empowerment as a young woman (Baumgardner, 2007; Lamb & Peterson, 2012; Yost & McCarthy, 2012). Other participants believed their peers were merely attempting to attract public attention, specifically heterosexual male attention (Lannutti & Denes, 2012; McLean, 2003; Rupp & Taylor, 2011). Most participants generally claimed this behaviour invalidated bisexuality. They believed this public girl/girl sexual activity was broadly interpreted as ‘bisexual’ by those involved as performers and as audience, encouraging a misleading and distorted image of bisexuality as public promiscuous exhibitionism.

Interestingly, none of the participants suggested this girl/girl ‘exhibitionism’ might be a form of bisexual exploitation (Fahs, 2009); however, although they appeared unaware this exploitation meant there was no way to display a personal bisexual identity or to genuinely exhibit the nature of bisexual attraction to a range of genders and personalities, participants held fast to their beliefs in the public misrecognition of bisexuality this activity fostered. As Artemis pointed out, a young woman coming out as bisexual was subject to ‘bisexual’ stereotyping, with any public affection she displayed being seen as *‘straight up faking for attention’*. Also, according to Blake, girl/girl public kissing gave onlookers the *‘wrong idea of bisexuality, yeah pretty slutty’*. The nature of this oppression suggests opportunity for further research into girl/girl activity which appears boundaried by hegemonic heterosexual masculinity and the stifling of women’s attempts to change current social norms.

In addition, girl/girl public sexual behaviour appears to be responsible for the proliferation of the societal misrecognition of all bisexuals not only as promiscuous but as polyamorists (Klesse, 2006), the

common use descriptor being ‘threesomes’ usually between a heterosexual male and two bisexual females or as general group sex (Borver, Gurevich & Mathieson, 2002; Callis, 2013; Hartman, 2011)

While many of the participants in this current study mentioned ‘threesomes’ in focus groups or interviews, this related only to their experiences of bi-misogynist abuse at school from young non-bisexual males and females. One participant said she would be interested in experiencing group sex and was looking forward to being old enough to attend a local club where group sex was a regular activity. A lack of prompts around non-monogamy in this study’s focus groups and interviews may have accounted for the lacuna in participant discussion of the assumed relationship between non-monogamy and bisexuality (Barker, 2005; Sexualities, 2003). Also, the study focused on schooling years, possibly prior to some participants becoming sexually active (McLean, 2001). It is noted McLean’s article on young Australian bisexual men and women does not include references to non-monogamy. While there remain future possibilities for research into young people’s experiences of multiple concurrent relationships, this study has not provided a forum for such investigation as the focus has been on young bisexual women’s experiences at school through their bisexual identities.

The next section addresses the domain of physical bisexual visibility. Many participants in this study made mention of the lack of a bisexual ‘look’ (see Chapter Four) and their wishes to embrace a ‘bisexual appearance’.

The visible bi: appearance and erasure

This thesis argues young bisexual women are subject to a plethora of invisibilities, facing not only the same factors young lesbian women face, but in addition experience negative attitudes and misrecognition exercised generally towards bisexuals by western patriarchal society (Daumer, 1992; Klesse, 2011; Lingel, 2009). As young bisexual women they are visible in the adult world as examples of adolescent sexual instability (Meyer, 2009), becoming invisible when lumped by society (and often by researchers too) into the same category as lesbians. Consequently, as young women their bisexual existence is ignored and erased by policies and ensuing practices in schools as well as in some academic research (McLean, 2005).

In addition to having their sexual identity rendered invisible, some young bisexual women may struggle to communicate their bisexuality through visual means. Having a bisexual ‘look’ may be important as it may deter non-bisexuals from apportioning a heterosexual or lesbian identity to a young woman based on the gender of her partner (Hayfield, Clarke, Halliwell, & Malson, 2013). Hartmann (2013) claims some bisexual women deliberately mix aspects of straight and lesbian dress or behaviour styles to

achieve an androgynous 'look'. Although this 'look' is often societally interpreted as stereotypically bisexual, Hartman (2013) describes her participants as "butch femme" (p.50), an appearance which mixes masculine and feminine dress codes such as heavy boots and strappy singlets; however, none of the participants in this study had considered adopting this approach. Several older participants had had the opportunity at school to wear mufti [personal clothing selection instead of school uniform]. They spoke of their wish to be recognised as bisexual at school through appearance such as clothing, hair, yet were unable to access what they perceived to be an authentic bisexual 'look'. They described experiencing considerable frustration as other people appeared to ignore the possibility of a bisexual identity, attributing their dress and partner gender to either a lesbian or straight identity. Hayfield et al. (2013) report bisexual women's seeming inability to communicate their sexuality through dress and appearance; however, Hayfield et al. (2013) argue some women may express their bisexuality by "incorporat[ing] elements of both heterosexual femininities and lesbian masculinities into their appearance" (p.7). In this study, several participants adopted this practice; Lee claimed she adapted her appearance to fit the situation. Other participants chose to be 'themselves' as individuals, suggesting their bisexual identity was but a part of their entirety. Evidence from some bisexual participants in Hayfield et al.'s (2013) study supports this argument, indicating a general lack of consistency regarding a "distinct shared aesthetic" (Hayfield et al., 2013, p. 7).

Other forms of bisexual appearance include "bisexual display" (Hartman, 2013, p.40). Bisexual women wishing to visibilise their bisexual identity do so through various interactions such as wearing bisexual pride pins or badges on clothing, displaying stickers or patches of the 'bisexual flag' (tri-coloured pink, blue and purple) on personal belongings, and including references to bisexuality in discussions where opportune. However, some participants in this current study claimed they did not feel the need to conform to a sexual stereotype to proclaim their bisexual identity; they felt secure as they were. To Amethyst, the lack of a bisexual stereotype suggested an overall '*normality*' of bisexuality. Another participant, Alice found this lack empowering, claiming it removed any pressure to declare her sexual identity by conforming to societal expectations and norms. Other participants claimed their bisexual identity enabled a personal freedom to individualise their own appearance. Participants embraced a range of appearances, through deliberate attempts to challenge and disrupt societal normalcy rather than depict a sexual identity. The issue of a definitive bisexual 'look' remained unresolved, leaving bisexuality in the shadows, partially visible yet obscured by stylised and stereotyped sexual dichotomy. As Amethyst suggested, '*The invisibility of the normalness of bisexuals make it difficult to do research on. Which make bis almost impossible to classify and very difficult to identify*'.

The next section concludes the exploration of young bisexual women's experiences of school cultures of safety including policy and practice around bisexual discrimination and exclusion.

School culture and young bisexual women

Pallotta-Chiarolli (2006) writes of “the marked decline in heterosexism and homophobia in our society, which is facilitating the emergence and visibility of new sexual minorities, including bisexuality.” (p. 83). This apparent decline appears in a range of mediums such as the inclusion of main gay and lesbian character roles in current television shows (Altemeyer, 2002; Raley & Lucas, 2006), social media articles featuring the latest movie or television star to come out as gay or lesbian (Dow, 2001; Gomillion & Giuliano, 2011), the burgeoning ‘pink market’ in the business world (Sender, 2004) and in some Western countries and states including New Zealand, recent legislation permitting same-sex couples to marry (Parliament Today, 2013). A similar decline seems to be apparent in New Zealand schools; results from *Youth07*, a recent national survey of secondary school students, indicated most ‘same/both-sexes attracted young people’ had “positive views on school with most indicating that school was okay” (Rossen et al. 2009, p.4). Pallotta-Chiarolli’s (2006) noted marked decline in sexist harassment is indeed smoothing the way for gay and lesbian sexual minorities. Many schools have taken steps to acknowledge and meet the needs of these minorities, possibly as a consequence of changing societal trends.

These trends include more young people coming out as gay or lesbian, suggesting a heightened awareness of homophobia and schools recognising the varied learning requirements of sexually diverse young people and indeed all students in a school population (Szalacha, 2003). In addition, a school culture of safety is supported by senior management and other services operating within the school such as counsellors and deans responsible for students’ pastoral care. Szalacha (2003) claims educators and teachers now recognise they have a social responsibility to ensure a harassment-free school culture for all students regardless of ability; however, the lived experiences of this study’s bisexual participants which included the failure of many teachers to take appropriate or indeed any action in situations where bisexual students were harassed would suggest some New Zealand teachers have yet to make that recognition. This study’s participants’ school experiences have suggested some New Zealand school environments are not safe and secure for young bisexual women, with evidence in these experiences of bi-misogyny and teacher disavowal of bullying situations. These experiences underscore the study’s claim that bisexuality appears to have become a new social target as there has been little direct research focus on ways safety policies and practices compromise the safety of bisexual students at school (Elia, 2014).

The well-being of students at school and indeed all those within a school environment is influenced by teacher attitudes; these attitudes are a vital aspect of school climate and culture (Dessel, 2010). In this study, incidents described by participants involving negative teacher interaction or lack of teacher

action suggest some external influencing factors on the lack thereof. First, any resultant incident report necessitates administrative requirements such as interviews with senior management, providing a written witness report, speaking with counsellors and parents. Some teachers may have been reluctant to intervene in some harassment situations because of the time required to complete this process in addition to their usual workload. However, ignoring any situation posing physical or emotional danger to students directly contravenes New Zealand school safety regulations (Ferfolja, 2007; MoE, 2009) and is illegal. Some teachers may ignore a situation founded on sexual harassment such as deliberate use of pejoratives (Pascoe, 2005; Thurlow, 2001) due to personal use of those same pejoratives, seeing no issue with this. Some participants in this study related incidents involving the term 'bisexual' used by young men as an epithet, subsequent teacher inaction, and the resultant feelings of frustration and insecurity; these are not only barriers to learning but examples of sexual and social injustice.

The lack of teacher response to complaints from young bisexual women in this study may have stemmed from teachers' personal discomfort around sexual identity. Personal prejudice towards bisexuality may manifest itself in a teacher's behaviour and attitudes. Dessel (2010) suggests "schools reproduce and reaffirm normative ideas about sexuality" (p.558); these normative ideas may originate from teachers' personal levels of discomfort and prejudice towards any sexuality other than heterosexuality. A teacher's personal prejudice may invoke resistance to creating a classroom culture inclusive of the diversities students bring to it (Meyer, 2008).

According to Brantlinger, Morton and Washburn (1999), teachers are not always aware of the dynamics within their classrooms, whether between students or between themselves and students. This study recommends teachers become more "directive" (Brantlinger et al., 1999, p. 495) within the social domains of the classroom. This may include students co-creating, with the teacher as facilitator, a class mandate to respect themselves, all others and the classroom environment. Hiam Ginott (1965), a psychologist speaking as a teacher, said, "I am the decisive element in the classroom; it is my personal approach that makes the climate; it is my daily mood that makes the weather..." (n.p.). Acknowledging and accepting the sexual diversities in their classrooms may help teachers create the very space in which to foster understanding and a greater potential for positive relationships between all parties.

Furthermore, teachers may consider exercising a "constructive moral control" (Brantlinger et al., 1999, p. 495) over student interactions with each other in an attempt to divert bullying and discriminative behaviour. Teachers can be among the most influential people in a young person's life. If a young bisexual woman has a teacher who is positive, affirming and inclusive, in whose classroom the student

feels safe and secure, her sense of well-being and self-confidence increases (Clarke, 2012) and through this so do her academic opportunities (Birr Moje & MuQaribu, 2003).

This study also advocates schools actively demonstrate inclusivity of sexualities in such public documents as their Mission Statement. The study examined three Mission Statements from participant schools and compared these statements with participant descriptions of teacher attitudes towards young bisexual women in those same schools. In each description participants' lived experiences included being ignored or dismissed by teachers when attempting to report bisexual identity-related harassment. This suggests some schools may claim a policy of inclusion but do not support their policy through practice by addressing and eradicating scenarios of harassment and discrimination.

To counter this, the study recommends Boards of Trustees and school senior management consider professional development for their staff around sexual diversity, not only for legal requirements but also to address and remind all staff of basic human rights. A useful resource is the NZPPTA Guidelines for Safer Schools (2012) which contains examples of scenarios which present gay, lesbian and transgender students and teachers in challenging situations requiring teachers and school management to find positive and affirmative resolutions. Although these scenarios focus on gay, lesbian and transgender students, situations including bisexual students such as those described in this study may be adapted and incorporated for discussion. If more secondary schools were to adapt the recommendations within the NZPPTA Guidelines (2012), some teachers may find the appropriate tools to help address their personal discrimination and prejudice towards young bisexual women and indeed towards all sexually diverse students. In turn this may contribute towards increasing young bisexual women's self-esteem and sense of connection to their school, leading to a greater sense of empowerment and improved academic outcomes (Clarke, 2012).

Many participants in this study described how their teachers provided positive support during challenging times such as coming out at school or facing bullying situations (Meyer, 2008). Some teachers organised for students to visit community-based sexually diverse groups, or found appropriate counselling when some school counsellors appeared to not understand the issues faced by young bisexual women. This is evidence of the positive attitudes towards bisexuality within some school communities (Kennedy & Fisher, 2010).

Teacher attitudes and values are also important in the delivery of school-based sexuality education. The next section considers issues within this subject area for young bisexual women.

Sexuality education: helpful or not to young bisexual women?

In this study, data on school-based sexuality education has revealed two major issues arising for young bisexual women. The first concerns the negative effect which the dearth of relevant and useful information within most school-based sexuality education programmes may have on young bisexual women as they struggle to find information including what constitutes bisexuality. The second issue relates to teachers' personal attitudes and values associated with sexuality and how these may influence appropriate and accurate delivery of aspects relevant to young bisexual women within the sexuality education programme. The foundation of the issue of the lack of useful and relevant information may be associated with the New Zealand Health curriculum and ways in which schools and teachers interpret the key area of learning, sexuality education.

The Health (and sexuality education) curriculum in New Zealand secondary schools

Section 60B of the Education Act states all New Zealand schools must implement the Health curriculum, including sexuality education up to Year 10 (MoE, 1999). Although this legislation demands curriculum implementation, the curriculum merely 'suggests' subject content promoting "positive sexuality" (MoE, 2007, p. 23). This lack of specification may be seen by some teachers as liberating, allowing freedom of choice; however, in some schools the lack of specification may mean sexuality education is granted a token acknowledgement through a particularly heteronormative filter, silencing and indeed erasing some topics deemed sensitive or inappropriate such as same and both sexes attraction (Allen, 2005, 2007, 2011; Connell & Elliott, 2007; Fields, 2008).

Some New Zealand-based research sees this silencing of the discussion of 'non-heterosexual' topics in sexuality education as a fault of the 2007 New Zealand Curriculum, suggesting the curriculum has a "pervasive heterosexual focus" (Jackson & Weatherall, 2010). In an effort to create a more inclusive and relevant sexuality education programme, this study advocates programme planners access age-appropriate New Zealand-produced resources such as *Affirming Diversity* (Ingram & Guild, 2007) and *Hei Huarahi: the Sexuality Road for Year 9* (Family Planning, 2013). Specific opportunities for learning about sexual diversity, in particular bisexuality, may be framed within such Health curriculum strands as Personal Identity, Relationships with Other People, and Healthy Communities and Environments. These strands provide the basis for any Health lesson; it therefore appears the opportunities to create specifically bisexually targeted Health lessons are well available to any teacher or programme planner. Rather than, as one participant in this study experienced, a piece of paper with a one sentence definition of bisexuality, why not create, as part of a sexuality education programme, lessons addressing specific issues such as coming out as bisexual, bisexual relationships, bisexual choices, bisexual challenges as faced by bisexual youth in comparison with those issues faced by young

gay and lesbian students? The Health curriculum encourages teaching social justice (NZC, 2007, p. 23). The freedom to plan lesson content encompasses the opportunity for teachers to ensure their sexuality education programmes are inclusive of all sexualities and genders. To ignore this is to deny bisexual students the chance to learn their own specific socio-ecological perspective on themselves, others and society.

Delivery of the Health curriculum: a culture of desultory practice

Although legislation requires its compulsory presence in secondary schools, Health including sexuality education is generally accorded a low status, often being viewed by senior management and school subject timetablers as a non-academic fill-in subject at junior level (Years 9 and 10), and at senior level (external NCEA qualification) as a repository for miscreants and students with timetable gaps (Hargreaves, 2012; Sinkinson & Hughes, 2008; Weir, 2009). This low status is reflected in the allocation of subject hours, resourcing and those assigned to teach the subject. According to Collins (2005), New Zealand schools have very few specialist Health teachers which may possibly limit the current depth of teaching of Health topics and indeed their very inclusion. In many schools Health is seen as a subsidiary subject to PE and taught by PE teachers; some participants in this study commented on this, describing their male PE/Health teachers as *'crusty old men'* who *'only taught straight stuff'*.

Some teachers also claim personal reasons in their refusal to teach sexuality education (Fenton, 2012). Indeed, as Ollis (2010) indicates, "sexuality education is a risky business for teachers because it is concerned with issues that can invoke a moral or ethical response and, if not conducted appropriately, can set up notions of blame and shame" (p. 227). For many teachers, the challenges to personal attitudes and values may be reflected in an often desultory and inadequate delivery of a Health programme (including a brief attempt at sexuality education) which does little to meet the needs of its recipients (ERO, 2007; Weir, 2009), in particular young bisexual women. This study's participant descriptions of their experiences of sexuality education reflected a sense of frustration as their efforts to seek more information about bisexuality were in most cases ignored or rebuffed by their teachers through comments such as *'bisexuality? That's just semantics'*.

In some cases, other subject teachers may not have enough timetabled teaching hours overall and are allocated junior Health classes to 'top up' their teaching load. Teachers may unsuccessfully resist this allocation, citing a lack of specialist Health teacher training or a lack of interest (Hargreaves, 2012; Weir, 2009), but to no effect. Sexuality education lessons are often casualties, often deliberately postponed until the last week of the junior Health programme, resulting in rushed delivery with lessons

pared down to the ‘basics’ being puberty and reproduction (Jackson & Weatherall, 2010; Sinkinson & Hughes, 2008; Weir, 2009). Little time is given to support student learning, teachers often defaulting to ‘chalk and talk’ rather than using a co-constructive pedagogy where students share their learning through interactive discussions (Fenton, 2012).

Another barrier to the effective delivery of inclusive sexuality education is the assumption made by senior managers responsible for employing new staff in secondary schools that all teachers trained in PE will also teach Health as a ‘supporting’ subject (Hargreaves, 2012; Sinkinson & Burrows, 2011). This expectation is perhaps fuelled by the tendency of pre-service education providers to bracket the two subjects together in accordance with the curriculum learning area, a practice which actively discourages intending teachers from other subject areas who wish to teach Health but not PE. Furthermore, Sinkinson and Burrows’ (2011) observations of “jock mentality” (p.59) towards teaching Health sees important and relevant issues in sexuality education being evaded, in particular bisexuality. This study suggests jock mentality is a form of oppression, possibly contributing to bi-misogyny. When Pollyanna asked her male PE/Health teacher about both-sexes attraction, he replied ‘*we don’t want to teach people how to get AIDS, and lesbian sex doesn’t exist*’. Responses such as this create insurmountable barriers for some young bisexual women attempting to find useful and constructive information about their sexual identity.

In pre-service Health and PE education and in fact all pre-service education across the curriculum, efforts must be made by all educators to stifle any signs of these oppressive attitudes, including bi-misogyny. Through educators facilitating an understanding of social and sexual justice, including recognition of heteronormative practices and its ensuing deleterious effects, beginning teachers may begin to recognise these attitudes within their own practices and take action to erase them. Also, all Health and PE teachers need to realise the importance of sexuality education to developing adolescents including those young people grappling with their sexual identity who need supportive, relevant and appropriate answers. Evidence in this study showed this importance was often negated; participants whose school PE teachers also took them for Health thought those teachers appeared uninterested in Health and specifically sexuality education, and were therefore unable to meet the needs of their female bisexual students. Most participants felt disempowered and disadvantaged by the attitudes of their teachers, communicated through comments such as ‘*we don’t need to talk about that*’.

The sexuality education programmes at many participants’ schools heteronormatively focused on male/female sexual activity (Jackson & Weatherall, 2010), making little reference to same-sex attraction and ignoring any reference to bisexuality apart from casting aspersions on its very existence.

Some participants thought their teachers appeared to believe being bisexual was the same as being gay or lesbian, an attitude which invisibilised the specificities of bisexuality and prohibited participants from learning more about themselves as young bisexual women.

Many of the experiences of young women in this study have tended to be negative; however, many participants were confident young women who undertook positive action related to their bisexual identity. Several participants from different schools approached their Health teachers, offering to speak with classes about being bisexual and sexual diversity. These young women were proudly out as bisexual and were active in their school Queer Straight Alliance (QSA) groups (Mayberry, 2013; Quinlivan, 2013) and community diversity groups. One participant, Pollyanna, described the look of relief on her teacher's face when Pollyanna offered to explain gender and bisexuality to the teacher's junior and senior Health classes. Apparently the teacher had not considered consulting with members of the school's QSA regarding peer education about sexual diversity. Without Pollyanna's action, the silence around bisexuality and sexual diversity in her school Health lessons may have remained unbroken; however, pre-service training, professional development and in-school departmental support for sexuality education should have provided the teacher with the means to deliver these lessons herself, rather than relying on a junior student.

Regardless of the positive actions taken by participants and by some teachers described here, the fact remains: heteronormativity, bi-misogyny and misrecognition of bisexuality continue to be manifest. Sexuality education curricula can be created and written, but unless teachers are required to confront their fears of 'difference', the status quo remains and young bisexual women will continue to exist beneath a veil of invisibility imposed by creators of school sexuality education programmes. Sexuality education offers its teachers the opportunity to be part of an "ethical professional...motivated by the belief of the good in people... [seeing the] possibility of enhancing that goodness" (Sinkinson & Burrows, 2011, p.64). These teachers may need to position themselves as role models of equality and inclusivity, ensuring their lessons are meaningful and relevant to all students in their classes, simply because, as indicated by the data in this study, our schools are not meeting the learning needs of our young bisexual women in sexuality education. Indeed, in a New Zealand-based study, a young bisexual female participant urges sexuality education teachers to "just acknowledge there is more than heterosexual people out there" (McAllum, 2008, p. 129). Participant narratives of school sexuality education experiences point to a current lack of social/sexual justice regarding these young women; raising teachers' and schools' awareness of this may encourage positive change in attitudes, values and practices in secondary school sexuality education. In the following, Ziggy Stardust's comment represents the thoughts and feelings of many participants in this study. When asked to reflect on her

school sexuality education and what she remembered as relevant to her as a young bisexual woman, Ziggy thought for a moment and then said:

I don't think there was anything. I reckon I would have remembered if there was and probably paid a bit more attention. (Ziggy Stardust, 19 years, FG)

Methodological insights

Limitations

Generalisability

Participants were drawn from a wide geographical area within the North and South Islands of New Zealand. This study recognises only some young bisexual women currently attending or having recently attended secondary school in New Zealand. It cannot be generalised to young bisexual women in other parts of the world; neither can it represent all young bisexual women in New Zealand as the total population of this group is unknown (Aerts et al., 2012). While this geographical spread enabled comprehensive data possibly representative of the schooling experiences of young bisexual women, physical distance precluded some participant contributions. In addition, the small number of participants (37) may have limited the generalisability of the findings. Because participants were required to be publically out as bisexual, several respondents did not meet this criterion; although they claimed to be known as bisexual to close friends and some family, this did not constitute being 'publically out' as required by the University of Auckland Human Ethics Committee. The data was generated only by young women who were publically out as bisexual; however, other perspectives on bisexual identity may have been gained from those young women who were out as bisexual to family and friends but not out publically as bisexual.

Recruitment of participants from schools

The criteria for participation included young women aged between 16-24 years who were publically out as bisexual. Recruiting participants through advertisements placed on notice boards on university campuses proved fruitful, as did sending invitations to be part of the research project to community diversity groups. As the study focused on schooling years, and in anticipation of a positive response, invitations were also posted to a total of 60 secondary school principals throughout New Zealand. Out of those 60, nine principals responded by post or email. Six returned signed consent forms; three declined the invitation, with one principal expressly forbidding any researcher contact with the school guidance counsellor and Health teacher. Nil response to the remaining 51 invitations was received, even following a further mail out. After returns were received, one school was unable to provide

participants as no students had contacted the guidance counsellor or Health teacher in response to the advertisement. Another school principal gave consent and passed the information to the school counsellor whose eventual desultory email responses suggested a lack of interest in supporting the study.

Many sexualities researchers have reported barriers to research within the school community (Allen, 2005, 2011; Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Quinlivan, 2006). Allen (2011) describes the combination of sexuality research and young people as “particularly contentious” (p. 21). As the formal school curriculum includes the provision of sexuality education to young ‘vulnerable’ adults, some may see this as creating opportunities for exploitation and corruption of young minds (Allen, 2011). These opportunities require certain regulation and policing; one method of policing by school principals is to deny outsiders such as researchers access to these ‘vulnerable minds’, thus quelling any possible chance of damage to a school’s reputation.

New Zealand school principals are subject to their own set of Professional Standards (MoE, 2009). These Standards include responsibility for the promotion of “an inclusive [school] environment in which the diversity...and prior experiences of students are acknowledged and respected” (MoE, 2009, n.p.). This study recommends principals take time to consider the benefit of research on diverse sexualities to school communities, benefits eventually measurable through such avenues as lowered reported levels of truancy and bullying incidents, and increased academic success.

Time, resourcing and cultural factors

When researching in the field of diverse sexualities it is important to clarify what the study hopes to find and the impact of those findings (Dankmeijer & Kuyper, 2006). This project was not intended as a vehicle for tales of victimisation. The study depicts various moments of participants’ lived experiences; there was neither the time nor the resourcing available to consider a longitudinal study which may have provided more evidence around the stability of bisexual identity. The research aim was to provide new literature that focuses solely upon the experiences of young bisexual women in adverse environments and their suggestions for improvements in some schooling contexts such as sexuality education.

The question of culture was not addressed directly as a separate issue. The existence of adversities created through race and religion was not the focus of this study; however, each participant was considered on those unique and individual qualities she brought to the research. If culture, race and / or religion played a significant part in a participant’s identification as bisexual, it was explored as part of that participant’s journey (Brooks, Inman, Klinger, Malouf & Kaduvettoor, 2010). It was not possible to ensure any analysis on the basis of ethnicity because this study was dependent on volunteers. There is great potential for further research in this specific field.

This study was relatively small scale. In accordance with other researchers in the same subject area (McLean, 2003; Pallotta-Chiarolli & Martin, 2009), a large response to the recruitment drive was not anticipated as many young women do not publicly declare their bisexuality. Their reluctance to do so may be based on a fear of recrimination and exclusion, or indeed a reluctance to be labelled (Pallotta-Chiarolli & Martin, 2009; Russell & Seif, 2002; Savin-Williams, 2005). Many New Zealand secondary schools problematise research of this nature, making access to possible participants difficult and restrictive (McAllum, 2008; Quinlivan, 2004; Smith, 2006). Further research in this area could consider attracting participants through public advertising and the snowballing method.

The study did not include bisexual males. The focus was solely on young bisexual women as there is a dearth of knowledge and literature about this group.

Areas for future research

Bisexuality, culture, and ethnicity in New Zealand schools

In accordance with increased levels of immigration into New Zealand, school-based sexuality education now extends to include young people whose cultures, ethnicities and religions may deny them access to such information outside of school. Due to space constraints, this study has not directly addressed the intersection between diverse ethnicities, youth culture and sexualities. Although Russell and Seif (2002) describe research within this area as “complex and controversial” (p. 88), future research into bisexuality and schooling needs to address and explore those intersections from a bisexual perspective. Table 3 identifies the range of ethnicities represented by this study’s bisexual participants, indicating an imbalance between young New Zealand European women and other groups:

NZ Euro	NZ Maori	Euro/Maori	Cook Is Maori	Niuean	Turkish	UK	USA	South Africa	NZ/Aus	Malay
21	3	1	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	1

Table 3: Participants ethnic identity

Teacher professional development in sexual diversities

Educational professionals such as teachers, school management and counsellors must understand the importance of acknowledging bisexuality's stability, validity and independence from other sexual identities (Kennedy & Fisher, 2012). Major schooling contexts in which active bisexual validation may occur include preventative whole-school harassment programmes and inclusive sexuality education lessons. These contexts must be supported with relevant legislation and bisexual-friendly school-wide attitudes and practices (Meyer, 2008). One New Zealand-based resource provides learning opportunities from which to implement such programmes.

The Guidelines for Safe Schools (NZPPTA, 2012) resource provides a sound basis from which to consider inclusivity for young bisexual women and indeed all students and staff of diverse sexualities. School-based teacher professional development around the Guidelines (NZPPTA, 2012) including strategies for managing challenging situations in schools began in 2012 (NZPPTA, 2013). The recent timing of these staff workshops in schools precluded any data gathering for this current study; however, future research opportunities around the implementation and efficacy of the Guidelines in relation to young bisexual women will be enhanced by the increase in the number of workshops taking place.

In addition, professional development for teachers of school-based sexuality education has suffered from withdrawal of government funding and resource cut-backs. This study has touched upon the effects of these cut-backs on young bisexual women and their sexuality education teachers. Further research on a larger scale may provide more detailed information supporting this group's needs and rights to receive relevant, appropriate and correct information about sexuality, sexual identity and being bisexual. Indeed, this research may serve two functions. First, it may draw attention to the development of "responsive practices" (Kennedy & Fisher, 2010, p. 482) within the sexuality education and Health classroom, practices which must be documented. Documenting successful practices and outcomes leads to the second function, the creation of a resource available to all teachers of sexuality education wishing to employ best practice when teaching young bisexual women.

'Being' bisexual

Some researchers suggest findings around the stability of a bisexual identity suggest a need for further research into this to help concrete bisexual validity and acknowledge the fluidity within bisexuality (Russell & Seif, 2002). The authors suggest considering "an alternate conceptualization of youthful sexuality, including identity, behaviour, and attraction, that acknowledges development and fluidity" (p. 90), while Aerts et al. (2012) claim maintaining clear "rigid categorizations" (p. 107) may place

limitations on a study, yet allows for easier comparisons between groups. Aerts et al. (2012) recommend longitudinal research as this may provide deeper insights into how sexual identity fluidity may influence the lives of young people. Another study suggests future research into fluidity may shift its focus away from gender preference to other characteristics such as age, ethnicity and class (Ross et al., 2012); the suggestion hints at the possibility these other characteristics have been obscured in research. Again, this raises opportunities for future research.

Advocacy for future research into bisexual youth may appear altruistic and slightly dated, given current claims that some youth are eschewing categorisation (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2010; Savin-Williams, 2005); however, evidence of lumping of bisexual statistics into lesbian or gay categories in order to generalise or homogenise results suggests a lack of social and sexual justice, wherein young bisexual women are invisibilised as bisexual and read as lesbian. Indeed, there is a need for further research in which young bisexual women are validated as bisexual rather than as a sub-group of lesbianism. Israel (2010) sees the need for research “from a range of disciplines which can describe, conceptualize and investigate the diverse perspectives and experiences of bisexual youth” (p. 360). Of particular importance is the need for more exploration of the strength and resilience of young bisexual women, including their negotiation of challenging school experiences. The identification of specific protective factors unique to this group may open up new perspectives on ways in which young bisexual women assert themselves as bisexual (Israel, 2010). As Fairington (2008) claims, bisexuality has “boundless possibilities for social progress” (p. 270). To activate these possibilities, bisexuality’s existence, and its very ubiquity within today’s society must first be acknowledged.

Are you bisexual and interested in equality issues?

Want to share your thoughts with other like-minded souls?

I am a doctoral student from the University of Auckland researching experiences of being bisexual at school. To qualify, you must be a young woman aged between 16 and 24 years and out as bisexual or pansexual.

What is involved:

Taking part in a focus group, writing in a journal about your experiences at school and an individual meeting with me, all at times that work for you.

(Maximum time @6 hours total over @6 weeks)

To contact me:

Email Mary-Anne at: mycoolpeople@gmail.com

Or text me on 0276206200

Thanks!

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON
10/12/2010 for 3 years.

Reference number: 2010/599

Appendix B

Reference number 2010/599

Focus group schedule ('bi' is often used to denote bisexual/bisexuality)

Warm up questions

1. Do you have any bi heroes or heroines? What is it about them that make them your hero?
2. What to you is the very best thing about being bisexual, and why is that so?
 - Worst thing about being bi?
3. What do you think this article is saying about bisexuality?

[Show participants the newspaper article] (Ani Esmailian, August 14, 2009. Retrieved October 2, 2009 from http://www.hollyscoop.com/kanye-west/kanye-wests-girlfriend-is-proud-to-be-a-bisexual-freak_21209.aspx)

- Draw out positives and negatives about bisexuality
4. Anna Paquin recently came out as bi. What were your impressions of the media reaction to this?

[Show participants the internet article] (Reuters, April 2, 2010. Retrieved April 5, 2010 from <http://nz.entertainment.yahoo.com//100401/5/i5ei.html>).

- Different ways of representing bisexuality through the media?
 - Media influencing ways of interpreting bisexuality accurate or not?
5. In the television series True Blood, the vampire character Queen Sophie-Anne is bi. Reading the posts about this on www.AfterEllen.com , some respondents seemed disappointed, wanting her instead to be lesbian. What do you think about this reaction?

[Show participants posts from *AfterEllen*] (Retrieved October 15, 2010 from <http://www.afterellen.com/archives-bisexualwomen.html>).

- Bisexuals in other shows, movies or books e.g. Karen in Will and Grace; Girl with the Dragon Tattoo?

Exploring Bisexuality at School

6. Now shift your thoughts to being bisexual at school. Can you remember a time when being bisexual was something you were aware of at school?
 - Was this a positive or negative experience?
7. Tell me about a time when your being bi influenced a relationship with either a student or a teacher.

8. Some academic research (Birr Moje and MuQaribu, 2003) [briefly explain this research to participants] suggests there may be links between our sexual identity and the ways we learn at school. What are your thoughts on this?
 - Birr Moje, E. And MuQaribu, M. (2003). Literacy and Sexual Identity. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 47(3):204-208
9. Think back to your sexuality education lessons at school. What do you remember about them?
 - Was bisexuality mentioned? Was this positive or negative?
10. Can you think of ways that sexuality education could be made better?
 - What wasn't as helpful or useful to you as a young bisexual woman?
11. Can you tell me if there was a time you were discriminated against because of your bisexuality? This can sometimes be called biphobia.
12. Are there any other things that you want to share about being bisexual at school?

Exploring participants' notions of bisexuality

13. What does the term 'bisexual' mean to you?

[Talk about ways in which society interprets bisexuality, show printed quotes to participants e.g. *"bisexuality is an act put on to attract heterosexual men"*; *"bisexuality is a passing phase"*]

- Is your understanding of bisexuality different from these statements?
 - How do you describe yourself as bisexual to friends, family, other people?
14. Do people ask you specific questions about being bisexual? Can you tell us about those questions?
 15. If there was one thing you would like to tell the world about being bi, what would it be? [Allow a few minutes to think then go around the group]

Appendix C

Guidelines for focus groups

The following is a combined list of safety guidelines as agreed upon by all participants in each focus group. The facilitator was responsible for reminding participants of these guidelines; however, the environments in each group were such that reminders were unnecessary. The language is that of the participants, unedited

- No mocking; we each have a right to give our own opinion and not be ‘dissed’ for it
- One speaker at a time
- Respect: for self when sharing personal information and for others when they are sharing
- Respect for [the researcher] and for what she is doing
- Support each other during the discussion and afterwards if we need to
- Keep silent if we want to and don’t put pressure on the others to speak
- Say if it’s getting too tough or personal: it’s okay to say ‘time out’

In addition to the above guidelines the researcher provided contact details of school counsellors and community diversity groups if participants wished to speak with support professionals. No participant requested these details.

Appendix D

Focus group flashcard prompts

'Bisexuality is a passing phase'

'Bisexuality is an act put on to attract heterosexual men'

"Bisexual identity is not a combination of attractions to women and to men but an attraction to people regardless of their gender" (author's emphasis)

(Rust, 2008a:213)

..bi people are sexual tourists, privileged people who get to flirt with a queer identity in an appropriative fashion who always have the ability to retreat into straight privilege.

Urocyon's Meanderings, blog at Wordpress.com, October 13, 2010. Retrieved November 13, 2010 from

<http://urocyon.wordpress.com/page/25/?archives-list&archives-type=months>

Appendix E

Reflective Journal introduction/instructions and prompts.

Each section/prompt was printed out and glued into an A5 journal, leaving space for written or visual responses such as drawings, clippings etc.

Introduction:

Hi there. Thank you for taking part in my research project, and for agreeing to record your thoughts in this journal.

My hope is that you use this journal to record any memories you may have of various aspects related to bisexuality, whether it is how you 'live' as bi, how people react(ed) to you when you come (came) out to them, things that may happen with your friends or at school which relate to being bi, anything at all that you may wish to include here.

As part of my research focuses on being bi at school, I would be grateful if you could record memories of specific learning e.g. your school sexuality education classes, how teachers treat(ed) you as a young bi woman, how your school views people who are bi, gay, lesbian. Please also include any song lyrics, poems (your own or others), artwork, photos, that may depict your sense of bisexuality. I have included various pieces from articles, blogs etc that may give you inspiration. Feel free to write any opinion you may wish to, and be safe in the knowledge that only you and I will be viewing this. If I include any of your writing in my final thesis, it will appear under your chosen research name, with any names of friends, schools etc also changed.

I will be in contact with you to arrange our interview time and place. I will remind you to bring this journal with you so we can discuss anything you may have written.

Once again, my sincere thanks for taking the time to participate.


Mary-Anne

mamcallum@gmail.com

Article for response: More women experimenting with bisexuality.

More women experimenting with bisexuality

Survey: Females in late teens and 20s report increasing same-sex contact

 Associated Press

updated 9/19/2005 11:20:58 AM ET

More women — particularly those in their late teens and 20s — are experimenting with bisexuality or at least feel more comfortable reporting same-sex encounters, according to a new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The survey, released Thursday by the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics, found that 11.5 percent of women, ages 18 to 44, said they've had at least one sexual experience with another women in their lifetimes, compared with about 4 percent of women, ages 18 to 59, who said the same in a comparable survey a decade earlier.

For women in their late teens and 20s, the percentage rose to 14 percent in the more recent survey. About 6 percent of men in their teens and 20s said they'd had at least one same-sex encounter.

A rite of passage?

When it comes to women and same-sex relationships, Mosher said it would be worth studying why young women seek such relationships, and whether they may be trying to avoid diseases more commonly spread through sex with men

But some experts who study sexuality say it's even more likely that many college students simply see experimentation as a rite of passage.

The trend among college women has prompted some sexual behavior experts to light-heartedly refer to the term “LUG,” or “lesbian until graduation,” said Craig Kinsley, a neuroscientist at the University of Richmond who studies the biology of sexual orientation and gender.

Article for response: Bisexuals Take a ‘Flexible’ View.

Bisexuals Take a ‘Flexible’ View and Don’t Follow a ‘Fixed Path’, Say Sexuality Experts

Young bisexual women face urban labels like “hasbien” and “Bug” (bisexual until graduation), not to mention the giddy voyeurism of male fantasies and the ridicule of their lesbian sisters.

For many of today’s women in their late teens and 20s, openness to intimate physical relationships with either gender has become a way of life, rather than an “experiment”. This relatively new phenomenon is likely a product of a generation unconcerned with labels.

“These young women see sexuality as a fluid thing,” said National Gay and Lesbian Task Force spokeswoman Roberta Sklar. “It’s not just between your legs.”

“These relationships are physical, emotional and intellectual, and the boundaries are not hard set” she said.

Prompts: these were posted every few pages throughout the journal with room provided for written or illustrated responses.

➤ **“Being bi is totally different to being gay or straight.”**

Who is advantaged by this statement?

Who is disadvantaged by this statement?

How do I feel about this statement and why do I feel this way?

➤ **“People who say they are bi just haven’t decided if they are gay or straight”**

Who is advantaged by this statement?

Who is disadvantaged by this statement?

How do I feel about this statement and why do I feel this way?

➤ **“Bisexual is halfway between gay and straight.”**

Who is advantaged by this statement?

Who is disadvantaged by this statement?

How do I feel about this statement and why do I feel this way?

➤ **“There’s no such thing as bisexual.”**

Who is advantaged by this statement?

Who is disadvantaged by this statement?

How do I feel about this statement and why do I feel this way?

- **Identity grid – which term(s) do you think most accurately describes ‘you’?**

I chose...because...

- **What does the term ‘bisexual’ mean to you?**

Do you use it to describe yourself? Why/why not?

- **School experiences of being bi.**

What happened?

How did you feel about it?

What was the outcome/how was it resolved?

- **I get most support from.....because....**

- **I get least support from.....because....**

- **What is/was there at school that gives/gave me a safe feeling about being bi?**

- **The best learning in sexuality education for me was...because...**

- **The least learning in sexuality education for me was...because...**

- **How do I portray myself as ‘bi’?**

- **The best things about being bi (see how many you can list)**

Appendix F

Reference number: 2010/599

Interview questions

NB: bullet points denote prompts

Being bisexual at school

1. To begin with, I'm going to ask you about your school days. Can you describe a typical day at school for yourself?

Now think about being bisexual at school. How would you describe that experience?

2. Do you think being out as bi plays a part in your learning at school?
 - If so, how?
 - If not, why not?
3. Think about your learning in class.
 - Which subject do you find easiest?
 - What is it about it that makes it easy?
 - Can you talk about a time when you remember hearing or learning something about bisexuality at school?
4. Now think back to your sexuality education lessons at school. What was the best part for you and why was it the best?
 - What wasn't as helpful or useful to you as a young bisexual woman?
5. Can you think of ways that sexuality education could be improved?
6. Tell me about a time when your being bi influenced a relationship with either a student or a teacher.
7. What about support from your school for being bi?
 - Available information and contacts in the community
 - Policies
 - Teacher attitudes and practice re language, classroom environment
 - School approach to diversity: is there a 'day of celebration'? If so is this useful? How do you feel about being celebrated?
8. Is there a diversity group at your school?
 - Can you tell me about how it works?

- Do you take part?
- How is the group regarded by students and staff who don't take part?
- If there isn't a group, why might this be?

9. What is the worst thing about being bisexual at school?

10. Can you please tell me how being bi at school has affected your feelings about school overall.

The journal

11. Now, could we have a look at your journal? Would you take me through the pages and tell me about the entries you have made?

- The journal will be given to participants containing copies of the media and research statements about bisexuality discussed at the focus group meeting. Participants will be asked to share any further ideas they have about these. This will allow an exploration of their ideas on a personal level.
- The journal will also include questions and statements e.g. *what does the term bisexual mean to you? How did you feel about coming out as bi to friends and family? Useful sexuality education needs to include...* Participants will be asked to respond to these. This will allow exploration and expression of their personal feelings and opinions.

Being bi

12. When did you first hear the word and think it might be a good one to use?

- What does the term 'bisexual' mean to you?

13. What helped you decide to come out as bisexual?

- How did you feel about coming out?

14. Can I ask you to think about your life after you came out as bi. How do you feel you were treated by other people?

15. What to you is the very best thing about being bi, and why is that so?

16. Can you tell me about some of the not so good things about being bi?

17. How do you manage these things?

18. Do people ask you any specific questions about being bisexual? Can you tell me what those questions are?

19. How do you feel about answering them?

- Allow some time to discuss the focus group meeting and any specific issues which may have arisen.

20. Do you have any bi heroes? What is it about them that make them your hero?

Thank you! I have enjoyed our discussion and really appreciate you spending time with me. I would like to meet with you again so you can read my transcription of this interview and check that I have represented you as you would like. May I email you in another few weeks to organise another meeting?
Cheers!

Appendix G



EPSOM CAMPUS

Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 64 9 623 8899
Facsimile 64 9 623 8898
www.education.auckland.ac.nz
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92601 Symonds St
Auckland, New Zealand

School Participant Information Sheet

Title: Young Women's Experiences of Being Bisexual in New Zealand Secondary Schools

To: Young bisexual women attending secondary school

Thank you for responding to the advertisement for this project.

My name is Mary-Anne McAllum and I am conducting research as part of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education through the Faculty of Education. I have had 15 years' experience in teaching Health Education in secondary schools, and have worked as a school support services facilitator for Health teachers in Auckland and Northland. I am currently a fulltime student at the University of Auckland. My supervisor is Dr Louisa Allen of the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the experiences of young bisexual women during your time in New Zealand secondary schools. The study will consider ways in which you feel you may have been treated by other students, teachers and school policies and practices because you are bisexual, how you manage this, and your views on being bisexual at school.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research providing you meet the following criteria for the study:

- Aged between 16-24 years old
- Have come out publically as bisexual

Benefits to participants may include:

- An opportunity to contribute to research that aims to assist schools to better support young bisexual women
- A chance to meet with other young bisexual women and share your schooling experiences
- Having the opportunity to engage in reflective activity may strengthen your self efficacy or the way you approach goals, tasks and challenges

Participation in this study is voluntary. 'Voluntary' means you only take part in the study if you want to.

Your School Principal has given his / her agreement that students who agree to participate in this research may do so. He / she will not be informed of your identity.

Your participation in this study will be independent of your school studies and commitments and will not affect your involvement in these in any way.

Please take the time to read the following information.

- Your confidentiality will be protected throughout. I will use a pseudonym (different name) to identify your information. As there is a possibility that the information I collect may be used for reports, publications and teaching, academic research and teaching, this will be done in a way that does not identify you as its source. If you name any of your friends or teachers in the focus group, reflective journal or interview, their names will be changed so they can't be identified.
- If I as the researcher feel that information that you give may indicate a reasonable possibility that your life or health or that of others is at serious risk, I have a moral and legal obligation to breach confidentiality and report that risk to the School Principal.
- This research will involve a focus group (a discussion with other participants), writing in a journal, a one to one interview and a follow up visit so you may read and approve the transcription of your interview. The meetings will take place either in an available and discreet classroom or office at school, removed from the Counselor's office. I will invite you to use the journal to record your thoughts, feelings and opinions for use at the one to one interview. I will ask you some questions relating to your experiences of being bisexual at secondary school. The questions may include:
 - Your relationships with other students and teachers at school and how being bisexual may or may not affect those relationships
 - What you think about school subjects e.g. Health Education and sexuality: should there be more discussion about sexual identity and diversity?
 - Any other things that you may wish to share with me about being bisexual at school
- You will have the right to not answer any question and you do not have to provide a reason for this.
- You will also have the right to leave the focus group but any information you may have provided cannot be withdrawn.
- You will keep all information discussed during the focus group confidential.
- During the focus group meeting and the individual interview, your answers will be digitally audio-recorded with your prior written consent and later transcribed by me. It is important that I record our discussions, because I need to be able to concentrate on what you are telling me. The recording cannot be stopped during the focus group; however, during the interview you may choose to have the recorder turned off at any time without having to provide a reason. I will be the only person who listens to and transcribes your interview. The recording and transcription will be stored at a secure location for six years. I will then destroy the recording and shred the transcript.

- Following my transcription of your interview, we will meet again and I will give you a copy. You may read this and change your statements.
- Estimated time needed is up to 6 hours in total. This includes the focus group meeting, your time for writing in your journal, the one on one interview and the follow up visit to read through and approve or change the transcript of our interview.
- Sometimes talking about your experiences can raise issues which you may wish to talk to someone about or receive support from elsewhere. I am able to provide you with the contact details of outside agencies; Youthline 0800 376633; Rainbow Youth 09 3764155
- You may choose to withdraw from this project at any time. You also have the right to withdraw any of your information up until 31 December 2011.

If you agree to take part in this research please sign the Participant Consent Form that will be provided by the researcher.

Thank you very much for your time. If you wish to know more, please phone or text me on 0276206200 or email or contact my supervisor at the address below.

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The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee

The University of Auckland

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APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE
ON 10/12/2010 for 3 years.

Reference number 2010/599



THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Te Kura Akoranga o Tamaki Makaurau

INCORPORATING THE AUCKLAND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

SCHOOL PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS

Title: Young Women's Experiences of Being Bisexual in New Zealand Secondary Schools

Researcher: Mary-Anne McAllum, candidate for Doctor of Philosophy, Faculty of Education

Supervisor: Dr Louisa Allen, Faculty of Education

Please tick each circle to indicate your consent.

- I have read and understood the School Participant Information Sheet. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that if the researcher feels that information that I give may indicate a reasonable possibility that my life or health or that of others is at serious risk, she has a moral and legal obligation to breach confidentiality and report that risk to the School Principal.
- I understand that I may participate in this study as I meet the criteria required as set out in the School Participant Information Sheet.
- I understand that the research requires me to participate in a focus group and an individual interview and to write in a journal.
- I agree that the focus group and individual interview will be digitally recorded with my prior written consent and that confidentiality will be protected by using pseudonyms and changing details that may identify me.
- I understand that during the focus group I have the option of not answering questions and I do not have to provide a reason for this.
- I understand I will keep information discussed during the focus group confidential.
- I understand I will have the right to leave the focus group but any information I may have provided cannot be withdrawn.

- I understand that the recording cannot be stopped during the focus group; however, during the interview I may choose to have the recorder turned off at any time without having to provide a reason.
- I understand that data provided by me during my individual interview can be withdrawn at my request and without giving a reason up to 31 December 2011.
- I understand that the research may take up to 6 hours of my time in total. This includes the focus group and interview, my journal writing and the follow up visit to read through and approve or change the transcript of my interview.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason.
- I understand that the data collected for this study will be held in a secure place (separately from the consent forms), at the university, for up to six years after which time the digital audio recording and other data forms will be destroyed and shredded. Data collected includes the journal.
- I understand that if the information provided is reported or published, or used in teaching, this will be done in a way that does not identify individual participants as its source.
- I understand that my participation in this study is independent of my school studies and commitments and that my participation will not affect my involvement in these in any way.
- I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. ‘Voluntary’ means I only take part in the study if I want to.
- I understand that the individual information gathered for this research will not be passed to my friends, teachers, Guidance Counselor or school and that my identity will remain confidential when results are published.
- I understand that in the unlikely event that an issue is identified which raises feelings and reactions for me, I may decide to see the Guidance Counsellor from my school or go to an outside agency whose contact details are supplied by the researcher: Youthline 0800 376633; Rainbow Youth 09 3764155.
- I understand that the Guidance Counselor and / or Health Teacher has supported this project by placing posters and advertisements in appropriate areas around the school.
- I understand that my School Principal has given permission for this research to take place. The Principal does not know who will be interviewed and will not be told. The Principal may receive a copy of the end result of the research but my identity will remain confidential.

I _____ agree to take part in this research.

Signed:

Name:

(Please print clearly)

Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS
COMMITTEE ON 10/12/2010 FOR 3 YEARS.

Reference number 2010/599



EPSOM CAMPUS

Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 64 9 623 8899
Facsimile 64 9 623 8898
www.education.auckland.ac.nz
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92601 Symonds St
Auckland, New Zealand

Non-school Participant Information Sheet

Title: Young Women's Experiences of Being Bisexual in New Zealand Secondary Schools

To: Young bisexual women who have attended secondary school in New Zealand

Thank you for responding to the advertisement for this project.

My name is Mary-Anne McAllum and I am conducting research as part of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education through the Faculty of Education. I have had 15 years experience in teaching Health Education in secondary schools, and have worked as a school support services facilitator for Health teachers in Auckland and Northland. I am currently a fulltime student at the University of Auckland. My supervisor is Dr Louisa Allen of the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the experiences of young bisexual women during their time in New Zealand secondary schools. The study will consider ways you feel you may have been treated by other students, teachers and your school because you are bisexual, how you managed this, and your views on being bisexual at school.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research providing you meet the following criteria for the study:

- Aged between 16-24 years old
- Have come out publically as bisexual while at school

Benefits to participants may include:

- An opportunity to contribute to research that aims to assist schools to better support young bisexual women
- A chance to meet with other young bisexual women and share your schooling experiences
- Having the opportunity to engage in reflective activity may strengthen your self efficacy or the way you approach goals, tasks and challenges

Participation in this study is voluntary. 'Voluntary' means you only take part in the study if you want to.

Please take the time to read the following information.

- Your confidentiality will be protected throughout. I will use a pseudonym (different name) to identify your information. As there is a possibility that the information I collect may be used for reports, publications, academic research and teaching, this will be done in a way that does not

identify you as its source. If you name any of your friends or teachers in the focus group, reflective journal or interview, their names will be changed so they can't be identified.

- If I as the researcher feel that information that you give may indicate a reasonable possibility that your life or health or that of others is at serious risk, I have a moral and legal obligation to breach confidentiality and report that risk to your Group Facilitator.
- This research will involve a focus group (a discussion with other participants), writing in a journal, a one to one interview and a follow up visit so you may read and approve the transcription of your interview.
- The meetings will take place in your community group meeting venue, free from interruptions and distractions. I will invite you to use the journal to record your thoughts, feelings and opinions for use at the one to one interview. I will ask you some questions relating to your experiences of being bisexual at secondary school. The questions may include:
 - Your relationships with other students and teachers at school and how being bisexual may or may not have affected those relationships
 - What you think about school subjects e.g. Health Education and sexuality: should there be more discussion about sexual identity and diversity?
 - Any other things that you may wish to share with me about being bisexual at school
- You will have the right to not answer any question and you do not have to provide a reason for this.
- You will keep information discussed during the focus group confidential.
- You will also have the right to leave the focus group but any information you may have provided cannot be withdrawn.
- During the focus group meeting and the individual interview, your answers will be digitally audio-recorded with your prior written consent and later transcribed by me. It is important that I record our discussions, because I need to be able to concentrate on what you are telling me. The recording cannot be stopped during the focus group; however, during the interview you may choose to have the recorder turned off at any time without having to provide a reason. I will be the only person who listens to and transcribes your interview. The recording and transcription will be stored at a secure location for six years. I will then destroy the recording and shred the transcript.
- Following my transcription of our discussions, we will meet again and I will give you a copy. You may read this and change your statements.
- Estimated time needed is up to 6 hours in total. This includes the focus group meeting, your time for writing in your journal, the one on one interview, and the follow up visit.

- Sometimes talking about your experiences can raise issues which you may wish to talk to someone about or receive support from elsewhere. I am able to provide you with the contact details of outside agencies; Youthline 0800 376633; Rainbow Youth 09 3764155
- You may choose to withdraw from this project at any time. You also have the right to withdraw any of your information up until 31 December 2011.

If you agree to take part in this research please sign the Non-school Participant Consent Form that will be provided by the researcher.

Thank you very much for your time. If you wish to know more, please phone or text me on 0276206200 or email or contact my supervisor at the address below.

Mary-Anne McAllum
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The Head of The School for Critical Studies in Education at the Faculty of Education is:

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Phone: (09) 6238899 extn 48826
Email: airini@auckland.ac.nz

For ethical concerns contact:

The Chair
The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee
The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1150
Phone: (09) 3737599 extn 87830

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NON-SCHOOL PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS

Title: Young Women's Experiences of Being Bisexual in New Zealand Secondary Schools

Researcher: Mary-Anne McAllum, candidate for Doctor of Philosophy, Faculty of Education

Supervisor: Dr Louisa Allen, Faculty of Education

Please tick each circle to indicate your consent.

- I have read and understood the Non-School Participant Information Sheet. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that if the researcher feels that information that I give may indicate a reasonable possibility that my life or health or that of others is at serious risk, she has a moral and legal obligation to breach confidentiality and report that risk to the community group facilitator.
- I understand that I may participate in this study as I meet the criteria required as set out in the Non-School Participant Information Sheet.
- I understand that the research requires me to participate in a focus group and an individual interview and to complete a reflective journal.
- I agree that the focus group and individual interview will be digitally recorded with my prior written consent and that confidentiality will be protected by using pseudonyms and changing details that may identify me.
- I understand that during the focus group I have the option of not answering questions and I do not have to provide a reason for this.
- I understand I will have the right to leave the focus group but any information I may have provided cannot be withdrawn.
- I understand I will keep information discussed during the focus group confidential.

- I understand that the recording cannot be stopped during the focus group; however, during the interview I may choose to have the recorder turned off at any time without having to provide a reason.
- I understand that data provided by me during my individual interview can be withdrawn at my request and without giving a reason up to 31 December 2011.
- I understand that the research may take up to 6 hours of my time in total. This includes the focus group and interview, my journal writing and the follow up visit to read through and approve or change the transcript of our interview.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason.
- I understand that the data collected for this study will be held in a secure place (separately from the consent forms), at the university, for up to six years after which time the digital audio recording and other data forms will be destroyed and shredded. Data collected includes the reflective journal.
- I understand that if the information provided is reported or published, or used in teaching, this will be done in a way that does not identify individual participants as its source.
- I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. ‘Voluntary’ means I only take part in the study if I want to.
- I understand that the individual information gathered for this research will not be passed to my friends or colleagues and that my identity will remain confidential when results are published.
- I understand that in the unlikely event that an issue is identified which raises feelings and reactions for me, I may decide to go to a community agency whose contact details are supplied by the researcher: Youthline 0800 376633; Rainbow Youth 09 3764155.

I _____ agree to take part in this research.

Signed:

Name:
(Please print clearly)

Date:

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Auckland, New Zealand

School Principal Information Sheet

Title: Young Women's Experiences of Being Bisexual in New Zealand Secondary Schools

To: the School Principal

My name is Mary-Anne McAllum and I am conducting research as part of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education through the Faculty of Education. I have had 15 years experience in teaching Health Education in secondary schools, and have worked as a school support services facilitator for Health teachers in Auckland and Northland. I am currently a fulltime student at the University of Auckland. My supervisor is Dr Louisa Allen of the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the experiences of young bisexual women in New Zealand secondary schools. The study will consider ways young bisexual women feel that they may have been treated by other students, teachers and school policy and practice because they are bisexual, how they manage this, and their views on being bisexual at school.

By agreeing to take part in this project, your school will be contributing directly to research in an area that has not been explored in depth in New Zealand. The material produced will eventually help further inform the safety of young bisexual women in secondary schools, and may provide information that strengthens student / teacher relationships, so enhancing quality teaching and learning.

Benefits to participants may include:

- An increased sense of self worth through being invited to share their experiences
- Having the opportunity to engage in reflective activity may strengthen their self efficacy
- An opportunity to contribute to research that aims to assist schools to better support young bisexual women

I am writing to request permission for up to four students from your school who meet the criteria below to take part in this research. Further to this, I am requesting permission to approach your school Guidance Counselor and / or Health Teacher for their help in advertising for potential participants for this research. This help would involve placing provided posters in relevant areas e.g. the canteen, the Health classroom, outside the Counselor's office, the senior common room, and also placing a provided advertisement in the school Daily Notices each day for one week. Potential participants may then contact me directly via email or text message and we will negotiate a time and place to meet individually to discuss the project, receive a Participant Information Sheet, and to sign School Participant Consent Forms. You will not be given any information about the identity of student/s who volunteer to participate.

Interviews will take place at a time that suits each participant and every effort will be made to ensure that this project does not interfere with the participant's school programme.

Prospective participants need to meet the following criteria for the study:

- Aged between 16-24 years old
- Have come out publically as bisexual while at school

Participation in this study is voluntary. 'Voluntary' means you only take part in the study if you want to. This includes the Guidance Counselor and / or Health Teacher.

I seek your assurance that the Guidance Counselor and / or Health Teacher's participation or non-participation will not affect his / her standing in the school in any way.

Participant confidentiality will be protected throughout. This research will involve them participating in a focus group, writing a reflective journal, having a one to one interview, and a follow up visit to read through and approve the content of the transcript of the interview. The focus group and the interview may take place either in an available and discreet classroom or office at school, removed from the Guidance Counselor's office. Questions will relate to participants' experiences of being bisexual at secondary school. Answers will be digitally audio recorded with participant's prior written consent and later transcribed by me. The Guidance Counselor / Health Teacher will be informed of the times and dates of the interviews, but, like you, they may not know who the participants are.

Estimated time needed is up to 6 hours in total.

If I as the researcher feel that information given may indicate a reasonable possibility that the participants life or health or that of others is at serious risk, I have a moral and legal obligation to breach confidentiality and report that risk to you as School Principal.

In the unlikely event that an issue is identified which raises feelings and reactions for the participant, she may decide to see the Guidance Counsellor or go to an outside agency whose contact details have been supplied by me as researcher: Youthline 0800 376633 or Rainbow Youth 09 376415.

If the information provided is reported or published, or used in teaching, this will be done in a way that does not identify individual participants or schools as its source.

The name and location of your school will be changed to protect its identity. You will receive an emailed copy of any publications resulting from this research.

Please could you indicate your permission by completing the enclosed School Consent Form and returning it in the stamped addressed envelope as soon as you have made your decision? I look forward to being able to work with students from your school who fit the criteria and also with your Guidance Counselor and / or Health Teacher.

Thank you very much for your time. If you have any queries or wish to know more please call or text me on 0276206200, or email me, or contact my supervisor at the address below.

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SCHOOL PRINCIPAL CONSENT FORM

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS

Title: Young Women's Experiences of Being Bisexual in New Zealand Secondary Schools

Researcher: Mary-Anne McAllum, candidate for Doctor of Philosophy, Faculty of Education

Supervisor: Dr Louisa Allen, Faculty of Education

Please tick each circle to indicate your consent.

- I have read and understood the School Principal Information Sheet. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that the researcher requires the Guidance Counselor and / or Health Teacher to place provided posters carrying information about the research and contact details in appropriate areas around the school, e.g. canteen, senior common room, Health classroom, outside the Guidance Counselor's office. The Guidance Counselor and / or Health Teacher will also place provided advertisements into the Daily Notices each day for one week. Potential participants will contact the researcher directly via email or text message to negotiate a time to meet individually and discuss the project. This will enable potential participants to make an informed decision about participating.
- I understand that the focus group/s and interviews carried out will be digitally audio recorded with participants' written consent and that the participants' confidentiality will be protected by using pseudonyms.
- I understand that the data collected for this study will be held in a secure place (separately from the consent forms), at the university, for up to six years after which time the digital audio recordings and other data forms will be destroyed and shredded. Data collected includes the reflective journal.
- I understand that if the information provided is reported or published, or used in teaching, this will be done in a way that does not identify individual participants or schools as its source.
- I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. 'Voluntary' means that I only take part in the study if I want to. This includes the Guidance Counselor and / or the Health Teacher.

- I understand that the research may take up to 6 hours of the student's time in total. This includes the focus group and interview, reflective journal writing and the follow up visit to read through and approve or change the transcript of the interview.
- I understand that the Guidance Counsellor / Health Teacher will be informed of the dates and times of the interviews but they may not know who will be interviewed, and I will not be informed of their identity.
- I understand that in the unlikely event that an issue is identified which raises feelings and reactions for the participant, she may decide to see the Guidance Counselor or go to an outside agency whose contact details are supplied by the researcher: Youthline 0800 376633; Rainbow Youth 09 3764155.
- I understand that if the researcher feels that information that a participant may give indicates a reasonable possibility that her life or health or that of others is at serious risk, the researcher has a moral and legal obligation to breach confidentiality and report that risk to me as School Principal.
- I understand that as School Principal I am giving permission for this research to take place in an available and discreet classroom or office removed from the location of the Guidance Counselor's office. I do not know who will be interviewed and will not be told.
- I understand that as School Principal I will receive a copy of the overall findings in the form of published articles but participant and school identity and location will remain confidential in these publications.
- I agree that the researcher may approach the Guidance Counsellor and / or Health Teacher at this school for support in advertising for potential participants.
- I agree that the Guidance Counselor's and / or Health Teacher's decision regarding participation or non-participation is made freely and will not affect his / her standing in the school in any way.

I _____ agree that my school
 _____ will participate in this research.

Signed:

Name:
 (Please print clearly)

Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 10/12/2010 FOR 3 YEARS.

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Auckland, New Zealand

Guidance Counselor / Health Teacher Information Sheet

Title: Young Women's Experiences of Being Bisexual in New Zealand Secondary Schools

To: the School Guidance Counselor and / or Health Teacher

Thank you for responding to the advertisement for this project.

My name is Mary-Anne McAllum and I am conducting research as part of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education through the Faculty of Education. I have had 15 years experience in teaching Health Education in secondary schools, and have worked as a school support services facilitator for Health teachers in Auckland and Northland. I am currently a fulltime student at the University of Auckland. My supervisor is Dr Louisa Allen of the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the experiences of young bisexual women during their time in New Zealand secondary schools. The study will consider the ways young bisexual women feel that they may have been treated by other students, teachers and school policy and practice because they are bisexual, how they manage this, and their views on being bisexual at school.

By agreeing to take part in this project, your school will be contributing directly to research in an area that has not been explored in depth in New Zealand. The material produced will eventually help further inform the safety of young bisexual women in secondary schools, and may provide information that strengthens student / teacher relationships, so enhancing quality teaching and learning.

Benefits to participants may include:

- An increased sense of self worth through being invited to share their experiences
- Having the opportunity to engage in reflective activity may strengthen self efficacy
- An opportunity to contribute to research that aims to assist schools to better support young bisexual women

Permission for your school to take part in this research has been given by the Principal who has also given permission for me to approach you. I invite you to support my project by placing provided posters about this research and my contact details in appropriate areas around the school, e.g. canteen, senior common room, Health classroom, outside the Counselor's office. This would also involve placing a provided advertisement in the Daily Notices that contains information about the project and my contact details each day for one week. Potential participants will then contact me directly and we will negotiate a time to meet individually to discuss the project, including answering any questions, receive a Participant Information Sheet and to sign School Participant Consent Forms.

Would you be able to support this project by carrying out the above requests?

Participation in this study is voluntary. ‘Voluntary’ means you only take part in the study if you want to. This includes you as Guidance Counselor and / or Health Teacher.

Your Principal has given his / her agreement that your participation or non-participation will not affect your standing as Guidance Counselor and / or Health Teacher in the school in any way.

Prospective participants need to meet the following criteria for the study:

- Aged between 16-24 years old
- Have come out publically as bisexual while at school

If the information provided is reported or published, or used in teaching, this will be done in a way that does not identify individual participants or schools as its source.

This research will involve participants in a focus group, writing a reflective journal, a one to one interview and a follow up visit to read through and approve the content of the transcript of the interview. The focus group and the interview may take place either in an available and discreet classroom or office at school, removed from the Counselor’s office. Questions will relate to participants’ experiences of being bisexual at secondary school. Answers will be digitally audio recorded with participant’s prior written consent and later transcribed by me. You will be informed of the times and dates of the interviews but, like the School Principal, you may not know who the participants are.

Estimated time needed is up to 6 hours in total.

In the unlikely event that an issue is identified which raises feelings and reactions for the participant, she may decide to see the School Counselor or go to an outside agency whose contact details have been supplied by the researcher: Youthline 0800 376633 or Rainbow Youth 09 376415.

If I as the researcher feel that information given may indicate a reasonable possibility that the participants life or health or that of others is at serious risk, I have a moral and legal obligation to breach confidentiality and report that risk to the School Principal.

Please indicate your interest by contacting me by phone or email (details below) as soon as possible.

Thank you very much for your time. If you have any queries or wish to know more please call or text me on 0276206200, or email me, or contact my supervisor at the address below.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Te Kura Akoranga o Tamaki Makaurau
INCORPORATING THE AUCKLAND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR / HEALTH TEACHER CONSENT FORM

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS

Title: Young Women's Experiences of Being Bisexual in New Zealand Secondary Schools

Researcher: Mary-Anne McAllum, candidate for Doctor of Philosophy, Faculty of Education

Supervisor: Dr Louisa Allen, Faculty of Education

Please tick each circle to indicate your consent.

- I have read and understood the Guidance Counselor / Health Teacher Information Sheet. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that the researcher requires me to support the project by placing provided posters carrying information about the research and contact details in appropriate areas around the school, e.g. canteen, senior common room, Health classroom, outside the Counselor's office. This also involves placing a provided advertisement that contains information about the project and researcher's contact details into the Daily Notices each day for one week.
- I understand that the data collected for this study will be held in a secure place (separately from the consent forms), at the university, for up to six years after which time the digital audio recordings and other data forms will be destroyed and shredded. Data collected includes the reflective journal.
- I understand that if the information provided is reported or published, or used in teaching, this will be done in a way that does not identify individual participants as its source.
- I understand that my participation in this study as Guidance Counselor / Health Teacher is voluntary. 'Voluntary' means I only take part in the study if I want to.
- I understand that the research may take up to 6 hours of the student's time in total. This includes the focus group and interview, reflective journal writing and the follow up visit to read through and approve or change the transcript of the interview.
- I understand that as Guidance Counsellor and / or Health Teacher my decision regarding participation or non-participation in this study is made freely and that the Principal has agreed that this will not affect my standing in the school in any way.

- I understand that I will be informed of the dates and times of the interviews but may not know who will be interviewed.
- I understand that in the unlikely event that an issue is identified which raises feelings and reactions for the participant, she may decide to see the Guidance Counsellor or go to an outside agency whose contact details are supplied by the researcher: Youthline 0800 376633; Rainbow Youth 09 3764155.
- I understand that if the researcher feels that information that a participant may give indicates a reasonable possibility that her life or health or that of others is at serious risk, the researcher has a moral and legal obligation to breach confidentiality and report that risk to the School Principal.
- I understand that my School Principal has given permission for this research to take place.
- I understand that my School Principal has given permission for the researcher to approach me regarding my participation in this project.

I _____ agree to take part in this research.

Signed:

Name:

(Please print clearly)

Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 10/12/2010 FOR 3 YEARS.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Te Kura Akoranga o Tamaki Makaurau
INCORPORATING THE AUCKLAND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Community Group Facilitator Information Sheet

Title: Young Women's Experiences of Being Bisexual in New Zealand Secondary Schools

To: the Community Group Facilitator

Thank you for responding to the advertisements for this project.

My name is Mary-Anne McAllum and I am conducting research as part of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education through the Faculty of Education. I have had 15 years experience in teaching Health Education in secondary schools, and have worked as a school support services facilitator for Health teachers in Auckland and Northland. I am currently a fulltime student at the University of Auckland. My supervisor is Dr Louisa Allen of the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the experiences of young bisexual women during their time in New Zealand secondary schools. The study will consider ways in which young bisexual women feel they may have been treated by other students, teachers and school policy and practice because they are bisexual, how they manage this, and their views on being bisexual at school.

By agreeing to take part in this project, your group member will be contributing directly to research in an area that has not been explored in depth in New Zealand. The material produced will eventually help further inform the safety of young bisexual women in secondary schools, and may provide information that strengthens student / teacher relationships, so enhancing quality teaching and learning.

Benefits to participants may include:

- An increased sense of self worth through being invited to share their experiences
- Having the opportunity to engage in reflective activity may strengthen self efficacy
- An opportunity to contribute to research that aims to assist schools to better support young bisexual women

I am seeking your permission for members of your community group to take part in this research. The participants' contributions will be valuable for the reflections they can provide on their past school experiences as young bisexual women. As potential participants will be known to you as Community Group facilitator (refer to criteria below), I invite you to support my project by making the initial approach to potential participants. This approach would include drawing attention to the advertisement for this project at a meeting and putting the advertisement in a prominent place at your meeting venue. The approach would also include giving any potential participants a Non-school Participant Information Sheet containing information about the project and my contact details. Potential participants will then contact me directly and we will negotiate a time to meet individually to discuss the project, including answering any questions, and to sign Non-school Participant Consent forms.

Would you be able to support this project by carrying out the above requests?

Participation in this study is voluntary. 'Voluntary' means you only take part in the study if you want to. This includes you as the Community Group Facilitator.

Prospective participants need to meet the following criteria for the study:

- Aged between 16-24 years old
- Have come out publically as bisexual while at school

If the information provided is reported or published, or used in teaching, this will be done in a way that does not identify individual participants or Community Groups as its source.

This research will involve participants in a focus group, writing a reflective journal, a one to one interview which will take place in a mutually agreeable safe space and a follow up visit to read and approve the transcript of their interview. Questions will relate to participants' experiences of being bisexual at secondary school. Answers will be digitally audio recorded with participant's prior written consent and later transcribed by me.

Estimated time needed is up to 6 hours in total.

Participant confidentiality will be protected throughout. Would it be possible to use your venue for the focus group meeting and the interviews? You will be informed of the dates and times of the interviews but not who the interviewees are. In the unlikely event that an issue is identified which raises feelings and reactions for the participant, she may decide to go to a support agency whose contact details have been supplied by the researcher: Youthline 0800 376633 or Rainbow Youth 09 376415.

If I as the researcher feel that information given may indicate a reasonable possibility that the participants life or health or that of others is at serious risk, I have a moral and legal obligation to breach confidentiality and report that risk to you as the Community Group Facilitator.

If the information provided is reported or published, or used in teaching, this will be done in a way that does not identify individual participants, their schools or community groups as its source.

The name and location of your community group will be changed to protect its identity. You will receive an emailed copy of any publications resulting from this research.

Please could you indicate your permission by completing the enclosed Community Group Facilitator Consent Form and returning it in the stamped addressed envelope as soon as you have made your decision? I look forward to being able to work with young women from your group who fit the criteria.

Thank you very much for your time. If you have any queries or wish to know more please call or text me on 0276206200 or email me, or contact my supervisor at the address below.

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APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE
ON 10/12/2010 for 3 years.

Reference number 2010/599



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COMMUNITY GROUP FACILITATOR CONSENT FORM

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS

Title: Young Women's Experiences of Being Bisexual in New Zealand Secondary Schools

Researcher: Mary-Anne McAllum, candidate for Doctor of Philosophy, Faculty of Education

Supervisor: Dr Louisa Allen, Faculty of Education

Please tick each circle to indicate your consent.

- I have read and understood the Community Group Facilitator Information Sheet. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that the researcher requires me to approach possible participants on an individual basis with a view to taking part in focus groups and individual interviews and that I will provide them with Non-school Participant Information Sheets that carry the researcher's contact details and information about the project.
- I understand that the interviews may take place at my community group venue
- I understand that the focus group and interviews carried out will be digitally audio recorded with participant's prior consent and that the participants' confidentiality will be protected by using pseudonyms.
- I understand that the data collected for this study will be held in a secure place (separately from the consent forms), at the university, for up to six years after which time the digital audio recordings and other data forms will be destroyed and shredded. Data collected includes the reflective journal.
- I understand that if the information provided is reported or published, or used in teaching, this will be done in a way that does not identify individual participants as its source.
- I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. 'Voluntary' means I as Community Group Facilitator and /or group members only take part in the study if we want to.

- I understand that the research may take up to 6 hours of the participant's time in total. This includes the focus group and individual interview, reflective journal writing and the follow up visit to read through and approve or change the transcript of the interview.
- I understand that in the unlikely event that an issue is identified which raises feelings and reactions for the participant, she may decide to go to an agency whose contact details are supplied by the researcher: Youthline 0800 376633; Rainbow Youth 09 3764155.
- I understand that if the researcher feels that information that a participant may give indicates a reasonable possibility that her life or health or that of others is at serious risk, the researcher has a moral and legal obligation to breach confidentiality and report that risk to the Community Group Facilitator.

I _____ agree to take part in this research.

Signed:

Name:

(Please print clearly)

Date:

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS
COMMITTEE ON 10/12/2010 FOR 3 YEARS.

Reference number 2010/599

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