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Filling the Silence:

Exploring the Bisexual Experience of Intimate Partner Abuse

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to explore the subjective experience of bisexual people who have experienced intimate partner abuse and to provide a tentative foundation upon which further discourses and research work can build. Eight participants were recruited and provided taped data from semi-structured qualitative interviews. These were transcribed verbatim and were analysed using grounded theory methodology. A theoretical understanding of the bisexual experience of intimate partner abuse was developed. The basic psychological process of 'adjusting for consonance' described the dynamic process of the categories 'getting lost in the relationship' and 'lifting the veil'. New insights into the bisexual experience of intimate partner abuse are provided and their clinical implications are discussed.

Filling the Silence:

Exploring the Bisexual Experience of Intimate Partner Abuse

Intimate partner abuse (hereafter, partner abuse) is recognised as a public health problem (WHO, 2002) and is acknowledged to impact individuals from all major racial groups, ages and social classes (Berrios & Grady, 1991; Browne & Law, 2007; McDermott, 2011; Stets, 1988). Partner abuse has been linked to a range of medium to long-term physical, psychological and social difficulties such as gastrointestinal disorders, chronic pain symptoms, an inability to trust others, symptoms of PTSD, suicidal behaviours, being isolated along with many others (Heisse et al, 2002, and Coker et al. 2009). Typically, research into violence in intimate partner relationships has focused on the heterosexual experience (Lockhart, 1994). The models produced from such work whilst invaluable for some, has been criticised by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (hereafter, LGBT) activists as they adopt a heterosexist gender-based model of domestic violence which does not fit for those who do not conform to binary notions of gender nor adhere to heterosexist assumptions of sexuality. The development of LGBT specific models of partner abuse have lead researches to acknowledge that whilst there are similarities between heterosexual and LGBT models, differences are shaped by the experience of heterosexism and homophobia for an LGBT individual (Donovan, Hester, Holmes & McCarry, 2006; Renzetti, 1989; and Richards, Noret & Rivers, 2003).

More recently, there is a growing body of empirical work into the experience of partner abuse within sexual minority relationships (Donovan, Hester, Holmes, & McCarry, 2006; Letellier, 1996; McClennen, 2005; Renzetti, 1988, 1989; and Robinson & Rowlands, 2006). Much of this work explores partner abuse according to gender. Considering that LGBT individuals do not consider themselves to be a homogeneous group (Dollimore, 1997; Prosser, 1997) and that despite the realisation that partner abuse is not a unitary phenomenon (Morrow & Hawxhurst, 1989; Merlis & Linville 2008), adopting a gender rather than a sexuality category for investigating partner abuse, has resulted in the bisexual experience being ignored by researchers. Why is this?

Borrowing ideas from Merrill (2008), it may be possible that researchers fear the recognition of bisexual partner abuse as it may confirm biphobic stereotypes and fuel stigma. Equally, researchers risk challenging (and contradicting) the most popular paradigm, the feminist perspective. Barker, Richards, Jones, Bowes-Catton & Plowman (2012), posits that bisexuality is a 'silenced', 'excluded' and 'invisible' sexuality in many domains, including within research and psychology. These claims seem to be true as despite Walters, Chen & Breiding (2013) findings that bisexual women are at greater risk of sexual violence than any other female sexual orientation group, no work has yet been conducted in this area.

Psychologically, bisexual individuals are reported to have the highest experience of mental health difficulties (Barker et al. 2012) amongst all sexual minorities. Explanations for this have been linked to individuals experience of biphobia (which can be explained as negative attitudes and structures specifically directed towards anyone who is attracted to more than one gender) and bisexual invisibility which is a form of biphobia, in which binary gender understandings erase bisexuality as a possible sexual identity (Barker, et al. 2012). Research by King & McKeown (2004), has shown that bisexual individuals are less at ease with their sexuality than gay or lesbian individuals and so are less open about their sexuality to friends, family and health professionals (King et al. 2004). Consequently, in the silence around bisexual partner abuse, bisexual people will be particularly vulnerable, as not only is it likely that services will be blind to their difficulties, there is an increased likelihood that their support networks are irreverent or unaware of their sexuality.

In their lack of action, researchers in the field have continued to make invisible the bisexual experience of partner abuse. This is a phenomenon that as yet, has no name. In the absence of knowledge, it is unlikely that bisexual partner abuse can be responded to appropriately by the individual, friends, family or by service providers and their staff. Taking into consideration Barker et al.'s (2012) calls for research into this area and Warner, McKeown, Griffin, Johnson, Ramsay, Court & King's (2004) recognition that bisexual individuals are a distinct group that merit further research, this study adopts a qualitative perspective to ask the question: what is the bisexual experience of intimate partner violence?

By adopting a qualitative approach to answer this question, the exploration and development of theory into *what* bisexual IPV is and *how* this experience and its given contextual factors may (or may not) shape behaviours enables meanings, processes, contexts and unique personal accounts to be explored in detail,

yielding new and in-depth insights into a person's experience. Grounded theory is the chosen approach for this study as it was originally proposed by Glasser & Strauss (1967) as ideal for use in the introductory, exploratory and descriptive study of phenomena where little research has been conducted. The approach proposes a method of developing or 'discovering' theory which inductively describes processes and relationships from the close examination of data. Charmaz (2006) has challenged the methodologies original positivist stance with the belief that imperative to the research process, are the ideas provided by symbolic interactionism (which identifies that social interactions are meaningful and through shared meanings individual's are able to interpret their world and others who interact with them). In aligning with Charmaz's stance the researcher will adopt a constructionist position and as such will incorporate the most salient contextual factors of the phenomenon to develop substantive theory based within an ontological acceptance of multiple, socially constructed realities and truths and an epistemological dependence on the transactional quality between researcher and participant to mutually construct deep meanings.

[Grounded theory shares with counselling psychology an inductive approach to assimilating knowledge that takes into consideration the social context. Constructing theory from lived experience, facilitates the integration of theory and practice in a way that provides an exemplar of the scientist-practitioner model. With its paradigmatic and methodological flexibility, grounded theory provides a qualitative approach that facilitates research into a range of issues that counselling psychologists might wish to address, in this instance the exploration of a phenomenon with a sexually diverse population within a social context of oppression.]

The aim of this study was to gain a greater understanding of how bisexual people make sense of their experience of partner abuse. Overall, the objective is to acknowledge the subjective views of bisexual people who have experienced partner abuse and to provide a tentative foundation upon which further discourses and research work can build.

Method

Participants

Eight participants were recruited to take part in the study. Participants were between the ages of 23-49 (with a

mean age of 33). Seven participants lived in England, one in Scotland. Seven participants identified as female, one as male. Seven participants had experienced abuse from mixed-gender relationships, one had experienced abuse from a same-sex relationship. Two participants had been in closed polyamarous relationships when the abuse occurred. All but one participant identified as being bisexual from a young age. Written consent was attained from all participants.

The first participant's experience served as a starting point for the development of an interview agenda and facilitated the adoption of appropriate language. Further sampling was driven by the emerging theoretical categories that emerged from earlier interview data.

The required sample size in qualitative analysis is not determined *a priori* but through the process of data analysis and stops only when the coding of additional data generates nothing new (a point referred to as 'theoretical saturation'). Saturation is determined by the judgement of the researcher (Charmaz, 2006; and Daly 2007) and is the position used for this study.

Procedure

The study followed a theoretical sampling strategy for data collection (Charmaz, 2006), which is an approach that enables continual sampling to occur concurrently with data analysis as it allows for the generation of new data to be guided by gaps in the emerging categories and verifies the interrelationships that are emerging through the analytic process. Consequently, calls for participants were placed within LGBT organisations, social media networks and academic mailing lists. Despite a quick initial uptake, recruitment soon came to a halt; a more creative approach was needed for the next recruitment phase. Recruitment leaflets were created and distributed at conferences, and placed upon the noticeboards of LGBT bookshops. The researcher made a recruitment video that got uploaded onto YouTube and overall, 110 UK LGBT organisations and bisexual activists throughout the UK were approached either directly or via social media websites (Facebook and Twitter) requesting that they support a call for participants. Snowballing from these adverts facilitated the recruitment process.

[Despite receiving international support for running the study, I found it incredibly difficult to recruit

participants. Using this anxiety to fuel my recruitment drives, I sought advice from other specialists in the field to see if I was missing something out. Some brought to my attention the importance of being creative in my calls for participants but many acknowledged that this was a very difficult participant group to recruit. Drawing from this correspondence, I began to think about the impact minority stress and stigma may have on disabling people to come forward to take part in the study, for instance, in talking about partner abuse, were there concerns that it might reinforce biphobic attitudes? As an "outsider", I began to recognise the possible naivety I brought about the socio-political environment these clients face and how I had positioned myself as someone who would be capable of producing work that might benefit this client group. Developing my awareness of the context and coming from a discipline that expects and recognises the influence of politics, highlighted for me that participant recruitment might be enhanced if people were able to feel a sense of connection to me prior to registering their interest. This lead to me developing a recruitment video (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EB20OLbvkX8). Whether this was the cause of the increase of participant recruitment or not, I will never really know but being prepared to put a face to a name and introduce a human quality to recruitment is something I believe to be invaluable when you are trying to recruit hard-to-reach participant groups.]

Interested participants were screened by e-mail to determine if they met eligibility criteria: they needed to identify as bisexual; have experienced partner abuse in their relationships; could be bisexual individuals of any gender, ethnicity, faith, ability, disability and employment status; and were required to no longer be in an abusive relationship. Participants completed and returned to the researcher a signed copy of a consent form that had been agreed by the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences (FAHS) Ethics Committee at the University of Surrey's ethics committee. Eligible participants were scheduled for a telephone interview using a semi-structured interview schedule. All interviews were digitally recorded and lasted for an average of 48 minutes, with a range of 34-64 minutes. After the interview, participants were debriefed and asked if they had any questions or concerns. Interviews were conducted between February 2013 – April 2013.

The semi-structured interviews consisted of questions focusing on a person's relationship in which IPA occurred, how they coped with the experience and the impact it has had upon them. Specifically, the following questions, which were slightly modified in each interview were: "What would you identify as IPA?"; "At what

point did you come to identify your relationship(s) as abusive?"; "Thinking back on your personal experience, can you identify when the abuse started?"; "Did your sexuality play a role in abuse you experienced?"; "At the time, how do you think you managed to cope with the abuse?"; "What brought your abusive relationship(s) to an end?"; "Can you tell me about the support you've received (if any)?"; "How has your experience with abusive partners impacted on your life (positively and/or negatively)?"; "How do you think bisexual IPA differs (if at all) from IPA in other sexual orientation groups?"; and " Using knowledge gained from your experience, what message would you like to give to other bisexual individuals who might be currently experiencing IPA?".

[The questions that have evolved will have been informed by own interpretative lens (mentioned below). Reviewing these questions at a later date, made me recognise that I never asked about the type of abuse a person experienced. I wonder if I did this in an attempt to ensure a research rather than a clinical interview? Alternatively, it could be that at some level, I became aware that this was a question I need not ask; all participants choose to inform me about the forms of abuse they experienced within the process of their interview.]

Ethical issues

As the study intended to use participants that could be considered vulnerable as a result of their experiences, a written proposal was submitted to the FAHS Ethics Committee. Once a favourable opinion from the committee had been granted and with due consideration to the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2010), participant recruitment began. All participants were provided with a participant information sheet (see appendix 1) and asked to provide written consent (see appendix 2). Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time and that their data would be made anonymous. Interview agendas (see appendix 5 and 6) were e-mailed to participants a week prior to the scheduled interview date. Recognising that participants might be affected by participating in the research, participants were informed at the beginning of interviews that if they did not wish to answer certain questions, that would be fine and that if emotions became too difficult during the interview, space could be given to allow for de-escalation and containment. The contact details for the researcher and the research supervisor were provided for participants to make contact to discuss the impact

of participating in the research if required and if participants identified that they needed further support, they could be sent an information leaflet for specialist organisations that they may wish to contact (see appendix 4).

Analysis

Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed through a process of constant comparison (whereby more abstract concepts and theories are produced by constantly comparing data, categories and concepts throughout all stages of the analysis both within and between different dialogues). For each interview, there were two preliminary stages of data analysis: line-by-line initial coding and focused coding. The initial codes were written either *in-vivo* (using the participant's words), e.g. opening Pandora's Box, or used *gerunds* that helped to capture the actions that were occurring in the data.

Focused coding was then used to synthesize and explain large segments of data. To develop the codes, data was compared with data and the most frequent or significant codes that helped make the most analytic sense of participant's account were utilised. To help start the analytic process of the focused codes, codes were clustered to enhance creativity and helped identify how clutters fitted related to one another. Generating clusters provided a preliminary sketch of the memos that needed to be written. This method of constant comparison helped to generate and explore concepts previously identified and lead to the development of more abstract, theoretical categories.

To facilitate the abstraction of ideas about the data, analytical memos were written using the focused codes that had emerged from the data. These memos were continually returned to, re-drafted and edited throughout the analytic process as comparisons and connections were made both across and within the data sets as new questions emerged during the analysis. To help identify the relationships and lineages between the categories, a conditional relationship guide (Scott & Howell, 2008) was used as it helped to contextualise the central phenomenon and enabled the researcher to relate categories by linking structure with process through engaging with investigative questions such as 'what, where, when and how?' To help identify relationships further, diagramming was used (Figure 1). Through this process of constant comparison throughout all analytic stages, the theory of adjusting for consonance in the bisexual experience of intimate partner abuse, was

constructed.

[Consistent with grounded theory's axiological focus on providing an explicit description of the expectations and interpretative lenses of the researcher (due to impact these will have on the interpretation and construction of the findings) are as follows. As a trainee counselling psychologist, my pluralistic stance on the nature of society and my ability to consider humans as relational beings is fundamental in forming the attitudes I hold towards human sexuality. With an emphasis on anti-discriminatory practice, in conducting this research I hope to produce findings that invites social change and contributes to theory that offers a more adequate understanding and an affirmative approach to bisexual people who experience partner abuse. Within a personal context, I identify as heterosexual but recognise that there is a fluidity to my sexuality and that there have been times in my life when I have been attracted to same-sex individuals. Having had these experiences, I can identify with some of the participants claims that attraction is about the person, not the gender. This position is at odds to my developmental environment (colonial, patriarchal, catholic) but my experiences in life and the interactions and friendships with sexual minority people have helped inform and educate my understanding of, and my attitudes towards sexual minorities. Combining my professional and personal values, I do not hold to heterosexist assumptions of attraction and have a more diverse understanding about human sexuality. I am highly motivated by social injustice (which perhaps hints at a recognition that I may have some power to induce change for others) so the presence of a developing socio-political awareness may have created a bias in my interpretative. The expectations I bring is that the data will hold many similarities to intimate partner violence in other sexual groups (as I believe the phenomenon to be something connected to the human, not just to sexual orientations), but differences will exist due to the socio-political environment bisexual people experience.

Employing an approach that requires a researcher to recognise the co-construction of theory has enabled me to recognise the impact my own experience of partner abuse may have had on the findings. In particular, the interview dialogue about “voluntary non-participation” struck a particular cord. At the time of the interview, my ability to remain with the participant as she was describing her experience became more difficult as my mind became more cloudy (which is what happens when I become overwhelmed by an emotional reaction I am having that I cannot make sense of). During the analysis stage, I was aware that I struggled to make sense of certain extracts. Using personal therapy to explore my reaction, the similarities in our experiences, where there

had been a systematic undermining of a solid sense of self, enabled me to recognise the parallel process between me and the participant. Having developed this insight, I was able to return to the transcripts and continue the analysis but remain aware that my own experience will have informed the way I analysed some aspects of her (and others) dialogue.]

Results

The theory that was raised from the data explains the experience of bisexual intimate partner abuse as a basic psychological process (which Glaser defined in 1978 as a type of core category that implies individual change over time) whereby participants constantly adjusted for consonance. Figure 1 outlines the findings and demonstrates how the core category 'adjusting for consonance', influences the dynamic between the two higher-order categories 'getting lost in the relationship' (which accounted for much of the variation around the process of people not being able to identify their relationship as abusive so remaining in the relationship) and 'lifting the veil' (which accounted for much of the variation around the process of people beginning to identify their experience as abusive so instigating a transition into something new). Marked by dynamism, the continual process of adjusting for consonance is a fragile equilibrium as people constantly monitor and adjust to dissonance that arises from their intimate relationship. Once a person is no longer able to achieve consonance in any of the category 'getting lost in the relationship' (the dissonance reducing mechanisms are no longer effective) they move towards achieving consonance in the category 'lifting of the veil'. Sometimes, consonance is not achieved which results in a circular dynamic whereby a person returns to the earlier category 'getting lost in the relationship'. This pattern can occur multiple times but achieving consonance in the category 'lifting the veil' starts the process whereby a person begins to disentangle themselves from an abusive relationship. To help explain this theory further, each category and sub-category will be explained below.

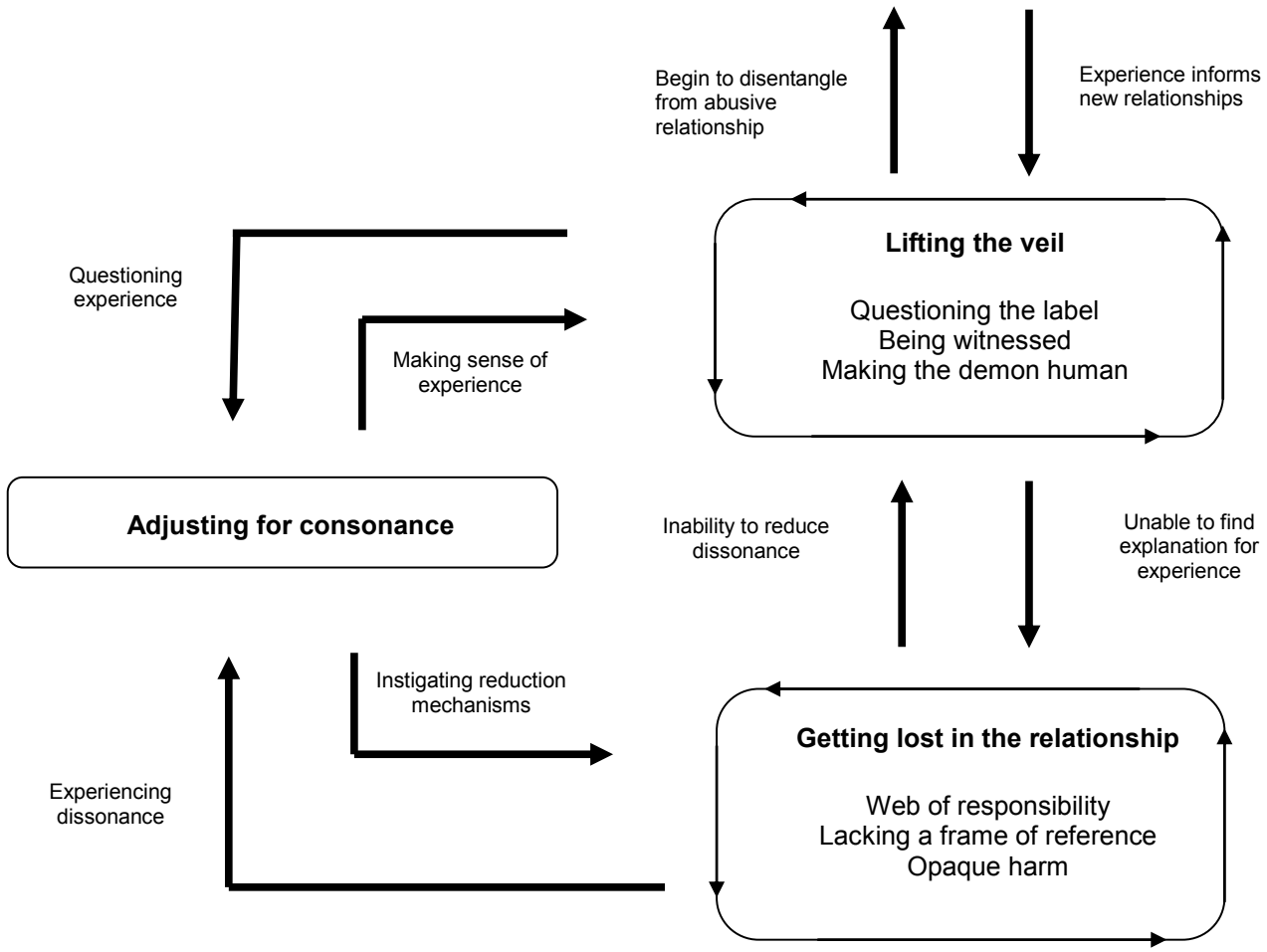

Figure 1. The theory of adjusting for consonance in bisexual peoples experience of partner abuse

All names used below are pseudonyms and whilst not attempting to dismiss similarities with heterosexual and LGBT models of partner violence, experiences that appeared distinct to the bisexual experience of partner abuse are explored. In extracts where there are empty brackets, material has been omitted and ellipses points (…) have been used to indicate a pause in the flow of participant's speech.

Getting lost in the relationship

This category refers to participants' experience of adapting to the demands of the abusive partner so the relationship remains intact. For instance, participants spoke of being highly invested (emotionally, socially, politically and financially) in the relationship and without insight into its abusive nature, they reported making sacrifices and experiencing losses to placate their partners. If participants had resisted these adaptations, they would have exposed themselves to the scary experience of "rocking the boat" which would result in them being subjected to verbal aggression and other hostile behaviours. To adjust for dissonance, avoidance mechanisms such as 'performing mental gymnastics', 'blaming the self' or 'not knowing any different' temporarily restored individuals to consonance as Rachel pointed out:

> *I also think that there's a lot of erm sort of mental gymnastics that are going on in a certain situation erm in order to make it be OK, to not make it not count in your head.*

The forms of abuse experienced covertly undermined people's sense of self. This resulted with all participants remaining in their abusive relationships for longer as they gradually became less differentiated but like Steve, many were in contact with the discomfort and dissonance this evoked within them:

> *...whilst there was some kind of ability to realise that the relationship I was in was wrong [ ]... it just didn't feel right.*

Unpacking the meaning of this category requires exploration of its sub-categories as this will help to clarify the many ways in which people got lost in their abusive relationships.

Web of responsibilities

Participants often spoke of how interwoven their lives were with their partners, be it through marriage,

children or finances. This sub-category takes a distinct bisexual slant with a felt responsibility to in-group identity as participants spoke of a fear of biphobic backlashing and enhancing stigma against bisexuality if they were to admit publicly that their relationship was abusive. In adopting this position, Claire found she was trapped in a double-bind:

> *It felt a lot to prove and it felt like admitting that the relationship had failed and that it had been so horrible would have given people some sort of ammunition that mixed gender bisexual couples can't be happy; can't work.*

When participants spoke of financial abuse, it was substantially more common that the abusive partner had not been contributing to the costs of daily or shared living and had been 'taking financial liberties'. People recognised that this financial situation had evolved gradually overtime. Although Bethany went to great lengths to trivialise the impact this took on her, it was clear she experienced animosity towards her partner:

> *And it started out as a fairly equitable way of doing it in that I sorted out all the household stuff and he paid for the fun stuff. So, if we went out for a drink, or to the cinema or whatever or got takeaway, he'd pay for it. But then that... that switched to him spending his money on selfish purchases. And we all need selfish purchases, everyone needs them now and then but when he was the only one who was able to do it...*

Alternatively, Steve found that although he felt a sense of responsibility towards maintaining the lifestyle of his partner, he perceived this as a safeguard as he knew that at some point, the relationship would end when he was no longer able to financially support the two of them. This provided him with some comfort as he knew there would be an ending to the relationship at some point:

> *I was trying to keep us with money to pay the rent. And she didn't work so we eventually lost the house we were living in and er... and I think I knew, at least subconsciously that that was the end*

of the relationship because, in fact, I kind of looked forward to it.

Lacking a frame of reference

Participants spoke of their having no template to draw from to help make sense of their distress, either within their personal history or within those provided by society. Janet spoke of how she became so lost as she had no available bisexual frame of reference for her experience and continues to leave her confused about her own process:

[ ] because I, my sense of who I am sexually is about who I'm with, not about who I am. I don't have a frame of reference to go "and that's what you do if you are a battered wife who is the victim" and all that kind of stuff and you're heterosexual because there is a support process. If you're gay, you know, lesbian/gay, there is that way of understanding it. There is no way of me understanding why I reacted so much and lost who I was in this process.

Although all participants identified strongly with being bisexual, narrative was absent regarding the development of knowledge about what a healthy relationship might be for a bisexual person. Elsbeth acknowledged that in this absence, she reverted to her families' relational model which prevented her from being alerting to the possibility that "better" does exist:

...'cos I had no understanding of what I should expect. And, I think a lot of that was because of the way that my family is. It just, they kind of taught me that I shouldn't expect any better than that. Nothing would be better than that anyway...

Opaque harm

Emotional abuse was the most typical form of abuse participants reported and in their reflections, they

were able to recognise the significant psychological impact this had had upon them. The abuse tactics they experienced presented early and continued throughout the duration of their relationship. Participants spoke of the emotional abuse as “insidious”, “covert” or “manipulative”. The experience of such opaque harm often lead to isolated incidences being dismissed and trivialised at the time and it was only upon later reflection were people able to recognise the cumulative impact the tactics had as a systematic undermining of the self. Leona spoke of her desire for the abuse to have been more overt as it would have helped her to identify what was happening and to provide evidence to others of her experience:

> *...the abuse that I suffered wasn't usual or physical. It was mainly emotional, hostile, bullying and manipulation. I don't know, in a way I'd wished he'd of punched me, or pushed me or beat me up 'cos then I would have had marks and would have been able to say to someone “look, this is why I left”. Because, I didn't have any concrete proof of what he was doing. All the incidents were isolated and sound like nothing. It was only when you took into account everything he was doing that it became obvious that it was abusive.*

Forms of abuse that seemed distinct to being bisexual were provided within the context of sexual boundaries. These were either controlled or broken by the abusive partner. For instance, some of the female participants had engaged with either closed or open polyamarous relationships at some point during an abusive relationship. Rather than this providing participants with the opportunity to experience variety in their sexual partners, it was acknowledged by Rachel that this provided her male, heterosexual partner the chance to use her sexuality as a form of control:

> *...when we were initially poly when he tried to enforce gender monogamy on me. And so that he was... so that I was only allowed to see women, apart from him. And he could see women because he was straight and so he didn't have an option. But because I was bi, I should only see women...*

Although Bethany's male partner did not explicitly enforce gender monogamy within their closed

polyamarous relationship, jealousy played out in the form of control during intimate occasions:

> *...he was very jealous and critical of what we were doing and if he thought that in any way he was being left out or overlooked then... And that meant that we engineered it as such that we always put him first.*

For many participants, having a monogamous closed relationship was something they were denied because they were bisexual. It was assumed by their partners that they would be more receptive to engaging with multiple partner sex relationships and would be less reactive to their partners adulterous behaviours. Elsbeth located this misconception of bisexuality within the media:

> *I think it probably means that we're more likely to come across people that want the media perception of us. Erm, because if you're not bisexual and you've not necessarily been around people that are and if that's your only view of what bisexual people are like, I think that's a very dangerous thing to be around. I think it's a very dangerous portrayal to have because it basically says that the kind of stereotypes basically say that bisexual people can't say no and if they say no, then they're lying.*

This ignorance about Elsbeth's sexuality became "dangerous" for her when she found herself in a relationship where her sexual boundaries were ignored and she was coercively worn down in consenting to something she did not want to do and demonstrated how her needs were consistently denied in the relationship:

> *a lot of the stuff that I had from that relationship was sort of coercive so it would be I'd say no sort of like twenty times and then it would be the twenty first time and just for some peace I would go "hmmm... not sure" or "I don't really want to" and that would be taken as a "yes". Erm, or kind of being given a choice between two things that I didn't want to do. That I didn't want to do either but I had to do one of them or be told that I had to do one.*

Biphobia was another tool partners used to undermine and control their bisexual partners both during and after the relationship. Being outed by a romantic partner to friends and family was something Rachel had experienced being used as both a threat and as a form of punishment:

> *he came back, a day or so later and my father, [ ] let him in and so, while they were talking in the kitchen because he was telling my father all sorts of things, including about my sexuality because I hadn't actually come out to my father about because he's quite religious...*

She was told on multiple occasions by her partner that she was "not normal", and he intended to expose her sexuality within a legal context to discredit her capacity as a mother:

> *[ ] when we came back to the property when he had gone, erm, I found that he had taken all of my back copies of BiCommunity News and when I asked him why, [ ] he had said that he had taken them, and I said "why" because he's not bi, and he said "evidence".*

For participants to move into the next category, as demonstrated in Figure 1, dissonance reducing strategies had to no longer work. This caused a shift from the application of personal resources to placate the abusive partner towards one where they began to seek alternative explanations for their distress by enlisting the help of others to change their partners behaviours or to provide insight into what was happening in the relationship.

Lifting the veil

This category refers to the point where participants dissonance reducing strategies have become redundant; they have reached a turning point. Some had experienced a significant event which lead to an 'awakening bolt' but others needed to experience a passing of time from the relationship ending before they

were able to 'open Pandora's box'. In order to adjust for consonance, participants spoke of finding external information sources to support them to develop insight into what was happening. The insight participants gained from the experience in this category acted as a protective factor to ensure against abuse in future relationships. Through the development of their insight, participants achieved higher-differentation from the relationship, engaged less with denial and distortion so they began to disentangle themselves from the relationship over a period of time. Janet spoke about her experience of this process:

> *I was always looking out at the whole system and the veil was lifting and I was becoming very aware of... becoming aware of me as a person and who I really am and an awareness of how this whole dynamic was happening. That the only person that could change it was me.*

Participants did not have a concrete understanding of their experience, emotional distress was used to initiate their lifting of the veil. When people began to explore their emotional responses to their relationships, opaque labels such as 'dysfunctional', 'just not feeling right' were given to try and make sense of their distress. For Janet, it was not until after the relationship had ended that she was able to identify what the 'something missing' had been:

> *An ability for me to feel safe, to be vulnerable and to be loved.*

When participants did not manage to attain insight or support, they would temporarily revert back to getting lost in the relationship until they reached a point where once again, their dissonance strategies no longer proved effective so activated attempts to seek alternative explanations and 'lift the veil'.

Questioning the label

The language and labels attributed to partner abuse by society and media campaigns were considered to be too narrow. When participants tried to fit their experience into this narrow portrayal, they found that they

were left 'feeling confused' and that their experience was 'not fitting in the boxes'. Terminology was particularly prohibitive as all participants spoke of emotional abuse and how the essence of this experience did not relate to the physical connotations associated to “violence” or “domestic abuse”. In questioning these labels, people were able to identify their experience. Broadening the categories proved useful for Claire:

> *I also think that a lot of the general societal and media focus tends to be on violent abuse and domestic violence and that often leaves people very confused because it isn't strictly limited just to physical violence. Erm, and I think that's a very confusing issue for a lot of people and I think it causes a lot of problems for people who are experiencing abuse in a relationship because if it's not as... as straightforward as “they hit me so that's wrong”, then I think people don't always seek help. Erm, I know certainly from my point of view, I didn't consider a relationship abusive when it was emotional and psychological abuse rather than physical.*

Through their narratives, participants voiced a need for labels and categories to be broader. Elsbeth suggested that the provision of concrete examples would be particularly useful as it enables people to find a mirror for their own experience and to expedite the clarification of their situation.

> *I guess I could have really done with having more detailed examples because I think that's the other thing, a lot of the kind of, the sort of bullet point examples that they give, those weren't things that were applying in that form.*

Unusually, for a sample of people who have experienced intimate partner abuse, two participants had been left by their abusive partners. In both cases, this caused a significant delay in their ability to identify the relationship as abusive, almost as if by being left, there was a premature lifting of the veil that they weren't yet able to engage with. Steve acknowledges these difficulties:

> *I said “that time, I was in an abusive relationship” [ ]. So in hindsight, it's clear as to what it*

was: look at this, and that, but somehow, I wasn't aware at the time and even for up to a year afterwards.

Being witnessed

Having the abusive experience validated by another seemed pivotal in participants ability to connect with the reality of their relationship. Typically, participants approached their friends for support. When they were witnessed, a person's sense of isolation ebbed and this proved a vital step towards their being able to seek further support and develop insight. Participants came to recognise that their relationship was abusive in 'comparing the relationship with others' and 'talking to others'. Experiences that they had previously dismissed as 'normal gripes' were challenged in conversations with others who were often the first to define the participant's relationship as “abusive”. Janet speaks of the power in this process:

There was a point between the November and the Christmas when I just... we were on Skype and I was just sitting there and I knew... I was in massive, massive of emotion and I just said “I can't talk to you” and she just said “well stay on screen” and then she just, she said “I know where you're at, I know what you're feeling. I've been there. I know it”. And hearing that, and seeing it in her face that she could reflect my pain was so powerful for me.

Not all participants experienced validation for their experience. When this occurred peoples ability to leave the relationship was hindered and they returned to the category 'getting lost in the relationship'. Steve described how his partner had systematically poisoned his social network against him so consequently he remained in the relationship for a longer period of time:

...she said that I'd tried to rape her. Which wasn't true but erm, er she tried to poison him against me. So, I went and spoke to him and said we have been talking together about bringing things to an end between [name] and I. Yet he responded with “yes, how could you treat her like that?”

Erm, and that immediately shut down that escape route for me.

In attempting to obtain practical support for the ending of the relationship, as the majority of participants were in a mixed-gender relationship, they acknowledged that by 'adopting a heterosexual disguise' they had approached mainstream services for support, Claire had found the heterosexist assumptions of services particularly useful at the time:

when I did want to speak to people or seek help, it was much more straightforward because I'd been able to speak about a male partner and I'm a female so that's been easier to seek access from mainstream organisations.

Participants spoke of a hesitancy when it came to approaching services (including LGBT organisation) and statutory organisations, such as the police, as they were 'anticipating biphobia' which Leona acknowledged impacted her willingness to seek support:

...there's a reluctance out there to report anything because you don't know what sort of attitude you're going to come up against from people in the NHS and the police. So I think generally, it's the same issues and it doesn't really matter what sex you are or what kind of relationship you're in, it's the same type of abuse but there's going to be an added stigma and a reluctance to want to talk about it.

There were a range of experiences for participants when they accessed support for their difficulties and they engaged with these processes to varying degrees but at some point, they all received a form of impartial support from others. For many, this provided them with the turning point they needed to move away from the relationship. It would seem that in accessing support, it allowed participants to begin to consider an alternative reality, feel less isolated and started to reduce the threat that the abusive partner held.

Making the demons human

A concerted effort was made by participants as they attempted to make sense of the behaviours that their partners had subjected them to. In locating the origins of their partners difficulties within the context of an abusive childhood or poor mental health, they were able to develop their own understanding into the abusive relationship dynamics and were able to 'make human' their abusive partners. Adopting this approach appeared to provide participants with a sense of closure and loosened their sense of personal responsibility. This process seemed important as it facilitated participants ability to loosen emotional connections with their abusive partner and ultimately, move on with their lives as Steve found out:

> *I think you know, the final thing I had to stop her from becoming some all-powerful demon. I had to take all my new-found knowledge and my new found self-knowledge and my confidence and strength and go and see her and say, "yup, look! You're just a person! And now I don't have to see you again".*

Participants acknowledged that their experiences had altered them but many spoke of enhanced self-awareness and a sense of personal development having been achieved. People believed they were now more informed so were able to identify abusive dynamics quickly and if these presented in new relationships, would end the relationship sooner. What seemed to be held in high esteem by a number of participants was how to use the insight gained from their own experience to help others as they were aware that the dynamics are not easy to identify, as Leona stated:

> *I know the warning signs of an abusive relationship now and I definitely wouldn't let it happen again. Hopefully not to anyone I know now as well 'cos I can recognise now the ways it can start sort of seeming quite innocent but not actually being quite innocent.*

For many participants, being able to make sense of their partners behaviours and attain a sense of

personal development from their experiences seemed to be of real significance for them and enabled them to put the past behind them and walk towards a better future.

Discussion

This study identifies the basic psychological process bisexual people undergo when they are in an abusive relationship. A framework of participants experiences has been provided with categories that describe the changes that occur within a person which enables them to either remain or leave an abusive relationship. The daily struggle for individuals to achieve consonance can be messy, as shown by some of the interview dialogue, any change often has significant consequences and may induce lifestyle changes. There are times when participants described a process of pulling away and disconnecting from the relationship yet still being intertwined within it. This cyclical notion of leaving and remaining in an abusive relationship was supported by Eckstein (2010). To disentangle from the relationship, support from others is required and many spoke of the time it took to recuperate and repair from the experience they have had. The struggle people went through to leave the relationship was at times uncomfortable and often distressing. Yet many felt that the experience had enabled them to develop a greater awareness of personal boundaries and to create a sense of what, for them, a healthy relationship should consist of. The process of dealing with abuse is not straightforward but is a lengthy, complex and dynamic process.

Many similarities to the heterosexual and LGBT models of intimate partner abuse were found. Supporting the theory is Baly's (2010) finding that heterosexual women undergo considerable personal change to remain in the relationship but reach a point where they begin to reevaluate the situation and their position and then begin a process of disengagement and recovery. Another similar finding to Baly's work is that some participants in this study perceived their unhealthy relationships as normal. In gay men, Merrill (1998) refers to this as a “recognition failure” which refers to an inability to recognise behaviours which constitute partner abuse and therefore prevents the activation of help-seeking behaviours. Participants attributed their failure to recognise the relationship as abusive on a number of factors, which others have identified as risk factors for partner abuse: early romantic partners where participants had little information or opportunity to discuss what a

healthy relationship for a bisexual person might mean (Bornstein, Fawcett, Sullivan, Senturia & Shiu-Thornton, 2008; Donovan, 2006); abusive childhood environments which facilitated a person's ability to rationalise abusive behaviours (Renzetti, 1992); and a lack of appropriate information available that captured their experience. What seemed particularly relevant for some participants was the ability to fit their experience into the labels typically used for intimate partner abuse. “Domestic violence” and the term “violence” were not felt to be appropriate for many participants as it pointed towards a narrow or simple typology of abusive relationships that simply did not encapsulate their experience. This finding echoes gay concerns found by Stanley et al.'s (2006). Seeking a more general term, multiple participants felt that the more general term “abuse” captured their experience better.

The forms of abuse participants reported were similar to those reported for heterosexual and LGBT people such as constant criticism, threats, physical assaults, rape and being humiliated amongst many others (Bornstein et al. 2008; Browne et al., 2007; Donovan et al., 2010; Roch et al. 2010; and Walsh, 1996). Despite reporting a range of abuse, participants in this study seemed to focus their interview dialogue on the emotional abuse they had experienced and this matches previous work by Head et al. (2012) where it was identified that emotional abuse was the most commonly reported form of abuse in the UK LGBT population. In considering participants tendency to focus on emotional abuse, it is tentatively suggested that Head et al.'s findings may have occurred, not due to prevalence, but due to people finding the symptoms of emotional abuse more difficult to overcome than other forms of abuse and so lead to a higher rate of retrospective reporting. This suggestion is supported by Hammond (1989) and Hart (1986) who found that for lesbians, the emotional abuse and the diminished self-esteem were more painful and difficult to endure than the physical injuries.

Some forms of abuse reported were considered to be specific to the bisexual experience as they consisted of abuse tactics that relate to biphobia. Some examples included participants being threatened by ex-partners to be 'outed' and have their sexuality used against them within a legal context. Others described being pressured to prove their sexuality by the suggestion that they engage with mixed-gender threesomes. Several participants spoke of a bisexual expectation that when in a relationship, they would tolerate looser relationship boundaries around adulterous behaviours and some reported being pressured into having open relationships. Many blamed the media portrayal of bisexual people as the reason for this assumption. Like lesbians, bisexual

people may not engage with Minuchin's (1974) “rules” in forming “boundaries” over who may participate in the relationship. Without these boundaries being asserted when broken, participants were either deeply distressed or had their behaviour used against them as a way of validating the abuse.

Even after a person was able to recognise the abusive dynamics, some acknowledged that they remained in the relationship and refrained from reporting the abuse as they felt it would be shaming to the bisexual community. They feared that they would encounter a biphobic backlash and enhance the stigma against the sexuality. This finding runs parallel to that found with other LGBT populations (Balsam and Szymanski 2005; Peterman and Dixon 2003).

The sources of help most typically sought by the participants of this study included: friends, work colleagues, helplines, family, therapists, religious members, police and solicitors. Similarities to lesbian (Renzetti, 1992) and heterosexual women (Baly, 2010). Not a single participant spoke about using a shelter or refuge for assistance although many recognised the need to have somewhere they could “run” to in order to break away from the relationship. Some even acknowledged that without this practical support, they would likely have remained in the abusive relationship for longer, a situation recognised by Head et al. (2012). For those who had been in mixed-gender relationships, seeking support from the mainstream services proved easy as the heterosexist assumptions of the organisations and its employees prevented them from asking about the sexual orientation of the individual. This was perceived as a positive thing by participants as it meant they were able to avoid the negative stigmas lesbians and gay people experience (Brown, 2008).

The study has shown that when a person is ready to leave an abusive relationship, they engage with many help-seeking behaviours. In recognition of their strengths and their experience of minority stress, it may be a useful to adopt a clinical approach suggested by Horne & Hamilton (2007) that acknowledges their resourcefulness, strengths and coping strategies as opposed to focusing on the powerlessness of the victim. Bisexual people are at enhanced risk to minority stress as they are invisible within both heterosexual and LGBT populations (Dollimore, 1997). A person who presents for support with an abusive mixed-gender relationship, must not have their sexuality assumed as it can serve to silence individuals who may already be suffering from psychological distress and low self-esteem (Horne et al., 2007). Bornstein et al. (2008) acknowledged the impact homophobia has in shaping the experience of partner abuse for a gay or lesbian person. Extending this

recognition to the bisexual experience is key if clinicians are to work from a formulation that is informed by the socio-political context people bring. Although the impact of partner abuse is similar to that in heterosexual and same-sex couples (Klinger & Stein, 1996), Merrill (2008) posits that clinicians need additional specific same-sex training for partner abuse, as it is possible that if interventions are offered, they may be misinformed by stereotypes about heterosexual partner abuse. From this study, it is proposed that additional training occurs for all sexual orientation groups if clinicians are to deliver appropriate support and interventions.

Limitations of this study are related to the time-frame given. It was difficult to recruit participants for the study and this may have been due to the short recruitment time frame (five months) but also because the study was investigating something that was asking people to go against community norms and risk discussing a topic that may enhance stigmas. Additionally, within the sample, there was a far higher proportion of female participants than males. This may skew the findings as despite sexuality, socio-political implications of a person's gender will influence their experience of partner abuse. The calls for participants were sent to organisations based on sexuality, not gender so it is not clear why there was a greater response from females. It could have to do with bisexual males like their heterosexual counterparts feeling gender-related shame about their experience (Strauss, 1999) or that like gay men, bisexual males do not perceive abuse to be problematic (Stanley et al. 2006). Despite these criticisms, the sample was not skewed towards those who have accessed services and individuals were recruited from both urban and rural parts of England and Scotland.

The questions needing further investigation are not simple ones, but it is hoped that this study will provide an impetus to, and useful suggestions, regarding their investigation. For instance, a few of the participants had the abusive relationship ended by their abusive partner; this stands at odds with the evidence base for other sexual orientations (Merrill, 1998). Additionally, subtle differences presented in the implementation of financial abuse which were at odds to studies that have explored financial abuse in lesbian and gay people (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; as cited in Clarke et al., 2005; and Donovan et al. 2006). In line with other empirical work for same-sex couples, future work may wish to investigate attachment styles, bidirectional violence or childhood environments to inform the evidence base about bisexual risk factors to partner abuse.

Conclusions

As this study has demonstrated, the dearth of research on bisexual intimate partner abuse should not be construed to imply that the phenomenon does not exist. The present study documents that bisexual partner abuse is a problem that deserves further attention.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant information sheet

INFORMATION FOR POTENTIAL INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

FILLING THE SILENCE: EXPLORING INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE IN BISEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

My name is Sarah Head and I am a third year trainee studying for a PsychD in Psychotherapeutic and Counselling Psychology at Surrey University. The research will contribute to the completion of my professional doctorate.

This study aims to explore intimate partner abuse (IPA) in bisexual relationships. This includes abusive experiences that may have been emotional, sexual, physical, financial or even preventing you from seeing family or friends (amongst many others).

For each participant, I intend to conduct a single one-to-one interview that will consist of seven questions designed to help explore your experience about bisexual intimate partner violence. I am aiming to recruit participants from across the UK. As I am based in London, participants that are located in the area will be offered the choice of having a face-to-face or a telephone interview. Participants who are located elsewhere will have their interviews take place over the telephone.

The interview will be digitally recorded, and then transcribed with any identifying details removed. Your name will never be connected to your results or to your responses; instead, you will be assigned a code number which will protect your identity. The data will be accessible only to those working on the project. The anonymous transcript, or extracts from it, may appear in the researcher's doctoral thesis and in publications and presentations arising from it.

I am aware of the sensitivity of this subject and it is hoped that you will experience the interview as a non-judgemental exploration of your views on the topic. Some participants may experience some distress at recounting their experiences. If this occurs, I will support you to contain your feelings and will be able to provide you with some information about services and organisations that will be better placed to provide you with both emotional and practical support you in the long-term.

All data gathered during this study will be held securely and anonymously. If you wish to withdraw from the study you may do so at any point but if you choose to withdraw once analysis has been completed, your data may still appear in the final research write up.

The study has been granted ethical approval by the Faculty of Human Arts and Science at the University of Surrey.

If you would like to take part in the study or have any queries my details are as follows:

Sarah Head
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Appendix 2: Consent form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

FILLING THE SILENCE: EXPLORING INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE IN BISEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

This study aims to explore intimate partner abuse (IPA) in bisexual relationships. Depending on your location, the researcher will be offering either a face-to-face (if in London) or telephone interview (if located elsewhere in the UK). The interviews will be arranged to take place at a time and location convenient to you.

You will be asked seven questions during the interview. These questions will be sent to you by e-mail, a week before your telephone interview so you are informed of what you will be asked about. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions you will be asked; we are just interested in hearing what you have to say. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to complete the study at any point during the interview, or refuse to answer any questions with which you are uncomfortable. You may also stop at any time and ask the researcher any questions you may have.

The interview will be digitally recorded, and then transcribed with any identifying details removed. Your name will never be connected to your results or to your responses; instead, you will be assigned a code number which will protect your identity. The data will be accessible only to those working on the project. The anonymous transcript, or extracts from it, may appear in the researcher's doctoral thesis and in publications and presentations arising from it.

The researcher respects the sensitivity of this subject and it is hoped that you will experience the interview as a non-judgemental exploration of your views on the topic and hopefully, you will be provided with further insights gained from exploring the topics. The researcher can provide service information for additional support if required.

Everything you say will be treated with confidentiality and in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society which can be found on:

http://www.bps.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/code_of_ethics_and_conduct.pdf

Consent Statement:

I agree to voluntarily take part in this study and I am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point. I understand that all information related to the research participants will be held in the strictest confidence and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1988). On the understanding that my anonymity will be preserved, I will not seek to restrict the use of the results of the study.

I confirm that I have read the information sheet provided, have understood what is explained above and have been given time to consider my participation in this study. I agree to comply with the instructions of the study.

Name: …….
(BLOCK CAPITALS)

Signature: …….

Date: ……

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the researcher. However if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the researcher's supervisor.

Researcher Contact Details:

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Appendix 3: Initial interview agenda

INTERVIEW AGENDA

FILLING THE SILENCE: EXPLORING INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN BISEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

There is no allocated time for how long the interview will take but to give you some insight into what you'll be asked, the following questions will be used to guide the semi-structured interview:

1. What are your thoughts and views about intimate personal violence (IPV)?

2. Do you think (or perhaps even know) if intimate personal violence impacts bisexual people?

1. From personal experience, and maybe experiences you've come across in friends, how would you describe bisexual intimate partner violence?

2. How do you think bisexual IPV differs (if at all) from IPV in other groups?

3. As someone who identifies as bisexual and has experienced IPV, where did you go for support with your relationship difficulties?

6. Using knowledge gained from your experience, what message would you like to give to other bisexual individuals who might be currently experiencing IPV?

7. Having spoken today about some things you may have found upsetting, have any issues or concerns arisen for you? If not, do you have any reflections you might want to share about what it has been like taking part in the interview? Have I missed out anything you wanted to say and think is important for me to know?

If you are asked a question in the interview that you do not wish to answer, please do just say!

Appendix 4: Final interview agenda

INTERVIEW AGENDA

FILLING THE SILENCE: EXPLORING INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE IN BISEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

There is no allocated time for how long the interview will take but to give you some insight into what you'll be asked, the following questions will be used to guide the semi-structured interview (please know that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions – I'm just really interested to know what you think):

4. What are your thoughts and views about intimate partner abuse (IPA)?
5. At what point did you come to identify your relationship(s) as abusive?
6. Thinking back on your personal experience, can you identify when the abuse started?
7. At the time, how do you think you managed to survive the abuse?
8. What brought your abusive relationship(s) come to an end?
9. Can you tell me about the support you've received (if any)?
10. How has your experience with abusive partners impacted on your life (positively and/or negatively)?
11. How do you think bisexual IPA differs (if at all) from IPA in other sexual orientation groups?
12. Using knowledge gained from your experience, what message would you like to give to other bisexual individuals who might be currently experiencing IPA?
13. Have I missed out anything you wanted to say and think is important for me to know?

If you are asked a question in the interview that you do not wish to answer, please do just say!

Appendix 5: Support information

Relevant Support Services

To access therapeutic support via your NHS, always book an appointment to see your G.P. To enquire about services that might be available to you and for which you can be referred to.

Helplines

Broken Rainbow:	0300 999 5428
Men's Advice Line: *(for bisexual males)*	0808 801 0327
London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard: *(also supports bisexual people)*	0300 330 0630
London Friend:	020 7837 3337
Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline: *(for bisexuals living in Scotland)*	0845 027 1234
The Rainbow Project: *(for bisexual males in N.Ireland)*	028 9031 9030
Lesbian Lines: *(for bisexual women in N.Ireland)*	028 9023 8668

Services that offer counselling/therapeutic support

London Friend: http://londonfriend.org.uk/get-support/counselling/

PACE: http://www.pacehealth.org.uk/Counselling-and-Psychotherapy(2460322).htm

If it is an option to have private therapy, LGBT therapeutic specialists can be found at:

Pink Therapy: http://www.pinktherapy.com/en-gb/findatherapist.aspx

General IPV advice and support

Galop: http://www.galop.org.uk/how-we-can-help/

Appendix 6: Favourable ethical approval

Professor Bertram Opitz
Chair: Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences Ethics Committee
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School of Psychology
University of Surrey

19th December 2012

Dear Sarah

Reference: 805-PSY-12 RS
Title of Project: Filling the silence: exploring intimate partner violence in bisexual relationships

Thank you for your re-submission of the above proposal.

The Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences Ethics Committee has now given a favourable ethical opinion.

If there are any significant changes to your proposal which require further scrutiny, please contact the Faculty Ethics Committee before proceeding with your Project.

Yours sincerely

Professor Bertram Opitz
Chair

Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences
Ethics Committee

Chair's Action

Ref:	**805-PSY-12 RS**
Name of Student:	**SARAH HEAD**
Title of Project:	**Filling the silence: exploring intimate partner violence in bisexual relationships**
Supervisor:	**DR MARTIN MILTON**
Date of submission:	**30 OCTOBER 2012**
Date of re-submission:	**12 DECEMBER 2012**

The above Project has been re-submitted to the FAHS Ethics Committee.

A favourable ethical opinion has now been given.

Signed: _____
Professor Bertram Opitz
Chair

Dated:

Appendix 7: Manuscript submission requirements

Manuscript submission for the Journal of Bisexuality

Each manuscript must be accompanied by a statement that it has not been published elsewhere and that it has not been submitted simultaneously for publication elsewhere (the ScholarOne system conveniently provides the author with such an opportunity). Authors are responsible for obtaining permission to reproduce copyrighted material from other sources and are required to sign an agreement for the transfer of copyright to the publisher. They are also required to secure permission to reproduce any figure, table, or extract from the text of another source. This applies to direct reproduction as well as "derivative reproduction" (in which an author has created a new figure or table which derives substantially from a copyrighted source). All accepted manuscripts, artwork, and photographs become the property of the publisher.

Each manuscript should be prepared using Microsoft Word, using the American Psychological Association style. Without exception, all text in the manuscript should be double-spaced, with margins of at least one inch on all sides, including the abstract, legends, captions, footnotes (which are permitted but discouraged), and references. Number manuscript pages consecutively throughout the paper. Authors should also supply a shortened version of the title suitable for the running head, not exceeding 50 character spaces. Each article should be summarized in an abstract of not more than 100 words, which must be double-spaced like the rest of the manuscript. Avoid abbreviations, diagrams, and references to the text in the abstract.

References. The *APA Publication Manual* , 6th edition, should be used as the style reference for preparation of manuscripts. References should be double-spaced and placed in alphabetical order. Cite in text by author and date (Smith, Yu, & Garcia, 1999). Words should be underlined only when it is intended that they be typeset in italics. Authors wishing to submit a paper that has already been prepared in another editorial style may do so. However, if the paper is favorably reviewed (with or without reviewer's alterations), the author is fully responsible for retyping the manuscript in the correct style (as indicated above) before final manuscript acceptance will be granted.

Illustrations. Illustrations (line drawings, halftones, photos, photomicrographs, etc.) should be submitted as clean originals or digital files. Digital files are recommended for highest quality reproduction and should follow these guidelines:

14. 300 dpi or higher
15. Sized to fit on journal page
16. EPS, TIFF, or PSD format only
17. Submitted as separate files, not embedded in text files

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Tables and Figures. Tables and figures (illustrations) should not be embedded in the text but should be included as separate pages or files. A short descriptive title should appear above each table with a clear legend and any footnotes suitably identified below. All measurement units must be included. Figures should be completely labeled, taking into account necessary size reduction, especially text included in the figure itself. Captions should appear, double-spaced, on a separate page of the manuscript. Pie charts are discouraged but, if included, should be circular (not elliptical), and the pie segments should not be separated from the pie proper nor have any depth (except in extremely unusual circumstances in which such features add information beyond that conveyed by the chart itself). Bar charts must not have depth or a third dimension (except in the extremely uncommon circumstance in which the depth itself conveys additional information). Authors should ensure that line styles (dotted, dashed, etc.) will be easily readable and distinguishable after reduction for publication (page size 5 by 8 inches, 12.5 by 20 cm).

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Appendix 8: Sample transcript

Transcript 8

R: Hello, this is Sarah Head calling from the University of Surrey. Is it possible to speak to [participant's name] please?

P: Yes, speaking.

R: Hi [participant's name]. Hello.

P: Hi.

R: I know we agreed tonight as an OK time but I just wanted to double-check before I started, is it convenient for you to carry out the interview tonight?

P: Yeah, fine.

R: Excellent. Can you hear me OK?

P: I can hear you fine, yeah.

R: Brilliant, OK. Erm, bear with me I just need to run through a few things about confidentiality and that sort of thing before I get through to asking the sort of questions.

P: Sure.

R: So, just to remind you, the interview is being recorded. What will happen with that is that as soon as I've written up what you've said, in the form of a transcript, the recorded data will be deleted and any identifying information will be removed. No one will be able to trace it back to you.

P: OK.

R: You have the right to withdraw at any time in the study. So, even part way through, if you think “I've had enough!”, do let me know.

P: OK.

R: Equally, I'm asking these questions not because I'm looking for a right or wrong answer. I genuinely don't know the answer so I'm just trying to get information from people to see what might be an answer.

P: Sure!

R: Also, you can choose not to answer any of the questions that I do ask because I'm aware that this is quite an emotional thing for some people to talk about and if it does bring up emotions, please let me know because by all means, we can take a break, you can have a few minutes to collect yourself... whatever you need.

P: Yup.

R: Excellent, well, are there any questions before I sort of set off really?

P: I don't think so, no.

R: OK. Well, if that's the case, if we just start of with: what would you identify as intimate partner abuse?

P: Erm, obvious things that anyone would count as abuse: physical abuse... erm, not being given things that are basic necessities so things like being forbidden to associate with your friend. Erm, any kind of trying to manipulate you out of the life you had before being a partner. But, I would say also that anytime someone uses their position as your partner as a means of manipulation. So that would be like abusing their priviledge, or whatever or seeing that that entiltles them to de-friend you or entitles them to a priviledged position in your life to manipulate you doing things you would not do for anybody else.

R: From the way you're talking there, it almost sounds as if there is a subtle element. You mentioned the word “manipulation” quite a lot.

P: Yeah. Also, everyone has things that they ordinarily, they would draw the line and say “I would not do that”. And the partner uses their position as their partner to make you cross that line then I would say that that's abuse because that's not respecting your choice about what you do and don't do. So I would include that certainly in partner abuse.

R: That's great as there are the classic ones people mention such as the physical violence but the more covert ones are quite difficult for people to notice is happening.

P: Yes.

R: Moving now more towards your personal experience, can you tell me at what point you came to identify your relationship as abusive?

P: Erm, it's hard to say really, erm... I'd thought it was dysfunctional for quite a long time. I think it was in the later stages that I started to see it possibly as (I don't think I used the term “abuse” at the time), but inappropriate. So after, so I mean in hindsight that I really realised just how much of it sort of was... if I could do it over again, I never would of let it happen.

R: But it sounds as if there were different stages there that you mentioned. The first one was dysfunctional, and now,

with hindsight, you can recognise that it was more towards abusive then dysfunctional but... can you explain to me a little bit what “dysfunctional” meant to you at the time and how did you know it was “dysfunctional”?

P: I could see that it wasn't working properly. There were... our communication wasn't brilliant and things would break down into a sort of emotional manipulation rather than properly discussing things. And, things wouldn't be resolved on an equal basis. Or even when things seemed to be resolved on an equal basis, then something would be brought up that hadn't been brought up at the time. Yeah, I often felt that I was being given the answer that was what I wanted to hear, that my partner thought I wanted to hear rather than his honest opinion. And sometimes that would then be used against me like “well, I always thought this”. “Well, why didn't you say so 'cos I was asking for your opinion?”

R: So can I just check that you would come back later on down the line and they'd say “well, I wasn't happy about this anyway”.

P: Yes, even though it hadn't been brought up at the time so he would try to paint me as the manipulator as I was just making him do what I wanted him to do. When actually, I'd gone out of my way to try and make sure at the time that it was what he wanted to do. And it was impossible to tell if he'd actually changed his mind or if that was a backtrack. Or actually was not speaking out his opinion at the time.

R: So there was an uncertainty about whether it was purposeful manipulation or if it was a changing mind or didn't have enough assertion to say at the time?

P: Yup.

R: How long did that, that sounds like quite a subtle form of manipulation, but how long did that go on for in your relationship?

P: That probably went on for a good couple of years and some of it, I didn't really know. Some of it was things that would be brought up during the relationship breakdown stage referring back to things in the past and saying “I never wanted to do that anyway”. Erm, it's almost like erm, there was an added element of abdicating responsibility to me so that he couldn't be blamed for anything that went wrong.

R: Right.

P: If he put all the blame onto me, by not getting involved than it wasn't his fault when there was a problem. Voluntary non-participation kind of [laughs].

R: How did that play out for you when you suddenly found out that you were alone in a decision that perhaps didn't work out the way you'd wanted? Kind of realised that he wasn't stood by your side on it, what was the impact?

P: Erm, it was stressful and it made me feel uncertain 'cos after the times that it had happened, I often found myself in the situation where a decision had to be made and clearly, I was going to be the only one who was responsible

for that decision. And yet I had no way of knowing whether that would be perceived as the right decision or whether I would then find completely, without any way of fixing it whether that was going to be a wrong decision or a decision that wasn't going to be agreed with.

R: That sounds like that would've been incredibly confusing actually. And like you said, left you with a sense of not knowing really what was what.

P: Yes.

R: And thinking back on, I'm aware some people have had more than one abusive relationship, is that the case for you or in the interview, are you likely to talk about more than one partner?

P: Just hold on a second....

R: For the purposes of this interview, are you going to be referring to the one relationship that was abusive or will there be more than one?

P: There was only one relationship which was abusive but it's slightly more complicated than standard in that part way through, it became a closed three-way relationship. So at that point, there was a male partner and two female partners. So, yes I'll try and be clear which one I'm taking about.

R: As long as you clarify with me if I get things wrong then that'll be good. So thinking back on your experience, it may be when it was just with him but it may also be when it was a closed relationship with three people, but can you identify when the abuse started?

P: Again, it was quite subtle. I think some of the... some of it started... I'm trying to think now. We had been together for about three and a bit years. Obviously we had occasional off points but we did plan to be together at that point. We had a period of time where we'd both sort of be unwell in different ways, and then we planned to relocate dramatically. After that point, we had someone come and live with us as a housemate and responded I guess differently to the two of us and that's because of his own history and baggage sort of thing, would take friendly reminder instructions from me and would just get on with things. And yet, my partner could talk to him about things like washing up and things like that that he hadn't done until he was blue in the face and he'd get no response. I think that created a sort of inequality between us and our relationship and kind of sent my partner into a, well it really sent him into a depression phase that took him a really long time to get out of and he didn't get out of really until after we'd separated. So, it prompted a... there was a sort of mental health deterioration which I would say was probably the start really of the abuse and actually made it harder to see for what it was 'cos I would tend to give him the benefit of the doubt on the grounds of being depressed. And given him a lot more leeway than I would have given him otherwise.

R: Trying to be understanding and supportive.

P: Exactly, yeah. “I can see why this is happening, I can see why you're in a bad mood, I can see why you're being

irrational". And it's kind of the tolerance level crept up and up and up really until it was a case of looking back on it, "how? How did I ever live like that?" because it was a sort of incremental tolerance increase.

R: I get the image that it was sort of a snowball. It slowly started to change but then it very quickly sort of... you know, a few years down the line, you didn't realise how different it really was.

P: Yeah, exactly.

R: How long were you in the relationship with this guy for if it started around three years?

P: Yeah, altogether, we were together for around eight years.

R: OK, so a fair while then.

P: Yeah.

R: I know you, creeping back a little bit, bear with me whilst I jump around.

P: Yeah, that's fine.

R: I know you mentioned that it was with hindsight looking back on the relationship that you could see it was abusive, how did you work that bit out that it was more than just a bit dysfunctional?

P: It was kind of erm... kind of the notion of looking back and saying "OK. Fair enough. Some of it you could accept on the grounds of mental ill health" but actually it was crossing the line into "that's not acceptable for anybody, I don't care who you are". Erm, and also there were times because he was by nature old fashioned chivalrous kind of mindset and when I would see him being intolerant in relationships to our acquaintances, a behaviour that I would see as "actually, that's not that far from what you're doing" and he wasn't, to the full extent, he wasn't realising just how manipulative he was being some of the time because it became a behaviour pattern.

R: That's not uncommon what you've just said there. People are not always... it's not done intentionally in some aspects. Can you tell me... I'm aware you identify as bi. Did he identify as bi or was he straight?

P: He was confused and he thought that he might be bisexual but his only encounter with a male partner had been inappropriate and slightly abusive one.

R: OK. Do you think, if you can cast your mind back to the experiences... to the problems you had in the relationship, was being bi part of what caused any problems for you do you think?

P: I'm not sure that it... it's hard to say that it caused problems but it certainly gave a mechanism for some of the abusive behaviour because 'erm, I don't know for sure if he ever was unfaithful but there were certainly times when he'd try to set up an additional person coming to join us by making moves on them before talking to me.

R: Right, so it hadn't been agreed previously.

P: Exactly. And I remember from a house party when I sort of came into a room and he'd said that effectively they'd been snogging on the stairs and can she come home with us?

R: How did you respond to those sort of instances?

P: I made it clear that it was unacceptable. And that it was mutual or not at all. But I think it was, my sexuality sort of gave him the leeway to slip into behaviour which was inappropriate in any other relationship. Because he, to a certain extent, I'm not sure that it was, he did think that he wasn't doing anything wrong if he was honest but although he slightly gleefully... Well, he'd do it as a “but it's OK 'cos I'm just shopping for a misses” bravado type of... kind of thing.

R: He sort of hid behind a kind of lads attitude?

P: Exactly, yeah.

R: But understandably for you it was quite hurtful or very hurtful.

P: Yes.

R: I know you said it was an eight year long relationship and that there was a shift towards including another in a three way relationship. How do you think that played out for you? I know that when you e-mailed, you'd said it'd become quite abusive in that triangular relationship. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

P: Erm once the other partner came to join us, it settled down for a little while but...

R: Can I just check, was that an agreed partner?

P: It was... that was, it was a friend who came over to stay and never left. It started out as just intending for it to be a bit of fun as agreed with everybody but very quickly emotional attachments were made and it was a case of well, we had to make a choice as to whether we'd pursue it to see where it goes or not and draw a line under it. And it was fine for a little while but fairly quickly I would say, it's hard to say it's length in sort of weeks or months or whatever, but it seems to me fairly quickly that, I'd say partly because of the depression, partly because his attitude that he would get very jealous that I was spending more time with her than with him. That he was isolated and that we were having a relationship without him. He started to get very paranoid and didn't like us spending time together without him. He became quite controlling.

R: Yes, and that sort of crept in gradually over time you'd say?

P: Yes.

R: How did he let you know that he was beginning to... was it his behaviours was it what he said that let you know that he wasn't happy about things?

P: Oh you know, he'd get very verbally bolshy. We'd be sitting on the chair in the living room. We'd all be sat watching TV or something. He'd be sat in an armchair. Me and her would be on the settee just sort of cuddled up, relaxed as you do! And, he'd be like “oh! You're getting very snuggly over there”. And we'd be just sat together. Alright, we might be sprawling on each other but there'd be nothing going on beyond that.

R: I almost get the image of quite a jealous person sort of looking from the outside in. And how did that... how did the two of you manage him when he was like that?

P: It kind of became an us against him sort of relationship. And erm, I don't remember at what point it happened but we sort of fell into a pattern of almost taking it in turns to deal with him so that we could spend time together. And even then we never really got the opportunity to spend intimate time together that wasn't under the controlling sort of influence of him. I think at times it was enjoyable but it wasn't really relaxed. Erm...

R: So it almost sounds as if from every point of the relationship, that you could have with her he was sort of watching it and observing it be it in the lounge or when it moved to the more intimate times as you said...

P: Yeah.

R: ...and he would control those as well?

P: Yes, he was very jealous and critical of what we were doing and if he thought that in any way he was being left out or overlooked then... And that meant that we engineered it as such that we always put him first.

R: OK. I mean, I'm aware that one of the ways you mentioned you sort of coped with him at the time when there was the other girl in the relationship, was you'd sort of take it in turns to manage him and sort of placate him I guess but how did you manage to cope with the dynamics that were going on and perhaps even before the third person came in?

P: Erm, it was... one of the things that was also going on at that time was, which again in hindsight should never have happened but we'd already planned it so we got on with it, was that we got married. And that was mostly for his family 'cos his grandmother was very ill at that point and we did think we'd be together for a significant amount of time and he wanted to get married whilst she could still appreciate it. Erm, which was even though I was starting to feel that the relationship wasn't... didn't really have long-term sustainability, I went with it. And, I think in hindsight, i'd sort of fallen into a pattern of “don't rock the boat”, 'cos it would turn into arguments and although he

would never violate, he was very, very aggressive and loud, shouting aggression if things got out of control and sort of storming out of the house. Erm, hitting things, putting fists through doors. So, the violence was directed elsewhere. Now, I never felt that I was under threat physically but it was made very clear that that outburst of aggression was because of me.

R: I'm just thinking about how that can be a very good way to demonstrate to somebody you know who's got the control. It gives quite strong messages.

P: Yeah, exactly. It's this “I broke this and it's your fault”.

R: When these sort of experiences happened, how did you kind of get through them?

P: I am somebody who is naturally a very good mediator. I'm very good at talking people down. So that's essentially what I did and often it was actually talking out what needed to be done but it had to reach a fever pitch before that conversation could happen.

R: So was that a pattern that you began to notice?

P: Yes.

R: So it became quite difficult or so bad before he was able to or before you were able to help have the conversation that needed to have happened?

P: Yes, exactly. And even then, there was no way of knowing whether that was heard in a reasonable way or whether that would be heard, sticking to his head as seeing through the rage kind of... kind of thing. So often, things would seem to be sorted at that time but then worse because once things were in his head again, he didn't remember it in the same way.

R: Right. That must have been quite difficult... I'm going to ask, not assume. How was it when you thought you'd gone through the process and had sort of patched things up only to then later find that they perhaps hadn't been clarified?

P: What it really was, what really stands out for me was that it reinforced the other pattern that was there in that I had to take the decisions. Because that was the alternative and it didn't get anywhere and it was far more unpleasant.

R: So, can I just check? So, it was far more unpleasant if you didn't take the decisions?

P: Exactly. Because the only other alternative was to try and have the conversations and it escalating into an argument and eventually came to what I thought was a resolution we agreed on, taking action based on that and

then being told that I was wrong. Still wrong.

R: Sort of a catch-22.

P: Absolutely, yeah.

R: As you're talking, my mind is working quite hard to make sense of it because it's quite a, quite a complex process...

P: Yes.

R: ...to hear. I can't imagine what that might have been like to live.

P: Yeah, no... it was a [laughs] tough times.

R: Absolutely! I mean, that sort of brings me onto thinking what sort of brought that abusive relationship to an end?

P: Erm, it got to a point where it was so much him versus me and the other woman that we were effectively a sort of, erm... it did get to the point where we were taking it in terms servicing him in order to keep him under control because the more out of control it got, the more the... the more it centred around whether or not he was getting sex.

P: It turned into steadily being very focused around sexual manipulation. And, as I said, then we got married, and that made it worse in some way because then he would start throwing things out such as “well, I expect to be able to have sex with my wife”. Like this 'wife thing' was someone different to me.

R: Do you think there was a sense of ownership?

P: Absolutely yeah! He thought that because we were married, it was like he had legitimate rights to my body.

R: The more you describe it, the more it sounds as if the relationship began to revolve solely around him... placating him so that you and the other woman could just be.

P: Yes, it did. The only way was if we maintained, to sort of maintenance level, if that makes sense [laughter].

R: That sounds quite exhausting.

P: It was, it really was. And how it came to an end was that she'd had enough. She couldn't handle it anymore. She had had quite bad depression problems when we first got together and she got out of it partly by having someone

she cared for and who cared for her. And, she could feel herself deteriorating again because of the stress of the relationship so she said she was leaving and I said “if it's splitting, I'm going with you!”

R: So sort of she, the thought of her going activated for you perhaps some sense of reality “well, I can't do this on my own and I care about you so I won't to go with you?”

P: It was more a case of “if this is ending, if it's ending between you and him, then it's ending between me and him too but what we have is still worth something”.

R: Right. So there's a real sense that an alliance formed quite strongly between you...

P: Yes, absolutely.

R: Through the experiences that you'd had, how did you actually come to actualise leaving? What was the steps towards that?

P: Initially by that point, we'd been living in a house that we'd bought which was legally owned by me and her. So, we basically said “it's over, you need to move into the spare room. And yes, we'll give you as much grace as you need to find somewhere else but that's what we'll do”.

R: How was that received?

P: It was received with a lot of aggression but it was clear that actually, part of him, he understood that it wasn't working anymore.

R: So, initially angry... how long did it take for him to move out? Was it quite...

P: It was quite quickly actually. Yeah, it started out more often than not that he would stay on a friend's couch but then basically, I think when he realised that it was definite, it was over, he got himself on the council and got himself a home within less than... and got the ball rolling. In the interim period, we also ended up with a child. So, in someways, that made it easier for him to get his own place as he had to have the facilities to see his own daughter. And in some ways, there was the acknowledgement that... there had been the acknowledgement that things hadn't been working for a little while and in some ways, we were able to say, “we could keep fighting over this, to draw a line under it for the kids sake and to sort of bring it to a stop before we really, truly hate each other and couldn't co-parent in any way”. So, in some ways, it gave a very good way to bring things to an end without serious hatred and animosity.

R: It sounds almost, from the way you're describing it that there was a rational process behind it.

P: Once it became clear that it was ending, actually everyone... there was almost a sort of group sigh of relief that this sort of on-going craziness was over.

R: But it sort of took somebody saying “I have to step out of this”...

P: Exactly!

R: ...for it to be allowed to happen.

P: Exactly, yeah. After, I mean one of things that was really a catalyst for the female partner to say she'd had enough was around having the kid because it became only one room in the house that he was allowed to smoke in (at the time, he was smoking a lot of cannabis). He could only smoke in one room so effectively he was kind of living in that room because he had a playstation set up in there. He'd get up in the morning, he'd make a cup of coffee, go in there, might come out for a little bit. But, I'd really say I was living on my own. She was going out to work. She was the breadwinner and we were living in separate parts of the house effectively and even after our daughter was born, actually trying to persuade him to take responsibility for her bearing in mind it was in his own house, he left for me to cook, wash up, go and have a shower, it was ridiculous. And that was what was really the last straw. She couldn't handle supporting him whilst he was doing nothing.

R: And looking back, there was something about it being a particular trigger when your daughter was coming along that she actually thought “no more of this”?

P: No, she was already about a year old.

R: Right, OK. I mean, I'm guessing that as this was all going on that you had support in each other; you and the other woman. But, I'm wondering about the support you received (if any) since the relationship ended or anything like that?

P: Erm, me and the other woman stayed together for a little while after that and then agreed mutually that we were very good friends. Probably, we shouldn't have crossed the line into a relationship but it's very hard when you find a connection with someone to know whether or not it should be a sexual relationship or a very strong friendship (and we're still best friends). She comes and stays at my house every couple of weeks, she's still the second mother to our child, we're still very close.

R: So, there's still the support there.

P: Yes.

R: I guess the question is about were there any professional organisations that had to help you or was that something you felt you didn't need?

P: We didn't, we didn't look elsewhere although we did talk about, particularly when it came to sorting out things, with him as regards to our daughter, I suggested mediation so that we could come to a sort of solid agreement with the help of a third party. But [laughs] I think in some ways he felt the threat of having to air his dirty laundry with somebody else as a catalyst to start being reasonable; it's quite strange, but...

R: Well it certainly sounds as if, when you both said “it's over”, he was actually after the initial aggression you mentioned, there was a sort of civility to things.

P: Yes!

R: It makes me wonder about... does he still have contact with his daughter now?

P: Yes.

R: And how is he towards you?

P: We're actually friends again now which is really strange. It took a while for it... to get over it I mean, it's one of those things I can't forgive him for and he probably feels the same about me but part of it, that comes from that actually his mental health problems, his depression, he'd gotten into such habitual behaviour that he couldn't get himself well without getting out of the involvement with our relationship. And actually, once he'd moved out, he actually started to get himself together, much better and now he's I'd say as overcome as a depressive every is kind of thing.

R: So there's something about a need for a change in environment for him to be able to change?

P: Absolutely, yeah! He'd got used to this sort of support structure where he didn't need to do anything. He'd sort of got away without doing anything for himself or anyone else to a certain extent. And whilst that was there, he didn't have any need to get off his arse and make his own food, there was no way for him to sort himself out really.

R: So he needed for that support to disappear so that he could hit rock bottom.

P: I'm glad that he has because when we first separated, I was quite worried about whether he'd be safe and reliable enough for her to go to his house.

R: But it sounds as if that was something that...

P: Yeah, it sorted itself out quite quickly actually.

R: OK, considering the experiences you've had, how has erm, how has it impacted on your life (and this can be positively as well as negatively)?

P: There's a few instinctive responses that I have which are negative, erm... which have lead on from that I think.

R: Could you give me some examples?

P: I'm... I'm a very touchy feely sort of person. I like physical contact but I now have problems with my hands being

controlled. I don't like my hands being held because I feel constrained and that has no real relationship to... there's no direct parallel that happened that was abusive in the relationship. But, I'm much more conscious of my freedom (if that makes sense).

R: I'm just thinking about what you mentioned about his ownership of your body.

P: Yes.

R: I'm wondering if that's connected in any way.

P: Yes, and on the positive, I've decided that it's made me much more determined and confident? “Confident” is not quite the right word for it. I... I'm much more outspoken when it comes to something I don't want to do, I will say so. Because, in hindsight, I'm so aware of how often I went along with things and I just... there are a lot of things I will draw a line under that I am not doing that again; that was destructive. Erm, and it probably makes me a harder person to live with in some ways [laughter] but I'm much more happier in myself that what I do, I do because I want to do it. No one is the master of me.

R: I guess it makes me think that future relationships... you know where your boundaries are and what you're willing to do and what you're not.

P: Absolutely, yeah.

R: And not prepared to compromise on that understandably.

P: Yeah, absolutely.

R: I am kind of moving sort of towards the end of the interview but there's a few questions still so please don't disappear. Do you think bisexual intimate partner abuse differs (if at all) from other sexual orientation groups?

P: In some ways no because a lot of it is just, in my experience a lot of it has been just person-to-person abuse that wasn't necessarily gender or sexuality orientated. But I think if you had a partner who liked to stray, who thought they could get away with it then being bisexual can make it easier for them to do that without actually, really convincing themselves that they're not actually crossing a boundary.

R: Do you have any insights into why that might be the case?

P: I think part of it is because of the social, of the socially constructed idea of bisexual women. This ongoing fantasy of two women together they find highly arousing and I can understand why. It is a very sexually charged thing. And there are certainly times when it briefly felt like he was gleefully participating in this fantasy thing and something that he knew was also fancy of his friends and peers. That he was actually living it. I mean, there were times when we would go out socially and he would introduce us as “this is my wife and this is our girlfriend”. In a

very possessive “look at me, I'm living the dream” kind of way.

R: Yes. Kind of revealing in that.

P: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah and the other thing is in being bisexual, it... it seems to be hard for a lot of people to accept it. And finding that someone that did accept it, erm when things start going wrong, can make it harder to leave because you don't want to loose that understanding. That someone actually gets it without thinking “well, you must be one or the other or you're just pretending or does that mean you want to have sex with everything that has two legs? ” or any of the other stupid stereotypical misunderstandings of being bisexual. Someone who understands that actually, it's just like any other kind of sexuality you pick and choose, you just happen to like men and women [laughter] and it's really no more complicated than that. And that understanding, can be quite a precious thing which I think can make it, just because of the fear of loneliness in a way.

R: I guess it makes me think of how perhaps, how unaccepted some people have been if that's such a valuable thing to have.

P: Yeah, oh just silly things like I used to work, I used to work in a bank call centre and I'm not at all shy about my sexuality but I don't throw it around in people's faces and when it came up in a group of my colleagues, the first thing one of them said was “do you find me attractive?” Sort of *really?* Is that all you can think of to say? How shallow! And you can tell it was kind of she just wanted to ask men if they found her attractive but couldn't [laughter] and it was like it was allowed because I was a woman and it was just the kind of [sigh] “really?” [laughter] and you just get so sick of that kind of behaviour.

R: So perhaps a lot of assumptions play into people who approach, not just you, but bisexual individuals who are in a relationship and some of these expectations are quite damaging.

P: Yeah.

R: Ignorant as well.

P: Yeah.

R: OK. Using the knowledge, you gained from the experience you had, what message would you give to other bisexual people who might currently be experiencing intimate partner abuse?

P: Erm, certainly mostly what I've just said that that understanding is not precious enough to compromise yourself. That relationships, yes, relationships are always about compromise but that if you compromise yourself, it's very hard to go back on. And yeah, don't ever let your partner use your sexuality against you.

R: I'm just thinking as you're talking there, some compromises aren't worth doing and yourself, yourself as a person

is not a compromise to make.

P: Exactly, yeah. And not just from a particularly bisexual perspective but in general, I mean, it's not worth staying in a relationship where... I don't know, where you have to complete steps A-C everyday just to keep it under control. Just to keep it bearable and if it becomes this thing that you're doing just to keep it bearable then it doesn't matter where you are, you can go somewhere else and start again and it will be better.

R: Sort of having that belief really isn't it?

P: Yeah, I mean I've always been a very independent person and actually, one of the things that came out of this was that I'd scared myself about how much of my independence I had relinquished without noticing.

R: It can certainly be a bit of a slap as the realisation comes through.

P: Absolutely.

R: The final question I wanted to ask was have I missed out anything you wanted to say and think is important for me to know?

P: The only sort of other aspect of the abusive relationship that we haven't touched on is the financial side of it because both when it was just myself and him and when the other one was involved, it fell to us to manage the household. And he was in receipt of disability benefits and didn't contribute to the house. So, it consequently meant that he was spending all of his money on well... tobacco, cannabis and computer games mostly. So, he was having lots of free money to do what he wished. And we, either I or we had to run the household on quite a tight budget with often nothing to spare for little luxuries to make life a little easier like getting takeaways once in a while.

R: So he sought of drained the money out of you?

P: Yeah, absolutely! Kind of what's mine is mine and what's yours is ours. Oh righty! And I mean part of it's, I kind of understand partly is because he's very bad with money. He's not a sort of money responsible person. So to make sure that everything was in place, that everything we needed was there, it made sense. And it started out as a fairly equitable way of doing it in that I started out with all the household stuff and he paid for the fun stuff. So, if we went out for a drink, or to the cinema or whatever or got takeaway, he'd pay for it. But then that... that switched to him spending money on selfish purposes. And we all need selfish purchases, everyone needs them now and then but when he was the only one who was able to do it...

R: Yes, there's a real imbalance there...

P: Absolutely, yeah.

R: So again, I'm seeing sort of a more gradual, progessive demise, it wasn't a just one day you're paying for everything but actually it's more of a due to circumstance, the paying situation sort of changed.

P: Yeah.

R: I mean, how did that sit with you? Was it something you noticed...

P: It was something I noticed but not, I didn't need to do anything about it because I am not a particularly materialistic person. I was brought up in a very low income household with a good and solid understanding of how to run a house on a low budget and I certainly don't consider that I've had a deprived childhood. I'm quite thankful for the way I was brought up in that that meant that when you can buy something for yourself, it was a treat. Money should be used thoughtfully and carefully for something which you'll really appreciate and will have longevity rather than sort of spending it on a bar of chocolate, or whatever. So I'd always been encouraged to sort of save up and get what I wanted sort of incrementally. So it was something that was quite, it didn't have a negative impact on me in that I couldn't have what I wanted because I'd still get my birthday money and my Christmas money sort of and that was what it had always been to a certain extent for me. But it did... it created a sort of animosity because he was always getting what he wanted.

R: In every way shape and form I'm thinking of.

P: Yeah, to a certain extent. And yet, because of the emotional manipulation, he was always getting what he wanted but it was never enough. There was always some way in which it wasn't right.

R: And were you made to feel that that was your responsibility?

P: Yeah... it was impossible... it was kind of impossible to get through to him that it should be a partner in all things, a joint responsibility because I was given the responsibility whether I wanted it or not.

R: Right, yeah. It's certainly an interesting twist... which I can imagine would have been quite difficult to grapple with at the time.

P: Yup.

R: Thank you for raising that one as it sounds as if that certainly was an added element to the relationship and dynamics.

P: Yeah, exactly 'cos it left him in a financial position where he could do what he wanted socially to a certain extent, he could go out for a drink with his friends, or get the latest computer game and invite his friends round. Which gave him another reason to live in the front room in front of the Playstation, smoking and kind of absenting

himself... he was absenting himself from the household but still dependent on it.

R: Yes, but not putting anything in.

P: Even to the point where we'd pretty much not sight him. He'd get up after she left for work. Spend the whole day in the front room. Erm, if he went out to a friend's house, then he'd quite often not be back till very late. And then not having done anything in the house or having any interaction with us at all, except when he was coming through to use the toilet or to make himself another coffee, would then expect for us to do for him in the bedroom.

R: That's the picture that I'm getting in my mind that the only interaction was based around sex.

P: Yup! And even to the point where it was being turned round the other way in that “if I'm not getting what I want in the bedroom, why should I do anything for you?”

R: So the only thing he was doing was part of... he then used that...

P: Yeah!

R: ...as further manipulation to get what he wanted.

P: Yeah.

R: Gosh, OK, right. You've given me an awful lot to think about [laughter]

P: [laughter] I hope it's useful.

R: It is useful. You're adding different twists which haven't come up which is very useful.

P: That's absolutely the point of it.

R: Absolutely so thank you so very much for taking the time this evening as I'm aware your sister's around.

P: Yeah, no, that's fine.

R: I really do appreciate.

P: I was going to say, if you want further clarification on any of the things we've talked about, I'm more than happy for you to get in touch again.

R: Thank you! That's really kind of you to offer.

P: If you need to ask any more questions, that's not a problem.

R: And equally, if anything pops up further down the line where you think “I wish I'd said that” or “I want to withdraw that piece of information”, please do let me know. But otherwise, I wish you all the very best for the future that you have and thank you once again for taking the time this evening, it's really appreciated.

P: I hope it goes well.

R: Thank you! Take care, bye bye.

P: Bye!