## *Forthcoming*

*Draft version. Please do not quote or circulate without permission.*

## *Passing/Out: Sexual Identity Veiled and Revealed, Ashgate Publishing Dennis Cooley and Kelby Harrison, co-editors*

##

## **“Those Shoes Are Definitely Bicurious”: More Thoughts on the Politics of Fashion[[1]](#footnote-1)**

## **Samantha Brennan**

## **Department of Philosophy**

## **The University of Western Ontario**

## *“I know that sometimes you feel like nobody truly sees you. I want you to know that I see you. I see you on the street, on the bus, in the gym, in the park. I don’t know why I can tell that you are not straight, but I can. Maybe it is the way you look at me. Please don’t stop looking at me the way you do. I would never say that the world is harder on me than it is you. Sometimes you are invisible. I have no idea what this must feel like, to pass right by your people and not be recognized. To not be seen. I want to thank you for coming out of the closet. Again and again, over and over, for the rest of your life. At school, at work, at your kid’s daycare, at your brother’s wedding, at the doctor’s office. Thank you for sideswiping their stereotypes.”[[2]](#footnote-2)*

## I am going to begin this chapter with a brief bit of autobiography. I feel like I have been coming out for my entire adult life. I came out first as a lesbian, predictably during my undergraduate student years, and then a few years later as a bisexual, when I discovered I still liked men after all but didn’t stop liking women. For a number of years I chose to regard this as essentially a private fact about myself. I told family and friends, but only close friends and immediate family, and certainly not workplace colleagues, unless they also happened to be close friends. Over time my thinking has changed and I now try to be out as a bisexual in the communities in which I move. But there have been limits to my success at being out and this chapter is in a part a chance to work through some of my thoughts about the limits and difficulties there are for women who choose to come out as bisexual, especially for women who are both bisexual and femme. This essay then has a personal impetus but the arguments it explores are ethical and philosophical.

## **Part 1: The Causes of Bisexual Invisibility**

## Sex advice columnist Dan Savage frequently argues that bisexuals have moral

## and political responsibilities to come out and to be forthcoming about our sexual orientation in a wide range of contexts.[[3]](#footnote-3) His view seems to be that bisexual invisibility as a problem, insofar as it is a problem, can be laid at the door of individual bisexual men and women. I am not going to rehearse here the arguments about bisexual invisibility, assuming the problem and the issues it raises are familiar to most readers of this volume. I am going to focus instead on causes and solutions. The problem of bisexual invisibility stems from three different aspects of bisexual life, according to Savage.

## First, it’s a numbers game. If I’m a bisexual woman, and lesbians and bi-women make up –let’s be very generous –15% of the population, then there is a much larger group of male partners available to me than there are female partners. Of course, the ratio gets worse if we have to subtract from the overall total the lesbians who won’t enter relationships with bisexual women. Hence, odds are, I’ll end up with a male partner. That’s not selling out, that’s just the statistics of dating and partner selection. You might also add pressures to conform and the desire to please one’s family to the list of factors that pushes bisexuals in the direction of opposite sex partners but we don’t need to go there to see the problem. Other than thinking of ourselves as having a moral obligation to be polyamorous and find partners of both sexes (thus confirming another stereotype of bisexuals as hyper sexual and always non-monogamous), there is little we can do about the numbers problem.[[4]](#footnote-4) Of course, having an opposite sex partner need not stop me from identifying as bisexual and this is connected to the next part of the problem.

## Second, I’ll tend to be seen as whatever sexual orientation best matches the partner I’m with. If most bisexuals end up with opposite sex partners, then most of us will be seen as straight. It is true that if I’m with a woman, I’ll be seen as a lesbian, but either way, my bisexuality disappears from view. Barring wearing a t-shirt that lists all of my past, or other, sexual partners and/or attractions down the back –like a rock concert tour t-shirt –and drawing peoples’ attention that way, it is a challenge to assert one’s identity as a bisexual. I don’t possess such a t-shirt but I do have one that simply proclaims “bi” on the front, for times when I want to make it very clear.[[5]](#footnote-5) The linguistic challenge is especially tricky. I often correct people who say of me that I’m in a heterosexual marriage. Marriages don’t have sexual orientations, I respond. If instead what you mean by ‘heterosexual marriage’ is a marriage of two heterosexuals, then the claim is false. I think it’s more correct to refer to my marriage as an opposite sex marriage, or a different sex marriage, in contrast with same sex marriage. The same error occurs when two women marry –even if both women are bisexual, people will still tend to refer to them as in a lesbian marriage. (Note there is no such thing as a bisexual marriage!)[[6]](#footnote-6)

## Third, not all people with a sexual history which would be consistent with an ascription of a bisexual identity choose to claim that identity. A woman may be with a male partner for most of her adult life and then realize she is ‘really’ a lesbian and come out as such. A man may occasionally have sex with other men in circumstances where that option is easy and available while still remaining firm in his conviction that he is really heterosexual. A history of bisexual behavior isn’t sufficient to determine bisexual identity. (Of course, a history of bisexual experiences isn’t a necessary condition either. I might be bisexual in my attractions and not had success with men. Or, I might be young and sexually inexperienced.)

## Here is yet another example, the movie *Brokeback Mountain*. Is *Brokeback Mountain* a movie about two bisexual men, two gay men, or a combination? Reviewer Amy Andre writes, “*Brokeback Mountain* is not a movie about gay people, and there are no gay people in it. There. I said it. Despite what you may have read in the many reviews that have come out about this new cowboy feature film, *Brokeback Mountain* is a bisexual picture. Why can't film reviewers say the word ‘bisexual’ when they see lead characters with sexual and romantic relationships with both men and women?”[[7]](#footnote-7) I take Andre’s point that no reviewers mentioned the possibility that the main characters might be bisexual but I’m equally persuaded that we don’t know what the sexual orientation of the characters was meant to be or even if it’s the same for both men. *Brokeback Mountain* was most easily seen as a story about deep closets, conservative cowboy values, and sexual repression. While the lead male characters in the film engage in bisexual behavior, we don’t really know what their attitudes about sex with women are, or what motivates them to have relationships with women. Surely the answer isn’t just determined by behavior but rather by what identity one claims.

## Even for those of us who are certain of our bisexual identity, being bisexual doesn’t mean that one is attracted to both sexes equally. Some may find that their sexual desires and emotional/romantic/affective desires pull in different directions. Others may be drawn to one sex a lot and the other, just a little. Given the variability it can make sense to round up as “gay” or round down as “straight” (to use Savage’s terms) and it’s not for others to insist, “No, you’re really a bisexual.” The demands of the Bisexuality Visibility Police must yield to an individual’s right to claim his or her own sexual identity.

## I’ll raise one final worry, a fourth worry, about why bisexual invisibility happens that isn’t Dan Savage’s, although it’s also connected to the choices one makes about identity. For some, the notion of bisexuality assumes a gender binary and that everyone sits nicely on one side of the line. On this way of understanding bisexuality then, bisexuals recognize the existence of just two sexes and we are attracted to both of them. But for many people, this isn’t quite true to one’s desires. You might think there are many genders and you’re attracted to all of them and identify as ‘pansexual.’ There are also those who identify with some version of bisexuality-lite, usually as a way of reflecting their stronger preference for and/or history with the opposite sex. One can be “hetero-flexible” or “bi-curious.” Others skip the whole debate and identify as “queer.” The range of labels which are consistent with the ascription of bisexual identity is staggering. And so with a plethora of labels to choose from, and as a small group to begin with, again bisexuality tends to disappear.

## So let us assume that bisexuality invisibility is a problem, and that the reasons given above are at least part of the story as to its origin, what then is the solution? Savage calls on bisexuals to come out, to positively identify as bisexual. Set aside Savage’s tone–“Oh, stop whining, you’ve caused the problem, what with your silence and your rounding up and rounding down. Claim your bisexuality or shut up”–and look at the claim that bisexuals have an obligation to come out. Savage puts the point this way, “Not only would it be great if more bisexuals were out to their partners, it would be great if more bisexuals in opposite-sex relationships were out to their friends, families, and coworkers. More out bisexuals would mean less of that bisexual invisibility that bisexuals are always complaining about. If more bisexuals were out, more straight people would know they actually know and love sexual minorities, which would lead to less anti-LGBT bigotry generally, which would be better for everyone.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

## I want to side with Savage on the prima facie obligation to be out but in this essay I also want to argue that bisexuals can only do what’s possible–“ought implies can” being a long established principle in ethics[[9]](#footnote-9)–and that being seen as bisexual can be difficult, especially for women, especially again for femme women.

## **2. Citizenship and Visibility as a Political Strategy**

## How easy it is it for bisexuals to be out? What’s required of us in the name of visibility? Dan Savage is, of course, an advice columnist, not a political theorist, but his claim that what bisexuals need to do is become more visible is connected to work in queer theory about the politics of visibility as a strategy for advancing GLBT rights. In the paper on fashion and visibility, cited earlier, I looked at the political strategy of visibility in advancing the cause of gay, lesbian, and bisexual equality and argued that visibility as a strategy had its limits. This paper continues that discussion of the limits of visibility arguing that visibility, like fashion, is a communicative process and there are limits on what an individual can do on his or her own. Visibility requires recognition; being out as bisexual requires being seen as bisexual.[[10]](#footnote-10) But what’s the connection between bisexual visibility, fashion, and sexual citizenship and rights of recognition? The story, I think, goes something like this.

##  In contrast to the abstract citizen of liberal political philosophy, the sexual citizen is offered as an alternative account of what it means to be a citizen. The sexual citizen moves in the public realm as a sexual being. According to *GLBTQ Encyclopedia of Culture*, the sexual citizen “bridges the private and public, and stresses the cultural and political sides of sexual expression. Sexual privacy cannot exist without open sexual cultures. Homosexuality might be consummated in the bedroom, but first partners must be found in the public space of streets, bars, and media such as newspapers and the internet.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Cultural theorist Jeffrey Weeks writes: “The ‘sexual citizen' is a recent phenomenon. Making private claims to space, self-determination and pleasure, and public claims to rights, justice and recognition.” According to Weeks, the sexual citizen is a hybrid being, who tells us a great deal about political and cultural transformation and new possibilities of the self and identity.[[12]](#footnote-12)

## Political theorists writing about citizenship have identified two aspects of citizenship. The first is about legal rights to equality before the law, very familiar territory for liberal theorists, but the second is about the right to recognition, about being recognized as a fellow citizen. Queer theorists have tended to focus on the second aspect of citizenship believing that’s where most obstacles to citizenship for sexual minorities can be found.[[13]](#footnote-13)

## The idealized citizen of the liberal state, abstracted away from sex, race, class, ability, and sexual and gender orientation, renders those invisible who are only ever seen in their particularity. Here are some examples: It’s the Society for Women in Philosophy (as the US association is known) and the Canadian Association of Women in Philosophy (in Canada). I’m told that when I identify myself as North American, people know right away that I’m Canadian. Denizens of the United States simply identify themselves as “American.” Likewise, there is same sex marriage, but no one speaks of different sex, or opposite sex, marriage. The default option does not need naming. There are attempts to shift the burden and to introduce names for that which previously did not seem to need naming, so obvious was it. Those in the GLBT community will be familiar with cis-gender as the complementary term for transgender. To be cis-gendered is to have your birth sex match your body and your gender identity. Likewise, bisexual activists have attempted to introduce the term “monosexual” for those, gay or straight, whose sexual preferences extend to only one sex.[[14]](#footnote-14)

## Thus the political strategy of visibility had a certain necessity to it. According to Phelan, a group “that is consistently present only as the opposite or outside of the nation, that has no part in the national imagination except as threat, cannot participate in citizenship, no matter what rights its members have come to enjoy.”[[15]](#footnote-15) As a strategy visibility is connected to the quest for rights of recognition. One of the main rights claimed on behalf of the sexual citizen is the right of recognition. Queer theorists have argued that gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals don’t merely want the same rights as the sexual majority. Rather a large part of what the queer community wants is to be recognized as having legitimate identity. That is, queer activists want to be recognized as queer citizens. Lisa Walker writes: “Privileging visibility has become a tactic of late twentieth-century identity politics, in which participants often symbolize their demands for social justice by celebrating visible signifiers of difference that have historically targeted them for discrimination.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

## I think the notion of the sexual citizen gets some things right and other things wrong. While it is true that the notion of the abstract liberal citizen fails to be truly inclusive, building in as it does ideals of masculinity, ability, and heteronormativity, I don’t think we need to so quickly abandon all hopes of a universal notion of citizenship. What we see at work here is the combination of failed abstraction and idealization. Abstraction would not be so worrisome were it not for its constant companion, idealization. Philosopher Onora O’Neill argues that feminist political philosophers need to make the distinction between abstraction and idealization: “Abstraction, taken straightforwardly, is a matter of bracketing, but not denying, predicates that are true of the matter under discussion…Idealization is another matter: it can easily lead to falsehood. An assumption, and derivatively a theory, idealizes when it ascribes predicates–often seen as enhanced, ‘ideal’ predicates–that are false of the case in hand, and so denies predicates that are true of that case. For example, if human beings are assumed to have capacities and capabilities for rational choice or self-sufficiency or independence from others that are evidently not achieved by many or even by any actual human beings, the result is not mere abstraction; it is idealization.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

My other worry about the notion of the sexual citizen, as opposed to the abstract citizen of liberal political theory, is whether the notion is broad enough to include all persons. While it’s true that we can each be seen in our particularities and that heterosexuality is a sexual preference too, I’m not so sure that the concept of the sexual citizen so easily suits children (not to deny children’s sexuality entirely) or that it fits so well with those whose life path does not have a large role for sexuality (think here of priests and nuns, or of the asexual). There is both an optimism and an individualism that I find disturbing in visibility as a strategy: individualism in that we each have an obligation to be visible–even though that achievement is much easier for some than for others–and optimism in that it assumes that a world in a which there was greater visibility is a world in which sexual minorities would be more justly treated. I am not convinced that this is necessarily true. But let’s set these doubts about sexual citizenship aside and look again at the strategy of visibility.

## **3. Who is Recognized and Who is Invisible**

## Recognition as a sexual citizen, being seen as a group member, being able to speak as a member of a group, is often not a something an individual can do on his/her own. Recognition will depend on issues of power, appearance, and context. If “visibility” is a success term, an achievement, then visibility depends on recognition. The simplest example is one that I gave in my analysis of queer politics and fashion: One can be seen and identified as a queer femme in Toronto or San Francisco while in smaller towns and cities such an option doesn’t exist. To dress in a feminine fashion is, in many spaces and places in the world to invite being misread as straight. The same difficulty applies if one wishes to be identified as bisexual. While there are times when the mysteriousness of sexuality might be desirable, when “is she or isn’t she?” might be part of the allure in bisexual friendly spaces, suggests Hemmings,[[18]](#footnote-18) there are other times when one simply wants to be seen for what one is. I’ve argued that fashion occurs at the boundary of the personal and the political, at the edge between private and public. Fashion achievements are a kind of successful communication which requires the right community. Fashion cannot be an individual enterprise. Consider an example from outside the context of sexual identity. I wear an orange belt to my Aikido classes signifying the grade level I’ve achieved. But I don’t expect people who aren’t familiar with martial arts to know what an orange belt means. In terms of details, I wouldn’t expect anyone except a fellow practitioner of Yoshikan Aikido to know what exact skills were associated with that level of achievement. Likewise, in a world of ever changing and complex gender identities, there are limits to recognition based on community. This creates challenges in these days of internet communities where even in small towns one can gain access to particular gendered sub-cultures. You might try to come out as power femme, or a faggy boi, in small town Northern Canada but likely the best you’ll be able to manage is gay or queer.

## Consider another example which illustrates limits on visibility. “Flagging,” the practice of wearing a coloured hanky to signify one’s sexual preferences and preferred role only really works if there is a community who knows what the hanky-code means. In the absence of a leather community with shared understanding of what various colours and their placement mean regarding your sexual preferences, you aren’t really flagging. You’re just wearing a hanky in your pocket. I am a member of a book group and we joked about flagging “book” at an upcoming community event with a paperback in the rear pocket of our jeans to indicate a preference for reading aloud or being read to. But our code would only work for other book club members. Other people would just wonder, if they noticed at all, why we were carrying books in such an odd location.

## In a recent blog post Drew Cordes talks about flagging as a way of identifying as both queer and femme. Cordes doesn’t feel that people have recognize exactly what her hanky indicates, though it’s nice if they do, but they do have to recognize that she is flagging for the identity marker to succeed. Hankies are used mostly by members of the kink community to identify particular sexual practices and preferences but they have a history that goes back to early times in the queer community. Cordes writes that she flags for reasons that go beyond kink identification:

## “Flagging reminds me of the queer people who were around before me, the struggles they went through, and the sacrifices they made to give me and my friends a better life. For me, flagging is a way to connect to my culture, even when there's not another queer in sight. I want to keep our culture alive. I want acceptance, but I don't want to assimilate … Flagging also is a way I can stay visible. Being traditionally femme-looking and being able to pass, it's easy for me to be mistaken as a heterosexual cis-female. This happens even when I'm in gay bars or other queer spaces. If I'm flagging, however, I have an identifier. It's true that most gay people won't know what the colors signify or what side is what, but they know it means something. They know it's a sign that the person wearing them is queer. Flagging identifies me as a member of the community.” [[19]](#footnote-19)

## Cordes reminds us that being visible is easier for some than for others. Lisa Walker’s book *Looking Like What You Are: Sexual Style, Race, and Lesbian Identity*, deals with visibility from the perspective of lesbian identity and the problem of recognition for women who are lesbians but who aren’t seen as such. In the chapter, "How to Recognize a Lesbian," she argues that there are both benefits and costs to strategies of visibility. Walker focuses on the identity issues facing lesbians who identify as femme. While Walker's work examines visibility from the perspective of the femme lesbian, there are other issues tied to recognition and visibility. Recognition is an important theme in queer culture and queer politics. Note that recognition has two aspects. First, there is recognition by the members of one’s own group. This can matter even more in contexts in which public recognition is too dangerous and so systems of secret signals develop, such as wearing a single earring in a particular ear. I’ve written about the loss one experiences when that sense of recognition disappears. For me, that’s most often occurred when travelling. In some countries I was shocked that I couldn’t recognize lesbians as lesbians and yet in other places it seemed to me that no one was queer though I knew that couldn’t be right. Second, there is recognition by a larger community and this can be more difficult to accomplish as it requires education on the part of a larger group.

## Fashion is one way we recognize one another, but what do lesbians wear? Obviously this varies across times, places, and generations. It also varies from subculture to subculture. From sporty to femme, from butch to leather, from dandy to geeky, there is a wide range of styles one might associate with a lesbian aesthetic. The issues get tougher still if what one wants to identify is not a lesbian aesthetic but rather a bisexual aesthetic. It’s worth noting that if a queer aesthetic works at all, then by necessity it does so by way of inclusion and exclusion. Think about your own judgments about sexual orientation. Some people get counted in and others out on the basis of such factors as handbag style, lipstick colour, fingernail length and amount of hair styling product used. Hair length is especially tricky and important to get right both for those who want in and those who want out. (Recall the fuss in the media about Hilary Clinton’s alleged “lesbian hair.” Actual lesbians I know looked at the pictures and laughed, and said “That is *not* lesbian hair.” But the idea that such a discussion could be had showed there was something to the issue of hair length, and style, and sexual orientation.[[20]](#footnote-20))

Could there be such a thing as a bisexual haircut? It turns out that I am not the first person to wonder this. Bi-blogger Amy Andre writes, “How can someone wear their bisexuality on their sleeve, if people's assumptions about our sexuality are based on things like haircuts? Especially if those haircuts are also being assumed to only belong to monosexuals (in this case, lesbians)? The only conclusion I could draw is: we need a bisexual haircut! I think the bi community needs to come together and decide on one hair style, and that will be the bi hair style. Then, we need to be able to advertise the fact that that is the bi hair style, so that people can recognize us ….But what I'm talking about here is developing a signifier, an aesthetic, a queer/clear marker for bisexuality.”[[21]](#footnote-21)

## However, the problem of exclusion is that it may end up excluding those who we didn’t intend. How far will word of the bisexual haircut, that Andre jokes about, spread? In her paper “Navigating Embodied Lesbian Cultural Space: Toward a Lesbian Habitus, Space and Culture,” Alison Rooke explores themes of exclusion and inclusion in the lives of working-class lesbian and bisexual women (both transsexual and nontranssexual). Writes Rooke, “It is worth noting that the aestheticization of lesbian and gay identities and bodies into ‘lifestyle’ had become more apparent in the past 20 years. The lesbian body politic has significantly changed since the 1980s and 1990s. The lesbian feminist critique of ‘patriarchy’ was borne out through embodied practices. The lesbian feminist body was unruly, questioning the discourses of appropriate femininity by sprouting hair, changing shape, refusing constraining clothes, and so on. Lesbian feminist culture offered the opportunity to experiment and explore dominant conceptions of gender; it offered a space to rethink heteronormativity and for some the possibility to live, at least temporarily in space and time, outside of its bounds.”[[22]](#footnote-22)

# But Rooke’s subjects were unable to fit in to be recognized. “They fell short of a recognizable lesbian habitus in more embodied ways. They were not androgynous, gym toned, or tanned or were not displaying the appropriate haircuts. It was not merely that they did not wear the right labels. It was also the case that they did not possess the requisite cultural capital to know which brands should be worn even if they could afford them and how to wear them.”[[23]](#footnote-23)

# So while the politics of recognition seems to call for visibility as a strategy, there are dangers in relying too heavily on visibility. Writes Walker: “While privileging visibility can be politically and rhetorically effective, it is not without its problems. Within the constraints of a particular identity that invests certain signifiers with political value, figures that do not present these signifiers are often neglected. Because subjects who can pass exceed the categories of visibility that establish identity, they tend to be understood as peripheral to the process of marginalization … The paradigm of visibility is totalizing when a signifier of difference becomes synonymous with the identity it signifies. In this situation, members of a given population who do not bear that signifier of difference, or who bear visible signs of another identity are rendered invisible and are marginalized within an already marginalized community.” [[24]](#footnote-24)

The political strategy of visibility has its dangers and those dangers extend beyond the GLBT movement. Ellen Samuels compares the problems faced by femme lesbians to the problems of those with invisible disabilities: “In the dominant cultural discourse, as well as in lesbian and disability subcultures, certain assumptions about the correlation between appearance and identity have resulted in an often exclusive focus on visibility as both the basis of community and the means of enacting social change. Discourses of coming out and passing are central to visibility politics, in which coming out is generally valorized while passing is seen as assimilationist. Thus vigilant resistance to external stereotypes of disability and lesbianism has not kept our subcultures from enacting dynamics of exclusion and surveillance over their members. Nor does a challenge to those dynamics necessarily imply a wish on my part to discard visibility politics or a rejection of the value and importance of visibility for marginalized communities. “[[25]](#footnote-25)

This is a short chapter ranging over a variety of themes, starting with the request for bisexual visibility and ending with thoughts about the ways in which visibility as a strategy may be problematic. I hope to have shown that there are some difficulties with privileging the strategy of visibility. I hope to have also shown that being “out” requires recognition and that this isn’t something one can easily do on one’s own. Along the way I explored the politics of fashion and looked at fashion as one communicative approach to being out and showed that it doesn’t work equally well for all sexual orientations or genders. It’s not enough to insist that the problem lies with bisexuals and our failure to be visible. I’d like to end with a quote by Clare Hemmings, a question she poses about bisexual visibility: “As bisexuality becomes more visible, as bisexual identity becomes more solidified (if it does), will there be a way of being ‘read as’ bisexual?”[[26]](#footnote-26) I hope very much that Hemmings’ hope is correct.

1. For my first thoughts on these matters, see my “Fashion and Sexual Identity, or Why Recognition Matters,” in Jeanette Kennett and Jessica Wolfendale (eds), *Fashion and Philosophy* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011). This paper rehearses and expands some of the arguments found there. The title is taken from *30 Rock*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ivan E. Coyote, “Hats Off to Beautiful Femmes: Thank You for Looking at Me the Way You Do,” *National xtra*, July 30, 2009. http://www.xtra.ca/public/National/Hats\_off\_to\_beautiful\_femmes-7215.aspx [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See for example Dan Savage, “Bisexuals: You Need to Come Out to Your Friends and Spouses –Now,” *The Stranger*, June 21, 2011. http://www.thestranger.com/seattle/bisexuals/Content?oid=8743322 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This would be a stronger version of the claim that Kayley Vernallis makes in her paper "Bisexual Monogamy: Twice the Temptation but Half the Fun?" *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 30/Winter (1999). Vernallis argues that bisexuals can commit to monogamous relationships but that the monogamy demands more of bisexuals than it does of both gay and straight people and that bisexual sexual flourishing is limited by these demands. Her paper provides material for arguments in favour of special permissions for non-monogamy for bisexuals. The claim I mention here, but don’t argue for, is that bisexuality suggests non-monogamy as a political strategy in service of visibility. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. I also collect buttons in the quest for visibility. One recent acquisition reads “I’m bisexual but I’m still not attracted to you.” I don’t wear that one because it seems mean and I like to be nice. Another reads “I came to a fork in the road and I chose both.” I don’t wear that one because it’s too obscure. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Leslie Green argues in favour of sex neutral marriage: “A different-sex marriage need not be a marriage between heterosexuals, and a same-sex marriage need not be a marriage between homosexuals. This shows how little the law of marriage cares about the sexuality of parties to a marriage; it does not show that sex-restricted marriage laws do not discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation. They do.” Leslie Green, “Sex-Neutral Marriage,” *Current Legal Problems*, 64/1 (2011): pp. 1–21. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. National Sexuality Resource Centre’s website, <http://nsrc.sfsu.edu/article/opinion_bisexual_cowboys_love> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <http://www.thestranger.com/seattle/bisexuals/Content?oid=8743322> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant/> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. I was once the grad student liaison for our grad program, assigned the task of talking to new students about our program and about department life. An incoming student said she was nervous about how faculty might react to her sexual orientation as she was a lesbian. I had to explain the problem wouldn’t be how they’d react. Rather, the problem would be whether they would ever notice. I said I wasn’t sure what one could do to be seen as a lesbian other than having sex with another woman on the seminar room table. This isn’t always true for gays and lesbians but it’s much more often the case for bisexuals. The “blending” and “invisibility” of bisexuality comes with both costs and benefits. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. GLBTQ Encyclopedia of Culture, <http://www.glbtq.com/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Jeffrey Weeks, “The Sexual Citizen,” *Theory Culture Society*, 15 (1998): pp. 35-52. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Shane Phelan, *Sexual Strangers: Gays, Lesbians, and Dilemmas of Citizenship* (Temple University Press, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See, for example, the tumblr, <http://stfumonosexuals.tumblr.com/> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ibid, p. 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Lisa Walker, *Looking like what you are: sexual style, race, and lesbian identity* (NYU Press, 2001), p. 868.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Onoroa O’Neill, *Towards Justice and Virtue* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 40-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. For a discussion of the playful aspects of identity judgments, see Clare Hemmings, "From Landmarks to Spaces: Mapping the Territory of a Bisexual Genealogy," in Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (eds), *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance* (Bay Press, 1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. <http://www.bilerico.com/2011/11/why_i_flag_its_not_just_about_sex.php#more> [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. For a discussion of “lesbian hair” and the media, see Julie Levin Russo, “Hairgate! TV’s Coiffure Controversies and Lesbian Locks,” *Camera Obscura*, 22/65 (2007): 166-172. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See <http://www.bilerico.com/2011/09/what_does_a_bisexual_look_like.php> [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. ##  Alison Rooke, “Navigating Embodied Lesbian Cultural Space: Toward a Lesbian Habitus, Space and Culture,” *Space and Culture*, 10/2 (2007): pp. 246-247.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Ibid, p. 247. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Walker, *Looking*, p. 868. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ellen Samuels, “My Body, My Closet: Invisible Disability and the Limits of Coming-Out Discourse,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 9/1-2 (2003): pp. 233-255. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Hemmings, "Landmarks." [↑](#footnote-ref-26)