

*French Twist's* Loli as a Representation of the Lived Experience of Bisexual Motherhood

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The lived experience of bisexual mothers has not been adequately researched by social science and is elusive as a subject of film. There have been relatively few film portrayals of bisexual mothers. Josiane Balasko wrote, directed, and co-starred in the film *French Twist*, which was released in France in 1995 as *Gazon Maudit* and distributed as a four minute shorter version in the U.S. in 1996. The film includes both motherhood and bisexuality as topics. Today, *French Twist* remains the most readily available and authentic representation of the lived experience of bisexual mothers on film. Although the film shows one possible living arrangement for bisexual mothers (polyamory), there are many aspects of the lived experience of bisexual mothers missing in the film. *French Twist* both reproduces and challenges myths and stereotypes of bisexual women.

Invisibility is one of the most important aspects of the lived experience of many bisexual women's lives. I mention it here to bring to light the degree to which bisexual mothers are neglected as a subject. Several anthologies, books, and studies have discussed the invisibility of bisexuality in great depth, including Hutchins and Kaahumanu's *Bi Any Other Name*, Orndorff's *Bi Lives*, and Firestein's *Bisexuality* as well as many articles in the *Journal of Bisexuality*. In a 2008 article, Lisa M. Diamond called bisexuality "woefully underinvestigated" (Diamond 5). Bisexuality remains marginalized in social science research. As little has been published about bisexuality, far less has been written about bisexual mothers as a population.

When bisexuality is addressed, bisexual motherhood is still left largely unexamined. The above sources and other social science research, have not addressed the lived experiences of or the unique challenges faced by bisexual mothers. Bisexuality is marginalized as a valid identity for many bisexual mothers and motherhood is commonly neglected as a topic of research on bisexuality. This absence is reflected in the difficulty of finding representations of bisexual

mothers in film. This myth that bisexuality does not exist is greatly challenged by *French Twist*. Balasko especially breaks new ground by revealing bisexual mothers' existence on film.

In this paper, I will define bisexuality and describe bisexuality in film. I will discuss several problems that arose during my review of literature on bisexuality and bisexual motherhood. I will examine film as a possible contributor to increasing the number and variety of representations of bisexuality. I will tie the narrative of *French Twist* to current myths, stereotypes and misconceptions of bisexuality while I also address how the film's portrayal of bisexual motherhood reflects the lived experience of bisexual mothers. I hope to encourage social science research on bisexuality and motherhood and more varied representations of bisexual mothers in films.

While a fixed definition of bisexuality has not been established, for the purpose of this research, I must define and use the term bisexual. According to *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, the adjective bisexual means, "Of, relating to, or having a sexual orientation to persons of either sex" (146). As a noun, it is defined as, "A bisexual person" (146). The dictionary definition becomes problematic when real life situations are applied. For instance, if a woman is highly attracted to women and fantasizes about sex with women but has only ever been sexually active with men, is she bisexual? Many within the queer community reject labels and prefer to embrace a fluid sexuality. I must also acknowledge those who identify as pansexual or omnisexual and are attracted to individuals regardless of their gender identification or sex, in opposition to the dichotomous idea of either/or monosexist expectations of males and females. Due to limitations in the scope of my current research, I am unable to identify them as subjects. I value them as an important population to be researched in the future. For the purpose of this paper, I will consider a person who has the potential to be attracted to members of both sexes

bisexual. Sue George suggests that bisexuality is an identity, rather than just a behavior and should be a voluntary identity, rather than be applied as a label (George 157). The existence of a bisexual identity is necessary for some, especially many mothers who may feel isolated and alone, to have a group to identify with if they choose. As Sue George points out, “advantages of taking on an identity...are clear: an individual can work out for herself what it means to be bisexual...; can regard it as positive rather than negative; can work to create a culture in which her sexuality is validated” (George 158).

Bisexuality in film is even more difficult to define than it is in reality. Perhaps as many definitions exist for bisexuality in film as there are bisexual characters. *French Twist* is not unlike other films with characters who have sex with both men and women. “Bisexual” is never uttered in the dialogue. Although I do not agree with the application of a label to others, I will label fictional characters as bisexual even though they do not claim the identity in the films. Often, when the term is used in films, it is used in a derogatory way, as in the U.S. film, *Kissing Jessica Stein* (Burlison 16). The term “bisexual” is also used to turn on a male or prove that the character is not a lesbian, as in the U.S. film, *Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story*, when Kate kisses Joyce then says “I’m bisexual,” and then kisses Peter. Part of the reason that bisexual characters may be difficult to find is because a film only portrays “a small slice” of the character’s life (Bryant 3). Like Loli in *French Twist*, we are not aware of a character’s past, or what will happen to them after the narrative ends. Loli may or may not have been sexual with women before but she is not outwardly shocked or confused by her attraction to Marijo. Her previous sexual experiences are not revealed in the film.

I found two primary problems in my review of literature on bisexuality and motherhood. The most notable problem that I will reveal is a lack of social science research specifically on

bisexual mothers because of their invisibility and historical combination with lesbian and gay subjects. I expected to find that bisexual mothers face unique obstacles. I suspect that many problems faced by bisexual mothers are the same ones faced by childless bisexual people. The effects of monosexism, biphobia, and the myth that bisexuality is nonexistent are likely exacerbated for bisexual mothers due to their decreased visibility. Bisexual mothers are not exempt from the myths about bisexuality and the pressure to live up to the image of the ideal mother is also applied to them. This has not been adequately researched because bisexual mothers are historically combined with all mothers, with lesbian mothers, or with all lesbian, gay, and transgender parents. None of the studies I discuss here that involve lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) parents sufficiently address bisexual mothers as a unique population.

The second problem I will discuss is the difficulty faced by researchers in accessing a random or unbiased sample. Invisibility causes bisexual mothers to be unquantifiable and creates difficulty in accessing random samples. This problem is also due to research subject selection methods. Studies by Alfred Kinsey and Fritz Klein have shown that there are a significant number of bisexual women, which I will further discuss during the film analysis on myths. Since many of these bisexual women are undoubtedly also mothers, this specific population should be studied in more depth.

The primary way that bisexual mothers are marginalized as a topic of social science research is through conflation with lesbian and gay parents. Examples of this can be found in many articles, several of which follow. In *Lesbian and Bisexual Mothers and Nonmothers: Demographics and the Coming-Out Process*, Morris, Balsam, and Rothblum used many more subjects that identified as lesbian than as bisexual. On their scale of 0 to 100, 0 was totally

lesbian and 100 was totally heterosexual. 44% identified as 0 or “exclusively lesbian,” another 18% were between 1 and 10, 8% were between 11 and 20, and 26% were between 21 and 50. A mere 3% identified between 51 and 100 (146). This is a good example of a study where bisexual subjects are combined with lesbian subjects in an uneven ratio but the title indicates equality. While the researchers did ask if subjects were in a current relationship with a female partner and if they were ever married to a man, they failed to ask if the respondents were in a current relationship with a man.

In a *Journal of GLBT Family Studies* interview by Gianna Israel, Arlene Istar Lev discusses “GLBT” parenthood but deals almost exclusively with lesbian mothers and gay fathers. In *(How) Does It Make a Difference? Perspectives of Adults with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Parents*, Goldberg recognized the need to study the adult children of LGB parents; however, of the 46 telephone interview participants in the study, only two were raised by bisexual parents, both of them mothers (553). In the online article, *Children of GLBTQ Parents*, Bateman focuses only on gay men and lesbian women. In the only reference to bisexual women in Bateman's article the data combines bisexual mothers with lesbian mothers. I mention this online article because it might be a common place for bisexual parents to look for information. In these studies that claim to include “B” in their titles and subject, there have been too few bisexual women and bisexual mothers in large groups of mostly lesbians, or lesbian and gay parents. They also commonly ask no questions that apply uniquely to bisexual participants, which further marginalizes bisexual mothers. This research practice does not consider that a bisexual woman with children might be out as bisexual.

Another problem within the social science research on bisexual mothers is obtaining an unbiased random sample. This problem is reflected in *A Family Matter: When a Spouse Comes*

*Out as Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual* by Amity P. Buxton. Buxton does not include in-text references, which creates difficulty in finding the sources of her information. While it is legitimate that she studied 8000 LGBT, and heterosexual spouses, she cites that they were collected as self reports from her years as the Executive Director of the Straight Spouse Network, a support group, which I argue would lead her to obtain a biased sample (52). Buxton does not adequately explain her method of gathering subjects. Spouses of bisexual people who are not in need of a support group, who are secure with their spouse's identity, those couples with two bisexual spouses, and those who were out as bisexual prior to marriage were likely left out of this research.

A biased group of research subjects was evident in *Children of the Closet: A Measurement of the Anxiety and Self-Esteem of Children Raised by a Non-Disclosed Homosexual or Bisexual Parent*. The subjects were found through PFLAG, Gay and Lesbian Parents International, Love Makes a Family, and psychology students at a Pacific Northwest university. Out of 36, five were raised by bisexual fathers and just two were raised by bisexual mothers. The researchers admit that the subjects were "biased by self-selection" (89). Next, In *(How) Does It Make a Difference? Perspectives of Adults with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Parents*, Abbie E. Goldberg recruited subjects from "Websites of two organizations that are geared toward children of gay parents" Parents, Families, Friends of Lesbians and Gays chapters, Rainbow Families, and word of mouth (Goldberg 553). This highlights an important gap in the research. As I found in the articles cited above, it is difficult for researchers to study bisexuality in an unbiased or thorough way because of the self-reporting nature of their subjects and the avenues that they must use to find research subjects. Peer reviewed, cited, inclusive social science research would benefit from a more random sample of bisexual mothers. This would

likely provide evidence of the many unique problems that these mothers currently discuss primarily in online support groups. Without more acceptance of marginalized sexualities, however, I am not convinced that collection of a random or unbiased sample will be possible.

I was able to find one study, published in 2007, that included bisexual mothers in nearly equal proportions to lesbian mothers. In *Perinatal Repressive Symptomatology among Lesbian and Bisexual Women*, those who identified as bisexual, two-spirited or other made up 17 out of 49 participants (54). The subjects were either pregnant, biological mothers, or non-biological mothers. The research found that “lesbian and bisexual biological mothers as a group have higher mean scores than previously reported for heterosexual women on the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale.” The researchers support the fact that this is an “understudied and potentially underserved population” (57) and that “additional, longitudinal studies are needed” (53). This relatively new study may indicate that more research on bisexual mothers will be forthcoming.

The habit of social science research to marginalize bisexual mothers has also been reflected in film criticism. Although scholars have often closely examined the roles of lesbian and gay characters in film, bisexuals have historically been left out of this research as in social science research. In the book, *Bisexual Characters in Film: From Anaïs to Zee*, which first addressed bisexual characters in film, Wayne M. Bryant points to several reasons for the invisibility or lack of bisexual characters in film in the preface. The first is the Hays Code or the United States Motion Picture Production Code of 1930, which was in place for decades, and that prohibited the portrayal of any same sex relationships until it was eliminated in 1968 (ix). Second, Bryant points to the lack of out bisexual filmmakers combined with the lack of a unified bisexual movement until the early 1980’s... about fifteen years behind the lesbian and gay

movement, in which bisexuals were also active (ix). His final reason is the most compelling: “the popular myth that bisexual people do not actually exist” (ix).

Bryant also points out that many films that are about bisexual characters have been mislabeled as gay or lesbian films (ix). The prejudices within the film reviewers themselves lead to overall disinterest in reviewing films that contain bisexual characters and when they are reviewed, they tend to highly criticize them and give them negative reviews (ix). At “LGBT” film festivals, when there are films with bisexual roles, the program may not list it that way or they may not be as likely to select bi films to include, perhaps because gay and lesbian viewers would not be willing to accept films that show “straight” relationships (x). While Bryant is exhaustive in his survey of the many films that include bisexual characters, bisexual mother characters are scarce in films. Therefore, only three and a half pages of his book are dedicated to bisexual women characters as wives and only three phrases within those pages address them as mothers or make reference to their children (77-80). This observation is not meant as a criticism of the book, but rather as a way to illustrate the missing piece in films with bisexual characters.

*French Twist* is a unique film because it has not become obscure and it does not shy away from portraying bisexuality and motherhood together. Other films have dealt quite differently with bisexuality and motherhood through the process of two different types of erasure. For instance, in two earlier U.S. films adapted from novels, bisexuality and motherhood were completely or nearly completely erased between the book and the film release. Alice Walker’s 1982 novel, *The Color Purple* contained a love affair between Shug and Celie that was quite intense and involved. The film version, directed by Steven Spielberg and released in 1985, portrays Celie’s love for Shug as more of a crush and just one kiss and some caresses occur between them. Fannie Flagg’s 1987 novel, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café*

contained a romance between two women, one of whom was a mother. In the film version, directed by Jon Avnet and released in 1991, the romantic relationship between them was removed and replaced by a symbolic food fight. Another type of erasure is exemplified by the Academy Award nominated French film *Entre Nous* (1983). It is a biographical account of director Dianne Kurys' parents' relationship and the relationship that develops between her mother and another woman during and after World War II. This critically acclaimed award winning film has become obscure and nearly impossible to obtain in the U.S. These three films are among the few to shed any light on bisexual motherhood, but none of them as completely as *French Twist*.

Film is a place for isolated bisexual mothers to see their lived experiences reflected. Film could serve as an avenue toward cultural awareness and a step toward acceptance. Despite its reliance on stereotypes, *French Twist* stands out as a film that most directly integrates various aspects of the life of the bisexual mother as subject. As a means of cultural representation, films like *French Twist* can contribute to the eventual recognition of bisexual motherhood as a valid identity rather than merely as a phase before coming out as a lesbian or a return to heterosexuality. All of the problems I discuss in my literature review above lead me to the following questions. How do bisexual mothers' lived experiences and the discourse on bisexual motherhood intersect with and diverge from the portrayal of the bisexual mother in *French Twist*? How does *French Twist* both reproduce and subvert myths and stereotypes of bisexual mothers? As I explore the answers to these questions, I hope to illustrate the erasure of bisexual people, particularly that of bisexual motherhood. I will examine some of the cultural attitudes that contribute to the invisibility of and misconceptions about bisexual mothers. I will encourage

further scientific research of bisexuality and motherhood. I also hope to promote bisexual mothers as a subject in film and other media.

Stereotypes of men, lesbians, mothers, and bisexuals abound in the French sex farce *French Twist*. Stereotypes are a common feature of comedic farce. The characters begin as the dyke, the womanizer and his sidekick, and the ingénue. The story opens with an introduction to Marijo, as a dyke lesbian, complete with a rugby shirt, baseball hat, trucker cigars, and loud music in her hippie van adorned with a Hindu deity on the back. Next we meet the womanizer, Laurent, a husband with a weakness for sex, and his friendly sidekick Antoine who assists him in his many pursuits. As Laurent leaves a restaurant, the scene of one exploit, he arranges the next on the cashier's phone, and lays the groundwork for a third with a beautiful woman in line. Later, it becomes evident that he is also involved with the family's young babysitter. Next, we meet his wife, Loli, a natural ingénue who is exasperated, lonely, and stuck at home, but remains a dedicated mother of the couple's two boys, Julien and Pablo. The four begin as shallow characters and are deepened as the story unfolds.

Comedic conflicts between characters drive the plot. Loli and Laurent argue over his neglect and infidelity. Laurent and Marijo are often at odds with each other because of Laurent's incessant machismo, the homophobic remarks that he constantly directs toward her, and the jealousy between them. The farce continues to escalate after Loli and Marijo begin an affair, eventually culminating in a physical altercation between Laurent and Marijo with Loli in the middle wearing only an apron.

The tables are turned when Marijo's ex-girlfriend Dani comes to visit and Loli is suddenly tortured by baseless jealousy of Dani. Laurent seizes the opportunity to force a wedge between Marijo and Loli. Loli becomes so jealous that she leaves the house and refuses to speak

to Marijo. While Loli is away, Laurent and Marijo come to the agreement that she will leave if he will have sex with her to give her a chance to have a baby of her own. Ironically, when Loli discovers Marijo's resulting pregnancy nine months later, she takes the opportunity to get Marijo back. Resolution is reached as Marijo gives birth to Laurent's child and a polyamorous living arrangement for the three develops. At the end of the original French release, Laurent begins an affair with a man. As the end credits roll, the two men kiss after a discussion of an ongoing relationship "if things go well."

Motherhood plays a powerful role in the film. While much of the storyline and dialogue center on the adults, motherhood maintains a presence throughout the entire narrative, as if it were another character. Loli's commitment to her children is established very well through the set design. Although the house where much of the film's action takes place is clean, it is also cluttered with children's toys, high chairs, letter magnets on the fridge, pots on the stove, dishes draining in the sink, fruit on the table, and other children's items. The children, Julien and Pablo maintain some presence in nearly all of the film's daytime scenes but are too young to have many spoken lines. Traditional motherhood is a central theme in the film and Loli, as a stay at home mother, is naturally relaxed with the children. In one scene, while she feeds her son, she licks his finger to clean the food off of it. Details like this enable the viewer to be comfortable with the family and portray Loli as an outstanding mother who is dedicated to her traditional role. In addition, Marijo's motherhood is the force that keeps the three of them together in the end.

In the remainder of this paper, I will discuss how *French Twist* approaches the lived experiences of bisexual mothers in four specific ways that are related to cultural attitudes, myths and stereotypes. First, I will examine how the film challenges bisexuality as a phase or transition.

Second, I will address how the invisibility of bisexuality and motherhood are challenged in the film. Next, I will analyze one scene in the film which reflects the biphobia that is a common occurrence in the lived experience of bisexual women, especially when they enter lesbian communities. Last, I will reveal how different aspects of *French Twist* support the myth that bisexual people are confused.

One stereotype commonly applied to bisexuality is that it is an “experimental phase” or a transition “on the way to a lesbian identification” (Diamond 12). In *Bisexuality in the United States*, Paula C. Rodríguez Rust cites studies which describe the attitude held within lesbian and gay communities that bisexuality is a “transitional form of sexuality or a transitional identity adopted by some lesbians and gay men as a temporary stage in coming out and that bisexual self-identity is a way for lesbians and gay men to deny their true sexual orientation to themselves or to others” (413). Lisa M. Diamond’s ten-year longitudinal study of 79 “nonheterosexual” women (7), published in 2008, supported the thesis that bisexuality is not a transitional phase but rather a valid “third type of sexual orientation” (13). In fact, Diamond found that “more women *adopted* bisexual/unlabeled identities than *relinquished* these identities” (italics are Diamond’s) (5).

*French Twist* challenges the myth of bisexuality as a phase. Loli is sexual with both her husband and Marijo during the film. There are nude love scenes between Loli and Laurent and between Loli and Marijo and Loli finds pleasure in them. For one brief period, during the climax of the film, it seems that Loli may end up with just Laurent and that her sexual relationship with Marijo may have been an experimental adventure after all. She finally feels forced to choose between Laurent and Marijo and chooses Laurent, although she is heartbroken by the decision.

As soon as she discovers that Marijo is pregnant with Laurent’s child, Loli confronts them and reveals her heterosexist belief that “a child needs a mother and a father!” It is ironic

that Loli uses her own heterosexist belief about parenting to get Marijo to come home to a polyamorous bisexual arrangement. Or perhaps by saying this, Loli was crafty and was just taking advantage of Laurent's heterosexism (knowing that he believes that a child needs a mother and a father) as a way to be with Marijo? In either case, this heterosexist remark ends up as the turning point that enables Loli to maintain her bisexual orientation. Marijo's motherhood has also proven to be a stabilizing force in Loli's bisexuality. At the end, Loli goes from the bedroom she shares with Laurent into Marijo's bedroom and they kiss while snuggling the new baby. The filmmaker could have chosen to omit that kiss and leave the viewer to guess about Loli's sexuality, or she could have left her husband and identified as a lesbian. Instead, bisexuality is clearly an enduring aspect of Loli's character. She is not just sexually attracted to Marijo and Laurent, but she is also in love with both of them. During the resolution at the end of the film, it is clearly maintained that she will be with both of them. We can see how Loli has embraced both aspects of her sexuality and has ultimately refused to choose between men and women. Loli is also still represented as a stable and loving parent.

In the film, Loli is both bisexual and an excellent mother. This model is actually reflected in research as reported in Buxton's 2004 article, *Works in Progress: How Mixed-Orientation Couples Maintain Their Marriages After the Wives Come Out*. An active focus on their roles as parents has been one way that bisexual wives cope after coming out (65). Parenting has been seen as a help toward keeping their marriage together (66). All subjects in Buxton's research "cited children and family life among the three most frequently mentioned supports that helped maintain 'post-disclosure marriage'" (71).

As discussed in the introduction, bisexuality is an invisible aspect of many people's lives, in large part because when a person is involved with someone of their own gender, they are

thought of as gay or lesbian and when they are involved with someone who is not their gender, they are thought of as heterosexual. This phenomenon “leaves monosexism unchallenged” (Rust 412). Rust maintains that in this way, orientation is perceived not based on an identity of one’s choice but applied based on the gender of one’s partner. In the same passage, Rust also supports bisexual activist and theorist Robin Ochs, who pointed out that the oppression of bisexual people is based on the “denial of the very existence of bisexuality” due to the “culturally dominant conception of sexuality as dichotomous, that is, binary” (412).

*French Twist* skillfully uses the playful sex farce plot to challenge these conventional monosexist, dichotomous understandings of sexuality. Director Josiane Balasko portrays Loli’s sexuality as somewhat fluid. The film breaks new ground because it focuses so strongly on both bisexuality and motherhood. Bisexuality is part of Loli’s life and a part of who she is. Her marriage is intact, she has a female lover, and somehow, by the end of the film the three have managed to reside together in a form of polyamorous lifestyle. Loli’s character even more directly challenges monosexist expectations since she keeps two lovers at the same time, in the same house. She refuses to be heterosexual and refuses to become a lesbian, and yet, the term bisexual is not used in the film. In this way, the film moves beyond labels and outside the comfortable boundaries of heterosexism and monosexism. Loli not only cannot choose, she *will* not choose for much of the film. Balasko could have created the film without the inclusion of Loli’s motherhood; however, by portraying the children in so much of the film, she has validated the integrated identity of the bisexual mother. Loli, as a loving mother with two love interests, lives as a direct challenge to dichotomous thinking through her refusal to choose. I apply Marjorie Garber’s concept of a bisexual person to Loli; this character is not as a “fence-sitter”

who refuses to choose but “a person who walked comfortably through an open gate from one “side” to another” (Garber 86).

Dichotomous or monosexist thinking among heterosexual and homosexual people informs several myths about bisexuality. Other myths about bisexuality include that bisexual people are incapable of monogamy (Garber 369, Burleson 145, 185, Ochs ed. Firestein 227), are immature (Garber 344, Hutchins ed. Firestein 241), are confused and indecisive (Hutchins 241, Ochs 218), unable to commit (Burleson 186, Hutchins 241), want the best of both worlds (Burleson 186), are going through a phase (Burleson 187, Garber 344, 351), or are following a trend (Burleson 188, Garber 219). These myths about bisexuals lead to biphobia, which is based on “antagonism toward bisexuality in lesbian and gay communities” (Rust 413), and on homophobia aimed at bisexuals in the heterosexual community. Paraphrasing Rust, the lesbian and gay community suspects that bisexual people “pass” as heterosexual in order to maintain their heterosexual privilege and thus experience less oppression than lesbians and gay men, that they will be “more likely to leave a same-sex lover for a socially approved other-sex lover,” and that they are not fully committed to “sexual minority civil rights” (Rust 413-414). Bisexual women specifically have been seen as a “threat... to lesbian identity, community and political strength” (Rust 413). Biphobia has been written about since the mid to late 1970’s (Rust 413). Although there are likely areas where the lesbian and gay communities are more welcoming to bisexual women, biphobia is still a common part of the lived experience of bisexual women and undoubtedly of bisexual mothers.

One scene in particular in *French Twist* deals specifically with biphobia in the lesbian community. It is perhaps one of the most authentic and highly emotional scenes in the film. It reflects the discomfort bisexual women may feel within lesbian communities. In the scene, Loli

and Laurent travel to the city and then to the lesbian dance club where Marijo is a D.J. after Loli discovers that Marijo is pregnant with Laurent's child. Although no men are allowed in the club, the owner, Fabienne, with whom Marijo also lives, lets Laurent in to see Marijo after Loli has already come in. Fabienne confronts the threesome while they argue over how they should raise the baby. She refers to Laurent as "the sperm bank" and calls Loli a "slut" and a "tart".

In this lesbian safe space, the threat of a fight quickly escalates. Camera angles and juxtaposition of characters reveal that this is more than just a woman expressing her anger at her broken hearted friend's ex. Loli, Laurent, and Marijo are huddled together in the foreground on one side and face a unified group of lesbians that line up in the background around Fabienne. As the verbal sparring continues, the camera cuts back and forth between the two groups as the three on the left of the screen slowly back up with no one close behind them, the united group of lesbians on the right advance one step at a time like a wall toward Loli, Laurent, and Marijo. Fabienne attempts to punch Loli, who dodges, and Laurent is punched in the nose. There are no people behind Marijo to back her up. Loli, Marijo, and Laurent are isolated in the unwelcoming lesbian separatist space of the bar. Marijo is abandoned by her community and will not be welcomed back in. I interpret the scene as a warning to lesbians: if you get involved with a bisexual woman, we will unite against you. The community's abandonment of Marijo in this situation is also symbolic of her punishment for having sex with a man. Ruth Gibian points to a possible reason for this fear of bisexuality, "So bisexuality falls outside the thick black line that marks the boundaries of community, and perhaps that's why it's often viewed as shaking the durability of a self-sufficient, woman-loving culture. But it shakes our insides too. It makes every one of us vulnerable to the possibility that it could happen to us" (Gibian 10).

Bisexual people have commonly been viewed as either “confused fence-sitters” or as half straight and half gay or lesbian (Rust 414). In 1948, Alfred Kinsey published statistics based on the Kinsey scale, which organized sexual preference onto a continuum scale from zero (heterosexual) to six (homosexual). Kinsey’s scale is another dichotomous scale. If one is not on either end, they are a mixture of heterosexual and homosexual. “In 1985, Dr. Fritz Klein published research based on his Klein Sexual Orientation Grid” (Bryant 2). The grid includes 21 seven digit scales and includes the “past, present, and ideal” and measures “sexual attraction, sexual behavior, sexual fantasies, emotional preference, social preference, lifestyle preference, and self-identification” (Bryant 2). This became a multidimensional approach and was a step toward a view of sexuality as fluid. Kinsey’s scale and Klein’s grid contributed to the common understanding among bisexual scholars today that most bisexual people are not attracted to males and females equally or in the same ways (Bryant 2).

*French Twist* reinforces the stereotype that bisexual people equally desire both sexes. This diverges from the lived experience of bisexual women. Most people are not equally attracted to people of both sexes. Loli is portrayed as a heterosexual woman at the beginning of the film, and then it seems that she may become a lesbian when the right woman shows up and sweeps her off her feet. When she finally shows that she still desires her husband, she comes up with a schedule of three nights with each partner and then one “night of rest” each week. This reproduces the myth that bisexual people are half attracted to men and half attracted to women or are part lesbian, part homosexual. Once the schedule is set, Loli begins to float around the house in a state of euphoria while Laurent and Marijo are both tortured with jealousy. This artificial schedule could lead an audience unfamiliar with bisexuality to believe that a bisexual person’s attractions toward men and women are equal and can be switched on and off at will. This

arrangement also highlights the narcissistic sexual selfishness that is believed to exist in bisexual people. While a polyamorous bisexual person can live with both lovers, this is just one possible arrangement for a bisexual person.

Bisexual people are thought to be nonmonogamous people who just “want to have their cake and eat it too” (Rust 414). Contrary to this myth, according to Rust, “...a minority of bisexuals have had partners of both sexes in the recent past, and even fewer have male and female partners simultaneously; even bisexuals with multiple partners often have partners of only one sex” (414). Loli reflects this this myth with her narcissistic schedule. Conversely, the lived experiences reported by bisexual people include isolation, the lack of a sense of community, and little to no social support as reported in *Women and Bisexuality*, (George 98-101), *Vice Versa*, (Garber 39), and *Bi Any Other Name* (Hutchins and Kaahumanu 127-133). Although there are out social support networks and groups specifically for bisexual mothers in metropolis areas like Boston, New York City and Seattle, there are none in most geographic areas. While there are many online communities for bisexuals, Bi Moms Group at [www.bimomsgroup.com](http://www.bimomsgroup.com) is the only nationwide online community in the U.S. that is specifically for bisexual mothers and is prominently featured in internet searches. Loli's character can be viewed as spoiled at times during the film. She does not seem to struggle with her identity as bisexual mother in a polyamorous relationship. The portrayal is idealistic and utopian in that Loli does not need additional support to come to grips with her seemingly sudden bisexual identity. She only struggles in the film when she is jealous. She wants both partners but wants them to be faithful to her. This reinforces the stereotype that bisexual people want to “have their cake and eat it too.”

In conclusion, one of the most important aspects of the film is the portrayal of Loli as comfortable with the fact that the person she falls for is a woman and that she still loves her

husband. Loli's reaction in the film is a valid reflection of the lived experience of a bisexual woman who is already secure in her identity. As Mary Bradford powerfully states, "For many women, being bisexual is not problematic; it is an integrated, accepted part of their identity and lifestyle that has enriched their lives and relationships" (15). Ultimately, Loli, Laurent, and Marijo may have the best of both worlds in an arguably utopian polyamorous arrangement. Even formerly homophobic Laurent experiments lovingly with his own bisexuality at the end of the original version. Thus *French Twist* is a rejection of dichotomous ideologies about sexuality with its characters embracing a new both/and identity as neither lesbian nor heterosexual, but bisexual. Loli also is a rare portrayal of both/and regarding her bisexuality and motherhood as integrated aspects of who she is. Anecdotal evidence suggests that bisexual motherhood is an acceptable and surprisingly common identity. Next steps should involve researchers and filmmakers. Researchers need to step in to the void and discover existing evidence that will likely reject the myths and stereotypes discussed here and the numerous others that bisexual mothers are painfully aware of in their lived experiences. Filmmakers should produce more numerous and varied representations of bisexuality, including bisexual motherhood.

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