

# The Politics of Labels:

## A Commentary on Our Need to Define and the Ensuing Chaos

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**D**efinition -- Bisexuality: romantic and/or sexual attraction to both genders (socially) or sexes; sexually attracted to both sexes; sensual or sexual attraction regardless of sex.

What is bisexuality, how do bisexuals view their dual attractions, what do they seek out in relationships, and how do they fit in the LGBT community?

"[Humans] do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black, nor all things white. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separated pigeon-holes. The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects. The sooner we learn this concerning human sexual behavior, the sooner we shall reach a sound understanding of the realities of sex." Alfred Kinsey, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* (1948).

We all know the familiar topics and stereotypes that come up in conversation when talking about bisexuality: promiscuity, perpetual longing for the sex they aren't with, straight male threesome fantasies, Tila Tequila, LUGs (Lesbians Until Graduation), phases, confusion. A recent study claimed that more lesbians and gays were identifying as bi than ever. With all these discrepancies, I figured that the problem must be in the definition. How does one quantify behavior, attraction, desire, arousal, emotion, love and experience into a neat little package to fit a supposed cohesive group? I interviewed several people to get a range of responses and experiences. The resulting conversations and explanations show just how inadequate and encompassing one term can be. Their names have been changed to protect their privacy and my artistic integrity, and my questions have been woven into the response. In addition to Aleister Crowley, Margaret Cho, Djuna Barnes, Alan Cummings, David Bowie, Ani DiFranco, Elton John, Angelina Jolie, Billie Holiday and Janis Joplin, here are four more individuals who identify as bisexual. Welcome to their brains.

**John:** I must admit I am honest with everyone gay or straight, about who and what I am attracted to. I don't look at someone's sex as an obstacle if I'm attracted to them in some way whether it is emotional, intellectual, or physical. I think being an FtM I look at gender and sexuality more fluidly. I never really felt comfortable enough to date until I started hormones. I feel that I shouldn't limit myself to one sex or the other. Thus far in life I've been sexual with women, but not men. Most women that I've dated are confused by my bisexuality because they see "straight man" all the way with some feminine characteristics. I like my women to be very feminine and I like my men to be kind of fem also. I'm not really attracted to overly masculine men because think they're trying to overcompensate for lack of something. I'm looking to settle down; I want to find my other half, whoever it may be.

**Amelia:** The first time I realized I was attracted to a woman was in junior high. She was a neighbor, and I remembering wondering what it would be like to kiss her. I've often appreciated the beauty of women since then, but never acted on it. But that's because I didn't act on any of my sexual desires for many years because I was raped when I was 17. I call myself "friendly". I was celibate for many years, but I was always open to a woman being the person I'd decide to have sex with. I think anyone who is open-minded has at least considered bisexuality. I want men to dominate me, to take charge of the situation. I prefer a more gentle approach from women. Most of the time when I am attracted to women, it's in a non-sexual way. When I am attracted to a man, it's because I want him sexually. I've never had a relationship with a woman, nor do I want one. It would never work. Then again, my relationships with men aren't exactly functional on a level other people might consider "normal." Men are bumbling idiots and I love them as well as their anatomy. Men love to think that the woman they are with might bring home another woman. As far as straight, gay and lesbian society, I think bisexuality threatens them. It seems to

generate a lot of flak. I see ads on Craigs list where women say specifically they don't want bisexual women. People have always had a streak of bisexuality; I don't see what the big deal is, but then again, that's just me.

**Nick:** I guess you'd call me a closet bisexual because I don't tell the guys that I date that I'm bi. I identify as bi because I can still look at a woman and think she's hot or see the beauty. I even told my mother that I can't 100 percent rule out ever being with a woman again, even in a relationship. Being with a woman is different; you don't have to deal with all the bullshit of a gay lifestyle. I told my kid's mother that I liked men. We were together for a of couple years. But since then I've only had sex with a woman once a year for the past two years. One of them involved a three way with a "straight guy". I've looked for women at times who were interested in bi guys. Women have more emotion. It's hard to find in a guy.

Now, it seems that the gay and lesbian communities are afraid of it; maybe they are recognizing something they don't care to admit. No one seems to like the gray areas. If you asked me right now what I'm looking for it's a long term committed relationship, but I 100 percent think it will be with a man. That doesn't change how I identify.

**Jen:** I began to identify as bi as soon as I realized what bi was. I knew I liked girls but I thought boys were cute, too. When I learned about sex, I learned about sexuality and that was what I identified with. To me bisexual means that you are (1) sexually and emotionally attracted to both men and women (2) have had/are interested in serious relationships with both men and women and (3) can enjoy sex with both sexes. I'm attracted to both sexes for very different reasons. When I think of women, for example, I think soft. They're so soft, to me. Even you sexy butches! They're more open emotionally, and of course there's the sex aspect. I find a woman's body irresistible. With men, it's

different. I don't usually fall for guys often, and when I do it's usually purely on an emotional level first, and then I become sexually attracted as the relationship progresses. I want to be in a loving, passionate, fun, trusting and supportive relationship whether it is with a man or woman. I've had sexual experiences with only two or three different guys. However, I'll fool around with pretty much any girl. I'm out to my family, friends, and the people I date. I don't ever really come out and say 'I'M BI!', but if I talk about my exes, I use their names and the correct pronouns and things like that. I feel like the gay and lesbian community is hostile to bisexuals, as if bisexuality is a fake sexuality. It's really hard to date a non-bi person because if you're with a guy they get jealous that you're going to leave them for a girl and vice versa. Almost every woman I've dated has had serious jealousy issues with the fact that I'm attracted to men. I think people view it as double the competition. It's just not that way.

So, four individuals with four very different ways of looking at the same thing: bisexuality. Whether you agree or disagree with an individual's characterization and expression of his or her sexuality, one must respect the pure diversity of experience. I've learned so much about these individuals from their frank responses to my very personal questions. Thanks to all of you, you know who you are. You've just done your part in furthering a small portion of this beautiful human existence. ▼

"Sex is a continuum. You go through different phases along life's way ... and if you don't, you've been sort of cheated."

- Gore Vidal