

2-17-2018

Towards Queer Space: Bisexual Experiences and Imaginative Geographies

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TOWARDS QUEER SPACE: BISEXUAL EXPERIENCES
AND IMAGINATIVE GEOGRAPHIES

Jacklyn Weier

76 Pages

Bisexuality has typically gone ignored in human geography. Specifically, geographers of sexualities have not incorporated the perspectives of bisexuals when theorizing about the production of queer or heteronormative spaces. This thesis asks what the experiences of bisexuals are throughout sexualized space and how bisexuals envision bisexual space. It argues that bisexuals, as people with non-binary subjectivities (not straight or gay), offer unique insights that challenge the widespread assumption of tolerant queer space, as well as performative approaches to space production. Bisexuals utilize preexisting models of gay space and their dissatisfaction within dichotomous space to imagine how bisexual space and queer space could materialize. This thesis uses imagined bisexual geographies to expand upon queer geography's lens to include concepts of utopianism and queer futurity. These two viewpoints, being bisexual experiences in dichotomous space and bisexual imaginaries, make for a holistic and in-depth understanding of how bisexuals fit into the geographies of sexualities field and within the methods utilized by queer geographers.

KEYWORDS: Bisexuality, Queer geography, Queer futurity, Queer space

TOWARDS QUEER SPACE: BISEXUAL EXPERIENCES

AND IMAGINATIVE GEOGRAPHIES

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

2018

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AND IMAGINATIVE GEOGRAPHIES

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

After a brief discussion about how bisexuality is portrayed in mainstream media, and especially in our favorite Netflix shows, I asked Karen, a senior English major, if she'd ever been to a bisexual space. After thinking a moment, she tried to justify how the Tavern, a gay bar in downtown Mapleton, might be a bisexual space, and wondered out loud if a bar could be "bisexualized" through gay and straight performances.¹ After thinking for some time, she admitted to me that maybe bisexuals couldn't create their own spaces because they couldn't "perform bisexuality." As a response, I asked her what a bisexual space could look like, if it did exist. At first, she described it like the Tavern and assigned music genres to each night that would appeal to bisexuals. Then, that bisexual space transformed into something else:

Karen: Yeah, I mean, what would that even look like? I have no idea, because like, what even, what stereotypes come with bisexuality?

JW: [laughing] Does it have to be melded to stereotypes?

Karen: I don't know, but is that, but then do they say that stereotypes come out of some type of truth? You know? They can't just manifest, I mean, I don't know if I actually believe in that. So like do we get like the good meld of like we know how to interior decorate? So our space looks great! Or.. Is it just .. I don't know..

JW: It's where people go to cheat and ... [laughing]

Karen: It's just a dark room, no one knows anyone, you just grab a body, and you'll probably like what you touch. [laughing]

JW: Because you get it all, if you want it all. That's a bi space.

Karen: It's called *One and All*... it's... [where] you can't decide and you're promiscuous because you're suddenly turned on by everyone.

My discussion with Karen resembled interviews I had with my other participants. Each had difficulty identifying any real, existing bisexual spaces after listing the gay and straight spaces they lived in. When I asked them to imagine or envision a bisexual space, many would give responses like Karen's: some were bars or cafés, and others turned into something built from bisexual stereotypes. Like Karen's image of a bar called "One and All," these imaginative bisexual geographies are enabled by both preexisting models of gay space and frustration or dissatisfaction with dichotomous, or gay and heteronormative, space. Specifically, my informants utilized "hipster" or "gay friendly/tolerant" commercial leisurescapes as models for how they imagine bisexual and queer spaces, and additionally they reflected on experiences with biphobia, or the prejudice and negative attitudes towards bisexuality (Bennett 1992), in gay and straight spaces to build an ideal bisexual or queer space which denounces sexuality categorization. These imaginaries or visions were also produced by addressing and often challenging mainstream stereotypes about bisexuals.

In this thesis, I argue that bisexual experiences in space and imaginative bisexual geographies challenge the current conceptualizing of gay, lesbian, and queer spaces by questioning the idealized tolerance narratives applied to gay/queer space and the use of binaries and sexuality categories in queer geography. Additionally, based on my participants' interest in imagined bisexual space, I utilize ideas of queer futurity to widen queer geography's scope and to better understand what queer space means. I find that explicitly bisexual space does not exist (like Hemmings 1997b). Furthermore, bisexual imaginative geographies emerge both out of preexisting models of commercial and institutional gay spaces and the negative experiences of

bisexuals within dichotomous spaces. The negative experiences bisexuals encounter in gay/queer and heteronormative spaces include instances of biphobia and passing or blending. I also argue that bisexuals experience exclusion from gay/queer spaces, and this challenges the general notion that gay spaces are especially tolerant or inclusive. I used interviews and participant observation with a sample of twelve participants to uncover the lived experiences of bisexuals in sexually dichotomous space, and the bisexual and queer spaces that my bisexual, pansexual, and queer participants imagined.

This thesis is comprised of two kinds of data. The first is the lived experiences of my bisexual informants. These experiences are comprised of biphobic incidents, and blending and passing, or the processes through which bisexuals are mistaken for or assumed to be gay or straight people (Lingel 2009, McLean 2008). The biphobia and passing that occur in gay spaces reaffirm Oswin's (2008) argument that so-called queer spaces are not 'queer' in the Warner (1993) sense (that is, using queer to signify a resistance to regimes of the normal, and the deconstructing of systems of oppression), but instead are spaces where specifically gay performances, and policing, are being enacted. Passing and blending also challenge some of the assumptions used by queer geographers and other geographers who contribute to the geographies of sexualities field, in that it reveals the inefficiencies of using the performative model of space production in theorizing about futuristic queer spaces. This is because performance, and perceptions of performance, necessarily require a binary interpretation which inherently excludes non-binary subjectivity. The experiences of bisexuals in dichotomous space will lay the ground work for why and how my informants go on to imagine bisexual and queer spaces.

The second part of my data focuses on how my participants imagine or envision bisexual and queer space. This is a reflection of more recent scholarship on how queer geography can be

utilized to access and assess Muñoz's (2009) description of queer futurity. Bain, Payne, and Isen (2015) collectively and artistically rendered a neighborhood queer with a queer world-making community project. However, while the authors take Muñoz's argument that queer futurity is enabled by critiquing the present via the past (or, looking to the past to explain the present, and giving queers a past to draw on for inspiration for a queer future), they do not delve into the geographical particularities of the present which aided in the production of that imagined queer future. This thesis will uncover how dichotomous space, and dissatisfaction within that space, enables my participants' queer and bisexual imaginaries.

In the sections that follow, I will first introduce the setting, methods, and term definitions. Afterwards, the literature review is presented. The literature review outlines queer anthropology, the geographies of sexualities and bisexuality's place within that field, and some of the key discourses in the queer geography literature. Following, I present my data analysis, which includes the sexual geographies of Mapleton, narratives which address bisexual dissatisfaction in dichotomous space, an analysis of how my informants conceptualize bisexual and queer space, and lastly some key arguments concerning performance theory and binary space production in queer geography that are derived from the analysis. Finally, I will present my conclusion with some final thoughts on bisexual lives, the imaginaries they produced, and queer space. Below, I begin with a summary of the study's setting.

Setting

My participants were living in Mapleton throughout the duration of the study, a mid-sized city in the Midwest. Mapleton hosts Midwestern Public University (MPU), a large public university with over 20,000 students, almost a fourth of which come from underrepresented backgrounds. Most students enrolled are from big city suburbs. Many people would describe

MPU as incredibly progressive in its outreach to minority students; others would say that the university is not doing enough. Throughout my interviews, participants will have various opinions about the campus, and the town, as progressive, liberal, or tolerant; or adversely, intolerant and uncomfortable. Their opinions about the town and the campus stem from being students at the university. All but one of my participants were either currently enrolled or recently graduated from one of MPU's plethora of colleges and programs.

Outside the university, the Mapleton metropolitan area has a population of approximately 130,000 people, making it the fifth-most populated area in the state. Most people working in Mapleton are employed at large insurance companies or MPU. During the interviews, participants will often refer to two well-known areas: downtown and Campustown. Downtown Mapleton hosts the popular bars and clubs for students, including Mapleton's only gay bar, the Tavern. Campustown offers a commercial landscape for student hangouts, such as coffee shops and gift stores. Participants chose the location of interviews, and most of the interviews took place in Campustown, though one took place at MPU's library and another one held at a tea shop near campus. Next, I will review the methods used throughout this study.

Methods

The data for this study was gathered through nineteen semi-structured interviews over the course of a year with twelve participants. Each participant had at least one interview, though most had two – an initial interview and a follow-up interview. Information about each participant is available in Table 1-A in the Appendix. The methods also include various participant observation at often-mentioned locations. Unfortunately, due to time restrictions, I was unable to use participant observation with informants within gay and heteronormative spaces. This limitation leaves more to be explored via ethnography and bisexual experiences. Future research

should incorporate interactions with bisexuals in their everyday spaces, and their encounters with others to better study passing and blending.

Participants were recruited to the study through two means: social networking and public advertising. Half the participants responded to a Facebook post created by MPU's Pride group at my request. The post asked for people who were bisexual, pansexual, queer, or fluid, or people who recognized their attracted to multiple genders and sexes. People who followed the Facebook page were then able to directly contact me via email to opt into the study. The other half of participants were from social networking, which consisted of my own personal network, and the networks of those within my network. Each person's name in the study is a pseudonym, which was either provided by myself or was requested by the participant. Additionally, the places where the participants work and live is not provided to ensure confidentiality.

This recruitment method did, however, pose some significant empirical barriers. For example, bisexual is considered a white label. Meaning, bisexual may be recognized as a term in white mainstream contemporary culture, but it is not as prevalently used by queer people of color (e.g., Boykin 2004, Cantu 2002, King 2005, Rust 1996a). Most of my informants are white, with one identifying herself as Puerto Rican, and use the term bisexual/pansexual for themselves. It is also the term that best fits the description for the set of desires I am researching. 'Queer' has become an overarching label, meaning that those who identify as queer may still consider themselves monosexual, or identifying as gay, lesbian, or straight. While using 'bisexual' may have limited the informants that volunteered for the study, I struggle to find another term I could use to be more universally accepted without being contacted by people who do not fit the criteria for this study. Future research should delve into this issue.

Ethnography

Ethnography is a method widely used to uncover the realities of sexual minorities and deviants, whether that be in anthropology (Boellstorff 2007a, Kulick & Willson 1995, Lewin & Leap 2002, Rubin 2011, Valentine 2007), human geography (Cloke et al. 2004, Hart 2004, Herbert 2000), or queer theory (Valocchi 2005). This research follows the process of finding volunteers and spending time to get to know them, and finally performing semi-structured interviews. I have also included accounts of participant-observation, at least within the sexualized landscapes that my participants point to. As I live throughout these same spaces, I will describe both my participant's and my own rendering of these locations.

When recounting their own methodologies, Halberstam (1998, 10) wrote that scholars from humanities are often criticized for not engaging with the real, lived, material lives of queers. She also raised a point of how social science methodologies, such as those I employ here, are subject to false accounts – how can I ever be sure that my participants are not lying to me? These criticisms, granted their validity, may not apply here with the same magnitude. Confiding about sex and sexuality were the main concern – topics and experiences which could be twisted in one way or another, depending on factors such as gender, race, and class. I do not ask my participants, directly, about their sex lives. My goal is more so to uncover their spatial experiences. I feel that there is less chance that my participants will intentionally lie about how they feel in gay/queer spaces. However, it is still a point which should be highlighted. I do not know if what my informants said was true, though I believe that they think it is. One of my questions concerns comfortability in spaces – whether those spaces be straight/heteronormative or gay/queer. To emphasize belonging, my informants may have downplayed their exclusion from gay/queer spaces, though interviews suggest otherwise. They could have also emphasized

their displeasure in straight spaces, to lead away any assumptions that bisexuals gain privilege when in those landscapes. Below, I explain how this study uses bisexual, as a way to introduce my conceptualization of bisexual space and navigation.

Defining Bisexuality

This study is intrinsically tied to the scholarship presented throughout bisexuality studies, anthropology, queer theory, and the geographies of sexualities field. Throughout these fields and disciplines, the terms that are employed to describe my targeted object of study are various, including bisexuality, non-monosexuality, multisexuality, ambisexuality, plurisexuality, non-binary sexuality, and others. This study uses bisexuality as a synonym for non-monosexuality, mutlisexuality, plurisexuality, and non-binary sexuality, among others, because bisexuality is the term most used throughout the fields I am engaging with. This term choice is used for simplicity, not as a way to ignore how bisexuality is also considered non-binary (Callis 2009), or to undermine attempts to move away from the so-called binary construction of bisexuality (Halperin 2009, Hemmings 1997b). In sum, *bisexuality* is typically used either as an umbrella term for identities such as bisexual, queer, and pansexual (Galupo, Ramirez, & Pulice-Farrow 2017), or it is used to describe specifically individuals who identify as attracted to multiple genders (Stryker 2008), both of which I describe in more detail below.

People who are described as bisexual in this study can take on many different identities – to the point that bisexual is considered an umbrella term (see Galupo, Ramirez, & Pulice-Farrow 2017 for ways that these labels may be distinct from each other). This includes queer, pansexual, omnisexual, fluid, bi-curious, homo- and heteroflexible, and even barcurious (Green, Payne, & Green 2011; Rupp & Taylor 2010). Labels among individuals who consider themselves a part of the “LGBTQ+ community” have grown quite extensively, much too extensive to delve into for

this study. My informants' preferred sexual orientations will be included with their data. While I will not take the time to pick apart the differences between people who are pansexual and bisexual, I consider their attractions similar enough to be grouped together for this study. Many of my participants clarify throughout their interviews that they will often change their specific identity depending on social context. For example, sometimes they will change between bisexual, pansexual, and queer as to not confuse other people or to avoid confrontation. Most of the participants were accommodating in terms of what specific sexuality they were referred to as.

On the other hand, when describing a specific sexuality, bisexuality is defined as the desire towards a member of any gender (Stryker 2008), or, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “the quality or fact of being sexually attracted not exclusively to people of one particular gender.” Similarly, this definition is often tied to “the attraction to more than one gender” (e.g., Barker et al. 2012, 3), though there are many other ways that bisexuality can be defined (e.g., Halperin 2009, Hemmings 2002, Maliepaard 2015b, McLean 2015). Some of these include lifestyle choices, reliance on an identity, desires, and other ways to try confining and controlling (protecting?) bisexuality as a distinct, legitimate category, not unlike homosexuality or heterosexuality. These definitions could be used to describe any of the identities encapsulated in bisexuality as an umbrella term, such as pansexual. My informants have their own particular understanding of their chosen terms, but each includes the attraction to more than one gender (being: men and women and others, rather than just butch and femme women, for example). This was the necessary criteria to be allowed into the study, and these terms were used in recruitment tools. Next, I overview some of the literature which studies bisexuals, and especially bisexual lived experiences.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Queer Anthropology

Anthropology has an interesting approach to issues of homosexuality and other nonnormative sexualities. According to Weston's (1993) review of the discipline's relationship with gay and lesbian studies, anthropology initially utilized deviance theory, in that homosexuality was an individual (and possibly medical) problem. It was only thought of as a social construction and associated with particular cultural contexts in the 1990s. Weston's (1993) review describes how anthropology began its work into lesbian and gay studies by searching for, and collecting data of, same-sex sexualities in non-Western societies. It is from this that a first issue emerged. There were only one or two ethnographers studying lesbian and gay aspects of specific regions. For example, there is only one renowned Mexican ethnographer, one Japanese, and so on. As a result, there was no one to challenge or broaden the theoretical framework which favored the dominant depiction of homosexuality as a monolith derived from Western cultures.

Boellstorff (2007b) more recently reviewed anthropological work within lesbian and gay studies. He followed the development of queer anthropology or the anthropology of sexuality from the trajectory of feminist anthropology. He wrote that it was not until the late nineties that female nonnormative sexualities were objects of anthropological scrutiny. Later, when anthropologists went looking to record nonnormative sexualities in Other cultures, as Weston (1993) elaborated, these practices were theorized within the assumption that non-Western homosexuality was replicating Western homosexuality. 'New' ethnographic work no longer views non-Western lesbian and gay identities as impure manifestations of identity tainted by

globalization. Instead, ethnographers look to the interlockings between economics and politics to find ritualized forms of sexuality that “supposedly reveal regimes of idyllic precolonial tolerance” (22). Boellstorff (2007b) finished his review by urging anthropologists to take so-called queer anthropology beyond a Western, white, male context. Since his review, there have been many developments and groundbreaking queer ethnographic work, such as Boellstorff’s (2007a) own writing and those of other anthropologists like Valentine (2007) and Rubin (2011).

However, anthropology still falls short in a lot of ways. One example of an anthropologist who has done work with Western bisexuality is Shokeid (2001), who described a bisexual help group in New York. He wrote about this group as a social hub where bisexuals can comfortably live out their sexuality via discussion, fantasizing, and experimenting. Unfortunately, Shokeid’s work exhibited some of the biphobic narratives that persevere in academia, such as bisexuality being reliant on other sexualities (that is, bisexuality really being a form of hetero- or homosexuality), and illegitimacy (believing that bisexuality does not exist). The abstract even highlights that the group members had “uncertainties.” While vague, this language reinforces to the reader that bisexuals are sitting on the epistemological fence, confused, and deciding on which side to fall. “Uncertainties” plays into the delegitimizing of bisexuality.

Throughout his literature review, Shokeid (2001) explained that in the eyes of anthropology, bisexuals are hated because they do not fit into (binary) categories. He even borrows Victor Turner’s term for bisexuals as “liminal creatures.” After detailing all the members of the group, each of whom identified as bisexual, he wrote, “One is naturally uncertain about how to locate the participants described above in terms of their sexual identity ... What values can one suggest to confirm the validity of their claim for bisexuality?” (81) Given before how Shokeid declared bisexuality as uncategorizable, and undefinable, these statements and

questions cause some concern. But it gets more interesting, as he writes: “Whatever the reasons, my overwhelming impression was that most attendees had a better experience with, or were actually more strongly attracted to same-sex relationships” (83). He demonstrated with this statement that he is now preparing to speak for the “true” nature of the group’s internal desires. He is also demonstrating his complicity within biphobic discourses of delegitimizing bisexuality as a sexuality. By referring to the “validity” of their sexualities, and having to “locate the participants described above in terms of their sexual identity,” he questioned the very existence of this sexuality.

It is troubling to see an anthropologist reinforce their particular category constructions as essentialist, reify or recreate the social categories of *other* people, and fundamentally play into delegitimizing narratives produced by homo- and heteronormative ideologies. Anthropologists are hardly in the business of destroying or delegitimizing emic categories (e.g., “It would be too simple to argue that the bisexual group served as a cover disguise for many people too embarrassed to acknowledge their gay or lesbian preferences” 84). If he were to analyze bisexuals as a social category and uncover what that particular category means in terms of knowledge production and political processes (as Valentine 2007 did for *transgender*), it would be a different case. It would be an outsider’s take on that sexuality as a cultural phenomenon, and maybe even an ethnography of bisexual help groups. Instead, Shokeid (2001) is willfully playing into the same biphobic theorizing that he denounced in his introduction. I argue that queer theory offers a crucial lens to prevent anthropologists, among other scholars, from falling into the persuasions of “natural” or “real” sexualities, a notion that even Weston (1993) thought was abandoned eight years prior to Shokeid’s article. His piece shows enough myopic analytical tendencies that an ethnographic study reexamining bisexuality in the United States is necessary.

My quest for bisexuality theorists within anthropology finally led me to Callis (2014a, 2014b, 2014c). She is an anthropologist who has published a variety of works relating to her Kentucky-based research on non-binary sexualities. Her writing demonstrated an inclusionary anthropological approach to bisexuality. Callis (2014a) worked within non-binary classifications to analyze them as potential borderlands, which may remind readers of Shokeid's and Turner's "liminal creature." However, Callis argued that, as a borderland, non-binary sexualities can reveal much about the construction of normative sexualities than about the artificial or trivial definitions of bisexuality. *Borderlands* in this line of reasoning also take on a subversive quality, which is referenced as a site of revolution and cultural production. While borderlands are "both and neither" (77), I believe this representation of non-binary sexuality has more to offer scholarly debate and this thesis. Many bisexuality theorists take a specific stance against seeing bisexuality as dependent upon hetero- and homosexuality (e.g., Barker et al. 2012, Hemmings 2002). Callis' theorizing about bisexuality as a borderland generated productive discussion without falling into essentialist traps like Shokeid did. These two articles represent two very different anthropological approaches to the topic of bisexuality in the United States, and yet these are the only two I see published.

Anthropology's shortcomings on the question of bisexuality, and bisexuals' lived experiences, turned me to human geography. As someone with anthropology training, I still wanted to use ethnography and empirical approaches. Geography offers an avenue that encourages qualitative data and on-the-ground interpretation, but additionally offers an opportunity to use queer theory and geographical imagination. The geographies of sexualities field and queer geography inform my questions about the heteronormativity of public space, commercialized space, and the contesting manifestations of sexuality within those spaces. It

additionally provides the background for questions of space navigation and the sexual coding of spaces, and a starting point for hypothetical bisexual space. These areas of interest are not necessarily within the scope of anthropological discourse, and have been largely ignored by anthropologists from any subdiscipline. Geography and anthropology, or rather ethnography, complement one another and have been used side-by-side with the intent to discuss space and sex(uality) (e.g., McGlotten 2014). The root concern of this thesis points to how bisexuals fit within mainstream gay and lesbian politics and spatial strategies, alongside how bisexuals imagine and envision space and their sexualities. These are areas which have no previous research within anthropology. As such, I draw on geographers of sexualities as a way to understand gay and lesbian spatial strategies and coding, and bisexual experiences within this framework. Next, I overview the discipline I will be drawing on, the geographies of sexualities, and describe in more detail how geography is utilized throughout this study.

Geographies of Sexualities

Geographers who first included sexuality within their disciplines began by mapping the migrations of gay men and lesbian women from rural to urban space, and then moved on to study gay neighborhoods and bars within cities (Bell & Valentine 1995). Largely, these studies focused on gay white men with very little said about lesbian women or queer people of color. What work did come from geography and lesbian studies in the early 1990s reiterated a widely held assumption that lesbians take up less public and private space than gay men because of their economic disadvantages, and apparent gender-specific resistance to hold space (Bell & Valentine 1995). This has since been challenged, as lesbian-specific places do exist in the form of bars and neighborhoods, though geographers contend that lesbian place-making is different in its “underground” and “network” characteristics (e.g., Binnie & Valentine 1999, Podmore 2006,

Rothenberg 1995). The focus of this early work was specifically that of gay men and lesbian women's experiences in public, commercial space. These early studies were slowly replaced by more sex-positive and queer ethnographies in the later 1990s. The main goal of this work was, and still is, to understand the relationships between sexualities, space, and place; how space and place are sexualized; and how sexualities are geographical (Brown, Browne, & Lim 2007).

Following up on Judith Butler's (1988, 1990) work in culture theory, geographers in the late 1990s began to revisit the idea of the body as a politicized component of landscapes, and approach space production in a performative framework (Bell & Valentine 1995). At that time, queer was becoming an important method and stance in the field, especially in how queer applied to sexuality, identity, body, and space. This included research on sex work, AIDS, essentialism vs. constructionism, pedagogy, and sexual minorities. Today, the components that define the thematic terrain of the geographies of sexualities field are still bodies, spaces, and desires (Hubbard 2008). The sexuality of space, which is built into and from bodies, practices, performances, and encounters, is socially constructed and actively produced.

On the production of space, there are some axioms important to geographers who publish within the geographies of sexualities field: the sexual coding of spaces is reliant on the dominant identity within a space (e.g., Bell & Valentine 1995, Hemmings 1997b, McLean 2003); and space is produced through the repeated performances that contribute to the establishing and maintaining of cultural norms (e.g., Bell et al. 1994, Browne & Bakshi 2011, Valentine 1995). Performance is used throughout this thesis as a means for space production, though the nuances and possibilities of performing bisexuality to an audience is questioned later. Queer (or gay) space production takes place in gay bars, LGBTQ+ organizations, Pride parades, and other places where gay men and lesbian women are dominant, out, and actively performing their

desires. Heterosexual or heteronormative space is produced in the same way – these are spaces where heteronormativity and heterosexism are (re)produced and maintained through performances. Queer space, or rather gay space, is most studied within this field. Queer in the geographical literature has referred almost entirely to white gay men and white lesbian women. There is very little research on queer people of color, trans individuals, or low-income gay men and lesbians in the geographies of sexualities scholarship. These absences were first acknowledged in Bell and Valentine’s (1995) original anthology. This same recognition continues into more recent editions and in the works of other well-known geographers, who additionally write that patriarchy and classism are other areas which have been ignored by geographers who contribute to the geographies of sexualities literature (e.g., Browne, Olasik, & Podmore 2016).

The focus on what Duggan (2003) called “homonormative” subjects also means that bisexuals and pansexuals were left out of the space discussion. Geography is no different than other fields in how it uses bisexual within a list of sexual dissidents (LGBTQ), or thrown under the umbrella term ‘queer’, without actually recognizing the unique features of bisexuality (Barker et al. 2012). Some geographers, such as Oswin (2008), have pointed out that using queer to describe gay and lesbian space erases the political processes working to exclude the “queer unwanted” (Binnie 2004, Casey 2007), or queers who do not fit assimilationist or desirability ideologies of mainstream gay and lesbian politics, and additionally makes invisible the other classed and racialized dimensions of subjectivity. In fact, Bell and Valentine (1995) write in their introduction that using ‘gay’ is passé, and that ‘queer’ was more accepting and inclusive. This results in bisexuals being included into spatial theorizing without the consideration of how their

subjectivities change their perspectives and experiences as subjects who take on non-binary identities.

The only exceptions to this are the early works of Hemmings (1997b, 2002). She single-handedly produced the literature on how bisexuals fit into the geographies of sexualities paradigm. She wrote that bisexual space is inherently a part of 'queer' space as bisexuals are inevitably a part of these spaces. Furthermore, 'queer' space was produced, and fought for, by gay men, lesbian women, and bisexuals together. While this space is not bisexual, it is still "inclusively queer." She is obviously using queer as an umbrella term for LGBTQ individuals, which Oswin (2008) and others warn against. Hemmings (1997b, 159-62) does propose two caveats: no space is fully straight nor fully queer, and bisexuals must "negotiate" spaces that do not belong to them. She also reiterated that bisexuals are incapable of producing their own space outside of temporally-confined bisexual events (e.g., BiFest, bisexual help groups), given that they are never dominant within a space. They are additionally incapable of producing space based on performance, also called the one-to-one link of identity to performance, which suggests that all performances are interpreted through the dichotomy of gay or straight.

This paints a very paradoxical picture. On one hand, Hemmings' work presents 'queer' space as idyllic, accepting, and partially bisexual space. On the other, bisexuals are without the agency to produce space themselves because they will never be dominant within a space; they will always be considered a minority of a minority. They are also unable to produce space because bisexuals cannot perform bisexuality; they can only ever perform straightness or gayness at any given time.

Ultimately, Hemmings' writings reveal how bisexual space does not exist independently of other spaces. Hemmings' description of queer space does include bisexual space, and she also

believes that temporally-situated events could be considered for bisexual space production. Outside of these exceptions, there is little room for bisexual space production or any kind of bisexual place-making. Some geographers, like Maliepaard (2015a, 2015b), argue that there needs to be new ways of conceptualizing space production in order to include non-binary sexualities. In calling for a focus on bisexual everyday lives, he asserted that scholars are unable to theorize the production of bisexual space given the current tenets of how space is (re)produced and coded. Instead, he argued that performativity and materiality be the basis for how bisexuals are understood within space – specifically he believed that language could be an avenue for bisexual space production. I am critical of the desire to seek out bisexual geographies, and exemplify this criticism in the final chapter.

While I agree with Hemmings' (1997b) argument that bisexual space, if it exists, is tangent to preexisting spaces, I disagree with her assumptions about so-called queer space and its acceptance of bisexuals. Instead, I find evidence for gay space not being especially tolerant towards people who identify as bisexual. This thesis will address these concerns, and others, through an analysis of ethnographic data. Since bisexuals are unable to produce space theoretically, literature has emerged which questions and analyzes how bisexuals navigate binary space. Next, I survey some of the narratives which describe how bisexuals, and other non-binary subjects, experience spaces given some of the assumptions used by geographers.

Bisexuals in Dichotomous Space

While I give a lot of credit to Hemmings for taking up the bisexual question, Bell (1994) was one of the first well-known geographers in the geographies of sexualities field to highlight biphobia. His discussion of a bisexual home (and the messiness of bisexuality and identity politics) is one of the first dismissals of viewing bisexuals as tourists:

But it must always be remembered that we are not just sex-tourists having our fun in the gay sun, sending our postcards from the edge; heterosoc [heterosexual society] is not the home we want to be in. It's one of the homes we are put into by other people. (Bell 1994, 135)

Prior to this publication, and for some time after (see below), bisexuals were essentialized as touristic heterosexuals who sometimes dabbled in same-sex intercourse. Bell pointed to these assumptions, and others, as he played with the fence metaphor: maybe the bisexual home is on that edge, since neither heterosexual or homosexual society “wants” bisexuals. In this, Bell (1994) theorized that bisexuals live on the margins, within academia and lived experience, because of endemic biphobia and the reluctance of gay and lesbian scholars to address it. These same problems that were first illuminated in the 1990s still hover today.

For instance, McLean (2003) wrote a Master's thesis similar to this one: he evaluated how bisexuals exist every day in others' geographies. Specifically, he wrote that bisexuals access “both” kinds of spaces to take advantage of these contexts to negotiate their desires (2003, 125). McLean's main argument is one based on theories of tourism, contradictory to Bell's (1994) original statements. He is claiming that bisexuals renegotiate or change their identities as they change spaces to fit the context of that space. This approach to bisexuality and geography is lacking in how it perceives both bisexuality and space. McLean's (2003) framework does not take into consideration how gay- or straight-identified people experience spaces. For example, a lesbian woman, finding herself within the heteronormative college classroom, does not suddenly become straight the way that McLean implies bisexuals do. Her desires and concepts of attraction remain intact as she tactically appropriates the space for those desires, separate from how she may outwardly define and possess her sexuality. The same can be said for bisexuals

who are using the space for their bisexual, multiple gender, desires which are too complex to split into 'gay' and 'straight'. In that same classroom, a bisexual woman may desire men, women, and non-binary individuals. It is too complex to try and decide at which second she is 'heterosexual,' which second she is 'homosexual,' and finally which seconds she is 'bisexual.' In response to McLean's (2003) claims, I would say that she is bisexual throughout the duration of her existence in any given space. Furthermore, seeing bisexual subjects as tourists presents such subjects as viewing and experiencing gay and straight spaces as situational spectacles rather than as a part of their daily lives. If someone lives somewhere, they are not considered a tourist there. This theorizing directly links to Bell's (1994) challenge of finding a bisexual home.

Other scholars have similarly tried applying other geographical theories to bisexual spatial experiences. Lingel (2009), among others (e.g., Swim et al. 2007), described the process of sexuality-based passing. This is when, "...bisexuals opt (or feel forced) to alternate between gay, straight and (where available) bisexual communities" (Lingel 2009, 386). Passing was originally used in racial contexts, such as when African American artist Piper (1992) described being mistaken for white and ridiculed for thinking she was Black. She also had to "prove" her Blackness to Black colleagues, and defend herself against white colleagues who accused her of lying about her race to gain privilege in predominately white institutions. Fundamentally, passing can be interpreted as a process whereby others perceive and assume identity categories onto other people, and form judgements based on these perceived categories. Categories also function as a way to assume privilege and belonging, while simultaneously exercising power dynamics throughout a space to practice exclusion and discrimination.

Passing has also been utilized in other contexts outside of race. For example, Ahmed (2017) used passing to explain trans women who tried to appear as cis-gendered women. She

wrote that, “passing is what you have to do because or when your legitimacy is in question” (2017, 120). In this regard, passing may not necessarily be the best way to describe bisexuals in dichotomous space. Bisexuals are not always intentionally trying to appear straight or gay; as Lingel (2009) argued, bisexuals are in many ways performing normalcy rather than trying to be considered legitimately gay or straight. A better representation of how bisexuals are experiencing and navigating space in this thesis comes from McLean (2008). She also used the term passing, but distinguished between that and “blending,” to describe bisexuals who did not reveal their identities but rather had others assume their sexual orientation, or not reveal information until they were directly asked. Like how passing is used to describe trans women, bisexuals “pass” in the sense that they have developed a strategy to combat (possible) discrimination throughout spaces and take on assumed social positions. However, unlike traditional passing narratives, bisexuals are not always *trying* to be gay or straight, they are simply erased as a sexuality possibility, or are “blended” into gay and straight spaces. Since passing is the term that has been used to describe the spatial navigation of bisexuals in the past, I continue to use it here, but will also distinguish when my participants are blending.

In sum, heteronormativity positions bisexuals as straight when in heteronormative space; and in gay spaces, they are perceived as gay or lesbian. This is also the basis for bisexuals being unable to perform and the one-to-one link: they will always be read as gay or straight no matter what actions they are partaking in (Hemmings 2002). Research on passing and blending exemplifies how bisexuals are made invisible and erased within dichotomous space.

While the passing narrative has a lot to offer, as it adequately explains some of my own observations with my informants, there has yet to be research on how passing and blending can be used to critique the problems inherent in spatial constructions and theorizing. Passing and

blending have more to offer the geographies of sexualities literature in terms of how bisexuals and other non-binary subjects fit within mainstream gay and lesbian spatial strategies and how ‘queer’ is employed to describe gay and lesbian spaces. The observation that bisexuals pass and blend in dichotomous space reveals that there are underlying processes within both heteronormative and gay spaces which directly affect non-binary subjects, and reinforce binary perceptions of sexuality. This study seeks to further analyze passing in these regards.

On this same topic, biphobia and bi-erasure should be overviewed as they are directly related to the passing narrative, and how my informants will express their space navigation narratives and bisexual space envisioning. The greatest issue that bisexuals encounter in heteronormative and gay spaces is the presence of biphobia. This is an area that has been greatly explored both from the side of bisexuals and other sexualities (Bostwick & Hquembourg 2014; Brewster & Moradi 2010; Burke & LaFrance 2016; Callis 2013; Crowley 2010; Eliason 2001; Herek 2002; Israel & Mohr 2004; McLean 2008; Mohr & Rochlen 1999; Mulick & Wright 2002; Rust 1993; Swim, Pearson, & Johnston 2007; Welzer-Lang 2008). Biphobia is often described as double discrimination: biphobic stereotypes come from both straight- and gay-identified individuals (Ochs 1996). Stereotypes within these studies have even been categorized to fit three main narratives – illegitimacy (i.e. bisexuality as a phase, or not a real identity, “fence sitter,” “choose a side”), disloyalty (i.e. to their partners as cheaters, or to the “gay community” as infiltrators), and heterosexism. The disloyalty narrative moves side-by-side with the passing narrative: bisexuals are often accused of passing when it is convenient for them in heteronormative spaces to acquire straight privilege (e.g., Swim et al. 2007, Welzer-Lang 2008). As most of the above scholars have reiterated in their own works, bisexuals do not gain privileges when passing; they are experiencing bi-erasure and the invisibility of their

subjectivities. While this research is important, the details of biphobia and bi-erasure do not directly correlate with this study's scope. However, some of these stereotypes will surface throughout my informant's discussions.

Dichotomous space navigation is filled with discerning between spaces which may not be especially tolerant. As Hemmings (2002) knowingly writes:

Bisexual nonce taxonomies include an unreliable sixth sense about when one should broach the subject of one's bisexuality, and how this differs depending whether the person in question is a friend, a colleague, or, critically, a hoped-for lover. (11)

Knowing just some background on biphobia is vital in interpreting how gay or heteronormative space may or may not be bi-inclusive. It will also be a vital aspect in bisexual space envisioning, which I argue is built from bisexuals' experiences in dichotomous space, which undoubtedly includes instances of biphobia.

Geographies of (In)Tolerance and Policing

An area of interest to urban and queer geographers are geographies of LGBT (in)tolerance. This literature typically analyzes how businesses have utilized tolerance as a way to draw in gay consumers to heterosexual space, or how heteronormative space is intolerant of gay men and lesbians. Browne and Bakshi's (2011) article, for example, looked at how capitalism has aided in the production of "mixed spaces," or spaces and leisurescapes where gay and straight performances are enacted. The kind of commercial spaces the article investigated, such as bars or cafés, appealed to gay and straight consumers in order to gain from both of their patronages. This trend has been studied by other scholars, who similarly find that tolerance is

embraced by businesses, and in some case cities or countries, in order to profit from gay consumerism (Binnie 1995, Browne & Bakshi 2011, Oswin 2015, Valentine 2002).

While it has close links to capitalism, such as with Oswin's (2015) analysis of how cities are becoming more open to queers, there are other works which look to policing within commercial spaces which defy the "capitalism creates tolerance" narrative. Gay spaces, like heteronormative spaces, exist and operate based on policing and exclusionary processes. As an example, Nash and Bain (2007) wrote about an annual lesbian bathhouse event in Toronto. They believed that the event resulted in powers throughout the space which allowed and encouraged certain sexual activities and identities while excluding others. The policing at this event mostly concerned class gatekeeping with an expensive cover charge, while paradoxically advocating for a grungy, working-class lesbian queerness. They argued that the event, "demonstrates that while queer spaces are often presented as progressive, inclusive and tolerant, these same spaces may be exclusionary or limiting despite efforts at openness" (58).

There is also some research on what Binnie (2004) called the "queer unwanted". In his chapter on this figure, Casey (2007) wrote that the queer unwanted is a reflection of inclusive and exclusive narratives in urban gay spaces. Like the motivation to create tolerant commercial spaces, processes embedded within capitalism assure that spaces of intolerance are produced. Specifically, Casey (2007) argued that gentrification and commercialization processes have resulted in older and disabled gay men and lesbians being positioned as unwanted and as breaking the link between gay sex and young, white, able-bodied men. Other studies have similarly found how commercialization and gentrification leads to the removal of non-affluent gay men and lesbians, and lesbians in general (Podmore 2006, Rothenburg 1995). This research

serves as a demonstration for how gay spaces have been recorded in the past as having exclusionary practices along gendered, classed, raced, aged, and abled lines.

This same idea can carry over to this thesis, which also finds policing in gay spaces regardless of a widely accepted narrative in geography that queer/gay space is accepting and tolerant. However, while class, race, and age dimensions have been the focus of policing studies in the past (Binnie 1995, 2004; Casey 2007; Nash & Bain 2007), there is little literature in the geographies of sexualities field that looks to how sexuality is policed in gay space. One exception comes from Matejskova (2007), who wrote about how straight people are actively excluded from gay space. Her research exemplified the negotiated acceptance of straight people into gay bars as paying consumers. This plays into the idea that commercial spaces are willing to tolerate people outside their targeted consumer group in order to bring in more customers; this is a mirror image of how heteronormative commercial space has appealed to gay consumerism. There was also a gendered lens, which featured straight women using gay bars as a way to socialize with their gay male friends and inhabit a space without straight male gaze (and, apparently, lesbian gaze). Matejskova (2007) analyzed these narratives from the standpoint of boundary-making, and how gay spaces work to control (or police) the presence of straight people to ensure that gay spaces stay safe spaces. The policing of straightness in gay spaces ultimately came from the desire to protect those spaces from becoming heterosexualized, and therefore unsafe for gay performance.

The desire for gay spaces, or for spaces which resist heteronormativity, is unsurprising. Even my own informants long for more gay spaces and acceptance in gay spaces. However, there is not enough research on how certain forms of non-heterosexual sexuality are policed from gay spaces, or are entangled in the queer unwanted figure. This thesis examines how bisexuality

is a form of (non-heterosexual) sexuality that is policed in gay space, and how bisexuals represent a form of non-heterosexuality that is undesirable. In addition to that argument, policing of non-straight identity in gay space also challenges some of the assumptions about what gay space is, or necessarily how gay space is imagined in the geographical literature. Gay space is defined and described, repeatedly, as “safe” space (e.g., Binnie 1995), but safe for who? This thesis tackles the idea of tolerant gay space in its analysis. From here on I will outline queer theory and queer geography, and how those fields and approaches are used to analyze my data.

Queer and Queer Geographies

Before going into the specifics of queer geography, I would like to first lay out what queer means in this context. Warner (1993) famously writes that using queer as a method is a way to resist regimes of the normal, those being the oppressive structures of power that permeate all walks of life. To utilize queer theory, or use queer as a method, is to critique and dismantle those structures. While Warner originally used queer to critique aspects of heteronormativity, other regimes include patriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism. Queering also evaluates and denaturalizes binaries, such as private and public, male and female, man and woman, and in this case gay and straight. While queer is especially used in the geographies of sexualities literature as an overarching umbrella term for all non-heterosexuals (Bell & Valentine 1995), some queer geographers seek to change queer’s definition in geography to Warner’s (1993), which incorporates a critique of hetero- and homonormative structures.

Queer in queer geography is often used to denote a practice or method that applies fluidity to seek out fluid sexes, genders, sexualities, spaces, and desires (Browne 2006, Knopp 2007a). Queering potentially looks to challenge binaries, boundaries, restrictions, and normalcy. Using queer theory in geography originally came out of lesbian and gay geographies in the

1990s, and from there essentialist attitudes were systemically deconstructed by various queer approaches, and identity politics from the previous sexual geographies were criticized (Binnie & Valentine 1999, Knopp 2007b). Queer geography has taken quite extensively from feminist geographies; but while newer, queer geography has its own distinct approach rooted in the dismantling of heteronormativity and sexuality-based oppression. Both feminist geography and queer geography compliment and contradict each other – in that queer geographers are accused of not incorporating issues of patriarchy, while feminist geographers ignore homophobia (Knopp 2007b). This study will be relying on queer geography for ontological understanding as its research questions focus on nonnormative, and non-binary, sexuality.

Queer geographers act on the idea that space should be constructed outside of binaries and normalcy. They ask whether or not space is dichotomous, or if space can be simultaneously heterosexual and gay/queer since both groups of people coexist in the public sphere. For example, Visser (2008) investigated how sexual minorities do not necessarily socialize within gay-coded spaces, and analyzed the instances in which non-straight people “gayed” straight leisure space in South Africa. From this, he conceptualized heteronormative spaces as being diluted by queer presence. In critiquing Visser’s (2008) article, Browne and Bakshi (2011) also analyzed how gay-identified individuals utilized straight leisure spaces. They found that in Brighton and Hove, in the UK, gay men and lesbians felt comfortable being themselves even in spaces not designated as gay, especially in bar scenes which hosted a variety of music genres that attracted queer enclaves. The authors argued that having both of these kinds of people in a space does not lessen the straightness of place necessarily, as Visser (2008) argued, but instead that these spaces are both gay and straight since both kinds of performances are being enacted. They used the term “mixed spaces” to describe how both kinds of performances and space production

processes interacted. Browne and Bakshi's (2011) focus groups, which were diverse along both gender and racial lines, surfaced evidence which suggested that spaces were moving beyond a gay and straight binary. This included not only straight spaces that sexual minorities visited, but also private interaction in homes and other materializations of networking, such as book clubs and sports. Overall, they aimed to show how gay and lesbian leisure activities were not secluded to gay-coded commercial scenes. In maintaining that all spaces are sexualized, they concluded that instead of "straight until queered," spaces should be understood as discursively both rather than necessarily exclusive. This research is representative of some of the discourses that are currently being developed around fluid sexualities and spaces in the queer geography literature.

While Browne and Bakshi (2011) proposed moving away from a binary perspective, their theories reinforced binary perceptions of sexuality. Even when trying to apply fluidity to their arguments and conceptualizations, they were still thinking only in terms of gay and straight. Non-binary sexualities are not considered in their study, and one has to ask if bisexual space could be theorized in a similar way. If space could be both heterosexual and 'queer', does that mean that space is simultaneously bisexual? Is queer being used here to encapsulate gay, lesbian, and bisexual subjectivities? Browne and Bakshi (2011) do not take into consideration bisexual performances and subsequent space production in their challenge of binary space. They use queer as an umbrella term, or as a way to find "fluidity," but not as a way to critically evaluate their own preconceptions of binary sexuality and identity. I address the problems with theorizing about bisexual space in the "Challenging Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Space" chapter. If bisexuality or sexual fluidity had been considered in Browne and Bakshi's (2011) theorizing, I believe the outcome of their arguments would have been much different.

One scholar who continues to push for queer in the Warner (1993) sense, rather than as an umbrella term, is Oswin (2008). She wrote that assumptions used in the geographies of sexualities literature – such as how ‘queer’ bodies move to produce ‘queer’ spaces of resistance in the reterritorialization of heterosexual/normative space – equalize queer space and gay or lesbian space. Doing this, she argued, reproduces binary thinking and ignores other critical subjectivities that are compounded into sexual identities, such as racialized, classed, and gendered dimensions. Oswin (2008) advocated for a poststructuralist approach and removing queer geography from identity politics. She wanted new directions from human geography, particularly directions which utilize postcolonial and critical race theory to question the power relations in so-called queer spaces. Her overall argument is for human geography to be more inclusive of other forms of productive power, not just heterosexual hegemony, but also questions of nationalism, colonialism, racism, and geopolitics.

Oswin’s (2008) approach challenges some of the assumptions and arguments made in Browne and Bakshi’s (2011) study. First, she contests using queer as a way to describe gay and lesbian space. Instead, queer should be used to critique and dismantle hegemonic powers and systems of oppression. Second, Oswin (2008) wanted to deconstruct identity politics within the geographies of sexualities field, and therefore question the reliability of essentializing straight and gay subjectivities. Browne and Bakshi (2011) depend on binary conceptualizations of sexuality in order to formulate their arguments, an assumption that surely Oswin (2008) would be critical of. Finally, Oswin resisted using queer as an identity. She questioned how bodies, or people, can be queer if queer is defined as a method to dismantle all social constructs and forms of power. No person, or subjectivity, exists completely outside of categorization or dichotomies. In saying this, Oswin reemphasized her point of how queer should not be used to describe gay or

lesbian spaces. Like bodies, spaces cannot exist outside of systems of power or dichotomies. Queer spaces, in Oswin's (2008) imagination, simply do not exist.

Hemmings (1997b) and others who write about idyllic *queer* (instead of gay) space tend to gloss over the exclusionary narratives being employed within those spaces. Using queer instead of gay or lesbian reinforces a false homogeneity onto these spaces which are typically dominated by subjects maintaining homonormative practices – many times explicitly working to make that space gay instead of queer. Claiming the existence of 'inclusive' queer space, and using *queer* in an effort to integrate non-gay and non-lesbian lives into studies which do not factor in their experiences, is not attempting fluidity nor reflexivity. In many ways, using queer space to describe and equate gay or lesbian space is reminiscent of Joseph's (2002) and others' critiques of terms like *community*. *Queer* makes invisible the processes that work through gay and lesbian spaces to make those places such. This study will instead refer to spaces which host gay bodies and performances as gay spaces, and will refer to spaces which deconstruct hegemonic processes as queer spaces.

Other scholars, such as Bain, Payne, and Isen (2015), also discuss queer space and queer geographies as goals and futures rather than a part of contemporary realities. In their study, Bain, Payne, and Isen (2015) described what they called queer world-making, or the mapping and queering of urban landscapes by queer-identified individuals. Their study analyzed artistic renderings of Toronto's gay spaces to envision how neighborhoods could be queered. In their analysis, they incorporated how many of the queer aspects of neighborhoods were non-material, such as the dyke march, or separate from consumerism, such as HIV prevention programs. This mental mapping served as a way to discuss queer space and queer neighborhoods as idealized goals in the pursuit of a queer future. Like Oswin (2008), they conceptualized queer space as

something that does not empirically exist, and emphasized the re-envisioning of neighborhoods rather than the re-territorializing of heteronormative space. Unlike Oswin, they also used queer as an identity for individuals. Both Oswin's (2008) argument and Bain, Payne, and Isen's (2015) article proposed productive ways of discussing, analyzing, and imagining queer space. Their perspectives on queer space are incorporated throughout this thesis.

In the preceding paragraphs, I briefly overviewed some of the issues generated by queer geography discourse. As Oswin (2008) and Bain, Payne, and Isen (2015) pointed out, queer space should be used to designate spatial futures aiming to realize queerness. This thesis will demonstrate how bisexual space is envisioned, and how this envisioning is produced. Bain, Payne, and Isen's (2015) article similarly looked at space envisioning. The authors wrote about two workshops they conducted which invited queer-identified people to participate in their queer world-making project. Essentially, the authors had volunteers create a map of Queen Street West, also called Queer Street West, in Toronto. In the first workshop, participants and the researchers collectively produced an artistic rendering of the neighborhood by drawing different areas of political and personal importance. For example, some participants drew the sites of homophobic crimes, a women's bookstore, an AIDS memorial, and so on. For the second workshop, the authors gave participants cameras to take pictures of things which to them represented Queen/r Street West. This included images of photo collages, a library, a church, and a changing room. Taking from Muñoz (2009), the authors argued that these practices constituted an expression of queer futurity, queer world-making, and the re-visioning of a neighborhood as queer. Muñoz initially stated that queerness was an ideality that was to be perceived as a potential future. Bain, Payne, and Isen (2015) were trying to realize this future by showing how queer mapping, re-imagining, and re-visioning can challenge heteronormative urban spatial practices and

“accentuate the politics of possibility at the spatial scale of the neighbourhood for dreaming and enacting other ways of being in the world” (440).

An important aspect of their analysis is Muñoz’s (2009) argument that queer futurity is accomplished by drawing from the past to critique the present, and then again to imagine queer futures. Bain, Payne, and Isen (2015) did not delve into the particular conditions of the present that were critiqued by the collectively imagined queer world-making project. Queer futurity, or utopianism, can be used to describe some of the data analyzed by this thesis. The envisioning of bisexual space necessitates critiquing the present. However, while Bain, Payne, and Isen (2015) and Muñoz (2009) look specifically to futures, this research collected visions which were not always expected to be futuristic. Some visions certainly challenge contemporary space in hopes that queerness will be realized, but others are not necessarily spaces which the participants idealize or want to see as potential futures.

Muñoz (2009), in his introduction, described queerness not only as an ideality, but a performance that is “not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future” (1). Imagining bisexual and queer spaces is a kind of performance that rejects the present and looks forward toward potentiality. The data here is a rejection of the present, a way of looking towards the future, and a way of practicing queerness. Queer geographers, while pushing the boundaries of the geographies of sexualities field, have not yet turned their attention to the geographical particularities of present conditions which enable queer futurity, nor have they investigated the ways that imagining bisexual spaces is a way of practicing queerness. This thesis will be expanding upon Muñoz’s (2009) and Bain, Payne, and Isen’s (2015) discussion of a critiqued present by uncovering what exactly about the present is being critiqued in the re-visioning, or imagining, of queer and bisexual space.

This study aims to take these approaches into consideration, and expanding on their results with my own. I do interchangeably use “imaginary” and “vision” in my analysis and results. While not using imaginary in a strict “geographical imaginary” sense, imaginary serves as a term which grasps how my participants perform queerness by dreaming of a future. Imaginaries and visions represent the spaces that my participants dream of but are not spaces that empirically exist. Next, throughout the data analysis, I will be reviewing and analyzing some of the background assumptions about space, such as sexualized spaces and spatial navigation narratives. Finally, I will return to this point about queer space, and how bisexual imaginings can offer perspectives on what queer space production could look like.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Sexual Geography of Mapleton

Two of my participants were born and raised in the Mapleton area. Ashley was a twenty-three-year-old queer-identified history major at the time of our initial interview. She was an extremely amiable person who emphasized her network of gay friends and parties whenever we talked about gay or queer spaces. She described Mapleton as non-progressive and a place she wanted to escape from after graduating high school. This echoed Jerry, a twenty-one-year-old psychology major who identified as panromantic demisexual (or pansexual for simplicity), who is from a rural area just outside of Mapleton's borders. As a psychology major, he was expressly excited to talk to me about homophobia and biphobia as it directly related to some of the areas of interest that he intended to research. Jerry was also a board member for the university Pride organization, and spent a great deal of time trying to convince me to start attending. He, like Ashley, described the area as intolerant, and similarly expressed a desire to leave Mapleton once he was financially able.

The narratives of tolerance and intolerance towards LGBT individuals are reoccurring throughout my participant's descriptions of this area. Geographies of LGBT tolerance are thoroughly explored by both queer and urban geographers (e.g., Oswin 2015). My participants engaged with the idea of tolerance in order to assess which spaces they believed were gay versus those that were heteronormative. As another example, another participant, Casey, used the college campus as a way to determine the heteronormativity of contingent space. Casey was a twenty-three-year-old graduate living in Mapleton as a summer research assistant. Casey

identified as a non-binary trans person, and was open to the sexual orientation labels bisexual or pansexual. A lot of Casey's answers were informed by how they (Casey's preferred pronoun) approached space as someone who is trans; this seemed to overshadow any conflict they may have as someone who identifies as bisexual or pansexual. At the time of our initial interview, they were living with their boyfriend in a shared rental home. Casey was a self-described scientist, who enjoyed talking about physics. They believed that the campus could be used as a way to measure the heteronormativity of the surrounding space. That is, the further one was from campus, the less likely they were to be in a "liberal" or "progressive" area. This same idea was reiterated by Jerry; however, each participant did initially describe areas they visited as especially tolerant. In using the campus as a way to measure tolerance, most of my participants believed that Campustown – also the main economic hub adjacent to campus – was more likely to host tolerant and gay spaces than other areas, such as downtown – the main city center of Mapleton about a ten-minute drive from campus. As the campus was also referenced as an area to find gay spaces, proximity to college became an unexpected unit of measurement for heteronormativity and tolerance.

I received a great deal of information regarding the places where my participants frequented and where LGBT individuals could be found. The most commonly referred to gay-coded areas were the Tavern and the campus of the university. Outside of these, there was not much in Mapleton in the way of gay and lesbian space. Additionally, there was no confusion that the public sphere was largely heteronormative, some of my participants even choosing that word to describe Mapleton. Even as a city that has given itself a progressive reputation, Mapleton was not always the first place people pointed to for gay spaces. Most of my participants brought up gay spaces in big cities before trying to think of more local places. Some participants had

attended Pride parades in downtown area of the state's largest city, and other well-known gay areas of that city, and these were mentioned as additional gay spaces. This plays into the assumption that metropolitan areas are more progressive than rural ones.

Below I split the geographies of Mapleton into four areas of interest: The Tavern, campus, commercial spaces, and parties. These were the four types of places that my participants recalled during their interviews. They ultimately serve as representatives for preexisting gay models of space, which are important references for their imagined bisexual geographies.

The Tavern

The Tavern is the only gay bar in Mapleton. It is located in the downtown area, next to many other bars, pubs, and nightclubs that are commonly visited by students. The first experience I had at the Tavern was with two personal friends, both of whom identified as gay. It has a bar, some high tables, two long booths, two dance cages, and a small stage in the center with a space for a DJ high above it on a second floor. In the back there are two bathrooms, one women's and the other gender-neutral, and above the bathrooms on the second floor was a pool table. The overall color scheme was black with décor ranging from mannequins to a movie poster of *Brokeback Mountain* (2005). When we arrived around 9:30 p.m., there were ten people in the bar including me, my two friends, two bartenders, and a bouncer. We ordered beers at the bar and watched as one of the bartenders and a customer flipped through different Beyoncé music videos on one of the large TVs above the bar. It wasn't too long before more people started coming in, though a majority of them seemed to be groups of straight couples in their thirties and forties. Eventually, what could be considered possibly gay couples and groups of friends started to arrive, though the predominate age range stayed the same. Once more people came, the Beyoncé videos were turned off and a DJ started playing music from up in his nest.

There were varying amounts of people at the dancefloor at any given time, with some entering the cages randomly.

One of my friends, Agnes, spoke to me about how they felt about the bar once our other friend, Gertrude, left for the bathroom. They (Agnes' preferred pronoun) said they especially appreciated the queer regulars, and commented that the Tavern was definitely a free space, an open space, and a queer space; they said this specifically because of their familiarity with my research topic. Agnes said that it maintained its 'queerness' even with the number of straight couples that came in.

JW: How's that?

Agnes: What do you mean?

JW: How does it stay queer?

Agnes: Oh, just look at the décor!

Agnes additionally mentioned that on Thursday bingo nights, "you really feel a part of it", though whatever 'it' was seemed elusive. They believed that its small venue and limited number of people contributed to that feeling. Having come here multiple times in the past, Agnes informed me of how the bar had changed since last time they visited. They were happy to try and contribute to whatever it was I was looking for in this space.

Agnes, Gertrude, and I went to see if the other downtown bars had more people, and finally found people in our age range, early twenties, and a lot more chaos. There were roughly five police cars with cops outside every bar and some directing traffic. Agnes told me that the cops came out like this every weekend. Towards the end of the night, around 1 a.m., we headed

back to the Tavern and saw that it finally drew in a crowd. More people are dancing on the dancefloor and a group of three men in their twenties were using the cages to flip and do tricks. The three of us watched, and eventually an older man from the bar came over and sat by us, saying his name was Chris but we could call him C. C started asking why we were not participating more with others on the dancefloor. He asked about our lives and majors, saying that he too was an MPU alum who majored in finance. He talked about his kids, both older than us, and how he came out as gay just ten years ago. He then reprimanded each of us for not contacting our parents more often. At the end of the night, around 3 a.m., last calls are made and we checked out, but we couldn't leave just yet because C pulled us into another conversation. He slowly unlocked the front door, with keys given to him by the bartender, to talk with us outside the establishment. He gave his number to Agnes, saying we should all keep in touch, before letting us go.

According to Agnes and Gertrude, our night represented an average night in downtown, and an average night at the Tavern. The only exception to our average evening was the surprising absence of college students at the Tavern. According to Agnes and Gertrude, there are more there on a typical weekend night. Our run-in with C demonstrated the networking and community-building capacity of the Tavern for gay men and lesbians, especially in the context of an older patron reaching out to young infrequent-flyers to the bar. While I believe that C was well-intentioned when he approached us, it should not escape scrutiny that an older white man robbed us, in a sense, of the rest of our night.

As for my informants, only a handful reported attending on a regular basis, such as George and Ashley. George was a thirty-five-year-old sociology major double minoring in anthropology and psychology. A self-described army brat, he traveled a lot when he was younger

but has spent most of his life in this college town. He came out as bisexual at seventeen, and had been married to his wife for twelve years. While being in the military for a large portion of his life, George was very active in different groups that cater to LGBT subjects. He had been involved with youth groups, church groups, Pride, and PFLAG, and frequented the Tavern. Being married and going to the Tavern had presented some issues for George, as he had experienced mixed reactions from his wedding band. He had gotten the impression that people were confused as to why he was there, given that he was in a relationship. This may highlight how gay bars, and specifically the Tavern, are spaces for hooking up. Though George does not use the Tavern for this purpose (at least not anymore), he does go to karaoke nights, and gets along well with the patrons there. Additionally, the confrontations relating to the wedding band mostly occurred prior the legalization of gay marriage, leading other customers to assume that George was straight. Ashley, too, mentioned attending the Tavern for karaoke nights.

Each of my participants mentioned the Tavern at some point during their interviews. Some, like Jerry, Riley, or Karen, wished they were able to spend more time there. Riley, being the only participant under twenty-one, expressed that she was excited for when she could finally use the space. While most of my informants did not attend the Tavern as often as George or Ashley, they did go to other consumer spaces which they felt could be gay-coded.

The Tavern served as the most influential preexisting model for gay space. For some of my informants, the Tavern was the only interaction they have had with a commercial gay space. Gay bars in general will enable some of the bisexual imaginaries my participants produced. The Tavern specifically was inspiration for at least one hypothetical bisexual space, while others believed that the Tavern was already in some ways a bisexual space. Below, I elaborate on campus potentially has gay-coded spaces.

Campus

The college campus was mentioned the most often when I asked about gay spaces specific to Mapleton. Some of my participants were involved with university organizations that targeted LGBT students, like campus Pride. The place where Pride meetings are held, the LGBTQ Institute, was considered a gay space. Jerry and Riley were the only active members of Pride I interviewed, and each regularly visited the LGBTQ Institute. Riley was a nineteen-year-old queer-identified social work major who had only positive feedback about the Pride organization. As for her other experiences on campus, she shared that she was often mistaken for a lesbian because of what she assessed to be her more masculine appearance. While identifying as queer, she talked to me about how she has had relationships with both men and women, and will sometimes subtly mention those past relationships in order out herself to a woman she is interested in, or to let a man know that she is available. Playing with gender terms went beyond just picking up partners to how she expressed herself. While coming off “as a lesbian” much of the time, Riley also talked a lot about the different reactions she experienced when she decided to appear more feminine. Riley, being the youngest of my participants, also had the most feedback about how the university accommodated non-straight students.

Jerry considered himself the only bisexual that regularly attended Pride, perhaps not knowing that Riley’s definition of queer was one of sexual fluidity. Jerry described Pride’s focus on cis gay and lesbian issues, and thought that this narrow focus may have contributed to the lack of bisexual participation in the spaces. He and others told me that this focus resulted in another organization forming which was run by transgender students. The Institute itself, which hosted both Pride and the trans group, was another space referenced by participants. Casey, for example, mentioned the Institute as a place where “nobody cares,” meaning that the people in the Institute

were not judgmental about Casey's life decisions. The Institute had a tolerance narrative applied to it. Casey called it "accepting," and a place where people will respect others no matter their changes in gender or sexual orientation. The last participant to use the gay university spaces was Amelia. Amelia was a twenty-three-year-old woman from the state's capital. At the time of the initial interview, she was a graduate student in Anthropology. She was engaged to a pansexual man, and had only outwardly identified herself as bisexual for two years. Her involvement with the department led her to be actively involved in the running of the Institute, as a graduate responsibility. Even though she used the space academically and not leisurely, she did express that the space was comfortable.

Finally, Riley's self-described status of "not yet of legal age" put her closer to campus. Gay spaces for her included her dorm room, Pride, and a class on gender studies. During her freshman year, Riley was living on the fine arts floor – one of the few themed dorm floors available on campus. She described it as welcoming, with a gay residential assistant (RA) and accepting neighbors. However accepting, she also told me about a time when her RA insisted on calling her and her girlfriend lesbians. When Riley finally had the courage to confront him, he eventually changed his wording and understanding. Prior to moving to a different floor, Riley believed that her fine arts floor was a space that was accepting, and possibly gay-coded. Lastly, Riley and Jerry were the only participants to call a classroom setting gay-coded. Riley attributed this to the class's focus on gender and sexuality, the small class size, and her familiarity with the professor. Jerry believed that a classroom could be a comfortable setting if he could assess the professor's willingness to "stick up" for LGBT students.

These spaces exemplify how the performances enacted in spaces contributed to how bisexuals perceived them. For campus, this meant that performances within the space, or

potential performances, determined how tolerable the space was to bisexuality. As mentioned before, geographies of LGBT tolerance are an area explored by urban and queer geographers (e.g., Oswin 2015). My participants demonstrated this by pointing to how performances on campus determined whether or not the campus, at the time, in that exact space, was welcoming. My participants finding tolerant spaces within the university is in itself a case which should be explored more closely, since geographers researching the university have found that the university serves as a heteronormative, and therefore heterosexual space producing, institution (Taulke-Johnson 2010). Perhaps performances of tolerance, and the social processes that produce these, need more attention in what creates tolerance outside of commercial space. The importance of campus gay spaces lies in how they are adopted as models for their imaginative bisexual geographies and queer spaces, which will be further explored in the next chapter. Below, I switch from campus to the parties, which were other often mentioned spaces.

Parties

Browne and Bakshi (2011) write that community networking is often overlooked as creating key spaces for gay and lesbian-identified people. Lesbian networking and place-making is often not a part of the public sphere, nor is it readily apparent as gay bars and clubs are. As an example, my participants pointed to house parties as potential gay spaces. Katie, for example, referenced these as queer or gay spaces, as they were mostly made up of gay participants. Katie was a twenty-four-year-old MPU alum from the suburbs of the state's largest city. She has only been out about her bisexuality for a year and had a boyfriend at the time of our initial interview. Being bisexual for Katie had been mostly a headache as she struggled being in a relationship while recognizing her desire to be with other men and women. She said she hangs out with a group that has a lot of "open" people: Katie described most of her friends as other bisexuals and

lesbians, with her straight friends being mostly men. When with these friends at their houses, in the context of house parties, she described those places as comfortable in terms of how she can be open about her sexuality. Ashley also described house parties as ideal queer spaces because the atmosphere was overall more comfortable than a heteronormative pub. In both cases, house parties took precedence over going out to bars in downtown. These parties were, at least for Ashley, a way to maintain her queer identity and network with Mapleton's other queers. It was through "social networks" that Ashley said that she was able to meet other queer people in the area.

Another participant to point to parties as gay spaces was T. T was a twenty-year-old bisexual woman attending community college almost two hours from Mapleton. She was the only participant who was not at some point living in the area, and was recruited via social networking. Having known T longer than the other participants, I can say that she has an unbelievable energy, and has been known to be a little bit of a partier. She had only recognized her bisexuality within the past two months from the initial interview, as she had begun dating a woman after years of only exclusively seeing men. For the purposes of our interview, she labeled her sexual orientation as bisexual, though during the interview she confessed to not being familiar with anything remotely LGBT, being that her social groups up until recently had been majority straight. T also admitted to only being publicly 'out' on two separate occasions, both of which were tied to gay spaces (one being a metropolitan area Pride parade) and within two months leading to the initial interview.

T talked about her group of gay friends and parties with them as potential gay spaces, and believed that in gay spaces "everyone is like more themselves and not worried about anything, so you don't necessarily like hold back anything..." T referenced these parties as comfortable,

freeing spaces, where one can “joke around” about things one could not in straight spaces. Straight spaces are those which “you know your levels,” or, otherwise, someone knows their limits for what is appropriate or what could be policed. Gay party spaces provided the freedom for T to express her sexuality while still being a part of the college partying lifestyle.

College and house parties are great examples for how gay space is produced via gay and lesbian bodies, and how social networking through gay spaces is a way to create a sense of community. Parties as gay space exhibits how bisexuals are embedded within even temporally-confined productions of gay space, and how their involvement with gay subculture goes beyond knowing where the only gay bar is. They are also able to grasp how gay bars, and therefore gay space, can be likened to the kind of space production at parties. My participants were able to understand how gay space worked – via gay and lesbian bodies – to pinpoint gay space outside of the public sphere. While parties did not serve as a model for their imaginative bisexual geographies and spaces (unless orgies can be compared to college house parties), they are important to document because less concrete forms of gay space production and social networking are understudied in queer geography. Next, I briefly discuss commercial spaces, which for some was transformed into gay space.

Commercial Spaces

Karen, Katie, and Ashley all worked at places that they felt were extremely open and welcoming. Karen, introduced at the beginning of the introduction, was a twenty-one-year-old bisexual woman from the suburbs of the state’s largest city. A senior English major at the time of our first interview, Karen and I would run into each other at presentations about queer theory and talked for long periods of time during our interview about bisexual representation, politics, and art. I have also taken graduate level classes with her in queer and trans theory. Karen works at an

office and had a coworker who was a lesbian and married to another woman. She said that this has helped make her work environment tolerant, though it was not always this way. Karen told me stories from previous managers before she was hired who were not tolerant of her coworker and caused tension. Since the previous manager was gone, Karen felt accepted for her sexuality at work. Karen used the narrative of tolerance, and comfortability around other non-heterosexual women, to justify her work place as a potential gay space.

Katie and Ashley both work with majority-gay coworkers at restaurants. Both told me that these gay-friendly spaces helped them develop their identities. These were considered gay spaces, supposedly, because of the number of gay, lesbian, and bisexual coworkers, and the tolerance and acceptance of the space. The narrative of tolerance, as it was for campus, is extremely important to all of my informants in what contributes to the ‘queerness’ or ‘gayness’ of space. On the other hand, participants such as Jerry felt that his coworkers were very intolerant and ignorant, and he expressed his frustration with the derogatory remarks they made. While for some of my participants work spaces could be, oddly enough, liberating, for others it forced them to interact with heteronormative ideologies that they would have otherwise avoided. All of these work locations took place in Mapleton, though they will remain anonymous to help keep the identities of the participants confidential.

Besides the work place, throughout my interviews I referenced the space we were in, such as a café, to assess how the space was sexualized. This brought up an interesting issue. Two of the other places I frequented with participants have reputations for being “hipster” and otherwise places where gay men and lesbians could be found. When I referenced these, some of my participants agreed they were ambiguous, or not necessarily extremely heteronormative. This shows the flexibility, or perhaps fluidity, in how my participants recognized what spaces were

gay and which were heteronormative, and how the tolerance narrative can influence how spaces are perceived. I call their perceptions fluid because heteronormative commercial leiscapes were investigated by Browne and Bakshi (2011), who argued that when spaces host both gay and straight performances, those spaces are “mixed,” or otherwise both gay and straight. They also considered how the commercialization of leisure space directly contributed to the production of mixed space, in that commercial spaces attempt to be tolerant of gay patrons to attract them as consumers. My participants’ perspectives of hipster or tolerant cafés represented this. Since they were not considered “extremely heteronormative,” they were potentially spaces where they felt accepted or tolerated.

Overall, even though my participants are bisexual, they were well aware of the different places and spaces which were gay-coded around Mapleton. Their involvement in these spaces highlights their desire to be a part of gay and lesbian spaces regardless of stereotypes that may say otherwise. It should also be reemphasized that I, and my participants, consider these gay spaces, not bisexual spaces. These are spaces which are produced because of the amount of gay and lesbian people in the space, and the performances being enacted within the space (Bell & Valentine 1995). While the spaces inevitably included bisexual people, the space itself could not be conceptualized as bisexual. Gay, for some participants, as it did for Hemmings (1997b), did sometimes include bisexuals, but not bisexuals exclusively. Gay space had the potential to be bisexual space, but was not an assumption of the space. This is because, as I will explain in the next section, bisexuality was still rendered invisible in these spaces. Next, I go over some of the narratives that my participants offered in light of sexual coding, or how most of the spaces they experience and navigate are produced through binary performances and binary conceptualizations of queer bodies.

Dissatisfaction with Dichotomous Space

In the literature review, I discussed how bisexuals are seen as passing or blending in spaces based on the binary perceptions of sexuality and gender performance (e.g., Lingel 2009, McLean 2008, Swim et al. 2007). Passing was a common narrative reported by my informants, and I believe that passing and blending contributed to the dissatisfaction with dichotomous space because it necessitates making invisible and erasing bisexual and other non-binary sexualities. Furthermore, the dissatisfaction with space also stems from the biphobic incidents that my informants described. Below, I analyze sections of interviews which dealt specifically with passing and biphobia to later present bisexual imaginaries' reliance on these incidents.

Passing and Blending

Passing and blending are processes that are used to describe bisexuals' interactions with space (e.g., Lingel 2009, McLean 2008, Swim et al. 2007). Each of my informants constructed their own passing narrative, though many of them never used the words passing or blending. Amelia, for example, explained how she "flew under the radar" around her parents, and she wanted to keep it that way. She is also in a different-sex relationship, which reinforced a perceived straight performance. Amelia benefits from blending as it keeps her religious family from suspecting a nonnormative sexual orientation. However, this is only a "benefit" because Amelia's family is heterosexist. Amelia's situation exemplifies how bisexuality is erased both through mislabeling and through the direct suppression of non-heterosexual subjectivities. Amelia would not need to blend if her family accepted her identity, and this caused her to be dissatisfied with the heteronormativity of her home.

On the other hand, Brittany and Heather, both twenty-year-old bisexual students engaged to each other, blend as lesbians. They expressed to me a few times during our initial interview that at the beginning of their relationship, they always had to reaffirm to others that they were bisexual. Eventually they stopped trying to correct people, and accepted being mislabeled. They both experience attraction to men, and would oftentimes comment on men's physical attractiveness together in front of other people. This, unsurprisingly, confused a lot of their friends who believed that the two had "become" lesbians once they started dating. Brittany and Heather's frustration and dissatisfaction stems from their experiences with blending as lesbians in both gay- and straight-coded spaces. Blending, as it was for Amelia, meant that their identities as bisexuals were erased in favor of being labeled gay or straight.

Moreover, Polly is another participant who described instances of passing and blending. She was twenty-three-year-old graduate student from out of state, but still from the Midwest, who hoped to attend a PhD program after graduating from MPU. Polly was incredibly confident in her bisexuality, and has been identifying as bisexual since high school. Her experiences with bisexual friends when living abroad gave her an appealing sense of authority on bisexuality and occupying gay space. Despite this confidence, she also had a long-term boyfriend and therefore appeared straight to other people. She described being in straight spaces as "selling" herself as an "average" person, which fits with the description of passing as trying to be a different category. Additionally, during our interview, Polly dismissed the idea of gay bars as inherently bisexual spaces because of passing:

I feel like as soon as I walk into a gay bar like I'm read as a lesbian. A lesbian or a visiting straight person, like depending on what I'm doing. Like those are like your two

options... If you go into a gay bar you don't hit on guys there because you assume that all the guys are gay... [You think] this place is really cornering me here.

Polly's experiences demonstrate how gay spaces function to recreate sexuality binaries, as straight spaces do. This is based on the assumption that gay bars are spaces that host only gay men (and to some extent lesbian women). When Polly, and others, enter these spaces, they are viewed in one of three ways: lesbians, gay men, or straight. Being a woman, Polly was read as a lesbian in most of these cases, though she did admit that some of her gendered performances could lead others to think she is a "visiting straight person." The one-to-one link and sexuality binary which causes erasure left Polly to conclude that gay bars and other gay spaces do not function as bisexual spaces because people cannot be read as bisexual in those spaces. Her dissatisfaction with dichotomous space was directed towards her inability to be read as bisexual, and how she is essentially forced to pass and blend in both gay- and straight-coded spaces.

My other informants similarly had experiences with erasure, passing, and blending in dichotomous space. Riley was often mistaken for a lesbian, which is not a distinction she made time to correct. Casey passes as a gay man, a narrative they are happy with, saying that being called a gay man as a trans person was better for them than other possible labels. Finally, George often found that people were surprised when he came out to them, judging by his self-assessed masculine appearance. He also believed that bisexuals could blend in straight spaces as long as they did not "fall into stereotypes" or "behave in a way that doesn't give something off." George's insight specifically referred to passing in straight space while simultaneously trying not to be read as gay out of fear of homophobic policing.

Casey was the only participant who referenced the passing/blending-with-privilege narrative, where bisexuals are accused of gaining straight privilege when they pass as straight in

heteronormative spaces. Casey described being bisexual as “the best of the both worlds,” where being bisexual would not receive any backlash unless that person was in a public space and in a same-sex/gender relationship. They never mentioned experiencing biphobia before, and spent a lot of time during our interviews saying, “society doesn’t care anymore” about one’s sexuality. I think this goes along with Casey’s description of the campus as a liberal, progressive place, as well as the other possible experiences Casey had with transphobia. Not experiencing discrimination or violence based on sexuality left Casey as an outlier in this sample. It is, however, my belief that Casey had experienced biphobia or bi-erasure, but those experiences may seem minute, or were in the form of microaggressions, and therefore were overlooked in favor of discussing more apparent and visceral experiences with transphobia.

While each of my informants expressed a passing or blending narrative, some felt that the ability to pass or blend (either as gay or straight) was an advantage, while others were frustrated by it. Amelia, as previously mentioned, told me that she benefits from blending as it keeps her religious family from suspecting a nonnormative sexual orientation; meanwhile, Brittany and Heather were frustrated about the constant misinterpretation of their sexualities. Either way, it should be recognized that passing and blending entail heterosexism. While Amelia benefits from blending, it is because her parents would not accept her for being bisexual. Brittany and Heather’s dissatisfaction stems from bi-erasure and (re)production of the sexuality binary. Passing or blending, as it is for racial minorities, are not necessarily narratives of privilege. To exemplify this, below, I trace the instances of biphobia that my informants recollected.

Biphobia in Space Navigation

On the topic of bi-erasure, most of my informants were able to recall instances of biphobia. Given the breadth and depth of biphobia research (Bostwick & Hquembourg 2014;

Brewster & Moradi 2010; Burke & LaFrance 2016; Callis 2013; Crowley 2010; Eliason 2001; Herek 2002; Israel & Mohr 2004; McLean 2008; Mohr & Rochlen 1999; Mulick & Wright 2002; Rust 1993; Swim, Pearson, & Johnston 2007; Welzer-Lang 2008), this is hardly surprising. That dissatisfaction, besides deriving from passing and bi-erasure, is also directly linked to the biphobia they have experienced in both gay and straight spaces. For example, George, a long-time resident of Mapleton, spends a fair amount of time at the Tavern, as mentioned previously. He remembered years before when he was called a “fence sitter” while out for drinks. He no longer received such direct confrontations, though he did recall when his wedding band left others to perceive him as straight and question his presence at the bar. Coming off as “straight” was a reoccurring point in George’s stories, even when he reflected on his experiences dating men while in the military before the abandonment of “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell.” He recalled biphobia only in the instances where he passed as “straight” in gay-coded spaces. His stories reflect the ways that bisexuals consistently deal with erasure or biphobic remarks when trying to live through gay and straight spaces.

Katie, who is feminine presenting, was with friends at a gay bar in a big city when she and her friends were confronted as “straight girls” and told to leave. About gay spaces, she said:

It’s not that I don’t belong there, it’s not that people don’t want me there but I don’t as much feel the like, ‘this is my place’ you know what I mean? ... I don’t really feel that place is made for me, I just feel like I’m just kind of there.

Referring to her encounter with biphobia, Katie asked, “Do people not think that I belong here?” Both Katie and George’s stories represented how the policing of gay spaces affected my participants. George’s experiences were directed at his identity as a bisexual, such as being

called a “fence sitter,” and not fitting in at gay bars. Katie’s experience came as a direct response to blending as straight. Her description of the event, and her above quote, both indicate how she feels that her bisexuality, and not presenting an ideal image of gayness, is what has caused confrontations in gay space.

My other participants similarly had experiences with biphobia, or in general the delegitimization of their identities. T had a friend introduce her as “testing the waters” of her sexuality. Brittany and Heather, when in public, were told they were lesbians because they were in a same-sex relationship. Amelia recalled a Pride parade where people were openly confronting couples that “looked heterosexual,” and reflected on other instances of what she called “gatekeeping.” These biphobic incidents were recollected when I asked participants if they ever experienced any problems from others for being bisexual.

The above instances of biphobia or bi-erasure were recollected as evidence for how gay space was not always bisexual space and even sometimes hostile for bisexual people. As Jerry and others said, gay space has the ability to be bisexual space, but this is not always how it plays out. These findings are in direct opposition with Hemmings (1997b), who proposed that gay space was partially bisexual space, and that space negotiation was the platform for any conflict of interest. A negotiation, in its literal sense, does not seem to resemble what I see happening in my field site or with my participants. The territorialization that has taken place within gay spaces, and around gay subcultures, is reminiscent of the separatist lesbian feminism that Hemmings (1997a) herself discussed. The bisexual subjects in my study are not ‘negotiating’ space per se, they are almost tiptoeing through it. Their acceptance into these spaces relies in many ways on their ability to align themselves with that space or else deal with confrontation. This might remind readers of McLean’s (2003) suggestion of bisexuals as tourists. My

participants are not “becoming” gay or straight when they transverse these spaces, they are instead being forcefully assimilated into the space while still retaining their desires and subjectivities.

These instances of biphobia are further evidence for how what many queer geographers call ‘queer space’ is only open and tolerant to certain kinds of ‘queers,’ and that those which resist the dominant conceptualization of ‘queerness’ or ‘gayness’ may be confronted within those spaces. Biphobic incidents in gay space represent how gay spaces are actively produced to be an ideal, mainstream, homonormative image of gayness, rather than ‘queerness.’ They also reveal more about the queer unwanted figure, and how this figure may also be in part bisexual, or non-monosexual. Biphobia in gay spaces challenges Browne and Bakshi’s (2011) resistance to calling gay spaces homonormative and intolerant by showing how these spaces are actively produced based on performances of ideal gayness, the policing of non-ideal gayness or the queer unwanted, and the processes of exclusion or intolerance in gay space. Additionally, these confrontations, and policing of space, directly impacted the visions of bisexual spaces for my participants. Below, I present some of the bisexual space envisions produced by my informants.

Imagining Bisexual Geographies and Space

Throughout the course of each interview, my informants agreed that there was no such thing as bisexual space, at least none they were familiar with. As a consequence, I began to ask what hypothetical bisexual space would be like. The responses were illuminating in how participants imagined their desires and uncertainties surrounding bisexual space. Participants imagined bisexual geographies as a response to their dissatisfaction with dichotomous (gay/straight) spaces but based their imaginings on preexisting gay geographies. They ‘improved’ gay spaces familiar to them by imaginatively imbuing them with hypothetical

characteristics, such as being inclusive or tolerant of bisexuals when they have felt policed or rejected from gay spaces. The imaginaries were often based on bisexual stereotypes, presumably to present or project bisexuality as a performance to both bisexuals and other sexual subjectivities.

Many participants described bisexual space as a tolerant utopia. For example, Katie explained that bisexuals are people who have a multitude of experiences and have faced rejection from spaces. For these reasons, a bisexual space would not be exclusively bisexual the way that some gay bars are exclusively gay. She called it an “open space” that did not restrict people, that is, there did not seem to be any exclusionary policing within the space. I mentioned previously Katie’s experience with biphobia and rejection from gay spaces. Her vision of bisexual space seemed to be based on this experience. She advocated instead for spaces which do not reject people from them for not being visibly gay or lesbian. By drawing from her experiences of being policed from gay spaces to envision bisexual spaces, Katie is directly addressing her dissatisfaction with contemporary gay spaces. Her experiences with biphobia and policing enabled the envisioning of bisexual space. This is an example of Muñoz’s (2009) call for rejecting the here and now and insisting on the potential of a better world. Katie’s imaginary confronts and rejects the present while longing for a better, queerer, world.

Jerry and Casey also called bisexual space an “open” space. Casey described it as a space where people from all genders and sexual orientations could “hang out and be themselves.” They also said that people in this space would not feel pressured to dress or present in a certain way, whereas in everyday society people may have to accept labels others assume and put onto them. Labeling was a subject that was repeated often, such as Brittany and Heather agreeing: “In a perfect world, there would be no spaces, just non-judgmental people. A place I can be with my

fiancé but people not assume I'm a lesbian." These imaginaries relied on acceptance which contradicted the rejection or scrutiny they had received in other spaces. Brittany and Heather's experiences of others enforcing a binary perception of their sexuality onto them enabled their vision for a "perfect world."

The only person to go into depth describing a bisexual space was Karen. Prior to imagining this bisexual space, she tried to understand how a bar could be "bisexualized" through essentially a mixture of heterosexual and homosexual performances, as mentioned in the introduction. She finally stated, "I don't even think she [a bisexual] could have that power on a space. It's almost as if she's a powerless kind of sexuality, almost." The power that Karen referred to was in the context of how bisexuality could be visible or recognizable in dichotomous space. Karen went on to imagine a bisexual bar called *One and All* that welcomed all sexualities. *One and All* represents how bisexual imaginaries are enabled by preexisting gay models of space. Karen decided immediately that a bisexual space would be a bar, by far the most common gay space mentioned by participants. At first, Karen described *One and All* as a bar with punk rock and classic rock themed nights. She described it as a space that resembled the Tavern, which also has themed nights each day of the week. In fact, *One and All* is almost exactly like the Tavern, except it caters to bisexuals while refusing to police non-bisexuals. This is a perfect representation of imagining queerness and queer futurity because she is using the present to create what she considers a better future.

There was a sudden turning point in our conversation of *One and All* when I asked what the bar would look like and, searching for something outwardly and unambiguously bisexual, Karen began to consciously rely on stereotypes to mark the space as bisexual. Karen transformed *One and All* from a bar similar to the Tavern to a "dark room" where "you just grab a body, and

you'll probably like what you touch.” This imaginative, spatial rendering of bisexual space is reliant on both the Tavern as a model for gay space, and stereotypes of bisexuality which must exist within a bisexual space in order to unambiguously convey a bisexual subjectivity to an audience. Karen’s vision, however, takes another step into a different direction. The tone of her voice and her laughter conveyed a sense that she was not seriously proposing a bisexual sex club. Karen’s depiction of a “dark room” is not representative of a queer future in the sense that it is necessarily a kind of space that she wants to see realized. The “dark room” instead is critiquing past and present bisexual stereotypes by imagining a space where those stereotypes materialize. Karen’s bisexual space imagination challenged how bisexuals are represented in mainstream culture, and revealed the dark and perverse way that bisexuality is imagined. By fixating on those stereotypes, and exaggerating them, Karen took away the power of those stereotypes.

Bain, Payne, and Isen (2015) use Muñoz’s (2009) concepts of queer futurity and utopianism to imagine queer space and artistically render a neighborhood queer. They argued that artistic re-envisioning is a productive way of collectively realizing and striving towards queer futures. Karen’s kind of queer imaginary, which critiqued the present without necessarily imagining a specific material or spatial future, is unlike any imaginaries produced by Bain, Payne, and Isen’s (2015) research, and therefore I do not have any imaginary to compare it to. I can only describe Karen’s imaginary as utilizing subversive queer imagery, rather than queer futurity, to reject the here and now. This could be an example of what Muñoz called disidentification, or “the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship” (1999, 4). These strategies, or performances, are typically through the use of stereotypes that come from hegemonic groups and

are put onto non-hegemonic, or minority, groups. Here, Karen disidentified with the stereotypes put onto bisexuals by both gay- and straight-identified people by taking those negative biphobic stereotypes and turning them into a kind of spectacle. By doing this, she both took power away from groups that produced these stereotypes to characterize bisexuals and defined herself via these imaginations. This was the only example of disidentifying that I received by a participant.

On the other hand, stereotypes about bisexuals were used to understand how bisexuality is performed: Polly and T thought of orgies as possible ways of “doing” bisexuality. Group sex is often referred to as a possible bisexual performance in both bisexuality theory literature and performance studies of bisexuality (e.g., Callis 2009, Gammon & Isgro 2006, Ochs 2011). Since bisexuality is understood as the desire for or attraction to more than one gender or sex, theoretically this could materialize or be embodied through simultaneously having sex with multiple partners of varying genders or sexes. Though, as the above authors have pointed out, even performances of group sex are often interpreted via a binary perception of sexuality. Ochs (2011) argued that because performances of bisexuality are often tied to sexual acts that are considered promiscuous, promiscuity is used as a stereotype to characterize bisexuals. Knowing both T and Polly outside of this research, I believe this is representative of them thinking about it in a performance context, rather than as an internalization of biphobia. Unfortunately, biphobia coupled with its general invisibility means that there are very few performances outside of the stereotype of hypersexual bisexuals to rely on to imagine an unambiguously bisexual space.

Besides thinking of orgies as bisexual spaces, which recreated both bisexual stereotypes and a performative framework, Polly imagined a bisexual bar modeled on preexisting gay space: “Yeah I feel like if you equate it with like.. if you think of like a gay bar, you definitely think of like a very sexualized sort of place with a queer folk style.” She additionally uses “hipster”

spaces like some commercial areas in Campustown as possible examples of bisexual spaces. Other informants similarly described some of the “hipster” places as possible spaces to find LGBT people, playing on the geographical assumption that gay-coded spaces are where LGBT folks are. Again, this is addressing how few gay spaces are available in public, and how those that do exist are commercial, and possibly appealing to tolerance narratives to attract gay consumers. Polly utilizes preexisting gay models by pointing to both hipster cafés and bars, bisexual stereotypes by proposing orgies as bisexual spaces, and bisexual performance by utilizing orgies as a possible bisexual display of subjectivity in her imagining of a bisexual space.

George and Casey both used preexisting models of gay space to describe how bisexual space was built into those places. George, for example, said that the Tavern was additionally bisexual space, regardless of his past biphobic experiences at the location. He said that the owner of the bar tried to make the space inclusive and welcoming. The effort on the owner’s part signified to George that the bar was additionally bisexual space, and utilized the tolerance narrative. When I asked Casey if they had ever been to a bisexual or pansexual space, they responded that the campus’ LGBTQ Institute was the closest to that description. They also said that the Tavern could qualify because they, or anyone else, would not be kicked out for being bisexual. When I asked them to elaborate, Casey said that they (and those spaces) are more accepting and respectful to people’s identity wishes. In both of these examples, imaginary bisexual spaces were enabled by preexisting gay spaces. Riley, too, used a preexisting gay space to describe a bisexual space. She is a member of Pride on campus, and unlike Jerry she feels that Pride is already a great example of ‘queer’ space, preferring that term over bisexual. Riley believed that Pride could be an example of queer or bisexual space because of the tolerance and acceptance that space provides. Riley’s use of Pride exhibits how her imagination utilized a

preexisting gay model of space. It did not, however, use stereotypes or dissatisfaction like other examples.

George, Casey, and Riley were imagining bisexual space as contingent upon existing spaces – as though bisexual space could empirically exist within those spaces. While referring to these also as imaginaries, I am not necessarily dismissing that they feel bisexual space might exist. However, each participant said that explicitly bisexual space does not exist. When I asked George, Casey, and Riley to imagine a bisexual space, they then projected bisexual space onto gay spaces they had listed previously. I would say that this is in line with Hemmings (1997b), who argued that bisexual spaces do not exist independently of other spaces. George, Casey, and Riley could not list bisexual spaces that were not embedded within gay spaces. For this reason, my data reaffirms Hemmings' work in saying that explicitly bisexual space does not exist.

Expanding on Muñoz's (2009) and Bain, Payne, and Isen's (2015) discussions of queer futurity as a result of a critiqued present, I argue that these visions or imaginations of bisexual space are drawing from contemporary gay spaces. What is most interesting about these imaginaries is that they are recreations of already existing *commercial* and *institutional* gay spaces, and further this represents how marked gay spaces are extremely limited within landscapes. Karen's bisexual space, which relied on disidentification, revealed how representations of bisexuality in the present are critiqued in spatial imaginations and visions. Polly's bisexual bar drew from gay and straight-coded leisurescapes. Her vision of bisexual space necessitated the kind of "mixed spaces" that Browne and Bakshi (2011) and Oswin (2015) explored in their articles: there are spaces which are profiting from gay consumerism without necessarily being exclusive of heterosexual consumerism. They are instead utilizing tolerance, among other characteristics, to draw in customers. Polly identified areas in Campustown which

represented this schema. Narratives of exclusion and inclusion were also drawn on by Riley, George, and Casey to demonstrate aspects of preexisting space that they idealized and sought for in potential queer or bisexual futures. Their bisexual space imaginations and visions represented a kind of queer futurity, in that their visions were built from present conditions which they idealized and wanted to see realized on a larger scale, if not perfected to be more inclusive and liberating.

Some of my participants expressed frustration with how the spaces they traversed were embedded in binary notions of sexuality. Imaginaries went from bisexual spaces to imagining what Oswin (2008) and Bain, Payne, and Isen (2015) might call queer space. For example, Ashley was most adamant about how spaces should not be sexually coded. She wanted all spaces to not rely on sexual differences:

I would love to think like that's like a future thing that could happen, like just in general, people being more like open about being attracted to just like people or like not specifying their sexual attraction in a binary way. It's all kind of fluid anyway.

She did admit that gay spaces, for her, were comfortable and freeing, but it was a shame that spaces needed to be divided and separated in this way. In her words, she believes that “segregating spaces... could be more exclusionary than inclusionary sometimes, but I understand why it happens...” On that topic, she brought up a time when a friend created a Facebook event for queer people to reclaim the Tavern since many straight people had begun to use the space. According to Ashley, this turned into a larger issue for people who were queer but wanted to bring their different-sex partners, which led to the event being cancelled. The event was meant to address straight people invading their space, which is what Ashley meant by “but I understand

why it happens” – referring to wanting spaces that resist heteronormativity. For Ashley, there is a tension between wanting gay spaces while simultaneously feeling that gay spaces still function as a way to keep gay people separated, or segregated, away from the general heteronormative public. Ashley’s spatial imagination most resembles what Bain, Payne, and Isen (2015) sought for in their research; Ashley was critiquing the sexual politics of the present in order to imagine a queer, rather than simply bisexual, future.

These examples demonstrate how imaginaries are embedded in narratives of tolerance and acceptance as a reaction to the intolerance and rejection my participants have faced in both straight and gay spaces. Visions and imaginations of bisexual space were enabled by critiquing the present via their dissatisfaction with dichotomous space, and the preexistence of gay spaces. Below, I expand more on these visions and imaginaries, and present how bisexual imaginaries and experiences challenge contemporary theorizing of gay, lesbian, and queer space.

Challenging Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Space

Ashley, and others, seemed to advocate for all space to be liberated from sexuality discourse – all space should be for all people, and the separatist ideologies that currently dictate space production, coding, and navigation should be abandoned in favor of a kind of queer futurity. Public space should be for queers (gays and lesbians?), and everyone else. Ashley’s comments also reminded me of queer geography, which seeks to find spaces and sexualities to be fluid. During her interview, I stepped away from calling space “gay” to avoid the confrontation of how to label sexual minorities. We ended up discussing spaces as either heteronormative or queer. In doing so, our interview, and the responses from other participants, challenged some of the main tenets used by geographers and their approaches to gay, lesbian, and queer space.

First, 'queer space' should refer to spaces which resist all forms of systemic oppression (Oswin 2008). The term should also be used for discussing queer futurity, as Bain, Payne, and Isen (2015) did. However, Bain, Payne, and Isen use queer and queer futurity to explicitly discuss what appears to be the expansion of gay and lesbian spaces in a neighborhood layout. Their approach to a queer neighborhood, while resisting heteronormative and traditional methods in urban geography, is still more-or-less imagining gay spaces on a larger level without scrutinizing how gay spaces function oftentimes in a homonormative and capitalist context. Oswin's (2008) description of queer space incorporated other subjectivities; she suggested using not just queer theory, but also critical race theory as avenues for queer space conceptualizing. Since queer theory is based on the critiquing and dismantling of norms (Warner 1993), references to queer space should incorporate more than just resistance to heterosexual hegemony.

In this thesis, both Casey and Ashley imagined spaces that could represent a form of queer space and queer futurity. Casey's position as a trans person led to their imagination to include gender performance and expression that was not controlled by policed boundaries or labels. Casey's ideal space existed in isolation of gender norms which rely on heteropatriarchal, and racist and ablest, values and expectations. Queer futurity, and geographical explorations of how this could spatially materialize, should also include how gender is factored into the hetero- and homonormativity of space. Casey's imagined queer space challenged how gender and patriarchy are overlooked areas in current research on gay space, a critique that has been already recognized by geographers in the field (Browne, Olasik, & Podmore 2016, Knopp 2007b).

Ashley's imagination of ideal queer space was separate from sexual coding. Her definition of queer space challenged Browne and Baskhi's (2011), which relied on binary sexuality being imperative to the construction of space. Categorizing people based on their sexed

object choice represented, to Ashley, a form of control and erotic injustice. An ideal space for Ashley would not categorize people based on sexuality. Queer space, in Ashley's imagination, was void of sexual citizenship. While most scholars studying the geographies of sexualities rely on sexual citizenship and identity as one of the most important key features for belonging and queer space production, my participants see sexuality categorization as non-liberating. Oswin (2008) advocated for a separation between identity politics and queer geography – Ashley's queer space imaginary represented this. Ashley's resistance to identity categories, like Riley's, who uses 'queer' as a catch-all term for 'not straight,' is similar to other research on bisexuality which has found that (both in contemporary times and since the term 'bisexual(ity)' surfaced) people who practice bisexuality might also tend to want removal from identity politics, or want an anti-identity politics (e.g., Clausen 1990, Hemmings 2002, Margareta 2001, Seidman 1993), which questions the legitimacy of sexed object choice being the defining factor for sexuality. Queer space, for Ashley, is representative of that desire to deconstruct sexuality identity categories. This exemplifies how bisexuality, and bisexuals, should be considered more thoroughly by queer geographers to better understand how queer space could materialize, and how contemporary straight, gay, and lesbian spaces are still tied to both binary sexuality and essentialist sexual citizenship.

Second, "mixed space," and other "fluid" concepts which work to analyze spaces which are both straight and gay, are still lacking a vision away from binaries. Browne and Bakshi (2011, 187) focused on one of their respondents who stated that sexuality is not defining to them, nor is it the center of their lives, and that gay-specific groups and spaces are not a "big deal." The authors then theorize, within the context of capitalism which allows for gay consumption in heteronormative space, about social spaces which transgress gay and straight segregation in the

interest of drawing in gay and straight consumers. For the authors, this means that geographers who contribute to queer geography and the geographies of sexualities discontinue their reliance on “straight until queered” space and theorize more from the basis of “mixed” space. For me, and the participants of this study, that approach is still myopic. Mixed space is still playing in binary sexualities, and in seemingly coherent, fixed identity. With the proliferation of sexuality identities, even just within the context of non-monosexuality and bisexuality (Galupo, Ramirez, & Pulice-Farrow 2017), to determine space as “gay and straight” is still viewing sexuality in narrow and fixed binary terms.

While Browne (2006) advocated elsewhere for fluid approaches to space and identity, she and others are still juggling sexual citizenship and legitimacy, almost to the point of essentialism. I mentioned in the literature review that their article portrayed participants transgressing the gay and straight binary when imagining leisure spaces. It is hardly transgressive in the way that my participants, such as Ashley, imagine space. When Browne and Bakshi (2011) found that spaces and people were “transgressing” the straight and gay binary, they thought that leisure spaces could be both straight and gay. For my participants, the ideal space would be neither straight nor gay. I believe that viewing space in this way is more towards queerness, or imagining queerness, and is a more meaningful rejection of the here and now than theorizing about “mixed” space. Imagining space that exists in isolation of sexual citizenship is resisting both hetero- and homonormative ideologies by dismantling the sexuality categorization which enables these. In this way, Ashley’s queer imagination calls into question that attempts at ‘queerness’ or ‘fluidity’ by geographers who still essentialize sexuality identity, categorization, and the systems of oppression that work through these.

Third, while Browne and Bakshi (2011) have reservations about studying homonormativity in gay spaces, this research exemplifies how gay and lesbian spaces inherently contain exclusionary discourses and processes. Browne and Bakshi (2011, 180) argued that space is without sexual or gender essence prior to performances which create such essences. Gay spaces, then, are spaces which contain performances of homosexuality, and where those performances outnumber or outperform performances of heterosexuality, heterosexism, or heteronormativity. Gay spaces, by being spaces where homosexuality is being performed, do inherently make invisible non-binary subjectivity, and especially non-binary sexuality, because performance and perceptions of performance require a binary lens to interpret (Butler 1988). Performance itself is embedded in the audience's binary view of the world – performance cannot be interpreted separate from binary systems of classification. For these reasons, Browne and Bakshi's (2011) determination that gay space is not immediately exclusionary is false. Polly, as mentioned previously, addressed this issue when describing gay space: when in a gay space, she is always either perceived as a lesbian or a "visiting straight person." Bisexual erasure and passing is an immediate, and inherent, consequence of binary sexual citizenship, and is therefore a consequence of gay or straight space. Queer geographers will continue to run into this barrier until they recognize the inherent binary trap of performance frameworks and work towards other ways of imagining queerness. More research is necessary to understand how perceptions of binary performance work to produce exclusion not only in terms of sexuality, but other dimensions of subjectivity.

Passing and blending, in this light, offer more to geographical enquiry than just a bisexual spatial navigation narrative. It is representative of how studies of spatial performativity in the geographies of sexualities literature are required to approach space production in a binary sense.

The sexualization of space, which is built from bodies and performances, requires the classification of spaces, which in turn requires the prioritizing of certain classifications over others. Maliepaard (2015a) made a similar argument in how spatial performativity will always leave bisexuality behind. He instead looked to affect and more-than-representational geographies as a way to seek out bisexual spaces, geographies, and performances. However, “bisexual space” still necessitates identity politics and sexual citizenship. Oswin’s (2008) call for a movement away from broad generalizations is a better solution to the issues that passing and blending present than to expand categorization and citizenship to every identity that is produced by postmodern attempts at inclusivity and norm expansion. Soon, geographers will have to consider pansexual space, demisexual space, and asexual space, let alone S/M or BDSM space. In all, the tenets of space production need to be reexamined, and while performativity might have more potential for geographers, it has yet to be utilized in a way that denounces binary perceptions of subjectivity and categorization.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Bisexuals have their own unique perspectives as they live their lives through dichotomous space. As people who take on non-binary subjectivities, their experiences in sexualized spaces are unlike those of other sexualities. In both gay and heteronormative spaces, they are continuously confronted with incidents of biphobia, bisexual erasure, blending, and passing. These incidents are the result of hetero- and homonormative processes that work through gay and heteronormative space, and for bisexuals they represent the ways that binary sexual citizenship renders their sexuality invisible. These processes work to make gay spaces gay, rather than inclusively queer, and show as an example of how gay spaces include performances of, and policing for, ideal gayness. Biphobia and its occurrence in gay spaces, as part of the policing of gay spaces, represents how bisexuals are entangled in the queer unwanted figure. Their occupation in gay spaces is undesired, and this resists the generally accepted idea that gay spaces serve as safe spaces for non-heterosexuals and especially bisexuals. Like Nash and Bain (2007) found in their analysis of Toronto lesbian bathhouse events, I also found that there are processes of power throughout gay spaces that are working to exclude certain queer/gay bodies – specifically bisexual, pansexual, and queer ones. Whether this will have bearing on future research, or impact in any way the current geographical approaches to sexual minorities, is undetermined.

Granted their unique perspective, bisexuals also are able to produce bisexual and queer imaginaries enabled by their dissatisfaction with dichotomous space, and by preexisting gay models of space. The imaginative bisexual geographies that my participants envisioned were representative of the way the present is critiqued to create queer futurity. While not all futures,

these visions challenged the assumption that gay spaces are especially tolerant, utilized commercial and institutional gay spaces as models, and pointed to bisexual stereotypes as a way to exaggerate and invalidate them. These imaginative bisexual geographies also reified an already-established claim that bisexual spaces do not exist independently of other spaces (Hemmings 1997b).

The experiences and imaginaries of bisexuals also revealed some of the inefficiencies of using performative frameworks to theorize about space production. Passing and blending, for example, demonstrate how gay spaces, as spaces built from the performances of gay subjects, do inherently include the erasure of bisexuality, and other non-binary sexualities. The performance framework thus far has required a binary, and classifying, perspective for interpretation. Queer geographers, if they ever hope to realize and pursue queer space, need to step away from using sexual citizenship as a reliable avenue towards liberation. As I have shown here, my participants do not see sexuality labels as freeing, but instead as enablers of exclusionary practices. My participants instead want space to be void of classifications.

Critiquing the performance theory framework opens the discussion for what geographers could look to when discussing space production, especially sexualized space production. My suggestion would be to look at how all power is embedded and exercised within space. While Knopp (2007b) and others have written about the conflicting interests between queer and feminist geographers, what radical geographers like Oswin (2008) are saying is that queer geographers, feminist geographers, critical race theorists, and others are isolated from each other. Public and commercial spaces are not just heteronormative, they are also white and male-centric. There needs to be more interdisciplinary work in geography that recognizes how these forces work together, not separately, to oppress and police certain undesired, minoritarian bodies. Only

with a united front can geographers address how hegemonic groups use spaces for social control, and how counter-spaces and spaces of resistance work to alleviate those powers. While outside the original scope of this paper, a comprehensive understanding of the other forces working throughout spaces could have led to different questions and conclusions. Thinking about power in space through an intersectional lens is the next step for this research.

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APPENDIX: TABLE

TABLE 1-A. Description of participants

Participant	Age	Pronouns	School	Sexual orientation	Number of interviews	Hometown
Bad Bitch T	21	She/her	Working on Associate's, community college	Bisexual	1	North of state
Polly	23	She/her	Graduate Student in Soc/Anthro	Bisexual	2	Out of state, Midwest
Amelia	23	She/her	Ex-Graduate Student in Soc/Anthro	Bisexual	2	Capital of state
Casey	23	Trans., they/them	Graduated MPU, Physics major	Bisexual/Pansexual	2	North of state
Jerry	21	He/him	Senior psychology major	Bisexual / Pansexual / Demisexual	2	Rural area near Mapleton
George	35	He/him	Senior Anthro major	Bisexual	2	"Army brat," Mapleton
Brittany	20	She/her	Sophomore in Nursing	Bisexual	1	Mapleton area
Heather	20	She/her	Sophomore in Business Administration	Bisexual	1	Mapleton area
Ashley	23	She/her	Senior History major	Queer	1	Mapleton
Katie	24	She/her	Graduated MPU, Psychology and Criminal Justice	Bisexual	1	Big city suburb
Karen	21	She/her	Senior English major	Bisexual	3	North of state
Riley	19	She/her	Sophomore Social Work major	Queer	1	Hour from Mapleton

ⁱ All names of places and people are pseudonyms.