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The Bisexual Option

American Institute of Bisexuality, Inc.

The Threat

(Part 1, Chapter 1)

[...] The bisexual resembles the spy in that he or she moves psychosexually freely among men and among women. The bisexual also resembles the traitor in that he or she is in a position to know the secrets of both camps, and to play one against the other. The bisexual, in short, is seen as a dangerous person, not to be trusted, because his or her party loyalty, so to speak, is nonexistent. And if one lacks this sort of loyalty, one is so far outside the human sexual pale that one is virtually nonexistent.

[...] In our society, with its strong negative view of homosexual behavior of any kind, it is quite understandable when bisexuals, or “closet” homosexuals, disguise their behavior. But bisexuality is not disguised homosexuality, nor is it disguised heterosexuality. It is another way of sexual expression. Although it contains elements of both heterosexual and homosexual behavior, it is a way of being, in and of itself, a way neither better nor worse than the more accepted ways of healthy heterosexuality and healthy homosexuality.

To most heterosexuals and homosexuals, the bisexual is an alien being whose dual sexuality opens up the possibility of their own sexual ambiguity. They cannot understand the bisexual's ability to share their own preferences but not their own aversions.

The heterosexual's erotic preferences and aversions usually do not permit an understanding of the homosexual. Homosexuals as well are baffled by attraction to the opposite sex. This creates two distinct camps from which banners can be flown. And though they may be ideological threats to each other, the two camps are as clearly distinct as, in the heyday of the cold war, the American eagle and the Russian bear. Their threat to each other is familiar, and the battle lines are clear-cut.

The wish to avoid conflict is natural and essential to life. Without peace of mind (if only of the kind available to the Sunday golfer), madness nips at our heels. Should we fail to defend ourselves, it will go for our throats. In our time, peace of any kind may be available only to the few who know themselves – and the many who keep their heads “securely” in the sand. Denial is one of the classic mechanisms by which this brand of security is sustained. For the heterosexual male, for example, the homosexual male's behavior may contain components of his own, but denial of the homosexual's label (and thence his role) is relatively easy. The heterosexual is not free to identify beyond certain vague, “neuter” acts, such as kissing or being fellated. But this same male confronted with a bisexual male must, if only unconsciously, deal with his own possible sexual ambiguity. The reason he is relieved to hear that the bisexual does not exist is that he thereby avoids his own inner conflict. If a homosexual male finds other males attractive, that fact has nothing to do with the heterosexual. But if a bisexual male finds both men and women attractive, that does have something to do with him in a way too close for comfort. The possibility of identification then is considerably broader. When the head in the sand comes up for air, what it sees may be unbearable.

Since, until now, bisexuality has been largely a negative, a nonstate, a neither-nor-a disguised state of homosexuality or worse – how can it be described at all, let alone labelled healthy?

[...]

Toward a Definition

(Part 1, Chapter 2)

[...] People differ infinitely – in height, intelligence, excitability, perseverance, color, age, point of view, nationality, religion, weight, sex, ability, and on and on and on. In every external and internal way they differ. There is no bisexual person who necessarily reflects a 50-50 degree ratio between his or her male and female preference. Such a claim would probably be as false as claims to fulfilling the ideal macho stereotype or the ultra-feminine type.

Within the continuum scale itself three different facets of bisexuality should be noted: transitional, historical, and sequential. A common view holds that all bisexuals are in a transitory stage – usually from heterosexuality to homosexuality. According to my findings and experience, this is true only for a small percentage of bisexuals. Bisexuality is used by such people as a bridge to change their sexual orientation from one end of the continuum to the other. Within their lifetimes, some people can and do change their orientation by more than one or two points on the Klein Sexual Orientation grid, but usually not in a short period of time. The change of emotions, ideals, and behavior necessary for such an alteration brings about, at times, the state of bisexuality. Often the bisexuality itself becomes the norm for that person, while a few people complete the swing to heterosexuality or homosexuality. For these few, this transitional bisexual period can be very short or can last for many years. It is also a two-way bridge – a person can travel the road from hetero- to homosexuality or from homo- to heterosexuality.

Historical bisexuality is demonstrated by the person who lives a predominantly hetero- or homosexual life but in whose history there are either bisexual experiences and/or fantasies. Sometimes the bisexual history is extensive, sometimes minimal.

Sequential bisexuality is quite common. [...] In sequential bisexuality a person's sexual relationships are with only one gender at any given time. The frequency of gender change, of course, varies according to person and circumstance.

The total range of bisexual preference is extremely broad – from almost complete preference for one sex, to enjoying sex with either gender, to almost complete preference for the other sex. There is also episodic, temporary, experimental, or situational homo- or heterosexual activity. One example of episodic bisexual preference is the woman who sleeps with other women only when she is drunk. An example of temporary preference is the predominantly homosexual male who, when having an affair with a woman, prefers to have sex only with her. The experimental bisexual is represented by the person who switches the gender of his sex objects only once, say, to see what it is like. Many normally heterosexual men in prison practice situational bisexuality, given the circumstances. They would prefer females.

Public attitudes toward sexual preference also have profound effects on individual lives. “Coming out of the closet” has become the phrase most associated with newly avowed homosexuals, but it could apply to bisexuals as well. A “closet bisexual” practices in secret. The world at large does not suspect. [...]

The subjective aspect of bisexual behavior must also be considered. A female prostitute who agrees to have a paid lesbian encounter might never consider herself to be bisexual. Male prostitutes who allow themselves to be fellated for money often do not consider this a homosexual act, or consider themselves bisexual.

A bisexual subculture would be yet another dimension of bisexual life, but if there is such a subculture it is too small to have any perceptible significance. With the increased media focus on bisexuality, however, we will probably see a new subculture develop, as bisexuals increase the frequency of their mutual interaction, and discover the extent to which they are a special group with beliefs and behavior different from those of other people.

Another aspect of bisexuality to be considered is the distinction between sexuality and intimacy. Sexual behavior and erotic feelings toward both sexes define the bisexual only, while intimacy is found in all kinds of human relations. [...]

Finally, the most important thing to note is that the bisexual, the heterosexual, the homosexual each lives in a state of motion, and within that state anything in the psychosexual spectrum is possible. This of course makes all sexual labels (including “bisexual”) a presumption, but a necessary presumption. These states of being can then be defined and located at certain points on the continuum.

[...]

Sociological Findings

(Part 3, Chapter 8)

[...] How many bisexuals are there? What percentage of the population is bisexual? There are a number of popular notions on this question. Some say there are no bisexuals at all (the nonexistence theory), others count fewer bisexuals than homosexuals, and still others believe everyone is bisexual. Actually, around 15 percent of the male population is definable on the Kinsey scale as bisexual if we look at a three-year period in the lives of his respondents; and half that percentage of the female population, i.e., 7-8 percent. This means that, conservatively speaking, there are 25-30 million bisexuals in the U.S.A. [...]

In 1993, John Billy et al. found in a survey of over 3,300 men between the ages of 20 and 39 that 2.3 percent of the men had engaged in same-gender sexual activity during the last ten years and that 1 percent reported being exclusively homosexual during this interval. This is much lower than what Kinsey found and is somewhat lower than some of the recent studies conducted in Britain, France, and Denmark which found that between 3 and 4 percent of men had had a homosexual partner at one time.

The figures support the finding that there are more bisexuals than homosexuals – between twice and eleven times as many, depending on who is counting and how. [...]

Whatever the exact figure, in my view it is extremely large – probably between five and ten times as many bisexuals as homosexuals. [...]

A bisexual who relates on an emotional and sexual plane to both men and women would, in many if not most cases, desire to and actually enter into marriage. On the number of married people who are bisexual, the figures vary between 2 and 10 percent of presently married people, with men carrying a higher percentage than women. Of those separated and divorced, the percentages that are bisexual approach the total percentages of men and women that are bisexual. [...]

The married bisexual who wishes to remain monogamous must refrain only from extramarital relations with the other gender, but with the same gender as well. Does the bisexual actually do that?

Does he or she practice fidelity as often as the married heterosexual? One myth about bisexuals holds that they share the sexual bed indiscriminately and often with others of the same sex. Exact statistics are not available, but in general one can say that bisexual men and women probably do have more extramarital affairs than their heterosexual counterparts. For the population as a whole the figures show that 50 percent of all men and 20 percent of all women have at some time during their marriage had sexual relationships on the outside. From my experience the figures for bisexuals are definitely higher. The married bisexual man who has outside homosexual contacts is relatively common. The married woman who has an affair with another woman is not quite as common though in a non-random sample, Janet Bode's study, *View from Another Closet*, found that only 33 percent of the women surveyed admitted to monogamous serial relationships.

Hunt found that only 20 percent of the spouses of those who had extramarital relations in the general population knew of their partner's outside affairs. For bisexuals the figure would probably be lower if the spouse did not know at all of the partner's bisexual inclination, and higher if either the mate knew that fact or if both members of the marriage were bisexual.

However, I'd like to stress that by no means do all bisexuals feel the need to have sexual relations with both genders at any given time. Many homosexuals too, like many heterosexuals, are satisfied with one deep primary relationship. McWhirter and Mattison's survey of male homosexual couples found that some men had lived with women up to fifteen years before changing to male lovers. As a homosexual group, however, most of the men were openly non-monogamous.

In their survey of male homosexuals, Weinberg and Williams compared them to the bisexuals [...]. They found that bisexuals were more involved with women sexually, were more likely to have been married, and, as might be expected, were less involved exclusively with homosexuals. Bisexuals concealed their homosexual component more than homosexuals and expected narrow discrimination from the heterosexual world. Weinberg and Williams found no data to support the thesis that bisexuals had more psychological problems.

Between 1973 and 1975 Drs. Blumstein and Schwartz interviewed 150 bisexual men and women to study bisexual behavior and identity. Their most consistent finding on both sexes showed that there was "little coherent relationship between the amount and 'mix'

of homosexual and heterosexual behavior in a person's biography and that person's choice to label himself or herself as bisexual, homosexual, or heterosexual." People with little or no homosexual experience sometimes identified themselves as bisexual, while others with considerable bisexual activity labeled themselves as heterosexual or homosexual.

Not unexpectedly, female bisexuals were found to be more romantic than male bisexuals. When involved with another woman, females labeled themselves lesbian; when involved with a man, heterosexual. When unattached, they would frequently label themselves bisexual. Males more often continuously identified themselves as bisexual.

Another important if not surprising conclusion of Blumstein and Schwartz's study was the changeability in sexual object choices. Significant experience with one gender did not necessarily determine future sexual orientation. Bisexuals came to their present state of functioning from extremely varied backgrounds: some early, some late, some changing suddenly, others undergoing a gradual transition over decades.

It was also found that both the heterosexual and homosexual communities generally viewed the bisexual in a negative light. The heterosexual world looked upon the bisexual as a homosexual, while the homosexual subcultures viewed the bisexual as someone just going through a phase; they defined the bisexual's identity as not real (in other words, nonexistent). Two exceptions were found in the heterosexual world. The libertarian element of the population viewed bisexuality more liberally ... the bisexuals "did their own thing." The women's liberation and the smaller men's liberation movements, devoted and finely attuned to the political and emotional needs of their own gender, were in sympathy at least with the idea – if not the reality – of bisexuality.

[...]

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Dr. Fritz Klein (1932-2006) is best known for his pioneering sex research and the development of the multi-dimensional **Klein Sexual Orientation Grid**

<http://bisexual.org/kleingrid.html>

which measures the complexity and fluidity of sexual orientation.

His outstanding and most well-written book on bisexuality "The Bisexual Option" is available at

www.amazon.com

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ISBN=1560230339/bisexualityoptionsA/>

By purchasing a copy through this link you not only buy *the* authoritative guide on bisexuality, you help to support Bisexual.org!

The American Institute of Bisexuality (founded by Fritz Klein in 1998) encourages, supports and assists research and education about bisexuality, through programs likely to make a material difference and enhance public knowledge, awareness and understanding about bisexuality.

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