**Invisible Subjects: Bisexual Experiences of Inequality, Prejudice and Discrimination in the Workplace.**

*Gill Valentine and Nichola Wood*

*School of Geography, University of Leeds, Woodhouse Lane, LEEDS, LS2 9JT, UK.*

*Corresponding Author – Nichola Wood (*[*n.x.wood@leeds.ac.uk*](mailto:n.x.wood@leeds.ac.uk)*)*

***Abstract***

In recent years the UK has witnessed a series of legal changes that extend the rights of and provide new protections for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people. The workplace has been significantly affected by this new legislation, with the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2003) prohibiting direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation or harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation. However, research suggests that attitudes to LGB people in the UK have not evolved at the same pace as legislative changes and that work-based discrimination and prejudice against these groups remains widespread (Stonewall 2008). It also highlights a particular lack of understanding of bisexuality as a distinctive (and valid) identity by both heterosexual and lesbian and gay colleagues (cf. Hemmings 2002, Tucker 1995).

Drawing on recent research into bisexual experiences of the workplace, this paper explores the ways in which bisexuality is often experienced as an *invisible identity* and how this, in turn, affects the capacity of bisexual employees to feel included, respected and equally-valued. The paper begins with an exploration of the ways in which the *fluid nature of bisexuality* leads to particular forms of prejudice and discrimination within the workplace. It then moves on to consider how the *varied nature of bisexuality* can, at certain times, leave bisexual employees feeling excluded from/marginalised within formal LGB support groups, depending on the sex of their current partner, and impact on access to social networks/informal support. The paper concludes by arguing that employers need to be more aware of, and pay greater attention to, the specific needs and experiences of bisexual employees and suggests ways in which workplaces might become more inclusionary spaces.

References

Hemmings, C. (2002) *Bisexual Spaces*, London: Routledge.

Stonewall (2008) *Peak Performance: Gay People and Productivity*, London: Stonewall.

Tucker, N. (1995) *Bisexual Politics*, New York: Haworth Press.