1 Bisexuality in Europe

Introduction to the field and this book

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Introduction

This anthology reflects the current state of research in Europe on bisexuality and people who desire more than one sex or gender. It makes work accessible that is grounded in expertise beyond the Anglo-American world, which still dominates academia in general and the field of bisexuality research and theorising in particular (Monro, 2015; see also Swan & Habibi, 2018). This book is not meant to provide a complete overview of bisexuality in Europe, as this body of research is still relatively small and rather diverse. Instead, researchers from both continental Europe and the United Kingdom have teamed up to discuss their current research, contribute to ongoing discussions, and provide inspiration and guidance for students, early career researchers, and more senior academics to delve more deeply into current bisexual theorising and the lives of people who desire more than one sex or gender.

The anthology is a product of a network of developments, including the increase in the number of academics and postgraduate students who are interested in studying bisexuality and the social realities of bisexual people, as well as international events and gatherings of bisexual researchers. It seems that bisexuality research in (continental) Europe is on the rise (Maliepaard, 2018a), and this book documents these developments as well as providing a solid foundation for the further elaboration of European perspectives and discussions of bisexuality, and the experiences and realities of bisexual people. This book is the first of its kind to bring together research from various European countries, including Austria, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, and Scandinavian countries, as well as from Europe as a wider geographical region.

This first chapter provides a tentative introduction to bisexuality research in Europe, then discusses the European research that falls into the three themes of this book: sexual citizenship, romantic relationships, and bi+ identities. It also reflects on terminology in bisexuality research, and concludes by discussing the structure of the book.

Bisexuality research in Europe

Research that includes theorising about bisexuality in Europe began as early as the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when sexologists and evolutionists introduced bisexuality in various contexts related to sexual differentiation and evolution on the one hand, and to a person's traits and dispositions on the other. In *A History of Bisexuality*, Angelides (2001) discusses these different uses and interpretations of bisexuality at length. For the purposes of this anthology, it suffices to highlight that bisexuality referred to three distinct but definitely interlinked phenomena (Hemmings, 2002). First, it referred to primordial hermaphroditism – embryological bisexuality – as the earliest form of human existence, before development and sexual differentiation. A second meaning of bisexuality was to describe people who possessed both masculine and feminine traits or dispositions – so-called psychical hermaphroditism. Third, bisexuality was conceptualised as a sexual desire, and ultimately as a sexual orientation and identity. This meaning was also an important aspect of the German-Austrian psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing's work on sexual inversion and the concept of psychosexual hermaphroditism. Psychosexual hermaphroditism was the first phase of sexual inversion (homosexuality), and it referred to bisexual desire within people who were described as *latently heterosexual*. Bisexuality as a desire was further developed in work by the Austrian Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, who understood bisexuality as the starting point of desire, before its differentiation into homosexual or heterosexual desire/attraction through positive or negative identification with the parent of the same or opposite sex. Only in the second half of the twentieth century did bisexuality become an authentic sexual identity: Austrian-born psychiatrist (and sexologist) Fritz Klein – who fled to the United States before World War II – further developed and complicated the Kinsey Scale (which had measured different degrees of sexual attraction to same-sex and opposite-sex people) into the Klein 'Sexual Orientation Grid' (KSOG). Klein contributed significantly to the understanding of bisexuality as an authentic sexual identity, not only with the KSOG – which added the time factor, and went beyond sexual attraction by also including features such as sexual behaviour, sexual fantasies, lifestyle, emotional preference, social preference, and self-identification – but also by publishing *The bisexual option* (Klein, 1993) and founding both the American Institute of Bisexuality and its flagship journal, the *Journal of Bisexuality*.

It is difficult to provide a complete picture of bisexuality research in Europe or European research that includes bisexual theorising. Academics publish in their own languages as well as in the lingua franca of academia. A large proportion of publications are indeed in English; however, a lot of work is also published in different languages, including Dutch (e.g. Goetstouwers, 2007), German (Kemler, Löw, & Ritter, 2012), Finnish (Kangasvuo, 2014), and Swedish (Bertilsson, 2001). Publication in academics' own languages

may hamper the development of European discussions; however, such publications do form a basis for further developing bisexuality research in their respective countries, and they provide opportunities for academics, policy-makers, activists, students, and bisexual people themselves to become familiar with national and perhaps even international discussions of bisexuality and bisexual people.

Today a substantial number of researchers who are working in non-Anglophone countries publish their work in English-language journals to actively engage with bisexual theorising. Following are some examples of researchers who are not part of this anthology but who have contributed to bisexuality research in Europe. Köllen (2013) studied bisexuality in LGBT diversity management in Germany; Gusmano (2018) wrote about polyamory and bisexuality in relation to coming out in Italy; Gustavson (2009) explored bisexuality in relationships in the context of Sweden; Oosterhuis and Lipperts (2013) discussed the slow acceptance of bisexuality in Dutch survey research and popular media; and Turai (2017, 2019) published on representations and positions of bisexuality in post-socialist Hungary. It is fair to conclude, however, that most work on bisexuality in Europe has been conducted by academics working in the United Kingdom. This work comprises not only a large number of articles, but also books that have dominated bisexual theorising in Europe (e.g. Hayfield, 2020; Hemmings, 2002; Klesse, 2007; Monro, 2015; Shepherd, 2019; Storr, 1999). Interestingly, an important cluster of bisexuality researchers is based at the Open University and has published widely on bisexuality in Britain (e.g. Bowes-Catton, 2007; Bowes-Catton, Barker, & Richards, 2011; Jones, 2011, 2016). Researchers at this institution also took the lead in the well-known *Bisexuality Report* published in 2012 (Barker et al., 2012), which they published together with a number of bisexual activists. Of course, this does not mean that all these authors have their personal origins in the United Kingdom; however, it makes clear that bisexuality research is more institutionalised in the United Kingdom than in other European countries (see also Maliepaard, 2018a). It is no surprise that most of the researchers based in continental Europe are conducting and publishing doctoral research, or are early career researchers who finished their doctoral degrees fairly recently.

Due to its relative short history, it is no surprise that bisexuality is not (yet) a sub-discipline within contemporary sociology or psychology. As in other geographical regions, such as the United States and Australia, bisexuality research and theorising have been taken up by researchers working in different disciplines. Nevertheless, most European studies of bisexuality are conducted by researchers in the fields of anthropology, psychology, and sociology. This seems to be quite similar to the situation in Australia and the United States, although a large share of the work in these contexts has been done by public health researchers (e.g. Ross et al., 2018 for a systematic review on mental health). There seem to be only a few studies in Europe that

focus on bisexual health, and there is a lot of potential in such studies (this will be discussed in Chapter 13). It may be true, however, that similar studies have been conducted in European countries but have only been published in the authors' native languages rather than in English-language peer-reviewed journals. Notable examples of studies that have partially embraced a public health approach include the aforementioned *Bisexuality Report* (Barker et al., 2012), the *Complicated?* report by Rankin, Morton, and Bell (2015), and a few individual articles – for example, on the relations between minority stress, social belongingness to LGBT communities, and the mental health of bisexual and lesbian women in Norway (Prell & Traeen, 2018). It is no surprise, then, that the majority of research on bisexuality in Europe is either based on qualitative research or is the result of more theoretical endeavours, while academic survey research on the realities of bisexual people seems to be rather absent. An interesting exception is Van Lisdonk and Keuzenkamp (2017), who used mixed-method research to understand the lived realities of same sex-attracted youth, and whose qualitative sample included several people who identified as bisexual. This emphasis on qualitative research and theoretical endeavours is also reflected in the contents of this book.

Bisexuality in Europe: Themes

In his article, 'Historicising Contemporary Bisexuality', MacDowall (2009) concludes that from the mid-1990s onwards, British and American studies on bisexuality focused predominantly on making space for bisexuality within academia – so-called reparative studies. An important motivation for this focus was the feeling that bisexuality and bisexual people had been invisible or ignored in contemporary academic scholarship. For instance, British geographer Bell (1995) argued against the placelessness and homelessness of bisexuality and bisexual people in society: bisexuality had no place even on the margins of his discipline, the geography of sexualities (see also Maliepaard, 2015a). His conclusion was supported by Monro, Hines, and Osborne (2017), who analysed sexualities scholarship between 1970 and 2015, and concluded that bisexuality was indeed invisible and perhaps marginalised in sexualities scholarship. Their article proposes a number of reasons why bisexuality was invisible, including the heterosexist or heteronormative nature of the scholarship, the emphasis on gay and lesbian experiences (as a result of gay and lesbian identity politics), and the rise of queer approaches within sexualities scholarship. Finally, Barker (2007), who analysed 22 undergraduate psychology textbooks (introductory, biological, developmental, and social psychology) found that bisexuality was rarely mentioned and never theorised in depth. Besides addressing the invisibility of bisexual desires, experiences, and identities, reparative studies focus on the legitimisation of bisexuality as a solid research theme by emphasising that bisexual people have different realities, and therefore deserve academic study and theorising.

Most research on bisexuality – both reparative studies and those that engage with bisexual theorising and possibly wider social theories – is focused on the lived experiences of people who identify as bisexual, and more recently also on those who identify as pansexual, queer, and/or omni-sexual. Far fewer studies discuss the realities of people who desire people of more than one sex or gender: studying bisexual orientations or desires seems to be a less usual, and possibly less safe, option for bisexuality scholars.

In this section, we discuss the three themes of this anthology: sexual citizenship, romantic relationships, and bi+ (or plurisexual) identities.

Sexual citizenship

One of the more minor themes in European research is bisexual citizenship. Sexual citizenship refers to relations between sexualised individuals and the state or society at large. Work has been published that focuses on the relationship between bisexuality and the state (e.g. Maliepaard, 2015b; Marcus, 2018; Monro, 2005) and bisexual communities (e.g. Applebee, 2015; Bowes-Catton et al., 2011; Monro, 2015; Voss, Browne, & Gupta, 2014). At the level of national and local governments, the limited research has shown that policy and legislation have been ignorant of the lived experiences and needs of bisexual people, which hampers bisexual people's attempts to achieve cultural citizenship or exercise their rights to freely engage in romantic relationships, sexual activity, partner choice, identity development, and identity expression (e.g. Maliepaard, 2015b). As argued by Monro (2005), three issues need to be addressed to make space for bisexual citizenship: accepting bisexual identities; embracing sexual fluidity instead of limiting ourselves to static identities and orientations; and making space for relational diversity, looking beyond monogamy in both policy and legislation. Furthermore, we would add, it is of vital importance to address the sexual, mental, and physical health needs and challenges of bisexual people in order to draft useful and specific policies to enable bisexual people to participate fully – or at least to increase their participation – in everyday life (see also Marcus, 2018). While Marcus (2018) hints at the situation of bisexual asylum seekers, there is no scholarship yet on the lived experiences of bisexual asylum seekers, and only very limited work on LGBT asylum seekers that also focuses on the paths of bisexual asylum seekers.

Bisexual citizenship and bi-inclusivity in legislation and policy are not a minor challenge for policy-makers or politicians, since bisexual people's realities may be even less valued than gay and lesbian realities (see Monro & Richardson, 2010). Bisexual communities, organisations, and events have the potential to speak with one voice and make political demands, urging politicians and policy-makers to actually pay attention to bisexual citizenship in policy and legislation (Maliepaard, 2015b; Voss, Browne, & Gupta, 2014).

Nevertheless, while research on communities suggests that bisexual communities, organisations, and events are helpful support networks for bisexual people, providing opportunities to meet like-minded people and encounter no (or less) negativity because of their sexual attraction (Voss, Browne, & Gupta, 2014), there is still a lot of work to do, as bisexual movements are not thriving in many European countries (e.g. Lahti, 2015; Turai, 2018). Furthermore, bisexual communities themselves may not be inclusive of all bisexual people – for instance, bisexual people with more right-wing political orientations, lower incomes, disabilities, or diverse ethnic backgrounds may feel excluded (e.g. Applebee, 2015; Monro, 2015).

Finally, work on bisexual citizenship may be extended to look not only at relations between bisexuality and the state or society at large, but also at sociocultural institutions such as religious systems. Indeed, there has been a rise in publications that discuss the diverse and complex interactions between religious institutions and the lived experiences of bisexual individuals (e.g. Shepherd, 2019; Toft & Yip, 2018; Yip & Toft, 2020). The current body of research seems to focus on the interactions between Christianity and bisexual people; however, Yip and Toft's (2020) edited volume discusses – both theoretically and empirically – the lived experiences of bisexual people who have different religious and spiritual backgrounds and live in various contexts such as the United Kingdom, Turkey, Lebanon, Canada, and the United States.

Romantic relationships

Klesse (2011) notes that research on bisexuality and romantic relationships emerged during the AIDS epidemic. It is no surprise that research on relationships became a substantial theme in European bisexuality research, since romantic relationships are often seen as one of the core elements of social life (Gustavson, 2009). However, the number of studies is still quite low (Hayfield, Campbell, & Reed, 2018). There are three interlinked foci within this theme: the intersection between bisexuality and polyamory (e.g. Gusmano, 2018; Klesse, 2018); the (in)visibility of bisexual people in romantic relationships, including people's agency to create bisexual display (e.g. Daly, King, & Yeadon-Lee, 2018; Hayfield et al., 2013; Lahti, 2015); and the negotiation of bisexuality in romantic relationships, including the impact of binegativity and bisexual stereotypes (e.g. Baumgartner, 2017; Gustavson, 2009; Hayfield et al., 2018). While research in the United States has also focused on the (mental) health implications of relationships for bisexual people, and has observed that romantic relationships may lead to health risks (see Feinstein & Dyar, 2018), this has not yet been studied thoroughly from European perspectives.

Within popular discourse, it is often understood that bisexuality and non-monogamy are strongly related. Nevertheless, one might also describe this relationship as “peculiar” or even contradictory (Klesse, 2005, 2011).

Bisexual stereotypes about promiscuity (Klesse, 2011) and the need to have relationships with both men and women – either at the same time or sequentially – in order to be truly bisexual (e.g. Hemmings, 2002) feed the understanding that a large percentage of bisexual people are indeed non-monogamous or polyamorous. While statistics seem to be absent, it is worthwhile to look at bisexual citizenship through this particular lens as well (see Monro, 2005). Klesse (2011, 2018) focuses, among other things, on the difficult relationship between non-monogamy, the law, and the (in-between) position of bisexuality, and discusses how legislation is not equipped for polyamorous bisexuals and hampers their freedom to shape their own romantic lives. Klesse (2018) also shows how “slippery slope” arguments are used in the United States to suggest that gay marriage leads to bisexual marriage and thus to group marriage, and he proposes that alternative discourses are needed to improve bisexual citizenship.

At the level of lived experience, Gusmano’s (2018) essay on people who are both bisexual and polyamorous argues that in Italy it is often wise not to disclose one’s bisexuality or polyamory. However, the essay also suggests that polyamorous communities may be safe spaces for bisexual people, due to their open-minded nature and the absence of bisexual communities. Discussing coming out in the workplace, Popova (2018) argues that while bisexual identities are invisible, they only become actionable in the intersection with polyamory. On a different level, the assumed connection between bisexuality and non-monogamy may indeed empower bisexual people to actually explore alternative relationship styles such as non-monogamy and polyamory (Gustavson, 2009). Nevertheless, there is much need for further research on the lived experiences of bisexual people who negotiate monogamy, non-monogamy, and/or polyamory in their romantic relationships, and on the impact of these negotiations on relationship satisfaction and (mental) health.

Today, more attention is being paid to the impact of binegativity on relationships. Baumgartner (2017), for instance, discusses how binegativity from partners may be internalised, and may impact the way bisexual people see relationships and their own positions within them. In particular, stereotypes regarding promiscuity, cheating, and non-monogamy are mentioned as factors that impact on how bisexual people shape their relationships. Indeed, Hayfield, Campbell, and Reid (2018) argue that bisexual people may experience difficulties in finding and maintaining romantic relationships due to these stereotypes and negativity, and they sometimes seem to proactively distance themselves from such highly sexualised stereotypes in order to be seen as trustworthy partners. Gustavson (2009) briefly discusses the role of jealousy and binegativity in bisexual women’s relationships, connecting these reactions (among other things) to the tensions between lesbian and bisexual individuals. The role of emotions such as jealousy may need more exploration and discussion. Interestingly, Baumgartner (2017), Gustavson (2009), and Hayfield, Campbell, and Reid (2018) have all discussed the role

of partners and how (ex-)partners understood/understand one's bisexuality; however, actual research with (ex-)partners, such as the work by Pallotta-Chiarolli (2016), seems to be lacking in Europe. Finally, and relatedly, we support Lahti's (in Hayfield & Lahti, 2017) effort to shift from understanding relationships as the product of conscious interactions and meaning-making to understanding relationships as a constant negotiation process that results in more-than-conscious experiences – experiences that are difficult to grasp in words. Conceptualising romantic relationships in this way may shed light on how bisexual people and their partner(s) experience relationships not only through conscious reflection or by focusing on remarkable events, but also through affects, emotions, and feelings.

Bi+ identities

Not surprisingly, in light of the history of bisexuality and the contemporary focus on people who identify as bisexual (and on other sexual identities used by people who desire more than one sex or gender), a vast body of studies has focused on bisexual identities as a research theme. It would be impossible to summarise all the studies that have been conducted on this theme, even in Europe. Examples include studies on identity management, coming out, disclosure (e.g. Gusmano, 2018; Maliepaard, 2018b; Popova, 2018), bisexual identities within contemporary sexuality discourse (e.g. Bowes-Catton, 2007), and methods to render one's bisexual identity visible in a society that equates sexual identity with the sex or gender of one's partner (Deschamps, 2008; Engelberg, 2018; Hayfield et al., 2013; Maliepaard, 2018b).

On a more political level, Bowes-Catton (2007) analyses political texts by bisexual theorists/activists such as Sue George, Clare Hemmings, and Jo Eadie, and identifies two discursive strategies used to position bisexuality and bisexual identities. The first strategy is to position bisexuality as invisible in the heterosexual/homosexual binary, thereby emphasising that bisexuality (as identity and as people) is done an injustice, and that people need to resist this injustice and proactively make space for bisexual identities. The second strategy, inspired by poststructuralist theory, approaches the binary system as restrictive, and positions bisexuality as an epistemology to undo all kinds of binary, well beyond the sex, gender, or sexuality binary. Barker, Richards, and Bowes-Catton (2009) also focus on the complex, overlapping, and sometimes diverging understandings of the relationship between queer (theory) and bisexual identities. Their article reflects an important discussion regarding the potential of queer theory, identifications, and language for bisexual activism and identities, without shying away from a discussion of the limits of queer, such as its abstract nature and its potential negative impacts on bisexual identity politics. The article urges its readers to embrace both identity politics and the deconstructive potential of queer and queer theory.

Interestingly, Deschamps (2008) makes it clear that, due to the lack of consensus over what bisexuality is, there is also no consensus regarding how to make bisexuality visible by using symbols and other material clues. Furthermore, it is also rather difficult to make bisexual desire visible in images or films without falling into the trap of stereotyping bisexuality (e.g. Engelberg, 2018); even when bisexuality is depicted through a threesome (sexually and romantically), it may still be the case that people will interpret it through a monosexual lens (Deschamps, 2008; Hemmings, 2002). Hayfield and colleagues (2013) reveal that while women may play with their appearance to render their bisexuality visible, this remains difficult. It seems that people mainly are able to express their bisexual identity through verbal clues (Hayfield et al., 2013; Maliepaard, 2018b). Nevertheless, research within this realm focuses mainly on how bisexual people themselves disclose or express their bisexuality, and not on how other people interpret the verbal, non-verbal, and material clues of bisexual people. Studies do hint at how bisexual people perceive themselves as viewed by others – for instance, discussing how bisexuality is rendered invisible and people are often interpreted as either heterosexual or gay/lesbian. However, there is no clear focus yet on how others actually understand these verbal, non-verbal, and/or material clues, or whether they have particular ideal types of bisexuality and bisexual people.

Several studies also focus on dynamics within identities, using longitudinal data. Kangasvuo (2011), among others, discusses how the lived experiences of bisexual people changed thanks to changes in Finnish legislation and culture. She also discussed how the understanding and importance of bisexual identities can change over time because of such changes, as well as changes in one's personal life. Another insightful study focuses particularly on how people's sexual identities change over time: Jones (2016) argues that a life-course perspective on sexual identities and sexual/emotional attraction may be helpful to complicate our understandings of people's sexual, romantic, and socio-sexual lives, as well as rendering bisexuality visible. Unfortunately, there is little research that uses a life-course approach or focuses on the later lives of bisexual people (or people who have identified as bisexual, or who are or were sexually attracted to people of more than one sex or gender during their life-course); this clearly is a knowledge gap. Finally, Jones' (2016) claim that the realities of older bisexual people – due to their bisexual histories in earlier life – are different from those of gay and lesbian older people is a good starting point for the study of older people as people with sexual presents and pasts.

Terminology

As bisexuality research blossoms, it is unavoidable that researchers will use different concepts to describe the lived experiences of people who desire more than one sex or gender, or to describe the social world in general. While

compiling this anthology, we found it important to encourage contributors to use some important concepts over others, in order to bring more clarity to the discussion, and to make it easier for researchers to discuss these concepts and the realities of bisexual people.

Bisexuality is often seen as the invisible sexuality within the binary system of sex, gender, and sexualities, as bisexual theorists such as Yoshino (2000) and Hemmings (2002) have already discussed at length. It seems impossible to think beyond binaries when we discuss social categories such as sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Ault (1996) discusses the emergence of a new binary – monosexuals versus non-monosexuals – in which the former refers to gay, lesbian, and heterosexual people and the latter to bisexual people (and others who are sexually and/or emotionally attracted to people of more than one sex or gender, and who possibly identify as pansexual, queer, and/or omnisexual, etc.). Ault (1996) rightfully argues that new binaries lead to further polarisation; however, the monosexual versus non-monosexual binary seems to be a form of bisexual agency that shifts bisexuality from the margin (or, at any rate, beyond the margin) to the centre of discussions on sexual orientations and sexual identities. Bisexual people, as well as others who do not identify as monosexual, no longer necessarily need to position themselves in terms of the heterosexual-homosexual divide, but are able to use the monosexual versus non-monosexual discourse to develop alternative understandings of their (bi)sexuality. This provides them with basic tools to rearrange understandings of their sexual orientation and identity/identities, and of the unique position their orientation and identity/identities occupy in our contemporary social world and the ordering of our sexual lives: away from bisexuality as invisible because of the heterosexual-homosexual divide, and away from understanding bisexuality as a middle ground that reproduces binary understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality.

Despite this success of the monosexual versus non-monosexual binary, it seems that we are witnessing a change to this dichotomy thanks to its linguistic reformulation. Researchers from the United States have argued for a reformulation of this divide as a monosexual versus plurisexual binary, in which plurisexuality occupies almost the same position as non-monosexuality. This is explained in a footnote to one of the earliest articles to discuss plurisexual people: “We use the term plurisexual instead of non-monosexual throughout the manuscript because it does not linguistically assume monosexual as the ideal conceptualisation of sexuality” (Galupo et al., 2014, p. 452). The concept of plurisexuality indeed does not assume monosexuality as the norm, and therefore it gives positive connotations to people who desire more than one sex and/or gender (irrespective of their sexual identity/identities). It is important to keep in mind that language *does*: language has a performative force and provides opportunities to shape and reshape our understandings of the social and sexual lives of human beings. We therefore encouraged the authors to embrace this linguistic shift, and to refer to plurisexual orientations and identities instead

of non-monosexual orientations and identities when talking about people who desire more than one sex or gender, or who identify as bisexual, pansexual, omnisexual, and/or queer. Of course, contributors do use specific labels when they are talking about people who use those specific labels.

The introduction of plurisexuality instead of non-monosexuality, however, does not mean that monosexuality is not the norm in contemporary Western societies. Bisexual theorists often use the term “mononormativity” to describe the institutionalisation and strong discourse (or even a social ideology) of monosexuality. This discourse is based on the assumption that one is either homosexual or heterosexual, that one’s sexual identity is directly linked to the sex or gender of one’s partner, and that one’s sexual orientation (and thus one’s identity) is immutable. Mononormativity is often understood as a reason why bisexuality and bisexual people are rarely visible in society, as people predominantly read others as heterosexual or homosexual, and therefore bisexuals seem to pass as heterosexual or gay/lesbian (Lingel, 2009; Maliepaard, 2017).

In bisexual theorising and research, academics often use mononormativity and monosexism interchangeably to address the institutionalisation of monosexuality. Nevertheless, as already observed by Hayfield, Campbell, and Reid (2018), mononormativity is also used to identify a set of norms related to monogamy, including by academics working on bisexuality (e.g. Gusmano, 2018; Monro, 2015). In this context, mononormativity encompasses the idea that a successful romantic relationship is an enduring, exclusive relationship between two individuals. While originally referring to different-sex couples, it now includes same-sex couples (Gustavson, 2009). It should be said, however, that researchers also use different concepts to highlight the institutionalisation of the monogamous couple. Klesse (2011) writes about compulsory monogamy, whereas Toft and Yip (2018) use the terms “compulsory coupledness” and “compulsory monogamy” to describe how monogamy is naturalised and idealised in society. In their words, compulsory coupledness/monogamy is “the dominant aspiration norm that underpins the popular construction of ‘committed’ and ‘faithful’ intimate (couple) relationships” (Toft & Yip, 2018, p. 245). This anthology does not want to contribute to further confusion regarding how mononormativity is used, so we encouraged contributors to use the term “mononormativity” when discussing the institutionalisation of monosexuality, and “compulsory coupledness/monogamy” if they were writing about social norms related to monogamy.

Introducing the chapters

Following this introduction, the anthology continues in Part I by examining sexual citizen, beginning with Zeynab Peyghambarzadeh’s discussion in Chapter 2 of the position of bisexuality within asylum procedures and its implied invisibility as sexual identity, including a number of telling examples

from European countries as well as Canada. Peyghambarzadeh not only describes asylum procedures but also zooms in on the difficulties faced by asylum seekers in creating a coherent bisexual story to tell during asylum interviews, outlining a variety of problems related to bisexual stereotypes and societal understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality.

Chapter 3, by Emiel Maliepaard, focuses on the relationship not between the sexualised subject and the state, but between the sexualised subject and society. On the basis of interviews with key bisexual activists from the Netherlands, he discusses historical developments, how communities are organised (and at risk of collapse), and how a specific *habitus* is *imposed*, accepted, and resisted by bisexual people. The chapter concludes with recommendations for bisexual activists to improve national and/or local organisations for bisexual/plurisexual people.

In Chapter 4, Carol Shepherd takes up a European perspective and gives a mostly theoretical discussion of why bisexual subjects are often ignored in Christian faith communities throughout Europe. Issues such as horizontal oppression, ignorance of bisexuality, and the presence of general erotophobia contribute to ambivalent stances towards bisexual experiences and bisexual subjects in these faith communities. These factors, as well as the sanctity of coupledness, may have detrimental effects on the mental health of young members of these communities.

The last chapter in this part, Chapter 5 by Christian Klesse, is a theoretical exercise in bifeminist thought related to non-monogamy since the 1970s. He discusses key texts by feminist voices grounded in bisexual activism to show how the quest for autonomy – most importantly, erotic autonomy – is one of the central arguments of bifeminist thinkers when arguing for bisexual nonmonogamy. Bifeminist thinkers are inspired by, yet distance themselves from, lesbian feminists. The specific argumentation used by bifeminist thinkers depends on, among other factors, the historical context, political stances, and the theoretical framework that is applied by key figures.

Part II on romantic relationships begins with Annukka Lahti's Chapter 6 on bisexuality in relationships, which applies a Deleuzo-Guattarian framework. This chapter discusses bisexual identities and relationships as emerging in assemblages between human and non-human bodies, instead of as fixed realities. Furthermore, Lahti opens up a new research field by focusing on the interactions between bisexual individuals, their partner(s), and their social relationships to make sense of the lived experiences of bisexual people in Finland.

In Chapter 7, Sarah Jane Daly discusses literature on bisexual women and monogamy. She first provides a thorough discussion of how understandings of human sexuality shape the romantic and sexual lives of women before focusing on contemporary thought on monogamy. The chapter concludes by discussing the intersection between bisexual women and monogamy on the basis of existing theoretical and empirical literature, before drawing attention to the invisibility of bisexuality in monogamous relationships.

In Chapter 8, which was originally published in the *Psychology of Sexualities Review*, Renate Baumgartner discusses the romantic relationship experiences of non-monogamous bisexual women in Austria. This chapter engages with bisexual people's understandings of relationships and the position of bisexuality within romantic relationships. Baumgartner's focus on binegativity from (ex-)partners and internalised binegativity sheds lights on the impacts of bisexual stereotypes on relationship choices, negotiations, and experiences. However, the chapter also includes a discussion of the agency of bisexual people to choose their non-monogamous relationships.

In Chapter 9, Nicole Braida discusses the intersection between bisexuality and non-monogamy in the lives of plurisexually identified people in Italy. On the basis of interviews with 32 plurisexual non-monogamous people, Braida discusses at length the experiences of these people within both LGBT and polyamory communities, and provides a nuanced understanding of the intersection between bisexuality and non-monogamy. Finally, the chapter focuses on how Braida's research participants negotiated binormativity and polynormativity in their everyday romantic and sexual lives.

Beginning Part III on bi+ identities, Robin Rose Breetveld focuses in Chapter 10 on bisexual identities and experiences by using an epistemological approach. This chapter discusses in depth the difficult position and possible erasure of bisexuality and bisexual identities in existing sexuality discourses by introducing the concept of epistemic injustice into bisexual theorising. Breetveld builds on the concepts of testimonial injustice, hermeneutical injustice, and wilful hermeneutic ignorance to show how bisexual experiences are rendered invalid, and to reveal bisexual subjects' difficulties in adding knowledge to societal and academic understandings of bisexual people.

Using an anthropological approach, in Chapter 11 Jenny Kangasvuo traces historical understandings of bisexuality and bisexual identity in Finland and neighbouring countries by focusing on policies, popular publications, and the experiences of bisexual individuals. This chapter does not just discuss how bisexuality became a well-known and authentic sexual identity for people who are attracted to people of more than one sex or gender; Kangasvuo also explores the different meanings attached to bisexuality, particularly how bisexuality was once understood as an issue for (gay) men but currently is more frequently linked to (heterosexual) women.

In Chapter 12, Nikki Hayfield examines the existing international (social) psychological research on the recognisability of bisexual and pan-sexual individuals. Building on previous work, Hayfield discusses how gay men are perceived as effeminate men and lesbian women as masculine women within our collective understandings. On the basis of existing experimental research, however, it is doubtful whether bisexual and pan-sexual individuals will be recognised on the basis of their appearance and their visual identities – as Hayfield asks, what about the existence of bidar and pandar?

The final chapter, Chapter 13, provides an overview of bisexuality research in Europe. What are our ideas about bisexuality research and theorising for the coming years? We identify a number of challenges and opportunities to advance bisexual theorising, and to contribute to mainstream social theories and discussions regarding minority people.

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