



Biphobia and gender: A questionnaire study into the effect of gender of participant and bisexual target on attitudes towards bisexuality

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ABSTRACT

Previous research into attitudes towards bisexuality has explored how the gender of participant and the bisexual individual each influence attitudes, but has overlooked an interaction between the two factors. This study aimed to examine the influence of both factors simultaneously.

290 participants (191=females; 99=males) completed the two scales of the Attitudes Regarding Bisexuality Scale (Mohr and Rochlen, 1999); one regarding male and one regarding female bisexuals. Their responses were analysed using a 2x2 mixed between-within subjects analysis of variance.

Results indicated the gender of participant did not significantly influence attitudes, which contradicted the hypotheses and previous research (Steffens & Wagner, 2004). Gender of bisexual did have influence, with attitudes towards male bisexuals being more negative than towards female bisexuals. This supported existing research (Arndt, 2009), and the hypotheses. A significant interaction effect was also found, and post-hoc t-tests revealed male participants to have more negative attitudes towards male bisexuals than female bisexuals, whereas female participants were not influenced by the gender of the bisexual. This too supported the hypotheses.

Thus, it was concluded that it is the gender of the bisexual that influences attitudes, rather than the gender of participant, which indicates male and female bisexuals experience different prejudices.

KEY WORDS:	BISEXUALITY	ATTITUDES	GENDER DIFFERENCES	BIPHOBIA	QUEER THEORY
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Introduction

The subject of attitudes towards sexuality is a much researched topic area (Le Vay, 1996), with the main focus of the research being on individuals' attitudes towards male homosexuality (Sullivan, 2003). However, there are many more sexual orientations about which there is little information regarding peoples' attitudes. The sexuality of interest in this piece of research is bisexuality.

Despite the concept of bisexuality being prevalent across cultures throughout history (Fox, 1996), it was not a focus of research into sexualities until the 1980's (Rust, 2000). The shift of focus may be due to the re-examination that occurred of what Fox refers to as 'the dichotomous model of sexual orientation' (Fox, 1996:3). This may have brought to the attention of academics a deficit in research surrounding queer orientations other than homosexuality. However, this seems to have made little difference overall, as evidenced by the lack of current research into bisexuality and attitudes regarding it (Angelides, 2001; Petford, 2003; Barker, 2007; Logie, et al, 2007).

This lack of research into bisexuality is an example of bisexual erasure; a practice where bisexuality is ignored and made invisible (Erickson-Schroth & Mitchell, 2009; Pramaggoire, 2011; Denton, 2012). This can be seen in studies that claim to explore attitudes towards bisexuality, but only used scales that analyse attitudes towards homosexuality (e.g. Robertson, 2005). Bisexual erasure has perpetuated negative assumptions and stereotypes surrounding bisexuality (Logie et al, 2007), and has hindered the effective reduction of prejudice towards bisexual individuals (Worthen, 2013). It is important to rectify this problem, as Brooks and Inman (2013) found that these negative attitudes are damaging to the psychological well-being of bisexual individuals. Therefore, conducting this piece of research is important.

One reason for the lack of research into bisexuality is that it is often assumed that attitudes towards bisexuality are the same as those towards homosexuality (Eliason, 1997). This is due to the belief that it is the same sex partnerships of bisexual individuals that are stigmatised, and the opposite sex ones are ignored (Herek, 2002; Arndt, 2009). This implies that negative feelings towards bisexuality stem from homophobia, yet it ignores the unique forms of prejudice that bisexual individuals experience. Many people view bisexual individuals as promiscuous, and believe they are incapable of making commitments as they need to be in relationships with both men and women simultaneously (Fox, 1995; Rust, 1996; Eliason, 1997; Dworkin, 2001). This is a stereotype that homosexuals are not subjected to. Worthen (2013) states that the legitimacy of bisexuality as a sexual orientation is also often questioned, which is supported by research that has indicated people do not view bisexuality as a valid sexual identity (Bronson, 2006; Arndt, 2009). Similarly, Weinberg et al (2009) found that bisexuality is seen as an inauthentic identity, and many believe bisexuality to be a transitional label, where the individual is in denial about their homosexuality (Rust, 1995; Wishik & Pierce, 1995; Dworkin, 2001; Dodge et al, 2008).

This is a view held not only by heterosexuals, but also homosexuals (MacDonald, 1981; Burleson, 2005), which is known in the literature as a double discrimination, where bisexuals experience prejudice from both communities (Ochs, 1996; Mulick &

Wright, 2002; Arndt, 2009; Weinberg et al, 2009; Brewster & Moradi, 2010). There is much research that indicates homosexuals hold negative attitudes towards bisexuals (Dworkin, 2001; Weiss, 2004; Baumgardner, 2007; Welzer-Lang, 2008; Arndt & de Bruin, 2011), which indicates prejudice towards bisexuality is not just rooted in homophobia. A further example of negative attitudes held by the homosexual community towards bisexuals is the belief that a bisexual individual can appear straight and thus benefit from straight privilege (Rust, 1995; Lee, 1996), which results in the belief that bisexuals do not face the level of oppression that gay and lesbian individuals do (Rust, 1995). This all indicates that attitudes towards bisexuality are distinct from those towards homosexuality, and thus homophobia cannot be the sole cause of negative attitudes towards bisexuality.

Research suggests the existence of biphobia, the bisexual equivalent of homophobia that encompasses the unique prejudices faced by bisexuals (Bennett, 1992). There is an abundance of research that suggests biphobia is a separate issue to homophobia (MacDonald, 1981; Bennett, 1992; Fox, 1995; Wishik & Pierce, 1995; Rust, 1996; Dodge et al, 2008). Eliason (1997) found negative attitudes towards bisexual men were more prevalent than negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. In a later study, Eliason (2000) found this to be true of bisexual women too. Similarly, Herek (2002) and Ensign (2009) found attitudes towards bisexual individuals to be significantly less favourable than those towards homosexual individuals, and Steffens and Wagner (2004) found this to be especially true in female participants. Oswald and Vargas (2013) compared attitudes towards lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals, and found tolerance towards bisexuality was much lower. This indicates there is a difference between attitudes towards homosexuality and bisexuality, which highlights the importance of researching bisexuality separately from homosexuality (Israel & Mohr, 2004; Woodford et al, 2013).

The existing research that includes bisexuality has highlighted many factors that influence attitudes. These include age (Herek, 2002; Steffens & Wagner, 2004; MVA Hong Kong Limited, 2006; Heath & Goggin, 2009), proximity (Herek, 1997; Bowen & Bourgeois, 2001; Herek, 2002; Krieglstein, 2003; Horne et al, 2004; Steffens & Wagner, 2004, MVA Hong Kong Limited, 2006; Kwon & Hugelshofer, 2012), education (Herek, 2002; Lambert et al, 2006; MVA Hong Kong Limited, 2006), race (Heath & Goggin, 2009), and so on. One influence in particular has been repeatedly studied and is the focus of this research; gender. There is a variety of research that has found gender differences in attitudes; both due to the gender of the participant, and to the gender of the bisexual target. In the literature, 'target' is used to refer to the bisexual individual to whom the attitudes are directed towards.

In terms of the gender of the participant, there is a wealth of literature that indicates male participants' attitudes towards bisexuality are more negative than female participants' (Whitley & Ægisdottir, 2000; Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Steffens & Wagner, 2004; Bowers & Bieschke, 2005; Kilgore et al, 2005; Bronson, 2006; Arndt, 2009; Ensign, 2009; Heath & Goggin, 2009; Oswald & Vargas, 2013; Worthen, 2013). These findings will be reflected in hypothesis 1. This aspect is strongly focused upon in the research, which suggests that the gender of the participant has a strong influence over attitudes, and thus is worthy of focus in this study.

In regards to the gender of the target, Mohr and Rochlen (1999) state attitudes towards bisexual women are not the same as those towards bisexual men. This indicates the importance of the gender of the target in influencing attitudes. Dworkin (2001) suggests that bisexual women may have a harder time gaining acceptance than bisexual men, which would suggest attitudes towards female bisexuals would be more negative than male bisexuals. However, empirical research has actually found the opposite result; attitudes towards male bisexuals are more negative than towards female bisexuals (Eliason, 1997; Eliason, 2000; Arndt, 2009). This result will be the basis of hypothesis 2. There is much less research that focuses on the gender of the target and its effect on participants' attitudes, despite the research that has indicated it does have an influence. Therefore, gender of target will also be included in this research.

This all indicates that gender plays a pivotal role in attitudes towards bisexuality. However, there is some research that has found gender to have no influence over attitudes towards queer individuals (Oliver & Hyde, 1993; Matthews, et al 2005). This serves as a reminder that whilst there is a wealth of literature that strongly indicates gender plays a role in determining attitudes towards bisexuality, it is not guaranteed. Nevertheless, there is a strong enough grounding of research to justify exploring the influence of gender on attitudes towards bisexuality. As can be seen, there is much research into how the gender of the participant influences attitudes, and some research into how the gender of the target influences attitudes. However, there is a distinct lack of research into an interaction effect between the two.

Such an effect has been found in research into homosexuality. Kite and Whitley (1996) found that male participants' attitudes are influenced by the gender of the homosexual, whereas female participants' are not. Furthermore, Herek (1988) found male participants hold more negative attitudes towards a male target than female participants, but hold more positive attitudes towards a female target than female participants. Thus, the gender of the target does impact on the attitudes of male and female participants differently in regards to homosexuality. Therefore, it is justifiable to research a potential interaction effect of gender of participant and gender of target in regards to bisexuality.

There are some studies into bisexuality that have looked at the gender of both the participant and the target simultaneously, however the methodologies of these did not allow for an interaction effect to be explored. Herek (2002), Steffens and Wagner (2004), and Arndt (2009) suggest that male participants hold more negative views towards a male target than a female target, whereas female participants are not influenced by the gender of the target. However, it is unknown whether these differences are statistically significant or not. Herek (2002) and Steffens and Wagner (2004) both assessed bisexuality and homosexuality simultaneously and compared them. Thus, their methodology was unsuitable for assessing the effect of gender on attitudes towards bisexuality alone. Similarly, Arndt (2009) used a one-way analysis of variance, which does not assess interactions between independent variables.

Therefore, while these trends cannot be claimed to be statistically significant, they can act as a basis for hypotheses 4-6, which can be tested with an appropriate methodology to determine an interaction effect of gender of participant and gender of target.

Hypotheses

1. Males will hold more negative attitudes towards bisexuality than females, regardless of gender of target.
2. Attitudes towards male bisexuality will be more negative than those towards female bisexuality.
3. Male participants will view male bisexuals more negatively than female bisexuals.
4. Female participants will not be influenced by the gender of the target.
5. Male participants' attitudes towards male target will be more negative than female participants'.
6. Male participants' attitudes towards female target will be more negative than female participants'.

Method

Design

This study followed a survey design. The questionnaire used was the Attitudes Regarding Bisexuality Scale (Mohr & Rochlen, 1999), which has two scales; one regarding female bisexuality (ARBS-F) and one regarding male bisexuality (ARBS-M).

There were two independent variables in the study; gender of participant and gender of target. Both independent variables had two levels; male and female. Thus this research used a 2x2 design. The gender of participant variable was a between-participants measure, whereas the gender of target variable was a within-participants measure. Therefore, this was a mixed design. There was one dependent variable measured; the attitude score as reported on a Likert scale.

In terms of group allocation, participants were split by gender, but were presented with the same stimuli; all participants completed both the ARBS-F and ARBS-M scales. This means that the data collection process utilised an independent measures design (VanderStoep & Johnston, 2009). However, during the analysis process, a repeated measures element was created when the two scales were analysed separately (Martin & Bridgmon, 2012).

Counterbalancing methods were employed to reduce confounding effects. This was achieved by having half of the participants complete the ARBS-F first, and half complete the ARBS-M first.

Participants

Prior to data collection, minimum sample size was calculated for an assumed power level of 0.8, a medium expected effect size, and a significance level of $p=0.05$. It was concluded that a minimum of 148 participants would be required (Cohen, 1988; Dancy & Reidy, 2011). The initial sample consisted of 302 participants. However,

12 were removed due to incomplete questionnaires, resulting in a 96% response rate. The remaining sample that was included in the research comprised of 290 participants; 191 females and 99 males.

Participants were undergraduate students from various courses, all over the age of 18. There was no upper age limit, and age was not among the demographic information collected. The only such information gathered was gender, as this was all that was required for analysis.

A student sample was chosen as it was an efficient method to recruit a large number of participants, as access could be gained through the university. Participants were recruited using opportunity sampling, and participation was voluntary. A participant pool consisting of undergraduate psychology students was established by Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) and was utilized in this research to gather participants. Social media was also used to recruit participants; a link to the online questionnaire was shared in a Facebook group set up by MMU for students.

Materials

Data was collected using the Attitudes Regarding Bisexuality Scale (Mohr & Rochlen, 1999); both the version about female bisexuality (ARBS-F) and the version about male bisexuality (ARBS-M). Evidence of permission to use the scales is appended (Appendix 1), along with a copy of the instrument (Appendix 2). All participants completed both the ARBS-F and the ARBS-M.

Both scales are comprised of 12 questions, each requiring a response of a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The questions are identical for either scale, with only the gender of the bisexual target changed. An example of an item is "Most women/men who call themselves bisexual are temporarily experimenting with their sexuality."

The Cronbach's alpha score in this research was 0.91 for the ARBS-F, and 0.92 for the ARBS-M.

Procedure

Questionnaires were administered electronically. The setup of the survey started with a participant information sheet (Appendix 3). In line with ethical considerations discussed on the ethics approval form (Appendix 4), consent was gathered using a compulsory section of the questionnaire (Appendix 5). Participants had to agree to the terms in order to proceed to the survey, but were able to exit if they did not want to agree. If they proceeded, they were then asked to provide their gender. The following two sections comprised of the ARBS-F and the ARBS-M, the order of the presentation of which alternated between participants. The final page of the survey thanked the participants for taking part and also contained a debriefing, and a section for participants to provide an anonymous personal code (Appendix 6).

Results

The gathered data, which was initially continuous in nature, was collapsed, so each participant had one score for each scale. This data was then analysed using SPSS. Analysis consisted of a 2x2 mixed between-within subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) (Pallant, 2010; Field, 2013). An ANOVA was chosen as a test of difference is required to test the hypotheses, and a mixed between-within subjects ANOVA was necessary as one of the independent variables is a between-measures condition and one is a within-measure condition.

Testing assumptions

Prior to analysis, the data was tested to assess whether the assumptions that an ANOVA makes were violated.

The assumption of homogeneity of variances was tested using Levene's test of Equality of Error Variances. As the results were not significant for either level ($p=.93$, $p=.96$) this assumption was not violated.

Box's test of Equality of Covariance Matrices provided a non-significant result, $p=.39$, indicating this assumption was not violated.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic for testing normality was significant, $p<.001$, indicating that assumptions of normality were violated.

The violation of normality can also be displayed in a histogram.

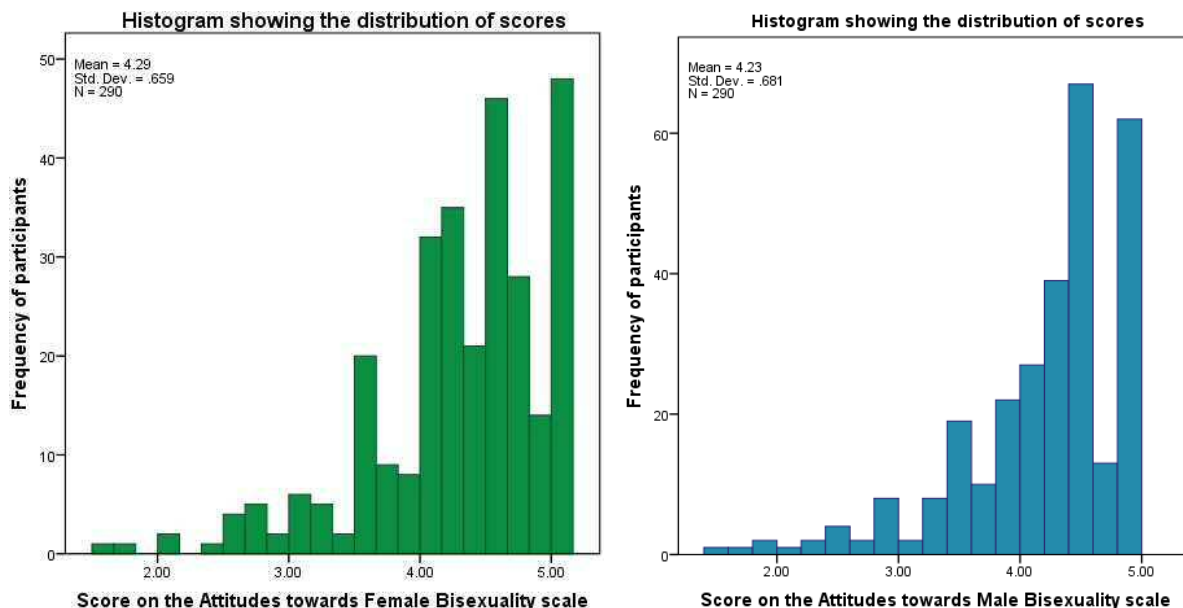


Figure 1: Histograms showing the violation of normality for both the ARBS-F and ARBS-M scales.

These diagrams indicate that the scores are negatively skewed, with most of the scores being high (Dancey & Reidy, 2011).

Many steps were taken to assess the severity of the violation and to account for it in the analysis. Such steps included comparing the means and the 5% trimmed means for each condition, and transforming the data. More information about this process is appended (Appendix 7). Ultimately it was concluded that the ANOVA was robust enough to cope with the violation (Mayers, 2013), as an ANOVA conducted on both the raw data and the normally distributed transformed data yielded the same results in terms of significance. Due to the controversies surrounding transformed data, and the fact that the transformed data no longer accurately reflects the attitudes of the participants, it was decided to report and interpret the raw data.

Descriptive statistics

The first stage of analysis is to review the descriptive statistics.

Table 1

Means and standard deviations of scores on the Attitudes Regarding Bisexuality scale.

	Female Target		Male Target		Total	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Female Participants	4.32	0.67	4.29	0.68	4.31	0.68
Male Participants	4.24	0.64	4.11	0.66	4.18	0.65
Total	4.29	0.66	4.23	0.68		

Note: High scores indicate more positive attitudes.

These figures would suggest that attitudes towards male targets were more negative ($M=4.23$, $SD=0.68$) than attitudes towards female targets ($M=4.29$, $SD=0.66$). They would also suggest that male participants hold more negative attitudes ($M=4.18$, $SD=0.65$) than females ($M=4.31$, $SD=0.68$).

However, descriptive statistics cannot indicate whether these trends are significant, or if there is an interaction effect between the two variables. In order to ascertain whether these results are significant, inferential tests are required. Therefore, an ANOVA was performed.

2x2 Mixed between-within subjects ANOVA

There was no significant main effect for Gender of Participant, $F(1,288)=2.41$, $p=.12$, ($\eta^2=.008$, observed power =.34).

There was a significant main effect of Gender of Target, $F(1,288)=37.59$, $p<.001$, ($\eta^2=.115$, observed power =1).

There was a significant interaction between Gender of Target and Gender of Participant, $F(1,288)=15.18$, $p<.001$, ($\eta^2=.05$, observed power =.97).

The interaction effect can be seen in graph form below.

Graph to show the mean scores of Attitudes towards Bisexuality as a function of Gender of Target and Gender of Participant

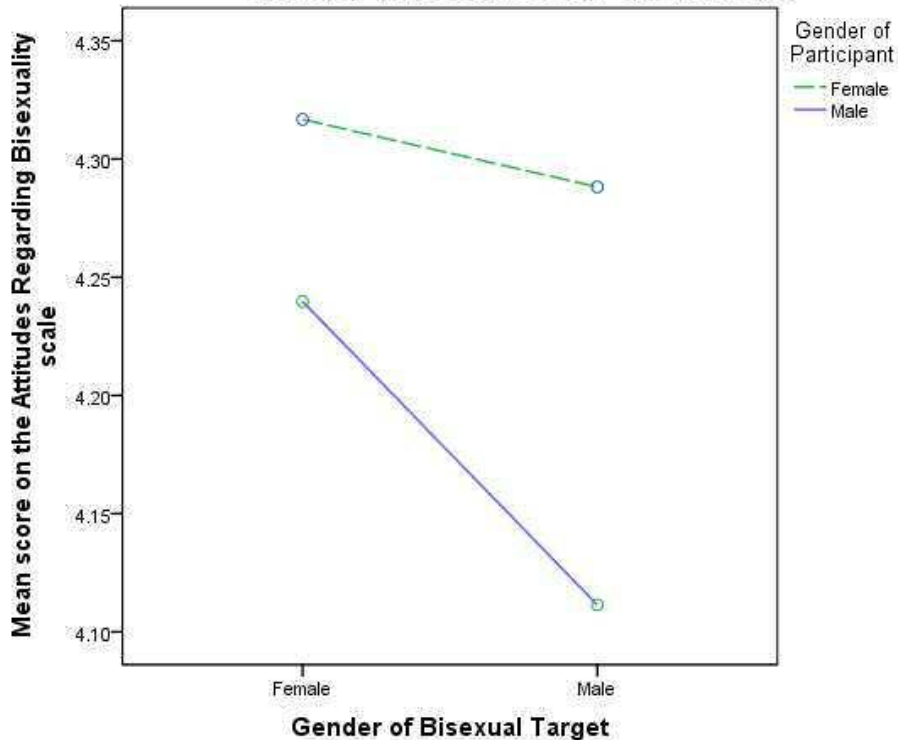


Figure 2: Mean scores on the Attitudes Regarding Bisexuality scale for male and female participants towards male and female targets.

This graph shows how the attitudes of male and female participants change depending on whether the bisexual target is male or female, and indicates the biggest differences is with attitudes towards male bisexuals, especially in male participants. However, in order to determine the nature of the interaction effect definitively, post-hoc tests are needed. In this case, t-tests shall be used. Due to the mixed nature of the independent variables, both related and unrelated t-tests are required (Dancey & Reidy, 2011).

Post-hoc tests

To reduce the familywise error rate a Bonferonni correction was performed, making the new accepted alpha level $p=.0125$.

The t-tests show that the gender of the participant did not influence attitudes towards the female target, $t(288)=.94$, $p=3.47$, or the male target, $t(288)=2.11$, $p=.036$.

The t-tests also show that the gender of the target did not significantly influence the attitudes of female participants, $t(190)=2.01$, $p=.045$. However, the gender of the target did influence the attitudes of male participants, $t(98)=5.66$, $p<.001$, with attitudes being more negative towards the male target ($M=4.11$) than the female target ($M=4.24$).

Interpretation in regards to hypotheses

These results show mixed support for the hypotheses.

1. Males will hold more negative attitudes towards bisexuality than females, regardless of gender of target.

As there was not a significant main effect of gender of participant, the gender of the participant on its own does not influence attitudes towards bisexuality. Therefore, this hypothesis needs to be rejected.

2. Attitudes towards male bisexuality will be more negative than those towards female bisexuality, regardless of gender of participant.

As there was a significant main effect of gender of target, with attitudes towards male bisexuality being more negative ($M=4.23$) than towards female bisexuality ($M=4.29$), this hypothesis can be supported. The effect size of this result was large ($\eta^2=.115$), indicating that the gender of the bisexual target plays a key role in influencing attitudes towards bisexuality.

3. Male participants will view male bisexuals more negatively than female bisexuals.

Attitudes of male participants towards male targets were more negative ($M=4.11$) than their attitudes towards female targets ($M=4.24$). Therefore, this hypothesis can be supported.

4. Female participants will not be influenced by the gender of the target.

As the attitudes of the female participants were not significantly influenced by the gender of the target, this hypothesis can be supported.

5. Male participants' attitudes towards male target will be more negative than female participants'.

Attitudes towards the male target did not significantly differ depending on the gender of the participant. Therefore, this hypothesis must be rejected.

6. Male participants' attitudes towards female target will be more negative than female participants'.

As attitudes towards the female target did not differ due to gender of the participant, this hypothesis must be rejected.

Discussion

The results of this study showed that attitudes towards male bisexuality are more negative than towards female bisexuality. This is especially true in male participants, whereas the attitudes of female participants were not influenced by the gender of the target. The gender of the participant was found to have no influence over attitudes. This suggests that it is the gender of the bisexual that influences the attitudes of individuals, not the gender of the individual themselves.

Interpretation of results in regards to previous literature and psychological theory

These results are mixed in terms of how they fit in with previous research. While some of the expected differences were found, others were not. In terms of gender of target, previous research indicated that attitudes towards male bisexuals are more negative than towards female bisexuals (Eliason, 1997; Eliason, 2000; Arndt, 2009). This was supported by the results of this study. However, contrary to the wealth of research that indicated male participants' attitudes towards bisexuality are more negative than female participants' (Whitley & Ægisdottir, 2000; Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Steffens & Wagner, 2004; Bowers & Bieschke, 2005; Kilgore et al, 2005; Bronson, 2006; Arndt, 2009; Ensign, 2009; Heath & Goggin, 2009; Oswalt & Vargas, 2013; Worthen, 2013), no such difference was found.

There was little previous literature into the interaction effect of gender of participant and gender of target, however, what research there was suggested that male participants would hold more negative views towards male targets than female targets (Herek, 1988; Herek, 2002; Steffens & Wagner, 2004; Arndt, 2009). This was found to be true of the participants for this study. Furthermore, the research indicated that female participants' attitudes would not be influenced by the gender of the target (Kite & Whitley, 1996; Herek, 2002; Steffens & Wagner, 2004; Arndt, 2009), which was also found. However, the results of this study contradicted the notion posed by Herek (1988) who suggested that male participants would hold more positive attitudes towards a female target than female participants would, as attitudes towards female targets were not influenced by the gender of the participant.

There are various potential reasons in the literature for these differences in attitudes.

Attitudes towards male bisexuality were more negative than towards female bisexuality

The most prominent result of this research is that attitudes towards male bisexuality are more negative than towards female bisexuality. One such reason for this may be the continuing conflation of non-heterosexual lifestyles with HIV and AIDS. Despite AIDS no longer being solely seen as a gay man's disease, the connotation appears to remain (Worthen, 2013). Lesbian and bisexual female lifestyles are not often linked with HIV, whereas gay and bisexual male lifestyles are (Fish & Rye, 1991; Price & Hsu, 1992), and research has indicated that prejudices related to HIV correlate with stigma towards gay and bisexual males (Peltzer et al, 2004; Wright et al, 2007). This indicates that fear of HIV would increase negative attitudes towards

male bisexuality, but would not influence attitudes towards female bisexuality. Furthermore, there is research to suggest that the heterosexual community blame bisexual men for transmitting HIV from the homosexual population to the heterosexual population, due to them having sex with both men and women (Miller, 2002; Rust, 2002; Worth, 2003). This would further increase negative stigma of bisexual men. Another reason why the fear of HIV would decrease attitudes towards bisexual men, but not bisexual women is that heterosexual women may feel at greater risk of HIV from a bisexual male, than a heterosexual man does from a bisexual female. This is due to the research that suggests an increased risk of HIV for women who have sex with men who have sex with both men and women (Worth, 2003). This indicates that there are stigmas and stereotypes that are unique to queer males that will inspire negative opinions towards them that queer women are not subject to. This would explain why attitudes towards bisexual men are less favourable than attitudes towards bisexual women in general.

A different explanation for the differences in attitudes towards male and female targets could lie in the reasons why female bisexuality is viewed more positively than male bisexuality. The sexualisation of queer women may go some way to explain why male participants' attitudes towards female bisexuality are more positive than those towards male bisexuality. Lesbian activity is highly eroticised in our culture, especially within the male population, who find it arousing (Louderback & Whitley, 1997; Kite & Whitley, 1998; Diamond, 2005; Worthen, 2013). This may result in men having more favourable attitudes towards queer women, and bisexual women in particular, who not only provide the sexual appeal of lesbianism, but are also potentially attainable (Rupp & Taylor, 2010). This is furthered by the belief that women's same sex attraction is transitory, and that their desire for men will ultimately supersede their desire for women (Zylbergold, 2005). This could suggest that men see bisexual women as 'heteroflexible', where they engage in same-sex activity, but will ultimately always return to men (Diamond, 2005). On a similar note, it is socially acceptable, and even encouraged, for straight or bisexual women to kiss in public to attract males (Rupp & Taylor, 2010). This will result in men viewing bisexuality in women as for their pleasure, and will thus have more positive attitudes towards it. This offers an explanation for why males view female bisexuals more favourably.

There are also reasons why females would hold more positive attitudes towards female bisexuals than male bisexuals. Despite the gender of the target not influencing attitudes in female participants in this study, attitudes towards female bisexuals were generally more positive. For heterosexual women, this may be because they are not taught to fear sexual advances from queer women (Worthen, 2013). This is because it is more socially acceptable for women to have close female relationships without being assumed to be queer (Diamond, 2009; Worthen, 2013). This is further supported by the aforementioned trend for women assumed to be straight to kiss for male attention (Rupp & Taylor, 2010). This indicates that potentially sexual associations with other women are less of a threat to heterosexual women's identity (Herek, 2000; Diamond, 2009); a notion supported by Rich (1980) who postulated that heterosexuality is not an aspect of a female's self-identity that has to be proven. This would result in women feeling less pressure to assert their heterosexuality by distancing themselves from queer women, or hold prejudices against them (Falomir-Pichastor & Hegarty, 2013).

This all provides reasons for why attitudes towards male and female targets differ.

Gender of bisexual target influenced attitudes in male participants

Attitudes towards male bisexuals were more negative regardless of the gender of participant, but male participants in particular disliked bisexuality in men. A key reason for this is the possibility of sexual advances from male bisexuals.

Heterosexual males fear sexual advances from queer men because it poses a threat to their self-identity, which places importance upon masculinity and heterosexuality (McCreary, 1994). As males feel more inclined to assert their heterosexuality than females do (Herek, 2000), this could explain why male participants in particular held negative views of male bisexuality. In order to fully understand the reasons for this, the importance of gender roles and heteronormativity in the male population needs to be explored.

Heteronormativity refers to the assumption that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual (Yep, 2002). With this come beliefs regarding gender roles for men and women being distinct and important to one's self-identity (Jackson, 2006). These beliefs include the need for men to be masculine and heterosexual, and for women to be sexualised and dependent (McCreary, 1994; Mahalik et al, 2005; Arndt, 2009; Worthen, 2013). The concept of heteronormativity, and adoption of the heterosexist values it instils, can be used to explain prejudice against queer individuals for a number of reasons (Bryant & Vidal-Ortiz, 2008; Knight et al, 2013). Firstly, the heteronormative standards of masculinity and heterosexuality in males encourage men to fear sexual advances from queer men in case they undermine their identity. Secondly, queer individuals, especially queer men, break heteronormative expectations by rejecting traditional gender roles (Worthen, 2013). It could also be argued that bisexuals break these gender roles even more so than homosexuals, because they reject the simple dichotomy of sexuality as well. Beliefs about gender roles and expectations of behaviour play a significant role in an individual's self-identity (McCreary, 1994), and the rejection of these norms by others can be perceived as a threat (Arndt, 2009). This is especially true in male individuals, as they are more likely to hold heteronormative expectations of the world (Kimmel, 2009; Montgomery & Stewart, 2012), and place more importance on gender roles in constructing their self-identity (McCreary, 1994; Blashill & Powlishta, 2009).

The non-conformity to gender roles practiced by queer men threatens a man's self-identity, which manifests as prejudice towards queer men (Eliason, 1997; Herek, 2002; Schope & Eliason, 2004; Glick et al, 2007; Talley & Bettencourt, 2008; Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Worthen, 2011), which could explain why males in particular have negative attitudes towards male bisexuality. This is further supported by Whitley (2001) who found gender role beliefs are closely linked to men's attitudes towards homosexuality, and Dasgupta and Rivera (2006) who found beliefs about gender roles to correlate with homophobia. Cárdenas et al (2012) also noted that men in particular are more prejudiced towards queer men if they hold these beliefs about gender roles.

The rejection of traditional gender roles results in negative attitudes from males due to an attempt to distance themselves from queer men and reassert their heteromascularity (McCreary, 1994; Vannewkirk, 2006). This is referred to in the

literature as 'reactive distinctiveness' (Falomir-Pichastor & Hegarty, 2013); a process where members of a group react to threats by reaffirming their social identity through emphasising their distinctiveness from the threat and separating themselves from it (Jetten & Spears, 2003; Jetten et al, 2004). This is supported by the research that found men who endorse traditional gender roles tend to distance themselves from gay men (Falomir et al, 2010), and that men are more likely than women to conceptualise their identity as exclusionary to queer men (Carnaghi et al, 2011; Falomir-Pichastor and Hegarty, 2013).

This indicates that males attempt to distance themselves from queer men because associating with them threatens their identity; either because they reject traditional gender roles, or because of the possibility for sexual advances that infringe on men's public self-identity of masculinity and heterosexuality. This gives an explanation for why male participants in particular were found to hold more negative attitudes towards male bisexuals than female bisexuals.

Gender of bisexual target did not influence attitudes in female participants

The next result to be considered is that female participants were found to not be influenced by the gender of the bisexual target. This may be due to a number of reasons. As previously mentioned, women are not encouraged or conditioned to fear sexual advances from queer women, as it does not impact on their self-concept as a heterosexual female. This would explain why female participants were not influenced by the gender of the bisexual being female. To explain why they were not influenced by the gender of the target being male, one must consider the way male bisexuals are perceived by women in terms of the threat they pose. The literature suggests that heterosexual women have more positive attitudes towards gay men because they covet them, due to the 'gay best friend' stereotype that is supported in popular culture (Shugart, 2003). However, one could propose that women do not covet bisexual men in the same way, because bisexual men pose a sexual threat in a way gay men do not (Eliason & Raheim, 1996; Worthen, 2013), as they pursue relationships with women as well as men. As women are taught to expect sexual advances from men (Stanko, 1985; Osmond, 2013), this means that their default attitude towards men who like women may not change regardless of whether they also like men, and would thus explain why female participants' attitudes were not influenced by the gender of the target being male.

Gender of the participant had no effect

Another result that needs to be explored further is the lack of a difference in attitudes between male participants and female participants. This is a surprising result, as it has previously been found to be a strong indicator of attitudes, which may suggest that the sample used influenced the results found. Research has suggested students may generally have more positive attitudes due to both higher education levels (Herek, 2002; Lambert et al, 2006) and proximity to queer individuals correlating with positive attitudes (Herek, 2002; Steffens & Wagner, 2004, Kwon & Hugelshofer, 2012), and as Hoburg et al (2004) suggest, the university years tend to be the time that non-bisexual individuals have their first contact with bisexual individuals. This indicates that the sample used may have more positive attitudes than the general population, which may have minimised gender differences within participants.

However, it should be noted that many of the studies that found differences between male and female attitudes did so with a student sample (e.g. Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002; Bronson, 2006; Arndt, 2009). Thus it cannot be said that the only reason for this result is the type of sample used. Beyond this, there is little theory to suggest why attitudes towards bisexuality are not influenced by the gender of the participant.

Evaluation of strengths and limitations

A key strength of this piece of research is that it contributes to the correcting of bisexual erasure in the literature and the wider world, as it focused on bisexuality separately from other sexualities. Furthermore, the focus in the methodology on the interaction of the gender of both the participant and the target, which has previously been somewhat overlooked, has helped to broaden the understanding of gender differences in attitudes towards bisexuality. As significant results were found, this has proven to be a worthwhile endeavour.

This study found the gender of the bisexual target to be of most significance in influencing attitudes, which allowed for a discussion of gender politics as well as queer politics. This provided a better understanding of how gender roles influence how men feel about queer males, which shows practical implications of the research, as it highlights the need to address how men conceptualise their identity as exclusionary to queer men if prejudice is going to be reduced.

Alongside the strengths of the study, there are also limitations. As previously mentioned, the sample may have hindered the research. Furthermore, not enough demographic information was collected about the participants to enable a discussion of the generalizability of the findings, as too little is known about the sample to determine whether it is representative of the general public.

Another weakness of the study is the data collection method; the validity of using questionnaires and Likert scales to gather attitudes is questionable. This is because a positive score on the scale does not necessarily reflect acceptance or positive understanding. For example, the attitudes towards female bisexuality were found to be more positive, yet the literature suggests this is due to the perceptions of female bisexuals being heteroflexible or over-sexualised. These are still stereotypes that erase and disrespect the identity of bisexual females and are therefore discriminatory. Thus, a positive score on the scale does not actually indicate a positive attitude towards female bisexuals, rather a misunderstanding of what bisexuality is. This indicates that including a qualitative element to the research method would be beneficial in supplementing the results.

From a queer advocate point of view, a weakness of this study is that it reinforces the gender binary; there were only male and female options available to the participants and the target. This ignores transgender and genderfluid individuals, and erases their voices and experiences, which is both damaging and discriminating. While the instrument used necessitated the use of the gender binary for the bisexual target, the binary style of the gender of participant variable was a fault of the design. It could be argued that since gender identity was asked for rather than sex, transgender individuals were able to choose whichever they preferred, but the choice was still limited to two extremes, which is inappropriate for many genderfluid

individuals. This can be corrected in future research by including non-binary gender identities. This is hard to achieve quantitatively; the questionnaire does not support non-binary identities in the bisexual targets, and for the participants, many statistical tests will require definitive categories, which would necessitate the confining of genderfluid individuals to specific groups. However, at the very least there should be three category options; male, female, and other/non-binary. This will not only decrease transphobia in research, but will also allow for an examination of how non-binary genders influence attitudes towards bisexuality.

An oversight that was made clear when interpreting the results was that the sexual orientation of the participants was not collected or assessed. This has impacted on the ability to apply theory to the results, as it sometimes necessitated speculation. For example, many of the reasons given for the gender differences, such as heteronormativity and fear of sexual advances, assume that the participants are heterosexual. While balance of probability indicates this will be true for the majority of the participants, there will also be participants with other sexual orientations. As the literature has indicated a double discrimination towards bisexuals from both heterosexuals and homosexuals, exploring the effect of sexual orientation as well as gender is important. This provides another potential future research idea. Assessing the intersection of gender and sexual orientation in the participants and the gender of the bisexual target will enable a further exploration of the unique prejudices that bisexual individuals experience from both heterosexual and homosexual individuals.

Concluding remarks

This study found the gender of the participant to have no significant influence over the attitudes towards bisexuality, while the gender of the bisexual target did. The implication of this is that it is the gender of the individual living the lifestyle that influences attitudes, not the gender of the individual forming an opinion on that lifestyle. This indicates that queer males and females are likely to experience different prejudices as a result of their sexual orientation, and so different approaches will need to be taken to reduce discrimination.

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