

## Bisexuality Myths & Misconceptions

- ◆ Bisexuality does not exist
  - Everyone is bisexual.
  - Nobody is bisexual.
- ◆ Bisexuality is unreal
  - Bisexuals are
    - ... just going through a phase.
    - ... haven't come out yet.
    - ... are sitting on the fence.
  - Bisexuals are denying that they are really
    - ... heterosexual.
    - ... homosexual.
  - The only true bisexuals are people who are equally attracted to both sexes.
- ◆ Bisexuals and relationships
  - Bisexuals
    - ... are "promiscuous".
    - ... have many sexual partners.
    - ... will have sex with anyone.
  - Bisexuals can't form stable relationships.
- ◆ Name calling
  - Bisexuals have no moral values.
  - Bisexuals are immature.
  - Bisexuals are unreliable.
  - Bisexuality is a political cop-out.
- ◆ Threats of Bisexuality
  - Bisexuals are responsible for spreading AIDS
    - ... to the "normal" population.
    - ... to the lesbian community.

## Bisexuality - What's it All About?

The ways people can experience sexuality form a multi-dimensional continuum. "Heterosexuality" and "Homosexuality" are not islands, but regions with fuzzy edges which overlap in "Bisexuality". Different people would draw their erotic potential as regions of different shapes on such a map. Some report more flexibility or "choice" than others. Over time, some

people change, uncovering new areas or shifting in emphasis.

This raises political questions. Gay and straight sexuality are not equally valued, and some people tell others what they should feel and how they must "choose".

There are no sharp lines around these regions of experience. People whose life stories seem similar identify themselves differently. I want to respect each person's self-understanding, rather than making rules for who is (or should be) "heterosexual", "homosexual" or "bisexual".

Thus, I define a "bisexual" using self-identity and orientation. At the same time, "bisexuality" in the sense of bisexual feelings or behaviour may be present in other people besides self-identified bisexuals.

My definitions: "bisexuality" is sexual/affectional attraction to members of both sexes. (As with all sexuality, we may speak in terms of a person's potential, identity, feelings and sexual expression.) "A bisexual" is a person for whom bisexuality is an important part of their experience or identity. ("Bisexual" as an adjective may refer to either.)

## All Bisexuals Make Sweeping Generalisations !

I've known a number of self-identified bisexuals and am attempting to generalise in these statements about bisexuality, however "your mileage may vary".

Bisexuals face some stereotyping and exclusion from both sides (lesbians/gay men and straights).

While "bisexual" may be a temporary state or label for some people exploring their sexuality, for others, it is a lasting identity.

I question saying "Everyone is bisexual" or "Nobody is bisexual". Both deny some people's experience and make "bisexual" a meaningless distinction.

Being a bisexual doesn't imply one has two sexual relationships at once. (Monogamy & non-monogamy are a distinct question.)

Being bisexual doesn't imply one is (or can choose to be) sexually attracted to everyone. Erotic feeling is idiosyncratic, with urges as diverse as desires for "tall brunettes" or for "non-smoking politically-active vegetarians".

Being unconventional does not mean one has no morality, values or standards.

An integrated bisexual identity can have qualities beyond a simplistic "half and half" mix of gay and straight sensibility.

I can't accept an ethic that accepts exclusive heterosexuals or homosexuals because they "were made that way", but condemns bisexuals for making the "wrong choice". To me this "choice" is like asking "would you like to cut off your left hand or your right hand?".

## "Come Out, Come Out, Wherever You Are!" or "Who was that Masked Man?"

There are a lot of different kinds of closets, passing and disclosure.

Bisexuals share with gay men and lesbians the experiences of living with a heterosexist society and "coming out of the closet". Yet, to avoid stigma in the gay/lesbian communities they may find themselves in a second "closet" where they hide their bisexuality.

Bisexuals are not equally visible. A socially experienced bisexual may blend into both communities unless they make an effort to be "out". A bisexual in a long-term relationship who does not advertise their orientation will be assumed gay or straight.

Almost nowhere is where being bisexual the "norm". Thus, it is hard to convey by subtle hints that one is bisexual. Even if one wants "to tell the truth, the

whole truth and nothing but the truth", this is a longer story than average.

## All Over the Map

There is no such thing as a "typical" bisexual. As a group, bisexuals exhibit as much (or more) diversity as gays or straights.

Since bisexuals don't fit expectations, integrating a bisexual sexual identity is especially challenging. Ideally, this all might be very simple. In a society like ours that is polarised along male/female and straight/gay lines, things get more complex.

One source of diversity is the many different histories that may lead up to calling oneself bisexual. Here are a few variables one might use to classify personal histories:

- ◆ own sex
- ◆ orientation of early erotic feelings or actions (same-sex, other-sex or both)
- ◆ age and stage in life when realising potential for bisexuality for example:
  - as an adolescent
  - as an "unattached" adult
  - during a sexual relationship
- ◆ denial vs. self-acceptance
- ◆ secrecy vs. openness
- ◆ shifts in predominant sexual orientation over time
- ◆ political/community identifications

## You've Got to Draw the Line Somewhere (?)

Some in both communities see blurring of boundaries as a threat:

People may see bisexuality as calling their own sexuality into question.

Conventionally, "We" are normal people (heterosexuals) and "They" are sexual deviants (homosexuals etc.) with no middle ground. Heterosexism is a major force for polarising society.

Gay men or lesbians may have put a lot of effort into establishing their identity or community, or may be distancing themselves from past unpleasant heterosexual experiences. Bisexuality does not fit with separatism.

Bisexuals are seen to weaken the political argument that gay men/lesbians "don't have a choice".

Written for the Chicago Bisexual Political Action Coalition (BiPAC) and the Homophobia/RCP task force of Wheadon United Methodist Church, Evanston IL

This is something I put together for a workshop on bisexuality. (You may use it not-for-profit context, but please include this notice and the copyright, if you use it as a whole, or provide reasonable credits for partial quotes.)

### Sydney Bisexual Network

SBN is a social and support group, based in Sydney. It has regular social activities and members undertake various activities to raise the awareness of bisexuality.

Web page: <http://sbn.bi.org>  
Email: [sbn-admin@yahoo.com](mailto:sbn-admin@yahoo.com)  
Info line: (02) 9565 4281  
Address: SBN, PO Box 281, Broadway 2007

### Australian Bisexual Network

ABN is a national body for bisexual men, women and their partners. It is affiliated with the Sydney Bisexual Network and other Australian bisexual groups.

Web page: [www.rainbow.net.au/~ausbinet/](http://www.rainbow.net.au/~ausbinet/)  
Email: [ausbinet@rainbow.net.au](mailto:ausbinet@rainbow.net.au)  
Phone: (07) 3857-2500  
Address: ABN, PO Box 490, Lutwyche 4030

# Bisexuality Notes



by Albert Lunde Copyright (C) Sept 1990  
All Rights Reserved  
([Albert-Lunde@nwu.edu](mailto:Albert-Lunde@nwu.edu))