

Sexuality, Borderzone Bisexuals, and the Need for a Romantic and Platonic Orientation Graph!

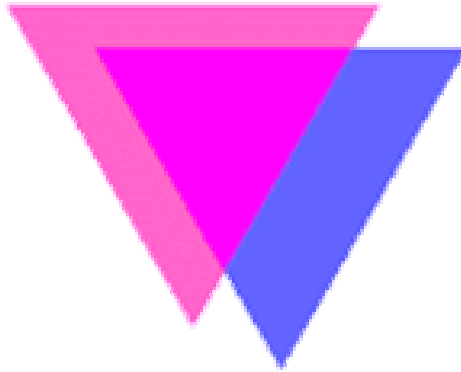
'Border-Zoners,' the Three Circles, and a New Paradigm of Sexuality

American society needs dichotomies. White vs. black! Republican vs. Democrat! Straight vs. gay! Why is society so intent on keeping debate within these parameters? Is it, as media executives say, because the masses are not sophisticated enough? Perhaps! But what does the social order gain from this? Given the seeming success of binary thinking vis-à-vis the status quo, how can new conceptualizations of human relationships open choices for millions of people, who currently are not even aware that options beyond “either/or” exist? How can popular and scholarly thinking be changed in relation to present conceptions of sexuality, romance, and friendship?

Bisexuality—or rather, its absence from public discourse—reveals much about the current social and ideological landscape of America. In people’s minds, people are either “sheep” or “goats” (Alfred Kinsey’s words for gay and straight).¹ Even bisexual people reject the *bi* term—at least, those who lack “equal” feelings for both sexes. This is because, not being the “50/50” variety, they see the term as not reflecting who they really are. So a Kinsey 1 or 5 bisexual may simply call him or herself straight or gay, respectively. But why, we must ask, didn’t Kinsey or anyone coin a term for the Kinsey 1 and 2 bisexuals, and for the Kinsey 4 and 5 bisexuals? Undoubtedly, many self-identified bisexuals say that bisexuality is all about tearing down boundaries. Labels don’t matter, they say. Yet, we live in a world of up and down, and right and left—when these terms mean nothing from outer space. Still, we use them, recognizing that chaos would ensue if we discarded basic categories. Not to say that the bisexual movement must become schizophrenic with a dozen new labels. But with two fresh, quasi-categories (one for the Kinsey 1s and 2s another for the Kinsey 4s and 5s), more people may tune into bisexuality as a *bona fide* mode of sexual identification. *As long as the term bisexual continues to speak for “border-zone” bisexuals, Kinsey 1s and 5s will continue to eschew bisexual identification altogether – as well as many Kinsey 2s and 4s.*

¹ In Part I of this essay, the terms *straight(s)*, *bi(s)*, *gay(s)*, and “*border-zoner(s)*” will refer to people of both sexes. The same applies to the terms *heterosexual(s)*, *bisexual(s)*, and *homosexual(s)*, while the term *queer(s)* will refer to all nonstraight people—although *queer* may include “unconventional” straight people..

Visualizing a three-circle graph will help us to understand where these “border-zone” bisexuals fall. First, however, we need to expand the Kinsey line into three-dimensional circles around it, with zone numbers replacing the Kinsey numbers (explained later in this essay). Before proceeding to the circle diagram, however, let us view how contemporary imagery portrays bisexuality.



The triangles above relegate “border-zone” bisexuals to oblivion. Where are they? Now, examine the three-circle graph below!



Using the three-circle graph, one sees that “border-zoners” do not straddle the straight and gay worlds. Instead, the Kinsey 0.1s through 1.9s (those in Zone 1 of the three circles—see graph above) straddle the *straight and bisexual worlds*, while the Kinsey 4.1s through 5.9s (those in Zone 3) straddle the *bisexual and gay worlds*. Border-zoners are in those areas where heterosexuality melts into bisexuality, and where bisexuality melts into homosexuality—depending on which side of the bisexuality circle one resides. The following illustrates the point at hand:

A. *Heterosexual*, . . . being in Zone 0 (the straight circle), and sexually attracted to the same sex 0/4 of the time in FREQUENCY

B. *Unisexual*, . . . being in Zone 1 (the zone where the straight and bi circles intermesh slightly), and sexually attracted to the same sex $\frac{1}{4}$ of the time in FREQUENCY

C. *Bisexual*, . . . being in Zone 2 (the bi circle), plus the present-day “50/50” definition with regard to FREQUENCY

D. *Trisexual*, . . . being in Zone 3 (the zone where the bi and gay circles intermesh slightly), sexually attracted to the same sex $\frac{3}{4}$ of the time in FREQUENCY

E. *Homosexual*, . . . being in Zone 4 (the gay circle), and sexually attracted to the same-sex 4/4 in FREQUENCY

But why circles, as opposed to triangles?

First, circles denote naturalness—the spherical shape of the earth, planets, and stars. Second, this ties to the concept of seasons, caused by the tilt of the earth’s axis. Visualizing heterosexuality and homosexuality as summer and winter, respectively, will help us to picture how border-zone bisexuals mostly pass for straight or gay—even to themselves! For the sake of argument, let us think about bisexuality in terms of fall. Early fall often resembles summer—at least, throughout most of the United States. Late fall, by contrast, resembles winter in many respects. By late November and early December, it often snows; the temperature gets frigidly cold; and the skies become wintry. Yet, as late as December 23rd, *it is still fall!*

Some self-identified bisexuals may argue that associating bisexuality with fall reinforces the stereotype of bisexuality as a “phase” – fall being a transitional season between summer and winter. First, many bisexuals *are* in transition – either to heterosexuality or to homosexuality – and to deny their existence is to shun reality. Second, fall returns every year, so there is an element of permanence to this season. Third, even “true” bisexuals question their bisexuality often throughout their lives. Whether this is because they are in an exclusive same or opposite-sex relationship, pressured to “choose” one gender, etc. is uncertain. What most bisexuals *do* agree on is that being a life-long *self-identified* bisexual takes a Herculean effort that most people are not willing to employ. Fourth, acquiring and maintaining a bisexual identity typically comes later in life vis-à-vis straight and gay identity formation, by virtue of bisexuality being more complex than heterosexuality and homosexuality. Given these factors, associating bisexuality with the maturity of autumn is appropriate, as far as bisexual symbolism is concerned, for only experienced, mature individuals are able to navigate the unclear and unstable terrain that bisexuality offers in today’s either/or world. If many heterosexual and homosexual relationships are also transitional (e.g., the one-night stand, the second divorce, etc.), straight and gay self-identity is not – by and large – and this difference places bisexual-identified people in a unique position that demands a highly mature psychology.

But why else bring the concept of seasons to discussions about sexuality? Furthermore, why associate straights with summer and gays with winter, rather than vice-versa? First, summer and winter represent extremes – as far as seasons are concerned. Similarly, straights and gays reside on opposite sides of the sexual continuum. Second, many gays experience “Indian summers,” periods of sexual activity with the opposite sex. Therefore, homosexuals saying, “I’m experiencing an Indian summer” would mean something like that wave of warm weather that sometimes hits in late fall. An Indian summer may last a day or a week; but though short-lived, Indian summers remain a *permanent possibility* every November and December. Indian summers are not a once-in-a-lifetime “phase” – as people currently see bisexuals – but recur unexpectedly. The opposite of an Indian summer, I presume, doesn’t exist for early fall, but the point is that most people – including queers – don’t appreciate winter as much as they do summer. Winter symbolizes death! In this sense, winter is the appropriate season for homosexuality because, even today, many gays live a “living death,” cooped up in houses and apartments, rather than being “out” and exposed to the biting cold of the world. Nonetheless, winter can produce beautiful scenery (e.g., snow-capped mountains, snow-powdered trees, etc.). In this sense, it is appropriate to associate homosexuals with winter, as many gays still do not appreciate the beauty of homosexuality, while most people “tolerate” winter but would gladly choose summer anytime over extreme cold – or cold of *any* kind (which spring and fall offer as well). Third, global warming threatens

to engulf the planet in heat, just as a rabid heterosexuality threatens to engulf all alternate sexualities. By some accounts, it is snowing less in certain parts of Europe and North America. Not just snow is threatened but spring, fall, and winter! Every year, it seems, the climate gets warmer than the previous year. Akin to snow and cold, queers of all ilk are disappearing through murder, AIDS,² and suicide—all triggered, influenced by, or exacerbated by a “runaway” heterosexuality (read greenhouse effect)—and of all these alternate sexual groups, gays have been hit the hardest. The winter analogy of homosexuals is therefore the most appropriate. How compelling to see one’s homosexuality in a snowflake, bisexuality in a falling leaf, or heterosexuality in the sun—and to realize that the global status quo (e.g., sexual, economic, political, religious, etc.) threatens to disrupt the delicate diversity of peoples and of the seasons.

As part of the three-circle graph, spring would be symbolized by a small flock of birds flying from the southwest of the straight circle (summer), and spring would represent a *possible beginning* of queerness (e.g., lesbian/gay/trans identity) for questioning people. (See image below.) Birds would be flying toward the right because that is the direction of the various queer identities; yet, the birds would come before summer, not just because of the natural arrangement of the seasons but because most questioning people initially see themselves as straight—or very close to heterosexual—rather than as queer, when they first question their sexuality. Not only do most questioning people—presumably—see themselves initially as straight, but they view their sexuality as straight *and* as faraway from queerness (of any kind) as possible. Thus, the birds are flying the furthest away from the queer circles.



² Though AIDS today is spreading more rapidly among the heterosexual population, its occurrence is still higher among the queer population. Given the disproportionate imbalance between straight and queer-identified people, the deaths of the latter group are far higher.

The concept of seasons helps us to understand why many straights and gays deny fantasies and/or sexual activities involving the “forbidden” sex. They do not acknowledge these because they are ashamed of what their group might say, fear an erosion of their straight or gay identity, etc. Akin to this denial, the Merriam Webster’s 10th Collegiate Dictionary defines summer as “. . . usu. the months of June, July, and August . . .” – when summer runs well into September. Likewise, the same dictionary defines winter as “. . . usu. the months of December, January, and February . . .” – when *most* of December is technically autumn. The reason for this generalization, of course, is because early fall often resembles summer, while late fall mostly resembles winter. In a similar vein, it makes sense for “border-zoners” to identify simply as straight or gay. Nonetheless, to deny the possibility of an Indian summer—or its early fall equivalent—is to abandon their bisexual side, when by definition, border-zoners embrace *both* heterosexuality and bisexuality (summer and fall) and bisexuality and homosexuality (fall and winter). Obviously, Kinsey 4 and 5 bisexuals will look very wintry, so to speak. Most of the time, they will seek members of the same sex, date them, kiss them, etc. Therefore, calling themselves gay makes sense. *Yet, how do they reconcile their occasional Indian summers with their predominant gay identity—without repressing any aspect of their bisexuality?* Calling themselves bisexual won’t do because the term connotes the “50/50” dichotomy, which does not apply to them.

This is where the need for new concepts enters the equation. Kinsey 1 and 2 bisexuals might want to call themselves “unisexual,” as they reside in Zone 1 of the three-circle graph—plus, they are mostly attracted to one sex, the opposite sex. The term *unisexual* would connote images of very late summer (actually, early fall). Conversely, Kinsey 4 and 5 bisexuals are the fraternal and identical twins of “pure” gays, respectively, so it makes sense to call them “trisexual”—as they are in Zone 3 of the three-circle graph (see below), plus they are willing and able to try sex with the opposite sex more than once. The term *trisexual* would bring images of very early winter (actually, late fall). The beauty of these metaphors is that they induce images of nature—reinforcing the idea that queerness *and* straightness are natural, if freed from social pressures.



By contrast, the pride triangles of today borrow from the Nazi atrocities against homosexuals. True, the triangles are used as symbols of queer pride. Yet, *queers have allowed the Nazis to determine their symbols, rather than insist that they define queerness for themselves!* As radical as this may sound, it would be the utmost of queer-positive affirmation to replace triangles not just with circles, but with circles filled with pictures of snow (the gay circle), autumn leaves (the bi circle), and even the sun (the straight circle)—the summer image which “unconventional” or “sympathetic” straights may want to embrace as their symbol. Trisexuals would have their zone filled with the *same* amount of snow as in the gay circle, and the *same* amount of leaves as in the bi circle. But the *tinting* of the snow—and any accompanying feature of the winter photograph—would be less, and inside that zone (Zone 3), the tinting of the leaves would be lesser still – the latter because of the border-zone’s proximity to the gay circle. Inside the “gay” border-zone (Zone 3), the shading of homosexuality would turn fainter the more one moves to the left, while that of leaves would turn brighter – until leaves are all that remains once one has totally crossed into the bi circle. Even inside the bi circle, however, the leaves would lose their bright tint the further away from the center. Inside the unisexual zone, the “gay” border-zone principle would apply as well – except that the summer picture from the straight circle would be superimposed over the leaves. The notion of actual pictures filling the three circles may seem too sophisticated, but that is the point. Pictures convey the message of reality! Furthermore, the circles are portraying sexuality as an affair as complicated as it is breathtaking.

Why are the circles different sizes? As shown on the graph above, the straight circle should be the largest because, at least, for the foreseeable future, most people will continue to identify as heterosexual. The bisexual circle, it seems, should be smaller than the straight circle and larger than the gay circle because of the likely possibility that more people in the future will identify as bisexual, rather than as gay—given that bisexuality appears to be the natural state for 80% of the population. Not to minimize the gay experience, but science has proven that more animals (humans included) behave bisexually than homosexually.³ As society makes “progress,” it is fair to assume that more people will proclaim their bisexuality—in whatever variety—rather than their “pure” heterosexuality or their “pure” homosexuality.

If examined closely, the bisexual circle resides in the background, even though it remains larger than the gay circle. This is simply because bisexuality, however widespread in the future, will typically manifest itself through “gay” or “straight” relationships, as most people presumably would not engage in bisexual threesomes. In this sense, bisexuality is always in the background. If viewed as planets, the circles also convey the image of a triangle which, though unacceptable to this author, may give the triangle crowd some comfort. More important, however, is the idea of the bisexual circle being in the background and thus, number three—as from bisexuality being a “third” option. By being in the *foreground*, the gay circle—however small—will portray homosexuality as equal to heterosexuality, as in equally valid. Also, the different circle sizes would assert that, for most humans, sexuality is not an either/or affair—something that would be conveyed if the straight and gay circles were the same size, standing on opposite ends. The statistical purpose, of course, remains the *main* reason for assigning different sizes to the circles (e.g., most people continuing to identify as straight). Some of these explanations may seem stereotypical, but that is the goal of the three circles—to portray queerness *as it is*, as well as how we envision it to be *in the future!* In theory, the three circles could move toward or away from one other, depending on how straight, bi, and gay-identified people grow or dwindle in numbers through time. Border-zoners might also move in and out of the gray areas through life, just as straights and gays may move out of their circles through time. The main point of the circles, however, is not to describe sexual behavior but to show sexual *identification* (e.g., straight, uni, bi, tri, gay, etc.) as we envision it to be in the future. Although present-day sex and fantasies are involved, the goal of the circles is to provide people with new ways of making sense of their sexual thoughts, feelings, and behavior—rather than to have them continue to deny “forbidden” feelings and

³ See Pomeroy, Martin, Kinsey, et. al. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1948). Also, see Bagemihl, Bruce. *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999).

ignore “forbidden” behavior. For just as fall and winter return, so do those unspeakable gay or bi fantasies.

Unlike the Kinsey scale, the circles convey a sense of infinite points *within each circle*. Therefore, people in Zone 0—those inside the straight circle—could be near the top of the circle, near the bottom, near the right, etc. and *still* be heterosexual. The message here is that in real life, straight-identified people do not act alike. Some marry once; others nine times. Some are loving spouses; others abuse each other. Some are promiscuous; others are monogamous. The same applies to people in the bi and gay circles—hence the need to avoid calling them Kinsey 0s or 6s, as these terms convey single points on a horizontal line, rather than any of an infinite number of points in a *zone*. People who identify as heterosexual or homosexual could reside *anywhere* in each circle, and it is up to each person to decide where in each circle he or she resides (e.g., near a treetop, on the ground, in the sky, etc.). Real pictures, therefore, need to fill each circle! Although bisexuals only have leaves in their zone (Zone 2), this also has a purpose—not just aesthetic (e.g., not overcrowding the circles with pictures). For bisexuals, their leaf-filled zone—as opposed to a circle with a more comprehensive, less monotonous photograph—would reflect the reality that self-identification as bisexual constrains bi-identified people more than self-identification as straight or gay—and again, the circle graph needs to be realistic, not just as visionary.

Wouldn’t a three-circle graph fragment the bisexual movement, not to mention increase the antagonism between gays and bisexuals? First, the antagonism already exists. Second, unisexuals (Zone 1) and trisexuals (Zone 3) would not form a separate movement for themselves, by virtue of their straddling the straight and bi worlds, and the bi and gay worlds. True, unisexuals would spend more time in the heterosexual world, while trisexuals would presumably spend more time in the homosexual world. Yet, unlike today, these border-zoners would acknowledge their potential for experiencing flashes of unseasonable weather. Again, it makes sense that border-zoners would not form a separate identity by virtue of their being in gray areas, for if torn from these regions, their identity would be engulfed by the “stronger” circle—precisely what has happened today with the Kinsey 1 and 5 bisexuals. Sure, border-zoners of the future can meet occasionally, as they would have highly unique issues to discuss. Also, trisexuals may acquire a quasi-bisexual identity that wouldn’t exactly match that of unisexuals on the opposing border-zone—as trisexuals would have a slightly shorter distance from left to right and a slightly longer distance from top to bottom, as opposed to the slimly shorter and slimly wider unisexual zone.⁴ Nonetheless, border-zoners’ time would be spent

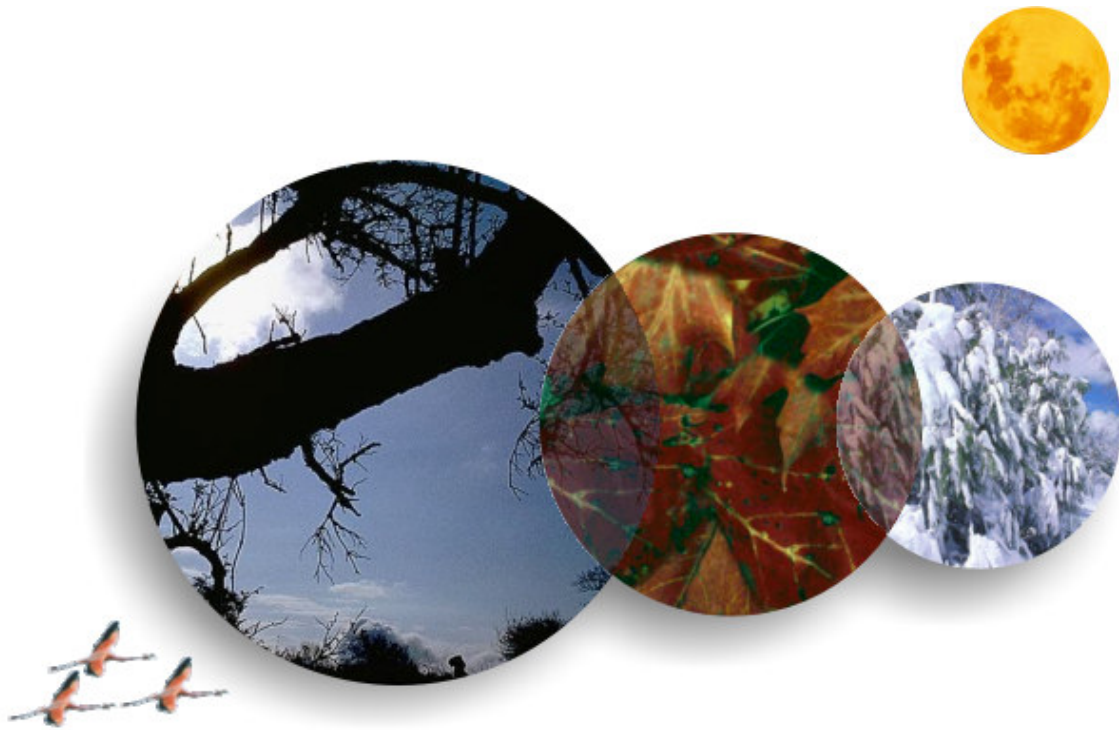
⁴ The slight difference in the shapes of the border-zones is simply a result of the different sizes of the straight and gay circles. Since border-zoners on each gray area would comprise the *same* percentage,

inside the straight, bi, or gay worlds. Unisexualsex and trisexualsex would, therefore, be perfect mediators between the heterosexual and bisexual worlds and between the bisexual and homosexual worlds, potentially easing much conflict. For this to happen, though, more people need to conceptualize bisexuality in a fresh way, an aim that the three circles seek to achieve.

Many nonstraight-identified people may oppose the three circles by saying, “But the graph includes straight people, and I want an exclusively queer symbol.” First, straights must be included because they are part of the world. Second, homosexuality (winter) can’t be understood without its opposite (summer). Third, the rainbow flag already includes the notion of sexual diversity—which by definition, would have to include straights. Gays and bisexuals might still say, “But how am I to identify as a *proud* gay or bisexual person, when heterosexuality is included as well in the three circles?” If pride is what one wants to convey, one might carry a cross-section of the three circles below some T-shirt. This would be the section that portrays one’s sexual orientation. The point, however, is that the three-circle concept would allow *everyone* to use it—proud queers (e.g., gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered people, etc.) and sympathetic or even “proud” straights. Total inclusion of everyone would be conveyed—and this, after all, is what the bisexual movement seems to be aiming for, at least, more than the “biphobic” gay movement. Of course, many heterosexuals may be threatened by the idea of living inside bisexuality and homosexuality—at the symbolic level—during actual falls and winters, respectively. Nonetheless, they may be comforted to know that nonqueers *and* queers get to experience the “heterosexuality of summer.”

Many people will ask: Should trisexualsex be considered part of the 10% statistic regarding gays? Or should they be considered part of the 17% statistic (or whichever you envision) regarding those who may identify as “50/50” bisexual in the future? As strange as it may sound, border-zoners would be part of the straight *and* bi population, and the bi *and* gay population. So if, say, 13.5% of the population identifies *broadly* as gay, trisexualsex would be 3.5% of that 10%. Likewise, trisexualsex would *also* comprise 3.5% of the 17% statistic regarding “50/50” bi-identified people. In short, homosexuals and bisexuals would *share* that 3.5% overlap. See circle-graph below:

those areas need to be arranged this way – as the huge straight circle would increase the *unisexualsex* percentage beyond the *trisexualsex* one if the bi circle were inserted further into the straight circle.



Percentages may read as follows:

Overlapping Percentages

Straights . . . 68.5%
 Gays . . . 13.5%
 Bisexuals . . . 24%
 Others . . . 1%

Regular Percentages

Straights . . . 65%
 Gays . . . 10%
 "50/50" bisexuals . . . 17%
 Unisexuals . . . 3.5%
 Trisexuals . . . 3.5%
 Others . . . 1%

The overlapping percentages, of course, exceed 100%; but this is only because straights, bis, and gays here claim the *same* border-zoners, and because border-zoners identify with *more than one group*—albeit with one more than the other. “Pure” gays would still be 10%, “50/50” bisexuals would be around 17%, and “pure” straights would be 65%. The border-zoners would be 7% (3.5% each), and transgendered people and others would be about 1% (represented in a full moon above the season circles—explained below). Again, these statistics are random – some might say too “high” as far as the queer population is concerned. Nonetheless, if society *truly* becomes more tolerant of queers, less people will identify as “purely” straight. So in the year 2030, 2060, or 2090, these statistics may not be that far-fetched. For this to happen, though, people must not only become more sexually liberated. *They must have sound analytical concepts with which to understand themselves!* Those who say that labels are meaningless forget that humans need a sense of identity (e.g., racial, ethnic, political, sexual, etc.). It is what gives meaning to our lives. In the realm of sexuality, three simple labels—straight, bi, and gay—just are not enough! In short, people ignore their bisexuality because of the limited ways that they have been taught to think about it—two simple triangles intermeshing together. Allowing for gray zones on opposite ends of “season circles” will allow many people to visualize the complexity of sexuality, articulate it, and claim it! Not that everyone has to do this, but people ought to be presented with choices.

Today, by contrast, border-zoners reject the “lesser” of their feelings, calling themselves straight or gay for the sake of simplicity in their lives. This, however, does not solve the problem because their denied feelings surface sooner or later (e.g., through neurosis, violence, resignation). With their “lesser” feelings acknowledged through the leaf labels, border-zoners may identify increasingly as bisexual, being able to differentiate themselves as a *specific type of bisexual*. Less people, of course, would identify as straight, and vice-versa for gay people – although I suspect that as more homosexuals come out of the closet, the 10% gay category will remain intact. The population of self-identified bisexuals, however, would rise well beyond 10, 20, or even 30% of the population.

What about transgendered people? Where do they figure in the three circles? First, the circles present a fresh way of viewing sexual orientation and transgender people, by definition, are beyond gender. Second, transgendered people can choose the moon as their symbol, if they wish. For those who accept this symbol, the moon would symbolize two things. First, the moon is literally outside this world--just as transgendered people are not part of most people’s daily lives. Similar to their awareness that the moon exists, however, the masses may occasionally get a glimpse of transgendered people—on television, the street, a newspaper, etc. But like the moon, transgendered people are not given much thought. The same applies to sexual minorities who are not even on phase

one of group-identity formation—seeing themselves as a *legitimate* sexual minority with the right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” They are also out of view, at least, most of the time—so the moon is a perfect symbol for these groups, although a faint star under the three circles may become a symbol for these non-transgendered groups that currently lack any social support.

In short, the three circles and the moon have the potential to include and unify all queer movements. True, bisexuals have the greatest chance of incorporating them, given their tendency to transcend identity-based politics and exclusivity. But straights—or “queer” straights (e.g., straight cross dressers)—and gays can also embrace the circles, unis and tris a cross section of them—embracing their “zones”—and transgendered people the hovering moon. Or straights can accept the sun, bis the leaf, gays the snowflake, and questioning people the bird as their respective symbols. The myriad choices available to these groups, however, would make the queer movement more interesting . . . and potentially more revolutionary.

The Need for a Romantic and Platonic Orientation Graph

The hypothetical rise of bisexual-identified people in the future need not upset the multitudes, as already most males behave or have behaved bisexually in the past. (Women’s sexuality may differ here, so the following section will refer to males.) The important thing is that for straight males, much “queer” behavior occurred during adolescent sexual experimentation, amid a drunken stupor in college, and/or in a sex-segregated environment (e.g., prison, a boarding school, the military). Most people ignore their homosexual behavior in these settings, but presented with the same three-circle graph, they may feel less of a need to deny these experiences. (The same, by the way, applies to gays who have “fooled around” with a member(s) of the opposite sex.)

With society becoming more complex, people need to draw a distinction between sex, romance, and friendship. Using Part I’s *sexual-orientation* graph, most people in, say, the year 2100 may identify as *bisexual*. This simply means that, *hormonally* speaking, they could perform sexually with either sex. Again, even today, any male who is sexually excited enough can “get his rocks off” with a guy or gal. Yet, the *meaning* of the sex will vary, depending on the romantic

orientation of the persons involved. For a heteroromantic male (one romantically interested in the opposite sex), sex with another guy will just be sex—*nothing more!* On the other hand, a homoromantic guy (one romantically interested in the same sex) will derive greater psychic pleasure from the same-sex act. Even as many straight males masturbate together, it is the homoromantic guys who are called “poufs” and “fags” and “fairies.” These are the males who want *more* than just “getting their rocks off.” Because their same-sex *romantic* feelings are so powerful, the “fairies” cannot have male-male sex and then lie about being “straight.” To them, sex is deeper than mere hormones—at least, that is what they seek for it to be. In short, romantic desire for males, as opposed to mere *hormones*, is what differentiates the “poufs” from the straights.

Likewise, many gays⁵ have physically gratifying sex with the opposite sex, but it’s just that—*physically gratifying!* They have no interest in developing a romance with the opposite sex. They, on the *romantic*-orientation circle graph, are homoromantic (romantically interested in the same sex). Sexually, however, they are bisexual (in whatever degree of capacity). Again, our *sexual*-orientation scale obscures the difference between sexual arousal and romantic desire. Biromantics are also possible (those romantically interested in both sexes)—although most people today are heteroromantic (romantically interested in the opposite sex) and, for many, bisexual in behavior. This paradigm may change to a world where the majority of people are (and identify) as bisexual *and* biromantic. This does *not* necessarily mean that heteroromantics are “born that way”—only that society, childhood experiences, hormones, etc. help to mold them in that direction. In short, we need to duplicate the three-circle sexual-orientation graph, adding a three-circle romantic orientation graph.⁶ This is, of course, if we wish to be honest about sex. Again, it is not who you have sex with but the *meaning* of that sexual encounter (e.g., just fooling vs. romantic yearnings). Furthermore, the term *orientation*, though used here, does *not* mean that people are “born one way.” Like a compass gauge, orientation in people is malleable, changeable, and unpredictable, although changes in one’s orientation (sexual, romantic, and/or platonic) often become more difficult as we age.

The situation, however, gets more complicated because most people enjoy friendships with members of both sexes—although Hollywood would have us believe that straight men can’t be “just friends” with women. (Revisit Billy Crystal’s argument in 1989’s *When Harry Met Sally*). Observing college students,

⁵ In Part II of this essay, the terms *straight(s)*, *heterosexual(s)*, *heteroromantic(s)*, *heteroplatonic(s)*, *bi(s)*, *bisexual(s)*, *biromantic(s)*, *biplatonic(s)*, *gay(s)*, *homosexual(s)*, *homoromantic(s)*, and *homoplatonic(s)* refer to males.

⁶ The term *orientation* may seem to duplicate Kinsey terminology – as from a point on his horizontal scale. But akin to a gauge, the three circles promote the notion of a point being up, down, right, or wherever in one’s zone of sexual, romantic, and/or platonic identification (e.g., the straight circle, border-zones, the gay circle, etc.).

for example, one is struck by how much males hang out together. Nothing wrong here! They are just being homosocial because platonically speaking, they are homoplatonic (capable of forming emotionally satisfying friendships with males). If Hollywood is right, then men are not capable of being “just friends” with women. All they are interested in is sex and romance with them. If males wanted opposite-sex friendship as well, however, they would be biplatonic (capable of forming emotionally satisfying friendships with both sexes) and heteroromantic (romantically interested in the other sex). The possibilities are endless, but the point is that in looking at straight males “bonding” with other males, one is struck by the hypocrisy of limiting talk of straight and gay to *one sexual-orientation scale*! Sexual acts, after all, mean different things to different people. Speaking of human relationships in terms of sexual, romantic, and platonic three-circle graphs may allow people to act bisexually (if they want), admit their bisexuality, and *still* be straight or gay or whatever in the *romantic-orientation* graph. After all, that is already happening. People just do not admit it, perhaps because Kinsey’s sexual orientation scale is the only analytical tool available today!

Everybody’s biplatonicism (ability to enjoy friendships with both genders) may allow males to revel in feelings of friendship while having sexual intercourse, making their sex act more than just physically gratifying. But such emotional gratification need not mean that these males want to spend the rest of their lives together. Only homoromantic (and biromantic) males would want this, although not necessarily all the time. Thus, close straight buddies may want to share their friendship sexually, enjoying the emotions that come with this, and still be straight in the romantic-orientation circle graph. By contrast, they may just “fool around” *without* any emotional/friendship attachment. The options are endless, but gay sex need not mean that one is queer in the romantic sense.

In short, I propose that people think of their human interactions in terms of the following orientation graphs, for *human* interaction, as opposed to mere sexual intercourse, should be the umbrella term.

1. Sexual-Orientation Circle Graph – (Heterosexual to Homosexual)
2. Romantic-Orientation Circle Graph – (Heteroromantic to Homoromantic)
3. Platonic-Orientation Circle Graph – (Heteroplatonic to Homoplatonic)

Romantic Orientation Three-Circle Graph

- A. *Heteroromantic* . . . being in Zone 0 (the straight circle), and romantically interested in the same sex 0/4 in FREQUENCY
- B. *Uniromantic* . . . being in Zone 1 (the zone where the straight and bi circles intermesh slightly), and romantically interested in the same sex 1/4 in FREQUENCY
- C. *Biromantic* . . . being in Zone 2 (the bi circle), plus the present-day “50/50” definition with regard to FREQUENCY
- D. *Triromantic* . . . being in Zone 3 (the zone where the bi and gay circles intermesh slightly), and romantically interested in the same sex 3/4 in FREQUENCY
- E. *Homoromantic* . . . being in Zone 4 (the gay circle), and romantically interested in the same sex 4/4 in FREQUENCY

Platonic Orientation Three-Circle Graph

- A. *Heteroplatonic* . . . being in Zone 0 (the straight circle), and platonically interested in the same sex 0/4 in FREQUENCY. (This is something that most gay males, presumably, are guilty of, as their same-sex friendships often turn into sexual relationships, failing to stay at the platonic level.)
- B. *Uniplatonic* . . . being in Zone 1 (the zone where the straight and bi circles intermesh slightly), and platonically interested in the same sex 1/4 in FREQUENCY
- C. *Biplatonic* . . . being in Zone 2 (the bi circle), plus the present-day “50/50” definition with regard to FREQUENCY transferred to the platonic orientation discussion
- D. *Triplatonic* . . . being in Zone 3 (the zone where the bi and gay circles intermesh slightly), and platonically interested in the same sex 3/4 in FREQUENCY

E. *Homoplatic* . . . being in Zone 4 (the gay circle), and platonically interested in the same sex 4/4 in FREQUENCY

For those confused by the platonic orientation graph, it is the *opposite* of the sexual and romantic orientation graph. People who are gay in the sexual and romantic sense are straight in the platonic sense and people who are straight in the sexual and romantic arena are “gay” in the platonic sense—for it seems that gays “bond” platonically with the opposite sex, while straights bond platonically with the same sex (e.g., homosocial bonds).

Most people will say that breaking down one’s relationship identity into three circle graphs will further complicate matters. Yet, health practitioners already note that people of one sexual orientation (e.g., heterosexuals) act in ways that contradict their sexual identity (e.g., having sex with both genders). Human relationships are already complicated! The question, then, becomes: Will society acknowledge this complexity and allow people to act *honestly* in a sexually free way (if they want), without that sexual variety meaning one and only one thing . . . that males are turning “gay” if one hot afternoon they “fool around” with a guy or that they are turning straight if they have sexual intercourse with a woman for the first time?

Bisexuality will continue to remain invisible as long as *sexual* orientation remains the *only* analytical tool. This is because, unlike gays, bisexuals hit too close to home. While gays are another species, bisexuals remind most people of their own potential for queerness (assuming that straights have not already enjoyed same-sex eroticism). The threat of “contamination” is just too great, although again, many straights secretly have gay sex. The term *bisexual* presents a threat because, unlike homosexuality, it eliminates the notion of separate species of people (e.g., gay people acting in stereotypical ways). Bisexuals, by the very fluidity of their nature, are like everyone else. Far more than gays, bisexuals may “convert” straights, since bisexuals are not a radically different species with desires 100% incompatible with the straight masses. If acknowledged, bisexuality would keep most people awake at night! Therefore, the cop out is to deny that bisexuals exist. Adding a romantic and platonic circle graph to discussions about human interaction, however, would allow many humans to act bisexually (as many do now) *and still be straight in the romantic graph*. This, of course, assumes that being gay is still a stigma—even if in a small sense. Nonetheless, while society makes progress, this conceptualization of sexuality may help straights and gays enjoy sex with the “forbidden” gender without feeling guilty, threatened, etc.

Why has nobody, including scholars, raised the notion of a romantic and platonic-orientation scale—not to mention the three circles mentioned here? No one has because duplicating the Kinsey scale, rather than simply expanding labels within the same continuum, would open a host of choices to people presently crammed into two boxes. The masses would have a sexual orientation, a romantic orientation, and a platonic orientation—although most people would probably talk more about the first two, as everybody’s biplatonicism (ability to form friendships with both sexes) would be so clear-cut as to eliminate the need for self-definition in this area and hence, debate. Nonetheless, for scholars, talk of a sexual, romantic, platonic, and even age-orientation three-circle graph will undoubtedly complicate scholarly research, debate, and discussions. This, of course, is potentially daunting to the various scholarly professions (e.g., sociology, history, sexology, biology, etc.), but such complexity must be embraced if research—not just society—is to make true progress in the realm of human relationships, and how people understand them.

In a radically different society, people would emphasize the *romantic* orientation of people, realizing that everyone acts *bisexually* and *biplatonically* at some point in their lives. In such a world, there would be no sexual minorities, only romantic minorities. Terms like “homoromantic” would replace the still stigmatized word “homosexual.” Of course, the notion of a romantic minority sounds ridiculous to us today, but a mere half-century ago, the idea of a sexual or invisible minority sounded just as ludicrous. For the romantic-orientation circle graph to take precedence over the Kinsey scale, however, most humans would have to acknowledge bisexuality’s prevalence in actual *practice*, as well as in *potential*. Only then would people focus on the romantic-orientation scale when speaking of themselves as gay, straight, bi, and the like.

Conclusions

This essay recognizes that reconceptualizing sexuality, romance, and friendship is not something that researchers—let alone, the masses—will do overnight. Most queers will probably see the three circles as too complex for rallying people behind queer pride. Even if queers and sexologists adopted the three circles and started talking about a sexual, romantic, and platonic-orientation graph, the mass media, schools, churches, etc. will continue to present everyone with two choices. Nevertheless, a large part of bisexual movement currently seeks to transcend this paradigm—to include transsexuals, straight cross-dressers, “she/males,” queers of color, etc. In theory, all these people are included in the bird/circle/moon/star schematic, as one can be in any point within a circle, the moon, etc. Symbols are powerful—with the potential to unify vast numbers of people. Just think about the French and American revolutions, the rise of Christianity, and the making of nations, and the role of symbols and images vis-à-vis these developments. Of course, symbols are constructs, but once embraced, they become natural. With the circles, myriad questions are raised, and these can be used to generate discussions within queer circles—and straight ones. Just because society chooses to reject self-examination, critical thinking, and truth does not mean that queers have to adopt that way of life. Unmentioned in queer circles, for example, is that many queers fear displaying the rainbow flag because it is too colorful, prominent, and therefore “in your face.” True, the rainbow flag is a beautiful symbol of diversity and should continue to be used by those queers who choose. But many bisexuals don’t identify with the rainbow, and they should be presented with other options. In December 1998, a bisexual rainbow flag was introduced, but it merely replicated an idea born out of gay-identity politics. Yet, large sectors of the bi movement seek to transcend that. Shouldn’t they be given a choice to choose a radically different symbol? Today, many bisexuals identify with the bi rainbow flag, perhaps because they have no other symbols. If that is their choice, so be it! The flag’s intermeshing of two colors is beautiful and will probably continue for a long time. Still, should these be the *only* symbols of queerness? Or should queers have more options—the choice of flying a rainbow flag *and* three circles; a bi-pride flag *and* a gay-pride flag? What would be the differences in the meanings of these symbols? Which group or groups should embrace which? Perhaps the border-zoners may opt for the three circles, as the current bi triangles present bisexuality as a “50/50” affair. In any event, these questions are for queers to discuss—and straights who wish. What the future will look like is uncertain. But as a bisexual activist once wrote, “If all behaviorally bi people identified as bisexual, queer politics would look very different.” In this sense, the circles have a revolutionary potential!

Employing terms like *unisexual* and *trisexual* may help border-zoners to identify, however subtly, as bisexual. The terms *borderline* bisexuals or *borderliners* will not do, because we are not referring to a line on the Kinsey scale. Instead, we are talking about an entire *zone* inside two circles—a separate zone on each side of the bi circle—not to mention the zones of “pure” heterosexuality, “pure” bisexuality, and “pure” homosexuality. If border-zoners do not employ fall imagery to describe their orientations, they risk being engulfed by the straight and gay worlds, by virtue of their twin identities with them. Presenting them and others with symbols of nature—the snowflake, leaf, and sun—may encourage people to embrace the symbols in isolation, wearing a prominent leaf on a t-shirt, having it on a mug, flag, etc. Or they might wear them below the three circles. Or they might choose to wear only the three circles. The options are many.

Very likely, older generations of queers will not discard the rainbow and triangle images. Younger generations, however, can be presented with new symbols, so that in the decades ahead, queerness will mean a smorgasbord of variety, nuance, and complexity. At the most basic level, wearers of the three-circle graph would announce that they choose not to be dumbed down by the larger culture; that they are mentally sophisticated; and that they are inclusive of different groups. The circles may even form a bridge between the various queer movements and the environmental movement, as sexuality and nature affirm life. Surely, no person wants to see the end of love, friendship, and sexual pleasure in the future—which environmental collapse threatens to obliterate. The options that we present to today’s youth will determine the shape of this planet’s future!

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