

Sexual Ambiguities

by Lilac Cana

The human sexual realm is huge, awesome. Too often we have experiences which we find difficult to define: not quite "normal" in polite social codes, but real, because they happen to us in concrete ways.

You may be a "regular" kinda guy with a steady girlfriend, just hangin' with the dudes on pub night, and suddenly you're looking at your buddy in a totally new light: surprise, surprise, you have a hard-on.

Or you may be a woman who finds your emotions inextricably linked to your sexuality, and you find this more easily fulfilled with women rather than men. Bisexuality may never have crossed your mind before; it's way too confusing or scary.

But sexuality, if it's going to be any fun at all, *should* have elements of the unknown.

Ultimately, sexuality is (according to Sharon Forman Sumpter in her article "Bisexual Myths and Realities") "a process that can [and does] flow, changing throughout our lifetime." Thank goodness.

Sumpter outlines the difficulties bisexual people have when relating with both heterosexual and homosexual communities. A lack of precise understanding has often led to harsh name-calling: Bisexuals are really "Bi-now-gay-later"; "Tweens" (as in, some politically incorrect mutation between straight and gay); "Swingers" or, simply, "Confused."

Writer Robin Ochs defines bisexuality simply as "the potential for being sexually and/or romantically involved with members of either gender".

So, for once and loving all, here's some elucidation into that groovy bi scene.

MYTH: Bisexuals are promiscuous/swingers.

TRUTH: Bisexual people have a range of sexual behaviours. Some have one partner; some go through partnerless periods. Promiscuity is no more prevalent in the bisexual population than in other groups of people.

MYTH: Bisexuals are equally attracted to both sexes.

But sexuality, if it's going to be any fun at all, should have elements of the unknown.

TRUTH: Bisexuals tend to favour either the same or the opposite sex, while recognizing their attraction to both genders.

MYTH: Bisexual means having concurrent lovers of both genders.

TRUTH: Bisexual simply means the potential for involvement with either gender. This may mean sexually, emotionally, in reality or in fantasy. Some bisexual people may have concurrent lovers, others may relate to different genders at various time periods. Most bisexuals do not need to see both genders in order to feel fulfilled.

MYTH: Bisexuals cannot be monogamous.

TRUTH: Bisexuality is a sexual orientation. It is independent of the

lifestyle of monogamy or non-monogamy. Bisexuals are as capable as anyone of making a long-term monogamous commitment to a partner they love. Bisexuals live a variety of lifestyles, as do lesbians, gays and heterosexuals.

MYTH: Bisexuals are denying their lesbianism/gayness.

TRUTH: Bisexuality is a legitimate sexual orientation which incorporates gayness. Most bisexuals consider themselves part of the generic term "gay". Many are quite active in the lesbian/gay community both socially and politically. Some of us use terms such as "Bisexual lesbian" to increase our visibility on both issues.

MYTH: Bisexuals are in "transition".

TRUTH: Some people go through a transitional period of bisexuality on their way to adopting a lesbian, gay, or heterosexual identity. For many others bisexuality remains a long-term orientation. Indeed, we are finding that homosexuality may be a transitional phase in the coming out process for bisexual people.

MYTH: Bisexuals spread AIDS to the lesbian, gay and heterosexual communities.

TRUTH: This myth legitimizes discrimination against bisexuals. The label "bisexual" simply refers to sexual orientation. It says nothing about sexual behaviour. AIDS occurs in people of all sexual orientations. AIDS is contracted through unsafe sexual practices, shared needles, and contaminated blood

transfusion. Sexual orientation does not "cause" AIDS.

MYTH: Bisexuals are confused about their sexuality.

TRUTH: It is natural for bisexuals, lesbians and gays to go through a period of confusion in the coming out process. When you are an oppressed people and are constantly told that you don't exist, confusion is an appropriate reaction until you come out to yourself and find a supportive environment.

MYTH: Bisexuals can hide in the heterosexual community when the going gets tough.

TRUTH: To "pass" for straight and deny your bisexuality is just as painful and damaging for a bisexual as it is for a lesbian or gay. Bisexuals are not heterosexual and we do not identify as heterosexual.

MYTH: Bisexuals are not gay.

TRUTH: We are part of the generic definition of gay (see Don Clark's *Loving Someone Gay*). Non-gays lump us all together. Bisexuals have lost their jobs and suffer the same legal discrimination as other gays.

MYTH: Bisexual women will dump [lesbians] for a man.

TRUTH: Women who are uncomfortable or confused about their same-sex attraction may use the bisexual label. Both bisexuals and gays are capable of going back into the closet. People who are unable to make commitments may "use" a person of either gender to leave a relationship.

It is important to remember that bisexual, gay, lesbian, heterosexual, are labels created by a homophobic, lesbophobic, biphobic, heterosexist society to separate and alienate us from each other. We are all unique; we don't fit into neat, little categories. We sometimes need to use these labels for political reasons and to increase our visibilities. Our sexual esteem is facilitated by acknowledging and accepting the differences and seeing the beauty in our diversity."

[Reprinted from *Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out*, Hutchins & Kaahumanu, co-editors, Atyson Publications, 1991.]

BGLAD

Bisexual Gay & Lesbian Awareness Days

at the
Student Centre

Look for our updated activity list coming out Friday. For more information, feel free to drop by the BLGAY office (447 SC) or, call 736-2100, ext. 20494.

Monday March 2nd	Tuesday March 3rd	Wednesday March 4th	Thursday March 5th	Friday March 6th	Saturday March 7th
<p>12-1 pm Christine Donald & Professor Naomi Black discuss lesbians and gay men and employment equity 307 SC</p> <p>4-5 pm David Rayside discusses homophobia on and off campus 307 SC</p>	<p>12-1 pm Professor Les Greene discusses the concept of sexual orientation 313 SC</p> <p>2-3 pm "Parents and friends of lesbians and gays: information and discussion session" 313 SC</p> <p>6 pm Movie night including "Tongues Unbed" 307 SC</p>	<p>1:30-3:30 pm Lesbian speakers bureau: "Everything you wanted to know about lesbianism, but were afraid to ask." 313 SC</p> <p>5-6 pm Peter Brickwood (of the N. York Health Dept.) and Glen Brown (AIDS Action Now): "AIDS as an issue of health and the law." 313 SC</p> <p>6-8 pm Drop in for coffee! 307 SC</p>	<p>4-5 pm Jerry Hedama (A.R.C.H.), Brenda Cossman (Osgoode) and Karen Andrews: "Homosexuality and the Law." T.B.A.</p> <p>5 pm Anglican Reverend Jim Ferry discusses Christianity and homosexuality 307 SC</p>	<p>12-6 pm "York Students' Experiences surrounding bisexuality, homosexuality and lesbianism" 307 SC</p>	<p>9:30-4:30 pm "The Margins of the Blackboard"; mainstreaming lesbian material with Minnie, Bruce, Pat and others 307 SC</p>

We're also looking for other events T.B.A., including "Speakers from S.A.M.E.," Toronto's S & M group.