

Out at Work

By Deb Morley

I once heard someone say that if you never go into the closet then you never have to come out to anyone. I really like this philosophy as it encourages me to be genuine in my relationships and avoid those painstaking “There is something I need to tell you” conversations with someone whom I wished I had revealed my true self to long ago. However, being out at work is different.

I have found that having a partner and now a wife has made it easy to be out as queer at work. One simple answer to the question, “What did you do this weekend?” has opened the door for me to be able to quickly and easily share that I am in a same-sex relationship and married. “My wife and I went for a hike.” Done. While satisfying to be able to so easily share that I have a significant other who is a woman, and that we have done that thing to our relationship called “marriage,” I shiver to think of all the assumptions that are then made by others with so much information that communicates so little about who I am and what I am all about.

A few months ago I seized a moment in a management meeting where I work to out myself as bi. We were having a conversation about the composition of search committees that we form when looking to hire a new employee for the organization. There has been a long-standing practice to include a “diversity member” (yes, that’s what they call that person) on every search team. That has resulted in the same

small number of people of color who work in our organization being asked to serve on search teams again and again. I asked if our goal was to meet the legal definition of under-represented groups or if we wanted to embrace diversity in the larger sense in an effort to represent our organization and show that we value diversity. When a few colleagues looked at me with puzzled looks on their faces, I pressed on. “For example, as a bisexual woman who is married to a woman, I feel that I represent a diverse segment of the population.” It was a moment. It passed quickly. But I was heard. “We would welcome you on any search team,” stumbled the head of human resources. That really wasn’t my point, but I appreciated the welcoming statement despite his awkward way of delivering it.

So while most of the organization probably still assumes I am a lesbian married to a woman (in my application cover letter which was shared with all staff I had mentioned relocating to the area with my wife), at least my peers on the management team know more of who I am. I am a bisexual woman married to a woman.

Deb Morley was active in the Boston Bisexual Women's Network for many years before moving to the Philadelphia area with her wife, friend and partner Gina and their two kitties, Lucy and Everett.

Waiting in the Wings

By Lila Hertelius

What belongs with children? Balloons, animal crackers, jump ropes ... bisexuals?

What belongs at school? Notebooks, pencils, teachers ... bisexual teachers?

What belongs in the definition of bisexual teachers? Pedophiles, creeps, and perverts? Or ordinary people who earnestly want to make a positive difference in young people’s lives and who simply happen to have the capacity to have crushes on members of more than just one gender?

In my encounters with scholastic environments in the West, I have often come across what seems to be a phobia about young children hearing the word “sex” or any words that contain it. The name for my sexual orientation happens to include that very word. In the debate about whether to come out at work, I am confronted with the aware-

Lila, continues on page 14



Artwork: Kare Estrop

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From the Editors

Dear Reader,

This month's theme is "Out at Work – or Not." According to one recent study, nearly half of bisexual people report that they are not out to any of their coworkers (49%), compared to just 24% of lesbian and gay people. For bisexual folks, being out at work can be tricky. The writings of Colleen, Hales Bopp, Diane Verrochi, Iyana James Stephenson, Andrea, Julie P, Jessica Renee, the Rev. Francesca Bongiorno Fortunato, Flash Gorski, Mitsy, Sue, Tasmin, Catherine Rock and myself provide concrete examples of just how complicated it can be to consider coming out as bi at work.

Our "Around the World" column features Jenny Kangasvuo, a Finnish academic, and we have a cartoon and artwork from Kate Estrop and Kristin Brown's review of Surya Monro's new book on bisexuality. And finally, as always, we bring you our New Briefs and Calendar.

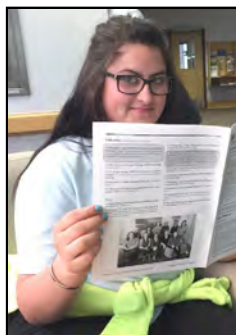
If you live in the Boston area, please consider joining us at one of our upcoming bi women's brunches on March 13, April 10 and May 21.

-Robyn & Catherine

Bi Women Quarterly seeks a new calendar editor! For every issue, the calendar editor compiles a list of events to feature in *BQW*, coordinates BBWN potluck brunches each month, and updates events for the BBWN web calendar. This is a fantastic opportunity to work with a one-of-a kind publication! Contact Kate at thewriterkate@gmail.com if you're interested.

Another fan reads the *Bi Women Quarterly*. Send us a picture of yourself reading *BWQ* to biwomeneditor@gmail.com.

Be creative!



Next in

Bi Women Quarterly

The theme for Summer 2016:

Labels

Those of us who identify between (or outside of) gay and straight use a lot of different labels. Which one(s) do you use, and why? Do you use different labels in different contexts? Are you comfortable in your label(s)? What are the challenges/benefits of labeling? DUE BY May 1.

The theme for Fall 2016:

Does Gender Matter?

Is love really just love, no matter the gender of your partner(s)? Are your affections and attractions genderless, or do you crave or seek experiences with particular genders? Are you treated differently with different-gendered partners? Do *you* behave differently? DUE BY Aug. 1.

Submission guidelines are online at biwomenboston.org.

Send your submissions and suggestions for future topics to biwomeneditor@gmail.com

Note: If you do not want your full name published, or wish to use a pseudonym, just let us know.

***Bi Women Quarterly* is online at biwomenboston.org.**

BBWN is an all-volunteer organization. Want to host one of our monthly brunches, be the woman who coordinates the brunches or help out with our website (we use WordPress)? Or, if you're a student, consider an internship. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Robyn (biwomeneditor@gmail.com).

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay and transgender people within the larger society.

Around the World: An Interview with Jenny Kangasvuo, Uolo, Finland

By Robyn Ochs

Jenny and I had the pleasure of meeting in person many years ago at bisexual conferences in Britain and in the Netherlands, and she has a piece in Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World, an anthology I co-edited with Sarah E. Rowley.

Jenny, please tell us about yourself.

My childhood was split between Uusikaupunki, a small coastal town in southwestern Finland and Ivalon-Matti, a tiny village in Lapland, 250 kilometers north of the Arctic Circle. Moving there was a result of my father's mid-life crisis. Currently I am 40, the same age my father was when he decided to take his wife and five children and move into the wilderness. Fortunately, I do not have a similar urge to uproot myself.

My family has an academic background although my parents have some angst related to that – both of them have rejected university education despite the fact that all of my four grandparents either have a university education or have worked at the university. I ended up studying Cultural Anthropology at the University of Oulu, a city of 200,000 inhabitants in central Finland. I still live in Oulu, currently in a commune with three other adults with whom I do not have erotic or romantic relationships; my longtime romantic-erotic friend lives elsewhere. Living with a group of reasonable people and cats is a joy.

I spend my time trying to write, both academic texts and journalism, but also stories and novels: about 15 of my short stories have been published over the years, and my debut novel *Sudenveri* (*Wolf's Blood*) was published in 2012. I mix folk tales, historical facts and other stuff to create speculative fiction. One of my stories was recently translated into English and can be read from an open access magazine *Finnish Weird*: <http://www.finnishweird.net/>.

In addition to writing I am active in a local live action role play (LARP) scene, and a year ago I rekindled my old love with aikido.

How did you come to identify as bi? How old were you? Who did you tell? What happened?

I remember having crushes on boys and girls as early as when I was six, but did not really think about that much until I was 19. I had just started university studies and was having a drunken night with friends. A friend of mine, a girl, cried to me about how she thought she was bisexual, and how she



Photo: Heini Lehtvästaho

was confused. I comforted her but started to think that her experiences were not that different from mine – the only difference was that I did not feel confused or agonized. I started to identify myself as bisexual then, and have been open about it to all friends and colleagues ever since.

I did not tell my parents, however, but that was mainly because I did not (and do not) have a very good relationship with them. At 25 I started to write my master's thesis on bisexuality, and when I told my father about the subject, he said: "There are so many sick and dirty things in the world; do you really need to dig them up?" So much for coming

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out of the closet then; that phone call ended up in a quarrel. Around the same time I told my grandmother – my father’s mother – about the thesis and my bisexuality. She said that she had actually guessed my bisexuality already, and told a funny story about her experiences at a girls’ school, where girls had such strong crushes on each other and the female teachers that they would faint in classes and have fights because of jealousy. My grandmother was supportive and understanding. I suppose that she ranted at my father about his attitude toward my bisexuality, because he did not pester me with the subject, which he would certainly have done without my grandmother’s intervention. I never spoke with my father about bisexuality again. Years later I asked my mother if she knew I was bisexual. She said that she did, but did not want to think about it: “Just like I know that your sisters have sexual lives because they have children, but I don’t want to think about that either.” Her attitude was quite mild; to her my bisexuality was my business and not hers.

Anyway, talking with one’s parents is overrated, and talking with siblings is more important. With my sisters and brother I have had serious discussions about sexuality and identities, and I have also been an object of stupid jokes and teasing. To their children I am that crazy aunt that has had two boyfriends at the same time and who always says that you can date as many people as you want from any gender you want. I aim to confuse my nieces and nephews, and am proud of this quest!

What is your religious background (if any)?

My family belongs to the Evangelic Lutheran church (80% of Finns belong to it), but our family was not religious at all. My father is possibly some kind of pagan with a hint of Henry Thoreau-like idealism and my mother might be an atheist. My father believes that homosexuality is “unnatural degeneration,” but this belief is based on his false understanding of nature, evolution and the human species, not religion.

What words are used to describe lesbian, gay, bi or non-heterosexual people in Finnish?

The currently used words are **lesbo**, **homo**, and **biseksuaali**, and they are pretty much equivalent to the English words. In the 1980s some gay people tried to use word “hintti” (from the German word “hinten,” “from behind”) as a translation of the word “gay,” but the word had too many pejorative connotations to become widely used.

Are you in contact with bi activists in other countries? Do you see a value in transnational activism?

Since I have been doing research on bisexuality I have always

had a certain conflict with being a bi activist. Somehow I have felt a need to keep some kind of distance from activism just to have an illusion of objectivity. The distance has not been far, anyway. Earlier I was an active member of a bi group in my hometown, and I have attended international bisexual conferences, meetings etc., in Sweden, Britain and the Netherlands. I think that transnational activism is valuable, but it is important to remember that each country and culture has a different history, legislation and attitudes and that activism and politics have to be localized.

You wrote your dissertation on Finnish bisexual people. How did this become an area of interest for you?

When I realized I was bisexual in the mid-90s there were almost no texts written on Finnish bisexuality whatsoever. I was frustrated about the lack of information, but when I had to choose the subject for my master’s thesis I suddenly realized that I could do research on bisexuality by myself. The research process that led to my doctoral thesis started then, fifteen years ago.

What was the title of your dissertation?

Suomalainen biseksuaalisuus. Käsitteen ja kokemuksen kulttuuriset ehdot (Finnish Bisexuality. Cultural Terms of the Concept and experiences).

It is available for Finnish speakers as an open access publication at <http://herkules.oulu.fi/isbn9789526205526/isbn9789526205526.pdf>.

Some of the results of the study are presented in: “‘There Has Been No Phase in My Life When I Wasn’t Somehow Bisexual’: Comparing the Experiences of Finnish Bisexuals in 1999 and 2010.” *The Journal of Bisexuality*, Taylor & Francis Publishing. Vol. 11, no 2-3. pp. 271-289.

Had anyone in Finland written on this subject before?

My research is the most comprehensive study done on bisexuality in Finland. Some articles and book chapters had been published before, but the material on bisexuality in Finnish was very scarce before my research.

What did you learn?

The research traces the processes that made bisexuality a viable identity term in Finland after the removal of same-sex fornication from the criminal law in 1971. I interviewed 40 Finnish bisexuals, 12 of them twice, and analyzed texts published in Finnish porn magazines, mainstream magazines and the publications of sexual minority rights organizations from the 1970s to the 2010s. The research material was

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so absurdly vast that one of the two pre-examiners of the thesis proposed that I should divide the dissertation into two separate publications. I declined because I found it important to combine both the experiences of bisexuals and the analysis of media texts to create a picture of bisexuality in Finnish culture.

The main finding was that the meanings related to bisexuality are very persistent: for the last 45 years bisexuality has been presented as an ephemeral fad, something that is essentially incomprehensible or a concept that explains the fundamental nature of human sexuality.

However, an interesting find was that bisexuality as a concept was used in early sexual minority politics in the 1970s as a tool to justify the acceptance of homosexuality. Bisexuality was presented as a trait that is very common, even universal, and if it is universal, everybody has a grain of homosexuality in themselves. The concept was used to make homosexuality (and sexual minority rights) more understandable to the general public. Bisexuality was not a separate identity but bisexuals were presented as being unconscious of their sexuality, victims of straight mainstream culture that would not give them a possibility to realize their true essence. In sexual minority politics it was claimed that improving the rights of homosexuals would also make bisexuals free to understand and express their sexuality, and therefore make

society better for everyone, for everyone is potentially bisexual. Around the early 1990s bisexual politics started to emerge within sexual minority rights organizations, and also the use of the concept changed. Bisexuality became a separate identity, and ceased to be a tool to explain to the general public why sexual minority rights matter.

It was also interesting to realize that porn magazines were an important arena for talking about sexual politics in the 1970s and early 1980s. During that era porn magazines were very widely read and circulated. In porn magazines the attitude towards homosexuality and bisexuality was supportive, while mainstream media was silent or hostile towards sexual minority issues. Some magazines even provided special sections for non-heterosexuals, and were somewhat parallel to magazines published by sexual minority organizations.

The research explains how bisexuality evolved from an instrument of sexual minority politics in the 1970s and 1980s to a concept employed by identity politics starting from the 1990s, and finally to a term which can be used to entice and entertain different audiences in the 2010s.

Any last words?

I spent 15 years studying bisexuality, and my bisexual identity and researcher identity have been tightly entwined. I hardly know how to talk about “my bisexuality” any more without talking about Finnish bisexuality overall!



Schrödinger's Bisexual

By Diane Verrochi

Rainbow-striped snakes wind their way
Along the winged pole I wear,
Hissing my not-so-secret.

You ask, I tell.
You forget.

They
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Diane Verrochi is a registered nurse who teaches at the University of Hartford and practices at Center for Hospice Care in Norwich, CT.

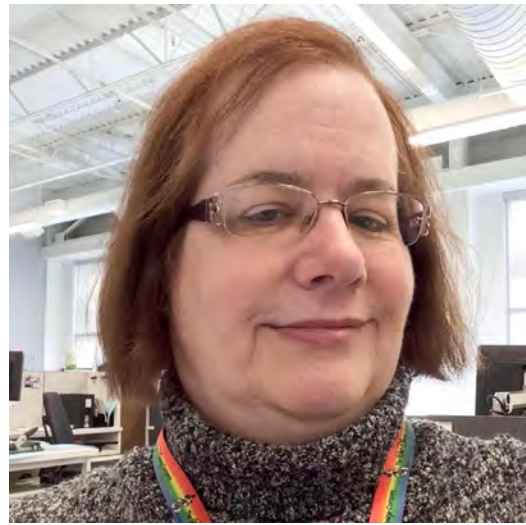
BLT, Anyone?

By Colleen

To look at me, you'd think I wasn't even queer, but I am. You might think I'm just a standard-issue middle-aged woman who dyes her hair and wears pleasant clothes and not much (if any) makeup, but beneath my mild-mannered exterior beats a truly queer heart. I am transgender, bisexual, polyamorous and kinky (dominant), and although I haven't worn these identities long, those who know me well would say I wear them very authentically.

The company I work for is very old and very conservative, so you might be surprised to learn that I am (mostly) out at work! I attribute this mainly to the fact that I had worked here for about 12 years before I transitioned. Because many people at this company are long-term employees, the majority of people that I work with knew me before transition, so I'm automatically out as transgender. And that, I think, makes it easier to be out about other identities as well. In addition to being out as transgender, I am also out as bisexual, and mostly out as polyamorous. To this end, I have a portrait on my desk of me with my two long-term partners, and if people ask who is in the picture with me, I straightforwardly tell them that they are my spouses. One is male, and one is female, so it's then pretty obvious that I'm also bisexual. I am not out about the kinky side of things – that's nobody's business anyway.

It isn't easy maintaining an out identity as bisexual, even with a portrait on your desk. People seem a lot more interested in the fact that I'm transgender and polyamorous than the fact that I'm bi+. I can't actually remember anyone asking me a question about being bi+, whereas I do occasionally get questions about being transgender or polyamorous. To me, this indicates something I think most people would acknowledge, that they are very uncomfortable with sex, and talking (or asking) about the partners or "family life" of someone with a different sexual orientation forces people to confront this discomfort. People are willing to speak freely with friends or coworkers whom they assume to be heterosexual because they can talk about many aspects of life without actually confronting the question of sex, whereas when the person in question is in a different sort



of relationship, such as a same-sex relationship, then even talking about one's spouse brings to mind questions about what happens in private.

I've been involved in the steering committee of the Rainbow Employee Resource Group where I work for a few years, and again mostly this is because I'm transgender; however, I also work to represent the bi+ community there because I seem to be the only one who will. In fact, a couple of years ago, I mentioned to the rest of the committee that our ERG is not bi-friendly, because the bi community basically never gets mentioned except when I do so, and they were surprised I would say that. They certainly felt that we were bi-friendly as a group.

One of my biggest difficulties is that in my unit, I seem to be the only LGBT person in an office of over 200. This seems statistically unlikely, but the truth is that there is nobody else in my office whom I'm aware is LGBT. I guess that makes it a good thing I identify with as many labels as I do – I basically represent a large part of the rainbow. In fact, since I also identify as lesbian, I guess that makes me a BLT. But seriously, bi visibility is hard work!

Colleen is a computer nerd, musician, songwriter, poet, homebrewer, luthier, artist and queer activist. If you hear someone say they have a "girlfriend in Canada," it's probably Colleen.

Q: HOW MANY PUBLICATIONS ARE THERE THAT FOCUS ON BI+ WOMEN?

A: JUST THIS ONE.

Do you value the *Bi Women Quarterly*? **Will you support our work?** A small group of volunteers produces and gets this resource out to THOUSANDS of readers. In addition to our electronic subscribers, we mail 600+ print copies to LGBTQ, youth and women's centers across the United States (and to a few beyond). It costs about \$6000 per year for postage and printing and our PO Box to create this resource **FOR YOU**. **Send a check to BBWN, PO Box 301727, Jamaica Plain MA 02130 or go to biwomenboston.org/donate. You need us. We need you.**

Staying in the Closet

By Hales Bopp

When I read the call for “Out at Work” submissions, I debated for quite some time about whether or not I should share my story. My relationship with my sexuality has not been a simple one. While I can remember being attracted to both men and women in middle school, I was an adult in college before I acknowledged that I was bisexual. This means that I never really had a major “coming out” moment. While I am out and open with many of the people I care about, there are still many people who are not aware of my sexuality for one reason or another. This includes my family, certain individuals at my university, and much of my work place.

The simple answer to whether I’m out at work? Partially. I am very fortunate to work with several close personal friends. These individuals are aware that I’m bisexual and have been for quite some time. But on our team at large, no one else is aware of my sexuality. My reasoning behind this is multi-faceted. First and foremost, there hasn’t been an appropriate opportunity to bring up this information. I am currently involved in a long-term relationship with a heterosexual man. This means people at work only see a typical heterosexual relationship. In this context, I haven’t found a graceful way to interject, “Even though I’m currently dating a man, I’m also attracted to women.”

That segues into my next point. I, in part, haven’t told people at work because my sexuality, while part of my identity,

should not be my defining quality. I already see this with my coworker, who identifies as a lesbian. This coworker, her sexuality, her marriage, and her family are all topics of polite, yet tiresome, conversation. I want people to recognize my work ethic and my achievements, not my sexual preferences. I am also frustrated by the concept that LGBTQ+ individuals need to divulge their sexual orientations to everyone. It would be a completely foreign concept for one of my coworkers to introduce themselves as, “Hi, my name is SuperStraight, and I’m heterosexual.” My relationships exist outside of the workplace, and therefore, should not be a topic of workplace conversation.

Finally, part of the reason I remain “closeted” at work is because I am guarded about my sexuality. While I am in no way ashamed of who I am, I also keep information about my attractions close to my heart. The state in which I currently live is still fighting marriage equality. My workplace, which specializes in social services, has been incredibly hesitant to involve itself in any LGBTQ+ issues. And while I don’t believe my team would actively discriminate against me, I cannot speak for the organization as a whole. Until these issues are better resolved in my home state, I think I will quietly continue to exist in the closet.

Hales Bopp is a young twenty-something currently navigating the perils of adult life in the Southern United States. Hales is currently pursuing her master’s in mental health counseling and hopes to one day become a licensed counselor.



Out

By Sue

I am out at work. When I talk about my identity, I phrase it: “I date all genders; gender is not a deciding factor for me.” I try not to use a specific term such as “bisexual” because using the term causes people to bring their own preconceived and mostly negative notions of what “bisexual” means into the conversation.

I came out for the first time at work while working for a short time at a nonprofit that promotes social change in the US and internationally. Because of the organization’s mission, the company culture was more open-minded about people in general compared to many other organizations. In this environment, I felt comfortable and safe to come out for the first time at work. I also had job opportunities available at other organizations at the time. Therefore, I felt safe that if I came out and was fired for being bi, I would be able to find another job. Additionally, the organization was quite bureaucratic, so I knew that if they tried to fire me, it would probably take a few months, which would give me time to transition to another job with another organization if necessary. When I came out, everyone’s response was, “Sigh, no big deal. What are we having for lunch?” I was surprised by how blasé everyone’s responses were. I’ve since moved on to a for-profit, fairly conservative organization, but have been comfortable coming out because of the positive experience I had at the social change organization.

I think it’s easiest to come out if you work at a company where your job performance is measured by specific, objective metrics vs. subjective criteria. If you are performing exceptionally well (exceeding your metrics), then it is safer to come out and not worry about being fired. (Yes, I know it’s illegal in many states, including my own, but of course it does happen.)

Sue lives in Massachusetts.

Shout OUT to My Workplaces

By *Iyanna James-Stephenson*

I am only in my early 20s and I try to be as out as I can be with everyone I know personally.

When I lived at home, this was very easy. I was raised by a very liberal mother who is, and continues to be, understanding and open. As an avid reader and an intellectual, there is no limit to what she is willing to absorb with her eyes and accept with her mind – whether it is through documentaries or her most beloved novels. I first began expressing my attraction to girls as a sophomore in high school. Thankfully, it was a fad at the time, but as all of the other girls suddenly realized they weren't queer anymore, I realized I was.

In college it was even easier than in high school. I attended a small, liberal arts, all-women's, international institution – a hub for learning information surrounding gender and sexuality. When I entered college, I was already out. However, in all of the years that I had identified as not straight, I still hadn't officially dated a woman; that all changed freshman year. Spring semester solidified my love for women as more than just an academic passion.

I have worked in several places, either as an intern or a full-time employee, and have mostly been out.

When I was an intern in Washington, D.C., I told my boss that I identified as a queer woman. My boss at the internship was an alumna of my college. She is working as the executive director, spokesperson and activist for a civil rights and social justice organization. Given the circumstances, I thought it would be safe to tell her. However, she is from a different generation, having graduated from college in the heart of the Black Power movement. Although things have changed, I was aware she could still hold a strong opinion about sexuality quite different from my own. Thankfully, she accepted me and I felt closer to her because I was unafraid of expressing my personal self or my personal opinion. To this day, she continues to be one of my closest role models and an intellectual idol.

Currently, I am working as an English instructor at an after school academy in South Korea with a pretty close-knit group of men and women who are very open about their sexuality, as I am with mine. I work alongside two openly gay men and one asexual woman who told me in confidence about her sexual identification.

I try to be as transparent at work as I have been with my peers in college, and this includes disclosing my sexuality. If we happen to fall into a conversation of dating or people

that I like, I always make sure to shout out the women I have dated, and the girls I've spoken to over the last five years. At my current job, my supervisors may not know who or what I like, but my colleagues are very much in the loop. That is as out as I am going to be here, and I am very comfortable with that.

I hope to continue working in spaces that foster my sexuality. As long as I am amongst a liberal group of individuals or living in an environment that supports civil rights and social justice, I will remain in an understanding place of refuge.

Iyanna James-Stephenson, 22, is a recent graduate from Mount Holyoke College. She is a writer, blogger, poet, and traveler who has visited seven different countries and is currently living and working in South Korea.





Cartoonist Kate Estrop is a artist who is actually a sloth stuck in a human's body. She has one cat, Max.

Amazing

By Flash Gorski

I was NOT out at work. People only knew I'd been married to a man.

One day, three female colleagues were leafing through a *Vogue* magazine. They stopped at a picture of a drop-dead gorgeous woman in a ball gown.

"Wow," they said. "Look! So incredibly beautiful!"

"Yes," I sighed, looking over their shoulders. "She's amazing."

They turned and stared at me. One said, "We were talking about the dress, Maryann."

Forgetting where I was, I blurted out, "Oh, come on, tell me you wouldn't hit that if you had a chance!"

Turns out they wouldn't.

Flash lives and works in Wisconsin.

Out. As Something.

By Mitsy

I think people know me as gay, perhaps queer, but not readily as bisexual. I have used "bisexual" to self-identify, but my female partner is known to the staff and I don't think they necessarily make the distinction of my bisexuality vs. being a lesbian. I have also been quite self-conscious at times of saying "bisexual" in certain contexts because I feel like it might invite more questions than I care to answer, so I may default to "lesbian" or "gay."

My advice to other bi women considering coming out at work? Make it a non-issue rather than hiding; it is more awkward to have a "coming out." My strategy has been to simply – when relevant – discuss my romantic relationships or politics in a matter-of-fact tone, and although some people may blink hard or ask me to repeat myself, it has never posed a problem. In fact, I have been approached a couple of times by others complimenting my bravery or frankness, and appreciating my perspective. I am highly aware that my appearance as conventionally femme (or "casual femme") may force people to check their assumptions or prejudice, which can elicit responses both positive ("oh, my apologies for assuming") and negative ("you don't look gay").

Mitsy lives and works in Massachusetts.

Work: The Final Frontier

By Andrea Miotto

I have never been able to be out at work. I realized I was bisexual about six years ago, which was a big surprise and yet not a surprise to me. The process of coming out to family, friends and church members (they are Quakers who are very progressive) brought me a lot of peace and acceptance. But I've never felt safe enough to be open with employers. I've told one or two co-workers here and there. But to come out to everyone at work – that really is the one “final frontier” for me (yes, I'm a Trekkie).

The reasons for my reluctance are my field and my location. I'm a chaplain at a retirement community in central Pennsylvania. I've also worked in hospitals and hospices here and in Washington, D.C., my hometown. My job is different from that of a pastor in a church. I don't preach, teach, lead or proselytize. I don't advocate or spread any beliefs or doctrines. Instead, I walk alongside people in their journeys, providing caring presence and nonjudgmental listening, and helping them discover their own values, needs, desires, strengths and beliefs. I rarely speak about my own personal beliefs. Prayer and scripture enter the picture only when specifically requested. I love my position and consider it an honor to be with people in their most vulnerable moments.

When I worked in Washington, I provided a caring presence for people of many different races, religions, economic backgrounds, ages and abilities. Many people who are atheist and agnostic also need someone to talk to about certain deep questions that come up in times of crisis. They will come to different conclusions than people with spiritual beliefs, but they can still need someone to tell them they're not alone and that people who care are nearby. I've been privileged to be that person.

I moved to central Pennsylvania about eight years ago to attend a one-year postgraduate residency program. I ended up staying. I love the lack of traffic, the involvement people have in the community, the low cost of living, the scenery, the history of the place and the fact that I'm still not too far from Philadelphia and DC. I've also found a wonderfully supportive spiritual community.

Those are the pros. Now the cons: It's a very socially and religiously conservative and homogenous place. What I miss around here is diversity in all its aspects. Schools, churches and neighborhoods are very much segregated by race. Also, there are very few women, like me, who have never married and never had children. Women get married and/or have children young, and many women my age (mid-40s) are

grandmothers. People tend to socialize mostly within their often large extended families and talk mostly about family issues. There's a toughness in demeanor and a certain coldness, almost an unfriendliness, when people here encounter new people, so simply making friends is hard.

Even the local LGBT community can be close-minded. I've had lesbians tell me to my face (and even more commonly on OkCupid) that they would never date a bi woman – for all the stereotypical, biphobic reasons most of you have probably heard. Let's just say the town isn't a bonanza of opportunities to date men or women. So while I love many aspects of the area, I sometimes find myself feeling like the odd woman out, which can lead to loneliness.

At least in my social life I can seek out the exceptions – the people who are open-minded, fun and compassionate in their views. At work, I have to deal day in, day out with people who almost all have those “con” traits I mentioned – the coldness to strangers, the conservative social and religious views and a tendency to find never-married, childless women weird. Unfortunately, since I came out to myself, I've needed to assume until proven otherwise that people at work – residents, patients, co-workers, outside vendors and supervisors – would be shocked and offended by my sexual orientation. Some might refuse to work with me or let me care for them. Pennsylvania has no protections by law for LGBT folk, so I could be fired legally because I'm bi. One boss in whom I confided, after careful scrutiny of his values, about my sexual orientation, cautioned me not to come out openly in that workplace because most of the staff would treat me poorly. He accepted me, but he knew the other employees too well and didn't want me to get hurt.

But you know, hiding it hurts, too. Disguising that big part of me hurts. It's exhausting. Having to listen to some of the elderly people I serve go on rants about how LGBT people are ruining the country hurts. (Luckily that's a rare occurrence.) Knowing that a single sentence from me to my colleagues could lose me their respect hurts. It's not that I want or need to wave my sexual orientation in people's faces. I'm not even dating anyone right now (big surprise!), so I don't need to conceal a primary relationship. It's just knowing that my acceptance on the job is so precarious – that hurts badly. And it scares me.

You know what's funny? At the hospice I worked for in DC, the entire social work department was gay! They were also extremely sweet people; I can't imagine them as biphobic. So if only I'd had my big realization a couple of years earlier, I would have found immediate acceptance on the job. But it just hadn't gotten through my thick head yet.

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I've thought of moving back. But full-time chaplain jobs are few and far between. If places want to provide spiritual care, they'll usually rely on retired, volunteer pastors (with none of the training in psychology and communication chaplains have) to come in. Spiritual care jobs tend to be part-time with no benefits, like my current job. Because of that, moving would be difficult financially for me right now – actually almost impossible. Sometimes I feel trapped.

I focus daily on the blessings in my life. There are many of them. I know that many, many LGBT people would love to have a church, family and friends who are so welcoming and kind. But I still dream of being my true self in that final frontier.

Andrea is a chaplain, poet and author in Central Pennsylvania.



Of Two Minds

By Tasmin

I'm not out at work, but not because I fear the repercussions. I'm fortunate in that my workplace doesn't have any prevailing anti-LGBT+ attitudes.

So why am I not out? There's no real reason, except I'm a quiet person. I don't talk much about my personal life, unlike my coworkers, who discuss kids and spouses and vacations. It's not really a conscious choice. I guess I just seem very focused and people don't want to distract me, and the subject has never come up.

I'm not out because I'm chicken, either – I came out as polyamorous to my traditionally-minded mother. That was not a fun discussion, but I was not going to lie. Even now she doesn't really accept it, but I still don't hide it or avoid the subject. So I know I'm not out at work because of fear.

In high school, as a member of Gay Straight Alliance (the name says it all), we were often highlighting out and proud LGBT+ people and allies. I think this is positive; it's good to have role models of all sorts. I do think coming out has helped acceptance of LGBT+ folks, so I'm aware I'm standing on the shoulders of those who went before me. I am grateful to feel as safe as I do, and I know I wouldn't if it weren't for other people's sacrifices.

Yet I am not grateful for this unspoken pressure to come out, to confess. My Yankee/English culture is reserved when it comes to other people's personal life; it's no one else's business. I share this attitude. So why do I feel this twinge of guilt because I haven't come out, because I haven't shared what no one has a right to know, except partners? I am not trying to "pass" for straight. Why should I have to "prove" myself? Why should anyone? To me this unspoken pressure smacks of oppression and policing all too similar to homophobia and biphobia. Do I have to suffer to prove my worth? I am just being myself, which is quiet, and supporting LGBT+ causes where I can. So why do I have this internalized hostility when I think about why I have not come out, but not about the act of coming out and being open? Maybe I'd come out if I were more convinced it would help others, but I don't have that sense, at least not at work. To me the best place I can be an open and proud bi+ person is Pride, because I get more grief inside the rainbow than inside my cubicle.

Tasmin lives in Massachusetts.

The Patient, Silent Unicorn

By Julie P., MFA

When I first came out in 1996 to all of my immediate family members, it was terrifying. I can still feel how the salt brimmed in my eyes, and how the knots danced in my belly like it was yesterday. That night shook and trembled my insides to their core, and I remember feeling dirty, like a disappointment, as I whispered the truth out loud. At the time, I was a young and vulnerable twenty-year-old college woman looking to KD Lang and Ellen DeGeneres (still new on the scene) for proof that I wasn't awful for dating and loving another woman. As I dodged the many hurtful comments from my parents (who wouldn't be ready to evolve on the matter for at least the next decade), I was glad I had a small support system of friends and siblings who did offer healthy guidance. Eventually, I came out here or there to select others, but mainly I preferred to keep to myself, wanting to avoid any more potential shaming. I certainly wasn't about to come out to my professors or any of my employers. Back then, I don't think that anything could have been more intimidating.

Fast forward twenty years, and, oh, my goodness, hallelujah! Thankfully, times have changed drastically, but so have I! I am now a tenured professor in a small liberal arts theatre and dance program located in a small town much like the one I grew up in. I've been teaching there for seven years at this point, and have found myself delighted to be a force of encouragement and diversity to my students. No matter who they are, my specific area of teaching allows me to encourage their deep sense of self-expression to go untethered. It is thrilling! Some students are creating works about Jesus right next to the students creating works about masturbation. I love it! I never know what to expect while teaching.

You can imagine my surprise when I realized, at age 40, I now also had something new that needed to be expressed and untethered, but this was complicated because of where I worked and lived. What was happening? Something I never could have dreamt up in my wildest dreams. Something that one might read about, but never guess to be the one doing. Surprisingly, I had found myself

engaging in the world of polyamory for exactly one year before this thought finally hit me: I was just now coming fully and actively into my true self-identity, which was that of a bisexual woman who desired to love freely. Over the year, I had explored this road honestly and openly with my female partner of seven years, and what resulted was this: I'd now maintained an additional male lover, whom I called Boyfriend, for this full year, and this was awakening essential parts of me that had been dormant. Yes!! This was shocking to me, but it was happening. And, I was starting to desire to come out again, but was in no way prepared for it! This had all snuck up on me. Yes...I was in love with two people, and I wanted to announce it to everyone! And, yet, despite my brewing excitement to now come out as a bisexual polyamorous woman, I realized this was even more complicated than it had been in 1996. Should I wait? The bigger world around me still wasn't entirely ready for polyamory, and certainly the small town scene wasn't either. And, wait! To make matters more complicated, Boyfriend, also a professor, certainly wasn't ready to come out with family and definitely not at "our" place of employment. What to do? I found myself stalling. Where could I find safety? There was now my partner, my boyfriend, and his wife to think about. Yes! Boyfriend had a wife, and his wife also had a lover. Gosh! This was complicated.

Could I even come out if they weren't ready? Was that fair? I found myself fighting the urges to tell people. Close colleagues could see flutters in me, so I'd be vague, but then eventually reveal subtle details about dabbling in "open relationship" territory. Where could I really tell my full story, though? I was going to burst!

I thought back to 1996. Yes...I decided I would start with my siblings since they had all accepted me back then for loving a woman. I felt safe; this would be okay with the whole "unicorn tribe" as we lovers called ourselves, since my siblings all lived several states away and there was no



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chance it would leak back onto campus. The siblings did eat it up. Drowning in the world of business jobs and parenting, they couldn't imagine the juicy tales I was reciting were real. This all simply fueled me! It felt so liberating, as I knew it would, to speak about the players who were important in my life!

Where did that leave me at work? Truly, at this point, it is still only a few of my most daring students who have been offered a glimpse into my private life. Why them? Because I can't teach them to be brave, self-expressed artists without being my own brave self-expressed role model. I don't want to hide or lie to them, so I don't give details, but when they ask if I have a boyfriend or girlfriend, as curious college students do, I just smile and simply say, "both."

In the end, I don't feel like I'm in the closet. I feel like I care about the other unicorns, and it's more important to me that they feel safe. I am ready to tell the world, but they

aren't, so I will yield with patience. Telling those that are closest to me is all that really matters. As an adult woman who conquered fear in 1996, it is rewarding to not be afraid this go-round. Rather, I am content to be sitting in silence simply because it helps the tribe for now. Boyfriend never had a 1996. For all intents and purposes, this is his 1996, so I don't want to push him. I'd rather just love him and all the unicorns involved.

Julie P. is an associate professor of Theatre & Dance who has directed, choreographed, and/or performed in well over 100 productions. Her claims to fame include two regional Emmy nominations, performing with Kenny Rogers, teaching Ellen Degeneres dance steps live on national TV, and laughing each day with her loving partner, Kim and amazing cat, Zellie.

Out in print

By Robyn Ochs

I came out as bisexual at my university job a very long time ago, in 1987, using a method somewhat unconventional: I was quoted, and my image appeared, in an [awful] *Newsweek* article. I had been contacted by a *Newsweek* reporter and interviewed for what I had been told would be a general feature about bisexuality. Turns out, the final title of the article was "Bisexuals and AIDS: The Dangers of a Double Life" – a big surprise to me as I had been interviewed for two hours and asked only one brief question about HIV or AIDS.

The day after the article came out, it was brought to my attention that one of my co-workers was surreptitiously going from office to office showing the article to our co-workers, but saying nothing about it to me.

Later that week, I ran into this co-worker in the supply room, and she finally brought up the article, saying, "I saw you in *Newsweek*. That friend in your support group who is interviewed in the article – her husband must be very open-minded, being willing to share her with other women, and all." I replied, "Actually, she and her husband are in a monogamous relationship. What made you think she was in an open relationship?" "But she's bisexual." "Yes. And also monogamous. And so am I."

Robyn Ochs is a writer, speaker and Editor of the Bi Women Quarterly.

Out, but...

By Catherine Rock

I am out at work, but not a lot of people know it. People know that I am married to a man, so many probably assume I am straight despite the LGBT décor in my office. I teach at a college and have come out to several groups, classes and people when appropriate, but it's not something that often comes up in conversation. Although I identify as pansexual, I am out as bi, since that is what most people understand. Several years ago I was helping with Safe Space training and finally realized that by not coming out, I was being a hypocrite. I had to help show that the college was a safe place for LGBT people. I started by coming out to the allies-in-training, and I've never had any trouble. Before coming out, it is important to look at the culture of the particular workplace. Are the policies LGBT-friendly? Are there many people who are out? How are they treated? You might consider talking to an out employee if you feel that you can trust that person. There is always some risk in coming out, so consider carefully before you commit yourself.

Catherine Rock is a professor of English and Assistant Editor of the Bi Women Quarterly.

Lila, continued from page 1

ness that I may be contending with not only homophobia, and not only biphobia, but also sex phobia.

Most of my work-time interactions in schools are with students ages five to ten. Coming out to my students would be out of context and uncalled-for. I am there to help them learn English, not to tell them about my personal life. My interactions with staff and other instructors are brief, time-constrained and focused primarily on the immediate pragmatics of my or their job. Commuting and a full schedule render after-work socializing with colleagues a moot point. These factors leave little room to create any ground from which coming out at work might even seem relevant.

Even if I took precious time out of my schedule to get to know some of the staff or instructors, the risk in revealing to them that I “like both guys and girls” is that, even if I express it in a roundabout way, there is a good chance their thoughts will lead them around to that term that has the word “sex” in it. If I worked in an office where all interaction pertaining to my job happened between adults only, I might feel more comfortable coming out to co-workers (and I might even use that scandalous word to do so). My colleagues, however, know that I work with children – indeed, the very same children they endeavor to protect and look out for. Needless to say, I, too, endeavor to protect and look out for those children. Yet misconceptions about bisexuality (e.g. that it is synonymous with pedophilia or sexual perversion) can sometimes unfortunately open the door to co-workers casting a wary eye on a colleague known or suspected to be bisexual.

While I am reluctant to risk my co-workers assuming an attitude of mistrust toward me if I were to come out to them, I am driven to ask myself, “Am I O.K. with keeping my personal and professional lives separate?” At times, I think, “I am at this job to do something I do well and love to do. My sexual orientation is none of your business.” Yet behind this self-assured thought I often sense in myself traces of fear, insecurity, and a longing to be accepted by my colleagues for who I am without having to monitor or edit what I say to them. A feeling that I am leading a double life or “waiting in the wings” (for a more accepting workplace, perhaps) plagues me with anxiety and discontent. Hiding is exhausting.

Perhaps the stress I feel in keeping my personal and professional lives separate comes partly from the fact that I am still in the process of coming to accept my bisexuality. My longing to be approved of by others may come to feel less painfully urgent as I become more self-affirming.

At the same time, feeling that one is accepted in their community is often important to maintaining a sense of personal well-being. Someone who is fearfully hiding aspects of themselves from what may incidentally be one of their

primary communities – their work team – may feel anxious or unhappy as a result.

Conventional wisdom (a.k.a. “common sense”) counsels against mixing the personal with the professional. However, has it not been discovered in many a workplace that colleagues who feel themselves to be part of a cohesive team do their jobs better? And wouldn't the element of co-workers getting to know one another be a fundamental part of creating a sense of cohesion among them?

True, in many workplaces, sexuality may not be the most relevant topic to broach. Subjects such as dating and relationships, however, do tend to come up from time to time in “water cooler conversations” (or the equivalent, in absence of a water cooler). If while at work a person has no desire to talk about their love life anyhow, then this separation of personal and professional may be a self-empowered choice and pose no problem. If, however, they feel they are deliberately withholding or altering information about themselves for fear of being viewed negatively because of misconceptions about bisexuality, this separation of personal and professional may reflect the person's sense that they have to pretend, to a degree, to be someone else in order to be accepted at work. This may create an invisible rift between themselves and their colleagues.

Rifts tend to be counterproductive to team building and job performance and are generally something to be avoided in the promotion of an effective workplace. On top of that, something in the quality of one's performance may be lost if one is “hiding in the wings.” Of course, in coming out at work, the invisible rift caused by hiding in fear may simply be replaced by a visible one – that created by confronting hostile or alienating attitudes in one's colleagues.

“Pick your poison” (or “pick your rift,” as the case may be) is the theme of the day for me at this point with regard to coming out to colleagues or staying in the closet at work. The lesser evil currently seems to be that of remaining in hiding, yet it is still a poison. The detrimental effects of this poison reside not so much in the actual act of hiding, however, as in the fear with which it is done. It is this fear which can eat a person alive, or at least hinder them from feeling a sense of belonging and contentment.

While coming out to my colleagues is something I would like to feel comfortable doing, the person to whom I feel it is the most important for me to come out while at work is myself. Many schools have felt to me like hyper-hetero-normative, sex-shaming environments, where the volume is turned up on unspoken homophobia, biphobia, and sex phobia. Putting on a self-protective, asexual “straitjacket” when I walk into work has become so automatic to me that the detrimental effects these internalized cultural phobias have on my happiness and well-being often slip under my own radar.

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There is, of course, nothing wrong with actually being straight or asexual. However, any persona one assumes because one is afraid of being oneself can feel pretty claustrophobic. What I do internally in order to assume this persona sometimes even feels like an act of psychological violence against myself. I effectively cut myself off from my own sexuality. It feels like holding my breath. Of course, this does not mean that I feel the need to deliberately express my sexuality at work. It simply means that, whatever I do or do not tell my co-workers about myself, I need to feel that, while at work (or anywhere else, for that matter), I am being honest with *myself* about who I am.

Still, it does get a bit lonely if I am the only one at work with whom I can be honest about the person I am without fearing hostility or alienation. What a sad thing it is to live a life confined to what one's fear allows. What an unfortunate thing it is that living a life unbound by fear evokes too often the unfounded suspicions of others.

My only hope is that as I continue to cultivate self-acceptance with regard to my bisexuality I will either feel more at peace with keeping my personal and professional lives separate or care less how my colleagues respond when I act on a resolution that feeling free and whole is more important to me than being accepted for something I am not.

Until then, I'm waiting in the wings.

Lila Hartelius, BA (lilahartelius.wordpress.com) is a published writer who has written funded grant and business proposals and served as editorial assistant for the International Journal of Transpersonal Psychology. Her work has been published in Weird Sisters West and Tendrel (Naropa University's diversity journal), and she has contributed to the efforts of Bennington College's Queer Student Union, Naropa University's GLBTQ student group, and Boulder Pride.

I'm Out But I'm Not: Schrödinger's Bisexual

By Jessica Renee

"My girlfriend." Nobody even blinked. My coworkers, despite being nearly all straight men, display a minimum of homophobia. The only other woman in the shop is herself married to a woman. But those two words, together, spoken by me, create a whole host of assumptions. I know exactly what those assumptions are, but I don't speak up. I don't correct them.

Somebody rags on the musical choices of another of my coworkers, saying, "We're here to work, not seduce women."

He replies, "I'm always ready to seduce women."

Says the first, "There's only one girl here right now, and you're seriously barking up the wrong tree."

Could be he only means, "because she's already in a relationship." Could also be he means, "because she's gay."

I've known that I was bi since I was fourteen, and I've been out to select family members and friends nearly as long. Nowadays, if I'm coming out to anyone in person, I prefer the casual mention of an ex-girlfriend or the attractiveness of a particular female celebrity. It's fairly simple, but always, always punctuated by, "...so you're gay?" "Bi, actually." "Oh, okay."

Lately, though, I find it harder and harder to care enough to correct them. Straight people invariably have a barrage of

questions, and it seems like those questions (appropriately) double whenever I feel the need to clarify that I'm bi, not gay. Having a girlfriend and being generally far more interested in dating only women and non-binary people anyway, it's easy to let that little assumption go unchallenged.

Sometimes I feel like I have a responsibility to be fully out, to be bi and loud and proud everywhere I go. There's a creeping guilt that I ought to be doing more than I am. If somebody asks me outright, or says, wrongly, that I'm gay, then yes, I will absolutely tell them that I'm bi, without hesitation. But I never asked to exist in a world that operates on binaries and absolutes created long before me. It's not my job to fix the presumptions and expectations of straight people. If somebody else wants to play the ever-smiling Bi Educator™, ready to answer the same questions that they've already heard a million times, I won't stop them. As for me, I'd rather be talking about the cute pictures of my girlfriend's dog that she sent me.

Jessica is a nonbinary bisexual woman currently living in New Mexico and working as an avionics technician. She hopes to one day become an astronaut, a novelist, or both.

Bisexuality: Identities, Politics, and Theories

by Surya Monro

Reviewed by Kristin M. Brown, PhD, MPA, MSW

I had the pleasure of meeting Surya Monro in the United Kingdom, and felt excited about this opportunity to review her recently published book *Bisexuality: Identities, Politics, and Theories*. In 2014, we met at the University of Huddersfield where she is Professor of Sociology and Social Policy, and Director of the Centre for Research in the Social Sciences, distinguished in her long-time international research and advocacy with sexual and gender minorities. In this review, I share a few highlights from the in-depth analyses presented in her book.

Bisexuality: Identities, Politics, and Theories is based upon Surya Monro's multinational qualitative and archival research, completed in collaboration with Camilo Tamayo Gomez of Columbia and Ahonaa Roy of India. For the US and India, published and written works related to bisexual life experiences were drawn upon. For the UK and Columbia, 40 contributors participated in interviews. Some research contributors were from within organized bisexual communities, yet some were reached despite not being members of organized sexual minority communities. Contributors ranged in age from 21 to 60, were multicultural and of diverse gender identities, socioeconomic backgrounds, faiths and lifestyles.

Addressed in the Introduction of Chapter 1 is an example of the valuable intercultural framework of Surya Monro's scholarship:

"Temporality is important for understanding bisexuality, because if the entire lifecycle of an individual is considered, rather than a particular point in that lifecycle, then the likelihood of behavioural bisexuality (sexual desires or behaviours towards other people of more than one gender) is much greater.... The notion of temporal sexualities can be taken further by using the notion of reincarnation.... In an approach to bisexuality that seeks to avoid Western-centrism.... temporalized identities would extend not over the course of one lifetime but many" (Monro, pp. 3-4).

In Chapter 2 on Bisexuality and Social Theory, Monro summarizes:

"Interactionist, queer, and trans theory approaches to conceptualizing bisexuality would not in themselves be sufficient in interrogating the structural inequalities that bisexual people face. Therefore some materialist analysis that explains the structures that render bisexual people marginal is brought into the chapter..." (Monro, p. 56).

Chapter 3 on Intersectionality acknowledges the origins of intersectionality theory in the work of scholars such as Kimberle Crenshaw regarding the life experiences of African descent women:

"There have, recently, been concerns voiced about the transposition of intersectionality theory from its roots in critical race and black feminist thinking to other loci of analysis.... This chapter uses intersectionality approaches which address whiteness and racism..." (Monro, pp. 58-59).

In Chapter 4 on Sex, Relationships, Kinship, and Community, Monro explains:

"...there are some key areas of divergence between the bisexual, and the lesbian and gay, communities. These revolve around several axes; these include... the LG communities as reliant on, and reinforcing of, discrete gender-binary and sexually binary identities as opposed to the bisexual communities, which celebrate sex/gender diversities; and the LG community as primarily mononormative, in contrast to the mixed relationship styles supported by the bisexual communities" (Monro, p. 107).

In Chapter 5 on Bisexuality, Organizations, and Capitalism, Monro presents findings from several studies, stating that

"...both UK and US research to date indicates that there are strong patterns of marginalization, erasure, and discrimination with regards to bisexuality, and that this impacts negatively on bisexual employees and perhaps the organisations within which they work" (Monro, p. 119)....

“however... some bisexual people experience supportive workplaces” (p. 131).

In Chapter 6 on Bisexuality and Citizenship, Monro summarizes complex concepts:

“Both universal and particularist approaches to bisexual citizenship are useful... Universal approaches can be used to support claims for fundamental human rights, whereas particularist approaches are needed to tackle bisexual erasure, invisibility, and biphobia” (p. 154).

In Chapter 7 on Bisexuality, Activism, Democracy, and the State, Colombian contributor Liliam is quoted:

“For me, if you want to have a bisexual identity, you have to overcome three closets... gays and lesbians say all the time that you have to ‘come out of the closet’ and be proud of your sexual identity, but for bisexuals, we have to do a step more... the first closet is with yourself, recognize you as a bisexual; the second closet is with the Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender community, because sometimes they can’t accept you as a bisexual and it’s really difficult to try to construct your bisexual identity when non-heterosexual people, ‘your friends’ judge you all the time; and finally, with the society in general” (Monro, p. 161).

Bisexuality: Identities, Politics, and Theories is a groundbreaking effort to bring bisexual theory into scholarly discourse and literature, building upon and expanding earlier social theories. While grounded in the context of historical scholarly frameworks, *Bisexuality: Identities, Politics, and Theories* is accessible to a wide range of readers, illustrated throughout with interesting quotations by scholars and research participants. Each chapter concludes with a concise summary, highlighting the main ideas.

The comprehensive bibliography, compiled with assistance from Antony Osborne and Anna Fry, is a valuable resource provided in this book. Surya Monro acknowledges the earlier work of exemplary scholars of minority well-being including Robyn Ochs, Beverly Greene and William Jeffries (US); and Meg John Barker, Christina Richards and Helen Bowes-Catton (UK). Also cited are the scholarly works of their colleagues and other seminal scholars such as F. Serrano and Maria Cecilia Zea (Colombia), A.V. Ravikumar and K. Anil Kumar (India); Sarah E. Rowley, Brian Dodge, Paula Rust, Ronald Fox, Beth Firestein and Kathleen Morrow (US); Diane Richardson, Claire Hemmings and Susan George (UK), as well as many other notable scholars.

Surya Monro’s contribution is necessary for a more holistic understanding of humanity. This book would be of interest to all social science scholars and historians, is essential for skilled, competent clinical practice and will serve as a source of empowering information for sexual minority communities and organizations.

Surya Monro’s book can be ordered in hardcopy or as an electronic book from Palgrave: <http://www.palgrave.com/us/book/9781137007308>

You can also access the book today, on Amazon Kindle!

Dr. Brown completed a cross-national research study “The Voices of African Descent Bisexual Women: Experiences Related to Identity and Disclosure, in Social Support Networks and Health Care Settings, in the United States and United Kingdom,” in 2014, with forthcoming publications.



Kristin Brown reads Surya Monro’s book

“Half Out” at Work: A Bisexual Phenomenon

By Rev. Francesca Bongiorno Fortunato

At my last job before this one (teaching drama in an after school program) I was “half out.” That’s a phrase I’ve heard many other bisexual people use, referring to what happens when we are in same-gender relationships and allow others to perceive us as gay or lesbian. Being “half out” means that people (at work or other communities) know we’re not straight. But they don’t know we’re bisexual. When they label us as gay or lesbian, we don’t correct them.

I can’t speak for other bisexuals in that position, but my own reason for allowing the misperception was simple enough. My boss and co-workers were all quite conservative straight people, as far as I could tell. I’d had to be honest, during my interview, about being in a same-sex marriage, so there was no hiding that. But I didn’t want to ask for more alienation (and there was already some, based on my marriage to my wife) than I was already experiencing. I could tell that my boss and co-workers (who tended to suddenly stop talking whenever I walked by) considered me an outsider, just for being “not straight.” My thinking was that, by not mentioning my bisexuality, I was allowing people at work to see me as a “respectable, married lesbian.” That seemed to be the safest thing for me, in that environment. I did feel very uncomfortable with my decision because I know that being out as bisexual is important for our community. I wasn’t proud of making the self-preserving (selfish) choice, but I did it anyway.

At my current job (as Interim Director of Religious Education for a Unitarian Universalist church), I am 100% out. When co-workers labeled me as lesbian, based on my marital status, I corrected them and told them about my bi writing and activism. When I was asked to give a sermon on Religious Education Sunday, I mentioned my bisexuality from the pulpit! I was glad to have a workplace that felt safe enough for me to be fully out.

Being an Interim DRE means that I am not allowed to keep this job for longer than two years. My contract with the church will end in June, and I have begun the search for my next job. I certainly hope and pray that it will be one where I can be fully out at work, without risking my job security or emotional safety. But there are no guarantees. Even many “liberals” seem to be unable to respect bisexuals, and there is only so much stigma I’m willing to take on. As a result, I might end up being “half out” again.

During the years when I was married to a man, I was never out at work at all. Being perceived as straight meant that I would have had to really, forcefully out myself not only as “not straight” but as bisexual. And, of course, that might well have led my supervisors or co-workers at those jobs

to think I was looking for sex outside my marriage, or just “seeking attention.” I didn’t want to deal with that!

I think it’s harder for us to be out at work than we are in other communities (social circles, school or even family) because our livelihoods are at stake. The risk (of either losing our jobs or being made miserable at them by stigma and harassment) can seem too great. Of course, I doubt that any prospective employer who does a “Google” search on me won’t find out, almost immediately, that I am bisexual. I’ve done so much public bisexual activism and bi writing (including a lot for this publication) that my orientation is pretty much all over the Internet for the whole world to see these days. So, the choice might not even be mine to make the next time. And maybe that’s a good thing. I hope so!

Rev. Francesca Bongiorno Fortunato is an ordained minister, dance teacher and bi activist, for whom writing is a serious avocation. She lives in Brooklyn, NY, with her wife, Lynn, and their cats, Alice and Gracie.



Deb, Robyn & Ellyn: a mini BBWN reunion at the Creating Change Conference in Chicago, January 20-24, 2016.

News Briefs

On January 30th, the Screen Actors Guild Awards had an unusually bi night: Queen Latifah was honored for playing the real-life bisexual singer Bessie Smith in HBO's *Bessie*. Kevin Spacey won Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Drama Series for his unscrupulous Francis Underwood character in *House of Cards*, and Viola Davis won Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Drama Series (*How to Get Away with Murder*). Actress Alicia Vikander won Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Supporting Role for playing real-life bisexual character Gerda Wegener in *The Danish Girl*.

Shows with present – though unnamed – bisexual themes that received recognition included *Downton Abbey*, *Orange is the New Black*, *How to Get Away with Murder* and *Game of Thrones*.



STUDENTS: Looking for a **PAID SUMMER INTERNSHIP?** We are looking for a communications intern with amazing design and web skills to work for 200 hours at \$10/hr. Boston-based a plus, but you could live anywhere. Details at <http://biwomenboston.org/2015/11/20/paid-summer-internship>.

We are looking for a new **CALENDAR EDITOR!** For every issue, the calendar editor compiles a list of events to feature in *BQW*, coordinates BBWN potluck brunches each month, and updates events for the BBWN web calendar. This is a fantastic opportunity to work with a one-of-a kind publication! Contact Kate at thewriterkate@gmail.com if you're interested.



Some of the attendees at the January brunch at Kate's in Somerville

Calendar, continued from p. 19

9 (Monday) 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. (See March 14th)

12 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLISS). (See March 10th)

21 (Saturday) 11:30 am, Saturday Bi Brunch. (See March 19th)

21 (Saturday) noon, BBWN Potluck Brunch at Robyn's in Jamaica Plain. Please bring food and/or drinks to share. There are cats in the home. Children welcome. A great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area. Info/RSVP: robyn@robynochs.com for directions.

26 (Thursday) 7 pm, Young BLISS, Jamaica Plain. (See March 24th)

The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street in Boston, behind Club Cafe. Call 617-424-9595.

Ongoing Events

Come to our monthly bi brunch! All women are welcome! See calendar for dates.

2nd Mondays:

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting. 7-9pm at the Bi Office. All are welcome.

Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. 7pm. Info: kate.e.flynn@gmail.com.

1st Wednesdays:

BLiSS: Bisexual Social & Support Group. 7pm. All genders welcome. Info: bliss@biresource.net

2nd & 4th Thursdays:

Younger Bi Group. 7pm. For bi folks 20-29. Info: Kate at youngblissboston@gmail.com.

3rd Saturdays:

Biversity Bi Brunch. 11:30am at The Burren, 247 Elm Street, Davis Square, Somerville.

Metro-Boston women: Keep up with local events. Sign up for our email list! Send an email to: biwomenboston-subscribe@yahoo.com.



CALENDAR

March

2 (Wednesday) 7-9 pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). All bi and bi-friendly people of all genders and orientations welcome to attend. Meetings are peer-facilitated discussion groups, sometimes with a pre-selected topic or presenter. Meets 1st Wednesdays. Info/RSVP: bliss@biresource.net.

10 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). If you are in your 20s or mid-30s (or thereabouts) and identify somewhere along the lines of bisexual/omni/pan/fluid (or are questioning in that direction), please join us on the 2nd Thursdays for a few hours of laughter, discussion, activities, and/or the eating and drinking of delicious things! Activities and locations vary, so please contact Kate at youngblissboston@gmail.com for info/to RSVP.

13 (Sunday) 2-4pm, Tea with Bisexual Women Partnered with Men (BWPM). A peer-led support meetup co-hosted by BI-WOC and the BRC. We will discuss a wide range of issues related to attraction, sexuality, and gender in a supportive safe space for only trans and cis women and non-binary folks of all races and ethnic backgrounds. Meets at Blue Shirt Café in Somerville. More info/RSVP at <http://www.meetup.com/Bi-Community-Activities/events/226955380/>.

13 (Sunday) Noon, Potluck Brunch at Betsy's in Newton. Bring a potluck dish to share. A great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area. Info/RSVP to Betsy at nelson@brandeis.edu.

14 (Monday) 7 pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. A peer led support group for women in a straight marriage/relationship struggling with sexual orientation or coming out. Meets 2nd Mondays. Info/RSVP: kate.e.flynn@gmail.com.

19 (Saturday) 11:30 am, Bi Brunch. This mixed gender bi group brunches at The Burren, 247 Elm Street, Davis Sq., Somerville near the Davis stop on the Red Line. Meets 3rd Saturdays.

24 (Thursday) 7 pm, Young BLiSS, Jamaica Plain. This group is aimed towards people in their 20s and 30s (or thereabouts) who are interested in some tasty snacks and discussion with like-minded bis. Feel free to bring any topics you're interested in discussing! Meets at Café Nero in JP on 4th Thursdays. Info/RSVP: contact Mia at youngblissboston@gmail.com.

April

6 (Wednesday) 7-9 pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). (See March 2nd)

8-10 (Fri-Sun), BECAUSE Conference. Based in Minneapolis, the theme of this conference is "My Identities, My Life." More info at <http://www.becauseconference.org/>.

10 (Sunday) Noon, Potluck Brunch at Steph's in Arlington. Bring a potluck dish to share. This is a great opportunity to meet other bi and bi-friendly women in the Boston area. Info/RSVP to smiserlis@gmail.com.

11 (Monday) 7pm, Straight Marriage, Still Questioning. (See March 14th)

14 (Thursday) 7-9pm, Young Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). (See March 10th)

17 (Saturday) 11:30am, Saturday Bi Brunch. (See March 19th)

28 (Thursday) 7 pm, Young BLiSS, Jamaica Plain. (See March 24th)

May

4 (Wednesday) 7-9 pm, Bisexual Social and Support Group (BLiSS). (See March 2nd)

7 (Saturday). Northampton Pride March. Info at <http://www.nohopride.org>.

8 (Sunday) 2-4pm, Tea with Bisexual Women Partnered with Men (BWPM). (See March 13th)

Calendar, continues on p. 19