

# What is Bisexual? Thinking Outside the Triangle

By **Psycherotica**

The word "bisexual" is having its bicentennial.

First used in 1824 to mean "having the organs of both sexes in one being, hermaphroditic," that definition didn't catch on. The current official, partially correct meaning of "attracted to both sexes" dates back to 1914, though the word was not in general use until the 1950s.

The term "ambisexuality" was proposed by a Hungarian psychoanalyst named Sandor Ferenczi for a person's "capacity for bestowing his [or her] erotism, originally objectless, on either the male or the female sex, or on both."

Similarly, ambidextrous people can do things with either hand; this adds some clarity to the discussion. Bi people are sometimes called switch-hitters, which is an ambidextrous baseball player.

Of course since these words are not used much (thanks to the general prohibition on sexual speech), the words and concepts don't get developed through usage. There's always a haze of denial hanging around matters of sex and sexuality.

## The Silence is Quite Loud

The letter B for bisexual is right at the middle of LGBTQ. Yet the silence around bisexuality is only noticeable if you listen for some discussion, or go looking for the "bisexual mixer." I often wonder what the B is doing up on the sign; I guess in the spirit of

diversity and inclusion it could not be left out.

The prejudices are not distributed equally. Any man who has sex with other men is suspect of being gay; all women are often presumed to be at least a little bisexual and counted as honorary queer, or as extra hot (by "straight" culture).

Bisexuality has always been a suspect idea in queer culture. It has a variety of concepts attached to it, such as passing for not-exactly-gay. (In a long forgotten episode, Elton John got in big trouble with the public and press for claiming he was bisexual when he meant gay.)

There's the idea of not being willing to pick a side — ambivalent or noncommittal rather than ambisexual. To both queer and "straight," this can be seen as a kind of personality defect.

A bisexual stereotype is that "bisexuals will fuck anything that moves," which certainly makes them seem like discerning and sensitive people. There was once a magazine in the Bay-area with the name *Anything that Moves*. This was in the spirit of reclaiming what could be perceived as a slur.

Bisexuals are perceived as being open to more forms of fun. As Woody Allen said, being bisexual doubles your chances of getting a date on Saturday night. People tend to be jealous of the fun that others have — especially sexual fun. So here we have a potential source of jealous or shunning responses to bisexual people and ideas.

## **Bisexual: Binary or No?**

The idea of bisexual implies the male-female binary as well as the gay-straight binary. Yet bi can have a diversity of affinities, and suggests that there is more dexterity to sexual orientation than the various official lines admit to.

And bisexuality implies the potential for change. Once you “come out as gay,” that’s usually it — you’re gay, and the idea is you’re not going to switch back. The potential to alternate or do two things at once is queerer than queer in many people’s minds, and it implies that the usual social strictures are potentially irrelevant.

What I find interesting is that even in our gender-bendy world of trans this and fluid that, *mum* is the word on bisexuality. There are few events at queer centers; there’s no easy way to put such people into categories because their orientation is the one that defies the other definitions.

And more to the point, bisexuality is something that many people feel is just a natural feature of who they are. They don’t need any special rights. I

’s difficult or ridiculous to politicize, and is therefore not really useful to the highly politicized environment in which sexual orientation is discussed. By defying categorization, bisexuality may be immune to politicization.

## **Many Forms of Expression**

Bisexual does not specifically mean identical forms of attraction or desire to/for men and women, though some people do experience this. Almost everyone has a preference for one sex or the other, which brings up the bugaboo of choice — of sexual preference.

Modern queer thought seems to be locked in a deterministic model — that you are what you were born as and you can’t go changing that (except of course for “sex change” operations, which are said to affirm an underlying latency).

Queer culture has inherited all the contradictions and taboos of the prior heteronormative culture, and painted them with a nice pretty rainbow.

## **Sexual and Affectual**

Among bisexual people, there are those who are mostly sexual about it, and those for whom it’s a sexual and affectual orientation.

There are bisexual people who have committed relationships with people of both sexes; there are those who can do this simultaneously. Multiple longterm commitments is a form of polyamory known as *panfidelity*.

There are some who like to play with same-sex people as a kind of extracurricular activity. There are those whose emotional relationships with same-sex friends come close to romantic relationships, whether there is sex or not.

I’ve known women whose close friendships with other women included the potential for sexual expression. It was a natural part of who they were to one another, but they did not consider themselves lovers, or lesbians.

Lots of bisexual expression is in the form of play: of experiences for the fun of it. For example, some like to have experiences with male-female couples.

Some same-sex couples like to invite a person of the opposite sex, though I’ve seen this mostly with F-F couples rather than M-M couples; gay men

usually have no affinity for the ladies. Gay women more often have more sexual affinity for men, even if occasional.

There is an idea that all women are at least a little bisexual; this has a documented basis in feminist thought, particularly if the goal is to recruit lesbians.

To most heterosexual people, female-female sex is usually considered more socially acceptable than male-male sex. It's somehow not as gay, but then most men don't try on things together in the fitting room or run off to the washroom together to powder their noses.

The upshot here is that bisexuality implies experimentation, many potentials and keeping one's options open. Sex can have many contexts. And most bi people have no use for declaring their orientation. It's just part of who they are and is (mostly) not a social or political statement. Bisexuality is not very useful as part of a political movement. It's just part of life and natural, organic sexuality.

### **Lots of Masturbation is Bisexual**

If someone is dominantly heterosexual and has same-sex sex with themselves, I propose they are really bisexual.

Masturbation usually gets a pass from being queer, after all, it's sex with yourself. Since it's not an open topic of discussion, it cannot be subjected to discrimination. But I think it's the queerest sex of all, especially if one clue to queer is being in the closet about something. Most masturbators are closet cases.

The only people who are forced to admit they masturbate, for business

purposes, are many porn and webcam actors, such as people working OnlyFans or Chaturbate. After all, they are often on camera alone and have to do something besides talk. Obviously, this is a form of actual sex.

Everyone else is part of the age-old masturbation coverup and veil of silence. After much thought, I am pretty sure that the silence involves masturbation being inherently homosexual. This is true physically, but it's often true in one's imagination. What exactly is going on in there? Well, it's too good to talk about.

### **Speaking of Porn**

Speaking of porn, if you're a hetero-identified woman and you like to watch porn featuring women, what does that make you? I think that all sex starts in the mind, and what you think about is what you are. Sex is not about identity; it's about desire and feeling.

Said another way, your sexual orientation refers to who and what you think is hot. By that definition, there would be a lot of bisexual people.

### **Bisexual Implies Polyamorous**

Bisexuality has another ripple, also filed under queerer than queer, and that is polyamory. The reason polyamory is taboo is because of how many people claim to be monogamous but really are not.

Note how little discussion of polyamory there is in the world, generally, but also amidst all this discussion of endless options.

Polyamorous it is a valid sexual orientation that is not part of the LGBTQIA+ alphabet soup but belongs there if anything does. Why is it missing? It's too controversial!

Those who have concealed relationships tend to get upset if the idea of polyamory is circulating, since it might expose them. Honest people make cheaters feel dishonest. A lot of people don't want to be advertising (or admitting) its existence. Polyamory is still mostly a closet case (and poly parents can be harshly punished by Child Protective Services; does anyone care?).

So what happens when a person attracted to or wanting intimacy with both sexes is in an exclusive relationship? Different bi people will give you different responses to this. Some will say they maintain their monogamous fidelity and don't act on their feelings for opposite sex attractions, and I'm sure that's true occasionally.

We might consider whether the real issue is triggering jealousy or homophobia in the partner who does not consider himself or herself bisexual.

This is why I propose that bi people be sure to check with potential partners about whether who you are works for them in a relationship setting. It's good to claim your true existence, or at least to associate with open-minded people. You always contain all of your potentials.

### **Straight or Queer Can Change**

There is a problem with all categories, which is that most people don't actually fit them; and they are almost all either temporary or subject to cultural re-evaluation.

Categories are convenience items, social lubricants, and opportunities to be part of a tribe. This is part of the problem with declaring oneself either "straight" or "queer."

That could change any day. I think Gore Vidal, one of the most famous gay guys of the entire 20th century, had it right when he said, "There are no homosexuals; there are only homosexual acts."

So one statement of bisexuality is that one does not fit into the queer or straight category — and you can tell because that's how they are often treated: as not belonging.

Bisexual men in particular have taken the brunt of many prejudices, especially those associated with what are claimed to be "sexually transmitted infections." This is an extension of the extreme cultural bias that any form of female sexuality is inherently pure, while any form of male sexuality is inherently predatory and perverse.

That is a prejudice that needs some time under the social microscope, though this would call much of feminism into question. Feminism is based on the false notion of female purity and superiority.

Therefore, female bisexuality and male bisexuality are allegedly not equivalents. This certainly true when women walking down the street holding hands are not necessarily lesbians, but men walking down the street holding hands are definitely gay.

What would we do without all these prejudices? What would we do without all of the political marks and social stigmas involving perceived sexual orientation? I think we would all be happier.

Let's not forget that besides making babies, sex is for fun, relating, intimacy, creativity and experimentation. Therefore, we are free to think outside the triangle.