

## **Working Bi: Preliminary Findings from a Survey on Workplace Experiences of Bisexual People**

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*Preliminary analysis of early data from an extensive survey of the experience of bisexual people in the workplace indicates that bisexuality is a separate sexual orientation from monosexuality (either homosexuality or heterosexuality), that workplace nondiscrimination policies are more effective in creating perceived safety for bisexual people if they include gender identity and expression in addition to sexual orientation alone, and that dissatisfaction in the workplace, as well as in life in general, can be correlated with the degree to which a person keeps her or his bisexuality a secret. Researchers propose a Sexual Orientation Infinite Polygon and suggest action steps for bisexual people and allies, such as*

- 1. Companies and other workplaces establish Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies offering workplace protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity;*
- 2. Employee work groups—formal and informal—encourage bisexual employees to be openly involved in their activities by:*
  - a. Hosting bi-specific events*
  - b. Actively incorporating bi-inclusive language in their meetings and publications*

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- c. Educating their gay, lesbian and straight members about the realities of who bisexuals are to dispel the myths that block those individuals support of bisexual coworkers*
- 3. Bisexual people who are closeted might wish to consider coming out as respondents who are out about their bisexuality indicated greater satisfaction with their sex lives!*

*KEYWORDS* *bisexual, bisexuality, fluid sexuality, gender identity and expression, LGBT workplace, pansexual, sexual orientation infinite polygon*

What does sexual orientation have to do with the workplace? What is there to talk about that you don't cover by understanding the experiences of straight and gay people at work? Do bisexual people have different experiences in the workplace than heterosexual or homosexual people? Those questions are the foundation that drove the development of this survey with the intent to learn from bisexual people themselves about their lives.

This preliminary analysis of this data begins to probe those questions, as well as broadens into the exploration of how bisexuality is defined by bisexuals, how satisfied bisexuals are with various aspects of their lives and how involved in community they are.

Bisexual people have long been an invisible demographic. To make matters worse for those people who acknowledge that their sexual orientation is not 'monosexual' (oriented only toward members of one sex, either the 'opposite sex' or the 'same sex') some researchers have asserted that bisexuality is not a 'real' sexual orientation (Rieger, Chivers, & Bailey, 2005). Nevertheless, 'bisexuals' have been nominally included in the 'LGBT community' (or at least in the acronym) for several decades. This inclusion has not resulted in widespread acceptance, something discussed by respondents to this survey, a finding that is developed further in subsequent analysis. The results overviewed here are intriguing and warrant further investigation.

Independent researcher Heidi Bruins Green determined to address this situation by collecting relevant data, designing an extensive quantitative and qualitative survey instrument intended to document the experience of bisexual/pansexual/fluid people. She recruited associate professor of quantitative analysis Nicholas R. Payne, and legal scholar and author Jamison Green to assist in survey instrument design and in analyzing and documenting the study results.

## STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted via an Internet survey (Survey Monkey™) using snowball sampling. The survey's 78 questions were divided into five sections: self-definitions, relationships, communities, workplace experiences and

demographics. The survey instrument was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Cincinnati and was launched June 24, 2010. The preliminary sample was pulled on July 20, 2010, and consisted of 822 respondents. The survey closed November 30, 2010, with the full analysis to be reported in 2011.

This article describes the preliminary data set results that Ms. Green and Dr. Payne presented at the BiReCon (Bisexuality Research Conference) and BiCon (Bisexuality Conference) 2010 and 10 ICB (International Conference on Bisexuality) symposia held in London, August 26–30, 2010, and at the Out & Equal Workplace Summit held in Los Angeles, October 5–8, 2010. These results are not a full analysis of all collected data but reflect the initial review of specific questions that the researchers felt would shed light on issues affecting bisexual/pansexual/fluid people and that would encourage interest in the final report. The full study will also include focus groups and in-depth interviews with 50 to 60 participants, to be conducted in 2011. We are aware of the limitations of the data with respect to race, sex, hourly workers and non-U.S.-based distribution, and we worked to reach out to underrepresented populations, including sending out special requests for respondents from underrepresented groups between August 1 and November 30, 2010.

## Demographics

The Demographics section contained 21 questions to gather in-depth background on the respondents. The purpose was to identify whether particular variables influenced the responses to questions in other sections. The questions probed age; race; sex; country of origin and where the respondent lives currently; economic status currently and in childhood; whether the respondent lives in an urban, suburban, small town or rural area; religion/spirituality; educational level; employment status; type of work and industry of employment. The Demographics section was the final section of the survey to avoid unconscious bias in respondents' answers by thinking about how they fit into various externally defined categories before responding to the survey, but in presenting the data, we reviewed the demographic highlights and anomalies first to provide flavor and context.

When asked their sex, respondents were given nine options and instructed to choose the single option that best described them. Fifty-three percent chose one of the female options (female with no transsexual history, female with transsexual history, transgender female/transwoman), 35% chose one of the male options (male with no transsexual history, male with transsexual history, transgender man/transman) and 10% chose queer/genderqueer. These figures compare favorably with those reported in the BiCon Survey that has been distributed to conference attendees each year since 2004 and indicates cumulatively that 45% of attendees identify as

female, 36% as male and 19% as transgender/queer, or TQ (BiCon Survey, 2010).

Our preliminary data ( $N = 822$ ) included respondents from five continents: North and South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. Sixty-eight percent of respondents were from the United States, 14% from the United Kingdom, 5% from Canada, and 2% or less from each of 17 additional countries as widely dispersed as India, Israel, Estonia, Puerto Rico, Finland and New Zealand. It is not surprising that our respondents were from predominantly English speaking countries because the survey is only available in English, though several zealous individuals took it upon themselves to distribute the survey in some non-English-speaking countries as well.

Fifty-five percent of respondents live in urban areas, 28% in suburbs, 10% in small towns and 6% in rural areas. This distribution is consistent with the 2009 Kaiser Foundation's data for health policy, which finds 79% and 80% of people in the United States and United Kingdom, respectively, live in combined urban and suburban districts (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010).

Eighty-six percent of respondents identify as White, 6% identify as biracial or multiracial, 4.7% identify as Hispanic, 2.9% Black, 2.8% North American tribal, and less than 2% each Asian, Pacific Islanders and Middle Eastern. The respondent age range was between 18 and 78, with the majority (68%) in the 25 to 45 age range. A majority of respondents (64%) reported recognizing their multisex attractions between the ages of 7 and 19; however, even people in their sixties reported realizing new attractions in the midst of, or after ending, a consistent history of monosexual relationships.

Fifty-five percent of respondents were salaried (aka 'exempt' in the United States), 34% were hourly workers ('nonexempt' in the United States; clerical or labor in the United Kingdom), and 11% indicated they were consultants or contractors. Of those working in companies, more than one third (36%) worked for companies with fewer than 100 employees and another 15% for companies between 101 and 500 employees, so one half of respondents worked for small companies. (Note: the Small Business Administration defines a small company as one with fewer than 500 people, and their data also indicates that 51% of US workers work for small companies or organizations; Kobe, 2007.) One in four (26%) of respondents worked in a midsize company or organization (501–15,000 employees), and one in five (22%) worked in large corporations or government organizations, defined as having more than 15,000 employees.

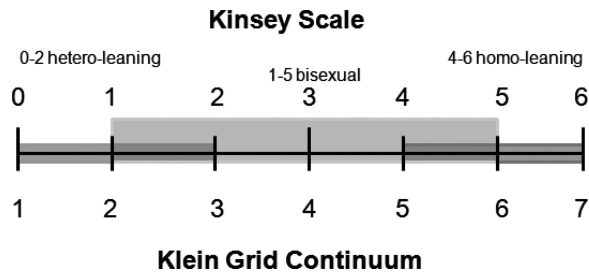
## Self-Definitions

In spite of the limitations of our data as mentioned earlier, the demographics above set the stage to discuss some of the more intriguing results.

Because the demographic data does not include a representative sample of all types of people, caution is required when extrapolating the results.

The first section of the survey asked respondents how they self-defined with respect to their sexual orientation. They were encouraged to select as many terms as applied to them, as well as to add additional terms in the Comments section. Three fourths of the 822 respondents (74.5%) used the term *bisexual* as a self-definition. Forty-three percent used that term and no other, whereas 31% used *bisexual* plus one or more additional terms. More than one fourth (28%) used the term *queer* as part or all of their self-definition. There were a number of comments indicating that *queer* is preferred because it conveys more belonging to the LGBT community, whereas *bisexual* can be seen as outside the LGBT community (despite inclusion in the 'community' acronym). One fifth (21%) of respondents used the term *fluid* or *sexually fluid*. Fifteen percent used *pansexual*. Another 15% used the word *gay* whereas 11% used *lesbian*. The self-definition terms question utilized several options common in the African American community 'men who have sex with men and women' (MSMW) and 'women who have sex with men and women' (WSMW). That category had a 10% response rate, indicating that people beyond the African American and other communities use those terms, because only 2.9% of respondents identified as Black. Alternative terms that were volunteered by respondents included 'heteroflexible' and 'homoflexible,' 'bisituational,' 'dual citizen,' 'day-walker,' and 'hot-sexual.' One participant stated, "A friend once told me that I was 'a bisexual woman in the body of a lesbian man!'" In total, 83% of respondents described themselves as one of the terms offered that indicate attraction to more than one sex or gender, and 11% of those did not select 'bisexual.' Although, 17% described themselves as 'straight' or 'gay,' most of those indicated some bisexuality in response to the questions based upon the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (KSOG—explanation to follow): only one self-reported gay person and two self-reported straight people provided answers to the KSOG questions that indicated absolutely no bi or fluid attraction or behaviors.

Defining the term *bisexual* is not an exact science. Although we suspect bisexuality has been in existence as long as human sexuality itself has existed, Alfred Kinsey's famous Kinsey Scale (see Figure 1) created a physical location for bisexuality on a single sexual orientation continuum between heterosexuality and homosexuality (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994). Kinsey designed a scale numbered from 0 (*completely heterosexual*) to 6 (*completely homosexual*) and used interviews with tens of thousands of individuals to validate his scale. Kinsey himself never used the term *bisexual*, but we interpret the section between 1 and 5 on that scale as a graphic representation of bisexuality. However, nothing is ever simple: there is overlap and ambiguity in the scale. After consultation with



**FIGURE 1** Combined Kinsey scale and Klein Sexual Orientation Grid scale showing overlap between heterosexualities, bisexualities, and homosexualities.

Robyn Ochs, bisexual author, activist and raconteur, we also view the section between 0 and 2 as *heterosexual/heterosexual-leaning* and the section between 4 and 6 as *homosexual/homosexual-leaning*. Although the overlapping numbers may seem to muddy the waters, for the people whose lives they represent, this is the most accurate delineation. Another researcher, Fritz Klein (1993) refined Kinsey's model by using a slightly different numbering system (1–7) and seven separate continuums for various aspects of sexual orientation: physical attraction, sexual behavior, sexual fantasies, emotional preference (self-definition), emotional connections, social preferences and lifestyle. There were seven possible responses to each: 'Other sex (heterosexual) only,' 'Other sex (heterosexual) mostly,' 'Other sex (heterosexual) somewhat more,' 'Multi-sex (heterosexual/gay-lesbian) attraction equally,' 'Same sex (gay-lesbian) somewhat more,' 'Same sex (gay-lesbian) mostly' and 'Same sex (gay-lesbian) only.' He then developed the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (KSOG) by adding three time dimensions to each continuum: now, past, ideal. For example, on the KSOG 'fantasy' continuum, an individual would indicate on a scale of 1 to 7 how heterosexually identified/homosexually identified their fantasies are currently, how they were identified in the past (a time period not specified in Klein's description) and then how they would prefer their sexual fantasies to be.

The first seven questions of our Self Definitions section asked respondents to define themselves on Klein's grid. The resulting answers yield a number that can be plotted on the grid. We recognize that the use of numbers as a shorthand to describe people's lives has its limitations. However, understanding that numbers are not the whole story, and ensuring space for the individual voices to emerge, allows us to use the numbers as a tool to learn valuable information about the respondents in aggregate. Each of the first seven questions was made up of three subquestions concerning the time dimensions Klein used. The resulting 21 numbers were then plotted to understand the respondents' sexual orientation, using the scales described above.

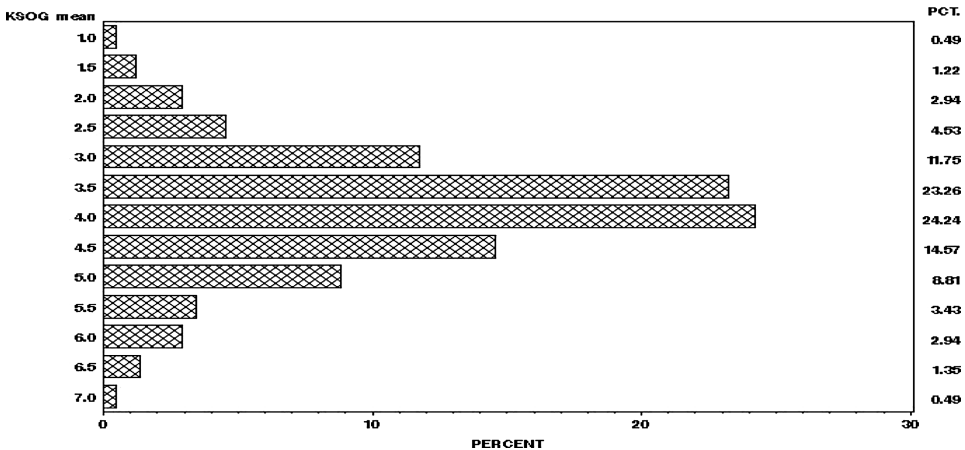
We constructed for each respondent several indices from the 21 answers:

1. “in past”—the average “past” answer for all seven aspects
2. “in life”—the average “present” answer for all seven aspects
3. “ideal”—the average “ideal” answer for all seven aspects
4. “overall”—the mean of the three above indices

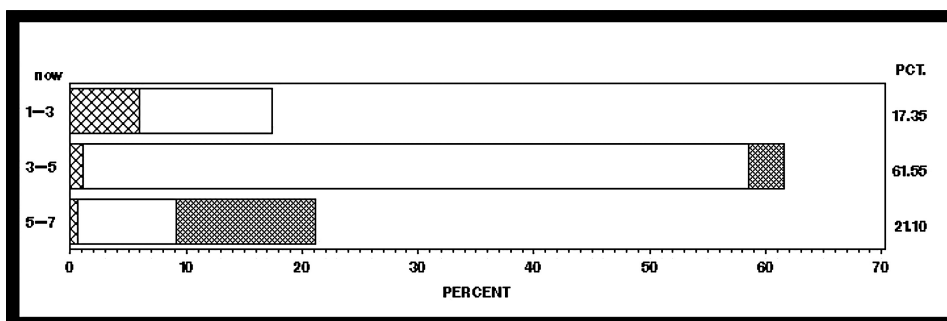
Figure 2 is the distribution of the ‘overall’ scores for the 822 respondents in the preliminary sample:

This distribution has a mean of 3.907, a standard deviation of 0.962. It is not perfectly normal as it has a kurtosis of 0.763, or a much narrower arc in the bell curve. In other words, though very close to a normal bell-shaped curve (expected for a discreet population), there is a bit of ‘squeezing in,’ or a greater percentage of the population in the center of the distribution, which indicates somewhat greater homogeneity than in a typical population.

In fact, the normal distribution of the KSOG data provides a strong indication that rather than bisexuals being individuals ‘on their way’ to permanent monosexual sexual orientations, that bisexuality is in fact a distinct and separate sexual orientation, separate from the monosexual orientations. This finding is further validated by looking at the desired direction of change demonstrated by comparing individuals’ ‘present’ KSOG with their ‘ideal’ KSOG. If bisexuality were a transitional state on the way from one monosexual orientation to another, the ‘ideal’ KSOG would be more monosexual than the ‘present’ KSOG. In fact, as demonstrated in Figure 3, quite the opposite is true:



**FIGURE 2** “Overall” Klein Sexual Orientation Grid values for 822 respondents, showing most respondents identified close to the middle of the ‘bisexual’ range.



**FIGURE 3** Respondents ‘present’ Klein Sexual Orientation Grid scores, by percent, with ‘ideal’ scores superimposed. The majority of bisexual people idealize a sexual orientation in the 3 to 5 range.

Note: Large cross-hatches = “Ideal = Present KSOG”; blank = “Ideal KSOG = closer to 4 than Present KSOG”; Small cross-hatches = “Ideal is closer to the 5–7 range.”

In Figure 3, each bar represents the percentage of the 822 respondents with ‘present’ KSOG scores between 1.0 and 3.0, 3.1 and 5.0 and 5.1 and 7.0. Seventeen percent responded in the heterosexually-leaning range between 1 and 3, and 21% in the homosexually-leaning range of 5 and 7 with the remainder (62%) in the middle 3 and 5 range. It is critical to note that the first section of each bar (large cross-hatches) indicates the percentage of individuals in that range (1–3, 3–5, 5–7) whose ‘ideal’ KSOG score is in the same range as their ‘present’ KSOG score, meaning that they do not idealize a significantly different sexual orientation. The second section of the three bars (the blank section) indicates the percentage of people in that bar whose ideal is to experience their sexual orientation in the 3 to 5 range. As is evident, the large majority of heterosexually-leaning and homosexually-leaning people have as their ideal to be more bisexual rather than more mono-sexual. As if to reinforce that point, the second bar clearly illustrates that the vast majority of people whose ‘present’ KSOG is in the 3 to 5 range idealize remaining in that same range. The two small sections at the end of the second and third bars indicate the percentage of respondents in that range who idealize being in the 5 to 7 range.

In other words, the data quantitative clearly shows that (1) bisexuality is a valid, genuine, distinct sexual orientation; (2) bisexuals are not in transition toward monosexuality; and in fact (3) embrace experiencing bisexuality (or pansexuality or sexual fluidity, depending on their own views).

This clarity from the quantitative data—the **affirmation of bisexuality as a mature sexuality separate from monosexuality**—may seem to run counter to the murkiness described earlier of how people define their bisexuality. To establish a common ground between the qualitative and quantitative data, the researchers posit a basic definition as “physical, romantic



and/or emotional attraction to more than one sex/gender.” *Bisexuality* defined at this core level is clearly supported in the qualitative and quantitative data.

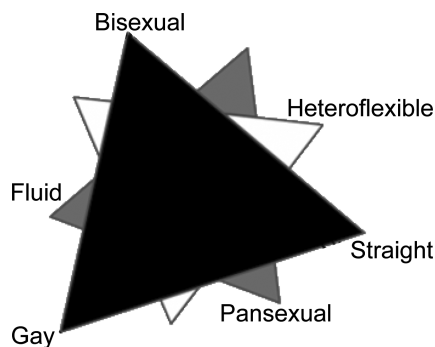
As we plotted the data and read the descriptions people painstakingly provided, the concept of sexual orientation on a continuum in a straight line (as in the Kinsey scale in Figure 1, or even Klein’s grid) just doesn’t fit the data. We believe that much of the difficulty that monosexual people have with understanding bisexual people is related to the way these scales are used to graph sexual orientation (refer to Figure 1).

When bisexuality is literally shown as between two ‘destination points,’ it is easy to confuse bisexuality as a transition point (e.g., the Kinsey scale), rather than a genuine, stand-alone sexual orientation. This preliminary data shows that sexual orientation does not belong on a continuum, and bisexuality not is a phase one goes through on the way to one or another oppositional pole. We believe sexual orientation is better represented by at least a triangle, or, perhaps better, by some other some other infinite polygon that allows distinct individual sexual orientations to be destinations all their own (see Figure 4). This infinite polygon allows us to begin defining some of the previously mentioned ‘murkiness’ in the qualitative definitions of bisexuality.

This rethinking of sexual orientation is not a refutation of Kinsey or of Klein but rather builds on their insights and research in an attempt to better describe people who are not monosexual.

## Relationships

The conflation of sexual orientation with relational styles, specifically polyamory, is the issue that respondents raised most frequently as problematic in understanding bisexual people. This misunderstanding contributes



**FIGURE 4** The Green, Payne, Green sexual orientation infinite polygon.

to prejudice against bisexual/pansexual/fluid people and complicates the relationships they have. One respondent wrote:

It is VERY, VERY important to educate people regarding the separation between sexual orientation and [relational styles like] polyamory. They are two distinct characteristics, just like having blonde hair and being gay. Not all bisexuals are poly, just like not all heterosexuals are monogamous. But this myth is hard to break.

In this sample data, 39% of respondents indicated some degree of polyamory, and 21% indicated they are currently in relationships that are actively polyamorous. Polyamory is not well understood by most people; it is confused with adultery and cheating and is therefore seen as morally questionable. The polyamorous situations respondents described in this survey were as varied as their self-definitions. Many clearly indicated that their relationships were consensual, that their partners were fully informed about each other and there seemed to be a high degree of structure built into the relationships. This is very different from ‘cheating.’

Polyamory is just one relational style that bisexual/pansexual/fluid people practice. Polyamory is also practiced by monosexuals. Bisexual/pansexual/fluid people also practice monogamy (61% of respondents). Bisexuals in long-term monogamous relationships often find themselves assumed to be monosexual, despite their own lived experience of themselves. This contributes to a widespread belief that bisexuality is more rare than we and many others believe it to be.

## Communities

We found that communities are very important to bisexual/pansexual/fluid people, whether from the depths of sadness and frustration expressed by those who feel isolated, or from those whose lives and relationships are rich with connection to community. A consistent source of pain and isolation was identified over and over by those who felt at risk to express their whole selves in either LGBT circles or with heterosexual friends. One respondent wrote:

When someone says they don't believe bisexuality exists, it is DEEPLY painful—in effect, that person is putting my very existence as a human being up for debate. Bisexuality is real and valid. It's not any more of a phase than being lesbian, gay, or straight. I'm also exhausted by having to keep having this same conversation with people who should be my allies. Those opposing the LGBTQ community rarely forget the bisexuals—we don't get half-fired from jobs, or half-beaten up by bigots, or half-discharged from the military. The choice is to be out or closeted.

We have always been in this struggle for equality, whether or not others have seen us and/or acknowledged us.

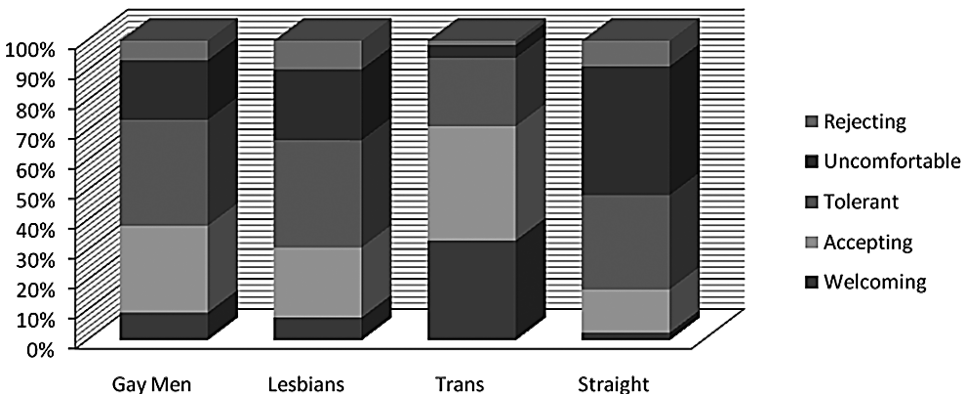
This population of respondents tended to be more engaged with LGBT community than with bisexual/pansexual/fluid community. Only 10% of respondents said they were regularly involved in bi/pan/fluid communities, and 57% are not a part of bisexual/pansexual/fluid communities at all. Twenty-one percent reported that they rarely attend bi-oriented events. On the other hand, 30% are regularly involved in LGBT communities, and 22% are not at all connected to LGBT communities.

It is important to note that membership in community is correlated with outness (willingness to have one's sexual orientation known by others) in the workplace. In other words, the greater the involvement in community—whether bisexual or LGBT community—the more likely the respondent was to report being 'out' as bisexual at work. 'Bringing one's whole self to work' is regarded by many diversity leaders and organizational development professionals as a prerequisite to maximizing workplace engagement and productivity.

When asked about how well they felt other groups accepted their bi/pan/fluid sexual orientation status, respondents indicated that the most welcoming group is transgender people, the most discomfort is expressed by heterosexual people, and the most outright rejection is expressed by lesbians (see Figure 5).

### Workplace Experiences

The inclusion of the *B* in LGBT mentioned in the beginning of this analysis has led to inclusion in the charters of company-sponsored affinity groups,



**FIGURE 5** Bisexual people's perception of other identity groups' affinity or antipathy toward bisexual people.

also known as employee resource groups (ERGs), within many workplaces. ERGs exist primarily in larger organizations and corporations, though even small to mid-size companies often have informal networks to create camaraderie for employees in historically marginalized groups. Typically, LGBT ERGs are formed to create safe and equitable LGBT workplaces; however most ERGs offer little in the way of resources or programming focused on bisexuality. Without statistics or other evidence supporting the perception of neglect that bisexual/pansexual/fluid people experience, there has been no way of quantifying these claims, and therefore no justification for making any effort to reach out to bisexuals in workplace settings to include them and their interests in any workplace quality of life advocacy.

Bisexual/pansexual/fluid respondents are more likely to be out at work in companies that have non-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity. A nondiscrimination policy that includes sexual orientation only was reflected as being no better at encouraging bisexuals to come out than no policy at all. Membership in LGBT employee groups also increases outness.

We asked respondents to tell us about misperceptions coworkers have about bisexuality, whether there are issues bisexuals have in common with lesbian and gay employees, and whether there are issues unique to bisexual/pansexual/fluid people. We found that 50% of respondents feel their gay and straight coworkers misunderstand bisexuality, 76% see there are a number of issues that bisexuals have in common with gay men and lesbians and 45% recognize there are unique issues. Some of the unique issues for bisexual/pansexual/fluid people are:

- They are treated as allies at best, not as members of the LGBT ERG.
- They are not trusted by lesbian and gay coworkers.
- They are seen as unreliable and unpromotable by management and leaders.

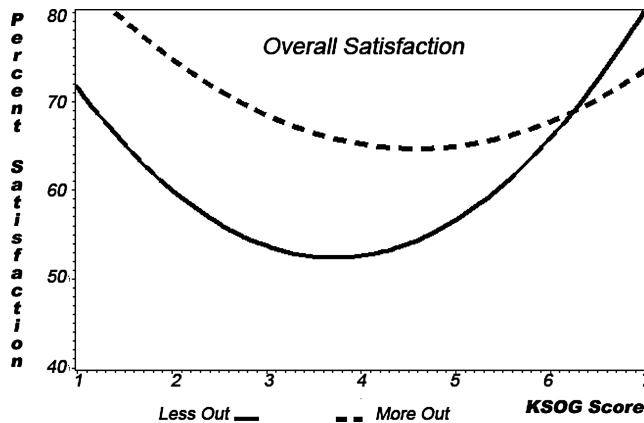
Bisexual people in 'opposite' sex relationships are viewed as allies rather than as members of the LGBT group, even when they are out as bisexuals. Bisexuals will often approach LGBT groups initially as allies to explore how accepting the ERG is of bisexuality before coming out. If they do not see other bisexuals, if bisexuality is left out in all but the acronym, or if bisexuals are actively disparaged when the group members believe none are around, the closeted bisexuals likely won't come out and may eventually disengage. Additionally, because allies to the LGBT community are often kept at arm's length from full participation in the 'queer' community, bisexual people feel the exclusion and may decide not to come out to the group as bi. An out bisexual who dates people of various sexes over the course of her or his career elicits heightened interest from coworkers regarding his or her sex life.

This heightened awareness leads to the impression that the bisexual can't commit, is flakey, immature, unreliable and/or indecisive, which translates easily to his or her being perceived as unpromotable.

### The Effect of Sexual Orientation on Various Aspects of Life

To understand the impact of bisexuality on the lives of the respondents, we asked a series of questions about satisfaction. We asked them to indicate their degree of satisfaction on six scales—overall satisfaction as well as satisfaction in a variety of specific areas: with their sex life, intimate relationships, friendships, community and work life. We used a 5-point Likert-type scale from *very satisfied* to *very dissatisfied*. We then correlated those responses with responses to the KSOG questions and questions ascertaining how 'out' people were in their lives, plotting overall satisfaction against KSOG and outness to generate the graph shown in Figure 6.

The X axis is the Klein scale 1 to 7, the Y axis is the level of satisfaction, expressed in percentages. The dashed line represents the half of the population that is more out, whereas the solid line represents the half of the population that is less out. The graph shows very strongly our expected outcome that people who are out (dashed line) present greater levels of satisfaction than those who are more closeted. The graph also shows that the closer the KSOG is to equal attractions to males and females, the greater the dissatisfaction. This surprised us initially. Does this mean that the 'more

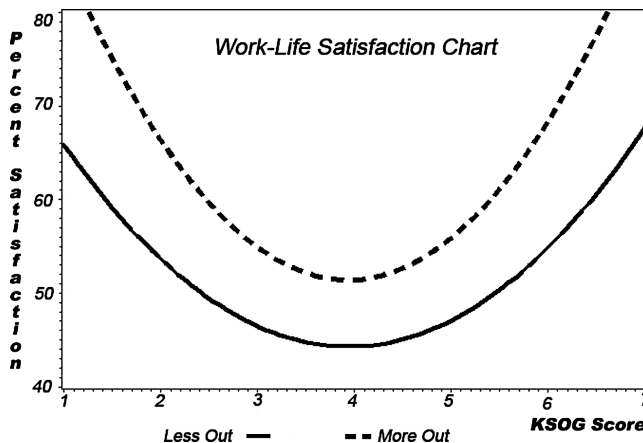


**FIGURE 6** Overall life satisfaction correlated with Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (KSOG) score and individual openness about their bisexuality, or 'outness.' The data indicates those in the center (those who are 'most bisexual') are the least satisfied in their lives overall, or, are most dissatisfied. People who are more 'out' experience greater satisfaction than those who are less 'out.'

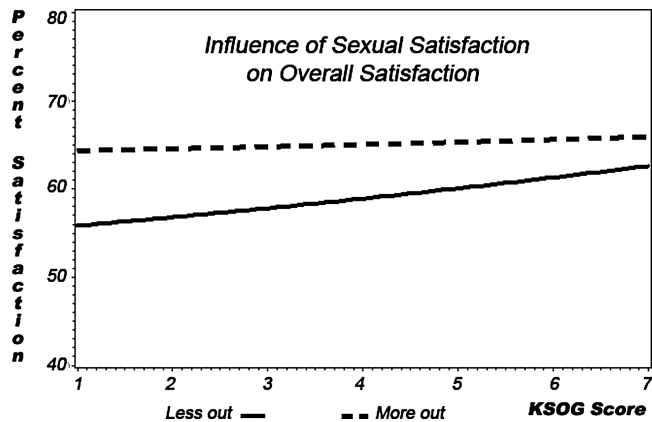
bisexual' someone is, the more unhappy they are? That interpretation did not fit with either the quantitative data we collected (recall the 'desired direction of change' data discussed in the Self Definitions section that indicated that people's ideal was to move more toward the 3–5 KSOG range denoting equal attractions to all sexes) or the qualitative data in which the more evenly attracted to multiple sexes the individual, the more expansive and contented their written answers to the questions.

We then graphed the other satisfaction responses, beginning with 'satisfaction with sex life.' The graph shows absolutely no variation based on KSOG score, though respondents who are out tend to have a more satisfying sex life than respondents who are closeted (see Figure 7).

Knowing the sex lives of bisexual people are in good shape, we next looked at 'satisfaction with work life.' There we found a difference more dramatic than (and largely causal of) overall satisfaction (see Figure 8). (Dis)satisfaction with work life seems to be a major driver of the significant depression in the overall satisfaction chart for bisexuals in the 3 to 5 KSOG range (refer to Figure 6). Respondents who are out are still less dissatisfied, a finding that may seem counterintuitive initially if difference is the cause of dissatisfaction, implying that people who hide the difference should logically be more satisfied not less. Based on this correlation, as well as the qualitative responses, we would suggest that it is the sense of isolation and lack of support bisexual people feel at work that contributes to their dissatisfaction, rather than their attractions to multiple sexes per se. Those who are not 'out' tend to be more isolated, therefore this may explain the correlation we see above.



**FIGURE 7** Satisfaction with sex life correlated with Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (KSOG) score and individual openness about their bisexuality, or 'outness.'



**FIGURE 8** Work life satisfaction correlated with Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (KSOG) and individual openness about their bisexuality, or ‘outness.’ Data reveals that work life satisfaction is a key driver of the overall life dissatisfaction experienced by those closest to the center of the Kinsey/Klein scale (those who are ‘most bisexual’).

## DISCUSSION

The key learnings are (1) quantitative validation of bisexuality as a sexual orientation as real as homosexuality and heterosexuality, (2) bisexuals who are open about their sexual orientation are more satisfied in all aspects of their lives than those who are closeted, (3) only 10% of respondents are actively involved in bi/pan/fluid communities with 30% involved in LGBT community, and (4) to create workplaces where bisexuals are more willing to be out (and therefore more effective and productive employees) there need to be policies against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, because one of these categories alone will not have sufficient impact.

Qualitatively there are some clear messages that the bisexual respondents have for lesbian and gay co-workers and employee resource groups such as:

- “Bisexuality is real. Just because you thought you were bisexual before you finally came out, doesn’t mean being bisexual isn’t genuine and permanent for me.”
- “We are not untrustworthy people who will abandon the queer community when the going gets tough.”
- “I am not your ally, I am a part of LGBT. I want my partner to be welcome at ERG events whoever my partner is, without feeling excluded.”

This preliminary analysis using roughly one half the data we ultimately collected has led us to some conclusions that we will look to the final data to support or refute. In summary, in its early stages, this study

1. strongly supports the concept that bisexuality is a real sexual orientation, not just a transition point between heterosexual or homosexual orientations.
2. strongly supports the idea that bisexual people have sex lives that are as satisfying as people who live mostly as gay or as heterosexual, and that this satisfaction is a major component of their overall satisfaction. Being 'out' leads to higher satisfaction.
3. strongly supports the idea that **satisfaction in work** is **lower** for people whose **same and other sex attractions are more equal**, and that this dissatisfaction is also a major component of their overall satisfaction. Being 'out' leads to less dissatisfaction here, also.

These observations suggest some action steps that bisexual people and their allies should work to achieve:

1. **Company policies** should include **bisexual people** in their sexual identity policy statements. It is important to see that this inclusion is not merely pro-forma, but is given the same degree of support that gay, lesbian, and (sometimes) transgender people have received in recent years. This should lead to greater satisfaction in work life, which should also lead to improved workplace engagement and productivity.
2. Gay and lesbian people who self-define as bi-allies should take responsibility for ensuring that their ERG (or Affinity Group) not only includes all gender expressions, but should seek to **help bisexual coworkers achieve the gains gay and lesbian workers have enjoyed**.
3. Bisexual people who are 'out' should explore the possibility of being more 'out' in as many aspects of their lives as possible; the data suggests more life satisfaction is possible in correlation to the degree of 'outness' one experiences.
4. Researchers should (and we intend to in our full analysis) probe the increased work dissatisfaction among those in the 3 to 5 KSOG range to better understand its causes.

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