

What about the 'B' in LGBTQ+?
Investigating Bisexuals' Feeling of Connectedness to The LGBTQ+ Community

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Abstract

Bisexual individuals are often overlooked and discriminated in society due to their polysexuality. Research shows that the discrimination also comes from LGBTQ+ communities, hindering bisexuals to build up a connection to them. This scoping review analyzes literature on the topic of bisexuals' feeling of connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community with the aim of investigating bisexual experiences and potential reasons and contributing factors to a decreased feeling of connectedness. Fourteen studies were included, covering quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method research. Besides some positive aspects regarding connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community, the process of a thematic analysis identified several potential barriers for bisexuals to feel connected to these communities. These barriers are for example internalized biphobic stereotypes within LGBTQ+ communities, which depict obstacles for bisexuals to connect with them. Indications were found for gender-overarching and gender-specific bi-negative stereotypes. Intersectionality of multiple marginalized identities was also found to influence the experience of bisexual individuals in LGBTQ+ communities negatively. This scoping review presents how bisexual persons experience their connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community and why they often face difficulties in building a strong connection to the community. Besides identifying possible factors causing a decreased feeling of connectedness, this review also demonstrates the newness and the limited research designs of the research field. The analyzed topic should be further investigated specifically regarding aspects of gender differences and intersectionality and by additionally applying further research designs like longitudinal studies.

The LGBTQ+ acronym is appearing more and more everywhere in contemporary media and in daily discourse in general, representing a diverse spectrum of sexual and gender identities. The letters in LGBTQ+ represent lesbians, gay people, bisexual people, transgender persons and queer people in general, including a diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities (American Psychological Association, 2023). Most people nowadays know the term or at least what it is associated with, which indicates that the visibility of LGBTQ+ people seems to increase. Although the topic has gained a lot of attention during the last few years (Price et al., 2019), it remains questionable if the attention paid to LGBTQ+ people has led to an already sufficient amount of visibility in our society. Zooming in on the people in the LGBTQ+ community, it can be valuable to recognize them as separate minority populations, united in one broader community (Balsam & Mohr, 2007). Following the letters for homosexual people in LGBTQ+ (L for lesbians and G for gay persons), there is the 'B', for bisexual people. Although it is a fixed part of the term 'LGBTQ+', the 'B' seems to be overlooked, neglected and invisible (Rust, 2002).

Before taking a closer look at these possible points of discrimination against bisexuals, a closer look is needed at the definition of bisexuality. In the following, the definition found in the APA dictionary will be used: bisexuality is a "sexual orientation characterized by romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction to, or engagement in romantic or sexual relationships with, more than one gender" (American Psychological Association, 2023, bisexuality). There is a widespread belief that because the term 'bi' is included in bisexuality it only refers to the binary construct of gender, therefore attraction to men and women (Israel, 2018). However, the term bisexuality rather represents an umbrella term for all non-monosexuals (Flanders et al., 2016), including persons being attracted to more than one gender compared to monosexuals (e.g. hetero- and homosexuals).

It is important to consider bisexuality as an independent identity rather than holding the often-assumed belief that bisexuality is something 'between' hetero- and homosexuality (Flanders et al., 2016). As for all queer identities, bisexuality has gone through a harsh fight to be seen as a 'proper sexuality', highlighted by the fact that in research on sexuality conducted in the 1960s to 1980s bisexuality was termed as 'situational homosexuality' (Rust, 2000). This label excludes the possibility that bisexuality is an independent sexuality and although it seems far away, the influences of the denial of the existence of bisexuality are still noticeable today. These stereotypes may be rooted in the 19th century when it was often concluded that men and women are 'opposite' genders. Therefore, it was and still is hard to understand for some people how a person can be attracted to men and women, and even more genders at the same time

(Rust, 2002). The thesis that bisexual individuals are in conflict with their hetero- and homosexual parts led to the image of bisexuals denying their true, monosexual identity, therefore just going through a 'transitional phase'. These misinterpretations have created an image portraying bisexual individuals as psychologically unstable and immature (Roberts et al., 2015). Additionally, bisexual individuals often have to face the accusation of being sexually promiscuous, not being able to 'decide' for one gender and leaving 'all opportunities open' (Israel, 2018). This stereotype also often goes in line with the assumption that bisexuals cannot be monogamous. Due to their polysexuality, the discrimination bisexual individuals face contains distinct features compared to the discrimination against monosexual people, for example, homosexuals. Therefore, the aforementioned stereotypes and prejudices bisexual individuals are confronted with can be summarized using the terms biphobia or monosexism (Rust, 2002). Biphobia relates to discrimination coming from an individual or an institutional framework, while monosexism describes the belief that sexual orientations are strictly confined to the attraction between persons of either the same or different genders (Roberts et al., 2015).

Connectedness

The stereotypes and prejudices bisexual individuals face can decrease feelings of connectedness. As Watts et al. (2022) explain, there are different aspects synthesized in the term of connectedness. The focus can be on the connection to others, to the world in general, but also the connection to the self. Connectedness can have various synonyms and associated variables like embeddedness, belongingness and (in)dependence, and plays an important role in one's identity development and mental well-being (Townsend & McWhirter, 2005). A high feeling of connectedness can act as a protective factor against emotional distress and can prevent several dysfunctional behaviours (Steiner et al., 2019). Furthermore, social connectedness can serve as a buffer against depressive symptoms and mental disorders (Wickramaratne et al., 2022).

Since members of the LGBTQ+ community are at an increased risk for mental health disorders and poor mental health in general as a result of discrimination and structural oppression (Robert & Christens, 2020), it is important to consider LGBTQ+ community connectedness as a possible protective factor against these negative mental health outcomes. Robert and Christens (2020) found that LGBTQ+ connectedness can have significant positive effects on the well-being of LGBTQ+ community members, which is also supported by a study conducted by Kaniuka et al. (2019), who found that connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community can serve as a buffer against symptoms of anxiety and depression and consequently might decrease suicidal behaviour.

Although a strong feeling of connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community can help protect against some harmful effects of biphobic discrimination (Craney et al., 2018), there are, in reality, several indications that bisexual individuals lack a strong connection to the LGBTQ+ community. For example, Kertzner et al. (2009) found that bisexual individuals lacked social well-being which could be ascribed to the fact that bisexuals reported lower levels of LGBTQ+ connectedness. Although the LGBTQ+ community is thought to be a tolerant social group and supportive space (Demant et al., 2018), Frost & Meyer (2012) reported significant differences in homosexual individuals' and bisexuals' connectedness to the community, with bisexuals documenting lower connectedness. A decreased subjective feeling of connectedness was also supported by a study conducted by Balsam & Mohr (2007). Their findings indicate that the tolerance and support usually expected from the LGBTQ+ community might not apply to bisexual individuals to the same extent as to other individuals in the community (Friedman et al, 2014). Therefore, bisexual individuals might have a harder time profiting from support of the LGBTQ+ community and this could lead to a decreased feeling of connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community. Consequently, there is the possibility that in addition to the confrontation with several discriminating stereotypes, bisexual individuals might also suffer from a lack of support from the LGBTQ+ community. Consequently, bisexual individuals might not feel as connected to the LGBTQ+ community as other members of the community.

Despite some existing research on the topic of bisexuals' feeling of connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community, there remains a knowledge gap when it comes to specific experiences of bisexual individuals, the extent of their potential lack of connectedness and the contributing factors. This study addresses this gap by synthesizing available literature published during the past ten years on bisexuals' actual feelings of connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community. The method of a scoping review was chosen since it is suitable to give an overview of the current state of knowledge and gather available studies on the topic. The research question which guided the review was: "What is known regarding bisexual individual's feeling of connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community?".

Methods

Reporting Guidelines

During the writing process of the scoping review, it was adhered to the PRSIMA-ScR guidelines. Applying the guidelines, the methodological transparency was enhanced and support for a structured way of making design choices was offered (Tricco et al., 2018).

Inclusion- and Exclusion Criteria

The articles included in this review needed to be peer-reviewed, written in English and full-text available. The studies could be quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods. Other reviews or meta-analyses were excluded. Furthermore, given the rapid pace of research development in the field of interest during the recent years, the review focused on studies published within the past ten years. The analyzed studies needed to include bisexuals as a sample or as part of a queer sample. Studies with heterosexual participants were therefore excluded.

Search Strategy

The search for relevant literature was conducted on the 21st of February in 2024 using the databases Scopus, PsycINFO and Web of Science. The following search strings were used:
Scopus: bisexual* AND (connect* OR community connect* OR sense of belong* OR sense of community OR feeling of connect*) AND LGBTQ* community

Web of Science: ((TS=(bisexual*)) AND TS=(connect* OR community connect* OR sense of belong* OR sense of community OR feeling of connect*)) AND TS=(LGBTQ* community)

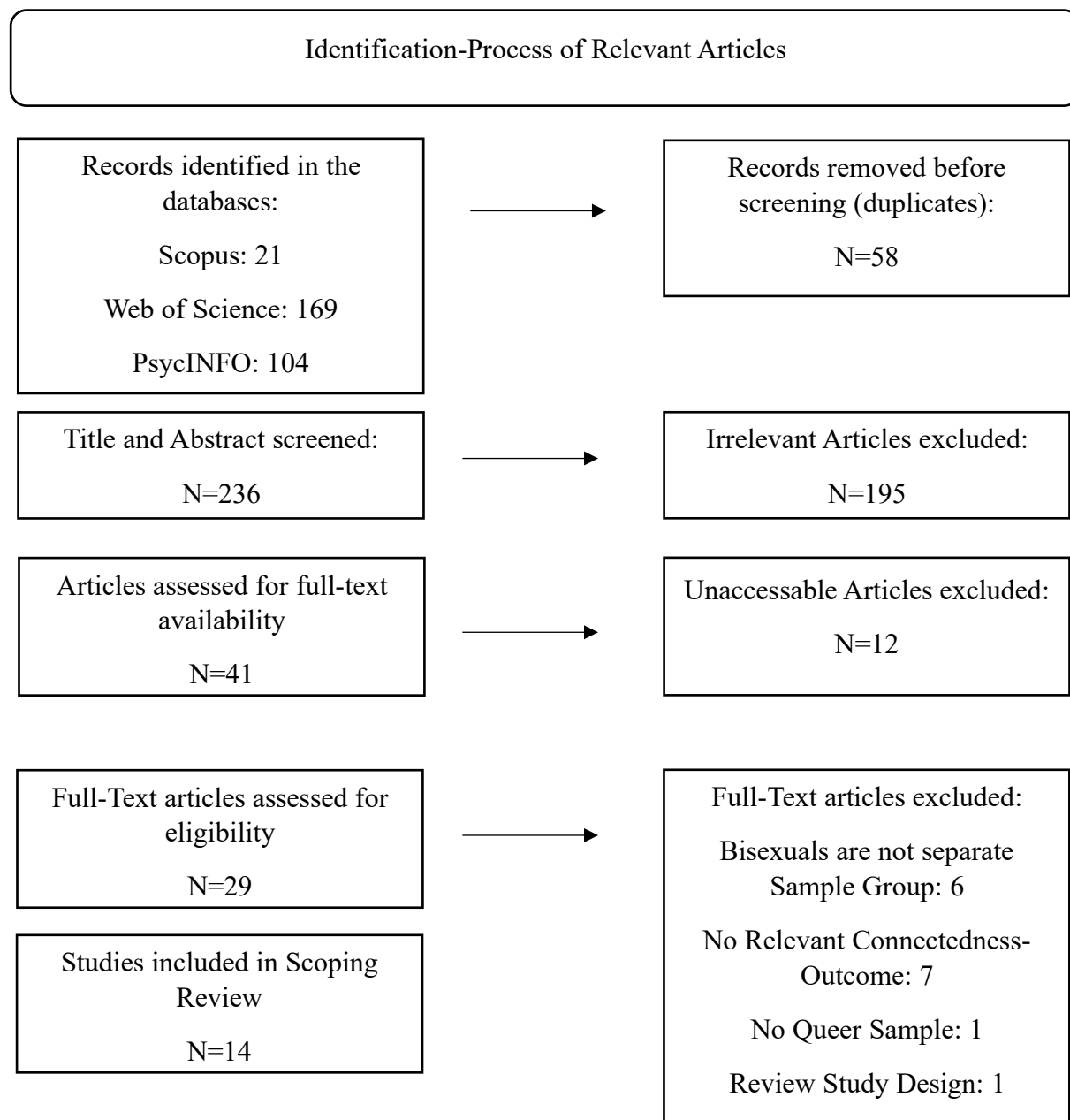
PsycINFO: bisexual* AND connect* OR community connect* OR sense of belong* OR sense of community OR feeling of connect* AND LGBTQ* community

Study Selection Process

To select relevant studies to include in the review, the search outcomes were exported to the program Covidence, which is a supporting system for screening relevant literature for literature reviews (Covidence, 2024). In Covidence, duplicates were removed. The next step was to screen titles and abstracts of the literature to start choosing the articles which appeared relevant for this review. After obtaining a sample of articles, these were checked for full-text availability and the available full texts were screened against the in- and exclusion criteria. See Figure 1 for an overview of the study selection progress.

Figure 1

Selection Process of Relevant Articles



Data Extraction & Analysis

Before starting with the data extraction process, a numerical analysis was conducted by examining the studies' publication dates, country of origin and characteristics of the sample and research methods, which can be found in Table 1. Afterwards, the outcomes of the studies were analyzed for relevant data to answer the research question, therefore data relevant to investigating bisexual's feeling of connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community. This process was conducted in line with a thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006). They identify six stages of a thematic analysis, where firstly the data is carefully screened to get familiar with the data and identify some preliminary patterns. Afterwards, codes representing certain topics that reoccur are derived from the articles. The next step includes sorting these codes into potential themes, which is followed by the step of reviewing the themes. The fifth step incorporates defining and naming these themes, which can be seen as "headings" for codes belonging to the same broader subject. After the development and refinement of the themes, in the last step, the findings are presented in a narrative text. The analysis process was carried out in an inductive manner, therefore not being guided by a specific theory.

Table 1

Study Characteristics of Included Studies

Authors	Year	Study Aim	Population Group	Sample Size	Sample Age	Study Country	Research Method	Measure of Connectedness	Outcomes
Bates	2020	Exploring challenges of bisexual persons with intellectual disabilities	Bisexuals with intellectual disabilities (all genders)	8	18-47	UK	Qualitative interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Indications for high connectedness
Bedford et al.	2023	Examine group differences and cross-sectional associations between minority stress and psychopathology	LGBTQ+ adults who survived sexual assault (all genders)	92	18-65	USA	Quantitative survey	Minority Stress Measure (Goldbach et al., 2015)	Indications for limited community connectedness among bisexual men
Betts	2021	Examine wellbeing of older LGBTQ+ adults	LGBTQ+ adults above age 60 (all genders)	31	60-80	New Zealand	Qualitative interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Indications for limited connectedness
Evans et al.	2017	Explore experiences of campus climate for LGBTQ+ students	LGBTQ+ students (all genders)	12	20-26	USA	Qualitative interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Indications for limited connectedness
Gonzalez et al.	2021	Deepen knowledge on bisexual belonging and community connection	Bi+ individuals (all genders)	9	18-33	USA	Qualitative interviews	Qualitative focus groups	Indications for limited connectedness

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Year	Study Aim	Population Group	Sample Size	Sample Age	Study Country	Research Method	Measure of Connectedness	Outcomes
Flanders et al.	2019	Investigate relationships between social support, bisexual identity and anxiety and depression	Bisexual POC young adults (all genders)	136	18-25	Canada	Quantitative surveys	Connectedness to the LGBTQ Community Scale (Frost & Meyer, 2012)	Indications for limited connectedness
Jen	2019	Explore how older women construct and make meaning of their bisexual identities	Bisexual women	12	60-77	USA	Qualitative interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Indications for limited connectedness
Kenee et al.	2021	Evaluate importance of social context variables on disclosure of sexual identity	Black sexual minority men	809	14-81	USA	Quantitative survey	Web-Based survey	Indications for limited connectedness
Lim et al.	2023	Examine factors associated with sexual minority women's evaluations of belonging to LGBTQ+ community	Sexual minority women	2424	18-65+	Australia	Quantitative survey	Connectedness to the LGBTQ Community Scale (Frost & Meyer, 2012)	Indications for limited connectedness
Miller et al.	2022	Explore challenges and supporting factors for wellbeing	Bi+ young people (all genders)	15	17-25	Australia	Qualitative Interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Indications for limited connectedness

Table 1 (Continued)

Authors	Year	Study Aim	Population Group	Sample Size	Sample Age	Study Country	Research Method	Measure of Connectedness	Outcomes
McLaren & Castillo	2020	Examine relationships between sense of belonging to lesbian and heterosexual communities and depressive symptoms	Bisexual women	306	18-67	Australia	Quantitative surveys	Sense of Belonging Instrument (Hagerty & Patusky, 1995)	Indications for moderate connectedness
Power et al.	2021	Explore bisexual men's experienced HIV-Stigma and support needs	Bisexual men	872	18+	Australia	Mixed-method survey	Connectedness to the LGBTQ Community Scale (Frost & Meyer, 2012)	Indications for limited Connectedness
Ross et al.	2017	Examine which elements of non-monosexual experience are associated with elevated risk of poorer mental health outcomes	Non-Monosexual pregnant women with different-gendered partner	39	18+	USA Canada	Quantitative survey and qualitative interview	Connectedness to the LGBTQ Community Scale (Frost & Meyer, 2012) + Semi-structured interviews	Indications for limited connectedness
Sexton et al.	2017	Explore how young sexual minority women define LGBTQ community related aspects	Young sexual minority women	30	18-24	USA	Qualitative interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Indications for limited connectedness

Results

Numerical Analysis

The studies were published in recent years between 2017 and 2023. All studies were conducted in the US, UK, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, representing only Western, mostly English-speaking countries. The biggest sample, including 2424 participants was studied by Lim et al. (2023), while the smallest sample was included in Bates' (2020) study with eight participants. The age classes of the studies' participants ranged from 14-81. Seven qualitative, five quantitative and two mixed-method studies were included. It needs to be noted here that the quantitative studies were all cross-sectional, so only measured at one point in time. Furthermore, although qualitative studies can give deepened insights into some topics, relationships between different variables are not measured. The (partly) quantitative studies used different scales for measuring connectedness. Four out of seven studies used the Connectedness to the LGBTQ Community Scale by Frost and Meyer (2012).

Thematic Analysis

During the Data Analysis process, five sub-themes arose which could be sorted into two broader themes: Positive Effects of Connectedness and Barriers to Connectedness.

Positive Effects Of Connectedness

Bisexuals in the analyzed studies addressed their involvement with the LGBTQ+ community. Gonzalez et al. (2021) found that bisexual individuals saw belonging to the LGBTQ+ community as an option to seek a sense of belonging and therefore experience acceptance for their bisexual identity. These benefits of a community feeling were also aimed for by Bates' (2020) bisexual participants who almost all had connections to LGBTQ+ social groups. Especially for their participants, since they had intellectual disabilities, it seemed particularly important to feel a sense of safety and comfortableness in their identity. In the study of Miller et al. (2022) with young bisexual people, they described a heightened sense of pride in their bisexual identity which was facilitated by being surrounded by other LGBTQ+ members. Sharing similar experiences and celebrating diversity were explained as benefits of belonging to an LGBTQ+ social group and Sexton et al. (2017) found that the LGBTQ+ community also helps as a mental representation where one can imagine oneself and relieve some stress. Another finding regarding the positive effect of belonging to a queer community was presented by McLaren and Castillo (2020), as they found that if bisexual women lack a sense of belonging to the heteronormative community, a heightened sense of belonging to the lesbian community helps as a compensation. Furthermore, feeling like a valid part of the lesbian

community can lead to lower levels of depressive symptoms among bisexual women (McLaren & Castillo, 2020).

Although some beneficial effects of belonging to the LGBTQ+ community in general and accessing LGBTQ+ social groups were articulated, the need for bisexual-only spaces was also a wish of some participants. The lack of bisexual-only spaces 'forced' some of Gonzalez et al.'s (2021) participants to turn to broader LGBTQ+ spaces to find some sense of belonging and connection. In the study by Gonzalez et al. (2021), the polysexual participants expressed their difficulties in finding bisexual communities where they would find comfort and people who share similar experiences. The participants expressed a preference for a space where only bisexual individuals meet since they can relate to the exclusion they often experience in daily life. Miller et al. (2022) and Kenee et al. (2021) also found online spaces to be a possibility to connect with other bisexual individuals.

Barriers to Connectedness

General Biphobic Stereotypes. Almost every study found evidence of discrimination against bisexual individuals in general society. Bates (2020) bisexual participants told their interviewer that they saw bisexuals stereotyped, either witnessing it or experiencing it themselves; also emphasized by bisexual participants in the study of Gonzalez et al. (2021) who called bisexuality the most discredited sexuality. A reoccurring topic in all of the studies was how participants experienced discrimination and microaggressions from other people because of their bisexual identity (Bates, 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2021; Miller et al., 2022). The discrimination took place in the form of accusing bisexuals of being confused regarding their sexuality, being in a transitional phase to finding out they are lesbian or gay or in an experimental phase resulting in returning to heterosexuality, as for example found in the study of Bates (2020). Moreover, framing bisexuals as incapable of having monogamous relationships and being unfaithful was also portrayed for example by bisexual participants in Miller et al.'s study (2022). These experiences of biphobia and bi-erasure were depicted as clear barriers to developing a healthy bisexual identity and a sense of belonging to a community (Gonzalez et al., 2021; Jen, 2019).

Discrimination from LGBTQ+ community. Although the benefits of belonging to a community, especially when incorporating a queer identity were important aspects for many bisexual participants in the studies, these individuals were confronted with several barriers to forming a sense of connectedness to the broader LGBTQ+ community. The binary perceptions of sexuality which posed challenges in daily life for bisexuals were also salient in members of LGBTQ+ communities (Betts, 2021). There seems to be tension in the LGBTQ+ community

and its sub-groups wherein bisexual individuals are faced with challenges related to their polysexuality, like being portrayed as confused and indecisive, that monosexual individuals do not experience (Gonzalez et al., 2021). Additionally, to these stereotypes, bisexual people are also discriminated against for thought to be “passing” as straight, for example when having seemingly hetero-normative relationships, therefore being confronted with less discrimination (Miller et al., 2022). LGBTQ+ members used accusations like this to exclude bisexuals, as well as actively expressing the perception that bisexuals are ‘not one of them’ (Evans et al., 2017; Jen, 2019). These kinds of discriminative experiences were most often experienced by bisexual women from lesbian women. For example, in the study of Betts (2021), bisexual women explained that they experienced lesbian women as being very negative towards bisexual women, leading them to rather hide their bisexual identity. Furthermore, bisexual women in the study of Jen (2019) told the interviewer about being kicked out of lesbian bars and being confronted with the perception that bisexual women lack loyalty towards the LGBTQ+ community. Reasons for discrimination coming from for example lesbian women were a lack of understanding, trust and perceived commonalities (Ross et al., 2017). The study of Lim et al. (2023) showed that bisexual women reported a less positive view of LGBTQ+ connection compared to lesbian women and that bisexual women are in general less likely to view participation in the LGBTQ+ community positively. Moreover, bisexual individuals seem to associate more connection to the LGBTQ+ community with more negative experiences additionally to an increased internalized binegativity and feelings of illegitimacy (Flanders, 2019). For bisexual men, the discriminatory experiences can be the same as shown by Kenee et al. (2021) and Power et al. (2021), who found that bisexual men reported lower connection to the LGBTQ+ community than gay men. Additionally, Bedford et al. (2023) discovered that lesbian women experienced significantly more community support than bisexual men. All these experiences taken together seemed to form major barriers to forming a sense of belonging to the LGBTQ+ community (Gonzalez et al., 2021) and to enforce restraints to open up about their bisexual identity towards the LGBTQ+ community (Miller et al., 2022).

Lack of Attention towards Intersectionality. A topic that came up in some studies and seemed to portray a particular challenge to forming an identity was intersectional discrimination. Participants with intersecting marginalized identities, for example, being black and bisexual or being transgender and bisexual, were found to be particularly at risk of experiencing discrimination as for example found in Flanders et al.’s (2019) study. Since different forms of oppression are experienced in one individual, additional challenges can be experienced which are not apparent in privileged bisexuals, therefore, limiting possible benefits

of LGBTQ+ communities (Flanders et al., 2019). A lack of attention to the needs of multiple marginalized identity individuals not only seems to be an issue in society in general, but also in LGBTQ+ communities (Gonzalez et al., 2021).

Gender Differences in Challenges. Although there are some overlaps in the experiences of bisexual men and women, there are still some differences in the perceptions and forms of discrimination they experience. In the study of Miller et al. (2022), the tendency to assume bisexual women as heterosexual and only ‘faking’ attraction to women, to gain heterosexual men’s attention was named as a bisexual-women-specific stereotype. On the other side, while women’s attraction to their own gender is dismissed, bisexual men are confronted with the assumption that they are secretly gay and not bisexual, therefore dismissing their attraction to the other gender. This study gave indications that bisexuality in men might be less accepted in society than in women. A barrier to belonging to the LGBTQ+ community was also the gender of the partner of the bisexual individual (Gonzalez et al., 2021). Being in a heterosexual-appearing relationship was a major barrier to feeling like a part of the LGBTQ+ community. Ross et al. (2017) found that bisexual women who partnered with men seem to be at particular risk for psychological distress. In general, the fear of being questioned for their queer identity as bisexuals with heterosexual-appearing relationships, seemed to form major concerns towards connecting with the LGBTQ+ community (Ross et al., 2017).

Discussion

This scoping review was conducted to synthesize and analyze available literature on the topic of bisexuals’ feelings of connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community. By examining the 14 studies which were included, valuable insights were gained which are relevant to answer the research question. The studies were all published within the last eight years, reflecting the current interest in the topic. The field of investigating bisexuals’ connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community seems to be relatively new, therefore the included studies are of high relevance for the present. Nevertheless, the newness of the topic also highlights the fact that the research available is still limited and so are the research methods used in the studies. This is for example portrayed by the lack of longitudinal studies. The included quantitative studies all incorporated a cross-sectional design. Since the surveys only measured the variables of interest at one point in time, developments over time cannot be determined and causality cannot be specified (Kesmodel, 2018). Furthermore, as usual in qualitative research, the included qualitative studies involved rather small samples and the data does not give insights into any causality and relationships between variables (Jackson et al., 2007). Therefore, conclusions regarding specific relationships between variables and their development over time cannot, or only

limitedly drawn. Additionally, the scales used for measuring connectedness in the studies differed. Although four out of the seven (partly) quantitative studies used the Connectedness to the LGBTQ Community Scale by Frost and Meyer (2012), which was shown to have high psychometric properties (Frost & Meyer, 2012; Barbuoğlu et al., 2024), the other three studies used different measures. Moreover, the analyzed data only came from mostly English-speaking Western countries which leads to a lack of multicultural insights. Especially for topics regarding the LGBTQ+ community, cultural differences can be significant since the rights and acceptance of queer people in different countries can vary a lot (Collier et al., 2013). Therefore, future research is advised to include studies on the connectedness of bisexuals to the LGBTQ+ community conducted in non-Western countries and compare the outcomes with Western countries, to be able to get a broader insight into multiple contexts of the topic. Furthermore, the intersectionality of multiple marginalized identities in one person also plays a role in the needs of a person, which was indicated by the research included. Bisexuals with an ethnical-minority background, as well as bisexuals with a second marginalized sexual minority identity like being transgender or non-binary, might have different needs and experiences than more privileged bisexual people. Further research is needed to get more insights into these minority groups and their connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community. Moreover, as this scoping review found some gender-specific stereotypes for men and women, research should focus on the underlying reasons for these patterns. While this scoping review offered some insights into potential reasons why women experience gender-specific binegativity, the origin of bisexual men's experienced stereotypes is not yet explored much in research.

During the literature search, it became salient that analysing bisexuals as a distinct subgroup of the LGBTQ+ community gained increased attention during the last years, highlighted by the fact that 9 out of 14 of the included studies were published within or after 2020. All the more noticeable is that some aspects regarding binegativity, like difficulty with understanding bisexuality and the denial of the existence of bisexuality, already mentioned in the literature of Rust (2000; 2002), were reoccurring in recent studies. For example, 20 years after Rust's (2000) publications, Bates' (2020) participants talked about the same stereotypes they experience, being non-acceptance of their bisexuality due to the false assumption that they deny being lesbian, gay, or heterosexual. Furthermore, Gonzalez et al.'s (2021) bisexual participants also experienced being portrayed as confused, while Miller et al.'s (2022) participants also described being accused of unfaithful behaviour; both representing stereotypes Rust (2002) already identified in her texts. Highlighting the reoccurrence of the stereotypes already identified by Rust (2000; 2002) shows that the same bi-negative stereotypes still seem to persist today and

present potential reasons for barriers for bisexual people to connect with LGBTQ communities. Although important developments towards the acceptance and rights of the broader LGBTQ+ community in society have been made since Rust's (2000; 2002) publications, the persistence of bi-negative attitudes sheds light on the hypothesis that the full acceptance of bisexual individuals has not yet been reached. As this review demonstrates, discrimination against bisexual individuals persists even within supposedly tolerant spaces like the LGBTQ+ community.

This scoping review depicts how bisexuals experience barriers to connecting with the LGBTQ+ community. Their bisexuality seems to portray a major perceived differentiator from their monosexual peers which leads to lower acceptance among LGBTQ+ members. The question arises as to why biphobia appears so often in society and how it creates such a barrier for bisexual people to build up a connection to different communities like the LGBTQ+ community. One possible explanation for the general scepticism towards bisexuals in society was given by Rust (2002) when she referred to the notion that in the 19th century, men and women were seen as two opposite genders, therefore an attraction to both was causing confusion. When examining the studies to find out what possible reasons are causing a potential low feeling of connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community in bisexuals, another interesting development in more recent history was brought to attention. The participants in the study of Jen (2019) mentioned the lesbian separatist movement in the 70s as a potential reason why they often felt disconnected from LGBTQ+ communities or lesbian spaces specifically. The lesbian separatist movement was initiated by lesbian women to separate from patriarchal structures, heterosexual ideals, and male influences (van Aurich & Hearn, 2022). As a result of their attraction to men, bisexual women were seen as 'committing' to patriarchy due to their connections with men and seeing them as potential partners (McLean, 2008), causing a conflict potential between lesbian and bisexual women. The sceptical attitude of some lesbian women towards bisexual women was reflected in the included studies (Betts, 2021; Evans, 2017), and the lesbian separatist movement could portray one historical development that still contributes to this attitude today. Bisexual women tend to experience this kind of scepticism towards their assumed 'heterosexual side' not only from lesbian women, but from society in general, in the form of dismissing their attraction to women or 'performing' it to gain attention from heterosexual men (Miler et al., 2022). These false assumptions pose bisexual women in hetero-appearing relationships with a particular risk of being misjudged and discriminated (Ross et al., 2017); underscored by the higher prevalence of depressive symptoms among these women caused by their biphobic experiences (Dyar et al., 2014). Moreover, continuous experiences of

invalidation of their bisexual identity from LGBTQ+ communities, caused some bisexual women in Manley et al.'s (2018) study to question their allowance of being in queer spaces themselves, emphasizing how these discriminative experiences can lead to the internalization of biphobic beliefs in bisexual individuals. Furthermore, the study of Dyar et al. (2014) illustrates how these internalization processes can cause bisexuals to be confused about their sexual identity due to the constant confrontation with the scepticism and denial of their bisexual identities. This is an important outcome since it shows how the often-assumed confusion within bisexuals is not intrinsic to their sexual orientation itself, but if at all represents a result of the continuous biphobic stereotypes they are confronted with. Being confronted with the sceptical attitude of some LGBTQ+ members reflected in the aforementioned assumptions can hinder bisexual persons from forming a proper connection with LGBTQ+ communities. Findings regarding these perceptions are however ambivalent. For example, a study by Morgenroth et al. (2022) did not find evidence for an assumed heterosexuality in women. However, what their study found evidence for is the perception that bisexual men are assumed to be secretly gay, which was also portrayed in Miller et al's (2021) study. The analyzed studies held significantly more gender-specific information and insights regarding the reasons for a low feeling of connectedness in bisexual women than in bisexual men. However, in general, the evidence seems to suggest that although many stereotypes are experienced by men and women, bisexual men are more often assumed to be gay, while bisexual women tend to be assumed to be heterosexual. Therefore, there seem to be gender differences in the underlying assumptions of some binegative stereotypes, which future research should be aimed at exploring further. What these false assumptions have in common is the underlying disbelief in bisexuality being a proper sexuality, forming a barrier for bisexual people to be welcomed in the LGBTQ+ community.

An important aspect when looking into the marginalization of minority groups, like queer people, is to be aware of intersectionality. Intersectionality is a concept describing how different systems of oppression interact with each other within a person, caused by multiple marginalized identities (Weldon, 2008). These aspects of identity can be gender, race, ability, class and many more which can pose an individual at increased risk of being discriminated when minority identities intersect. The concept was introduced by black feminists, as they proposed that they experience different challenges than white women due to their intersecting identities of being a woman and being black (Weldon, 2008). Some of the included studies also raised attention towards intersectionality in bisexual individuals, emphasizing potential barriers they face in fully benefitting from LGBTQ+ communities (Flanders et al., 2019; Gonzalez et al., 2021). The distinct needs of bisexual individuals with intersecting identities seem to be

often not met by LGBTQ+ communities. It is striking to see how the assumed accepting and safe environment of LGBTQ+ communities can display exclusion behaviours because of race, gender and sexuality. As the findings of the included studies indicated already, bisexual individuals with more marginalized identities have to face different challenges than more privileged bisexuals. Studies investigating the discrimination queer people of colour (POC) experience show how exclusion happens within LGBTQ+ communities. For example, the study of Knee (2019) examined a queer community in Chicago and found that individuals who did not meet certain criteria were systematically excluded. In this case, white, cis-gendered, upper-class males were privileged, increasing the barriers to accessing this community for any individual who did not meet these criteria. These findings are underscored by McCormick and Barthelemy (2021) who elaborated on power dynamics within LGBTQ+ communities and also found evidence for the favouritism of white, male, cisgender and monosexual individuals. Furthermore, attention is drawn to exclusionary processes because of not meeting appearance standards or fitting into certain stereotypes, emphasizing how outward appearance and behaviours can also lead to exclusion from LGBTQ+ communities (McCormick & Barthelemy, 2021).

This scoping review shows how exclusionary processes like these operate within LGBTQ+ communities and how they can hinder bisexual individuals from forming a safe connection to the LGBTQ+ community. Given the positive effects of being connected to a queer community, such as experiencing a sense of belonging, affirmation, increased confidence, and support (Bates, 2020; Flanders et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2022), for sexual minority individuals, including bisexuals it can be important to belong to a queer community.

One possible step towards creating safe spaces for bisexuals was suggested to be bisexual-only spaces. Bisexual participants expressed their need for spaces like these, especially in Gonzalez et al.'s (2021) study. Since the bi-negative attitude in some broader LGBTQ+ spaces can lead to a decreased sense of community (Gonzalez et al., 2021), bisexual-specific spaces can be a solution for bisexuals to create a safe space for them. What reoccurred in the included studies was how bisexuals often felt the need to 'fit in' heteronormative and binary perceptions within the broader society and LGBTQ+ spaces, a process Weier (2018) calls 'Passing and Blending'. A perceived need to pass as straight or gay/lesbian, therefore fitting into monosexual norms, results from fear of bi-negative discrimination (Weier, 2018). These processes of passing as monosexual can be active by for example hiding parts of their sexual identity (Miller et al., 2022), but also often happen passively in the sense that people simply assume a monosexual sexuality when meeting a bisexual person (Weier, 2018). Blending in with monosexuals can

therefore serve as a protection against biphobic discrimination, also within queer spaces. However, it can also paradoxically reinforce bi-erasure when bisexual identities are not revealed, decreasing the chance of facilitating the visibility of bisexual identities. Bisexual-only spaces could offer a space where bisexuality is the norm and polysexuality is ideally not questioned (Eadie, 1993). These safe spaces could facilitate the aforementioned positive effects of belonging to a queer community. Here, the importance of online spaces is also not to be undermined. As suggested also in the reviewed studies (Kenee et al., 2021; Miller et al., 2022), online spaces for sexual minorities like bisexuals can offer easily accessible rooms for connecting with other individuals experiencing similar challenges. Baumel (2021) suggests that using online spaces like social media can buffer against the negative impacts of heterosexist norms and might especially be helpful for sexual minorities who lack offline connections to their sexual minority peers. Considering the possible positive psychological outcomes (Baumel, 2021) and the fact that bisexuals can face difficulties with connecting with LGBTQ+ communities, turning to online spaces, bisexual-only or broader, presents a proper possibility to find a sense of belonging for bisexuals. Nevertheless, seeking a safer space in bisexual-only spaces could widen the gap between bisexual persons and other LGBTQ+ members, potentially reducing their feeling of connectedness to the broader community. However, as this review showed, for bisexual individuals, LGBTQ+ communities are often not safe spaces, as they can encounter biphobic attitudes. Therefore, using bisexual-only spaces can be seen as a transitory solution for those affected until biphobia decreases within LGBTQ+ spaces.

Strengths

This scoping review offers a comprehensible overview of recent primary research on bisexual individuals' feeling of connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community. The method of a scoping review allowed the consolidation of findings from the studies to gain knowledge on the relatively new field. With this review, a first step was made to fill the knowledge gap of the experiences of bisexual individuals regarding their feeling of connectedness and potential barriers to forming a strong feeling of connectedness to the LGBTQ community. The diversity of included research methods offers a multifaceted synthesis of relevant information to answer the research question. This review raises awareness towards biphobic exclusionary mechanisms within LGBTQ+ communities and encourages further investigation of this topic and some of its specific facets.

Limitations

Although this review offered interesting insights, some limitations need to be acknowledged. Since the literature search was limited to three databases, additional databases

could have held more valuable studies, that are not included in this scoping review. Since the available research can vary per database, more or different databases might have offered more extensive outcomes. Furthermore, since it was exclusively searched for English-written studies, studies published in other languages were not included. Considering the aspect that the cultural backgrounds of these studies were limited to mostly English-speaking Western countries, including more studies in different languages could have resulted in culturally more variable studies. Moreover, the research was conducted by one person, therefore, the research was not discussed with a research team nor was an inter-rater reliability assessment conducted. This causes a decreased level of objectivity and generalisability (Daudt et al., 2013). Additionally, due to limited resources, there was no quality assessment of the studies conducted. When more resources and time are available, a scoping review should be undertaken by more than one person and it is advised to include a quality assessment of the studies using a validated assessment tool (Pham et al., 2014).

Conclusion

This scoping review offered valuable insights regarding bisexuals' feelings of connectedness to the LGBTQ+ community. It was shown that profiting from being part of LGBTQ+ communities can have positive effects like a sense of belonging and pride in one's identity. However, bisexuals are often hindered from building up a proper connection to the LGBTQ+ community since biphobic attitudes are prevalent not only in broad society, but also in the assumed tolerant space of LGBTQ+ communities. Monosexual and heteronormative perceptions seem to be prevalent, causing confusion and scepticism towards bisexual individuals. These stereotypes have different nuances for bisexual men and women which should be further investigated. Additionally, intersecting marginalized identities can increase the barriers to feeling connected to LGBTQ+ communities. The analysis captured the underlying stereotypes and mechanisms of exclusionary processes in LGBTQ+ communities towards bisexual individuals. Temporary solutions to creating safer spaces for bisexual individuals can incorporate creating bisexual-only spaces or reaching out to online spaces.

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