

Session 9A: Bisexuality

Learning Objectives:

- To learn more about bisexuality and what it means to be bisexual in our society.
- To understand how the dualistic nature of our society affects our perceptions of bisexuality.
- To discover how to be a better ally to bisexual people.

Session Summary:

In this session, the work of two sex researchers, Alfred Kinsey and Fritz Klein will be used to examine to complexity of sexual orientation and bisexuality. Through conversation and art, participants will explore how dualism affects our perceptions. They will also explore how the US and Canada view bisexuality as compared to other places in the world. Finally, the participants will use what they have learned to deepen what it means to be an ally to bisexual people.

Background:

Kinsey's research is very old and not accurate. His scale however is extremely useful. In the late 60's researchers examined sexual orientation in some 400 cultures worldwide and discovered that repressive cultures dichotomized sexual orientation more than less repressed cultures.

Fritz Klein took Kinsey's scale and made it more complex, allowing for multiple understandings of sexual orientation. His work is considered leading in the field of understanding bisexuality.

In most cases, people learned about bisexuality after heterosexuality and homosexuality—due to the dualistic notions that pervade our society.

The study from the University of Georgia was done in 1996 and has received wide acclaim. The men's arousal was measured through placing measuring devices on each man's penis and then recording growth or reduction.

Materials:

1. Newsprint
2. Markers
3. Crayons
4. Drawing paper (gray)

Preparation:

- Create copies of the Kinsey scale and Klein scales on newsprint.
- Create space in the room so people can move for the forced choice.
- Have materials ready.

Workshop Plan

Opening Reading/Hymn (5 minutes)

(You are invited to pick a reading and/or an opening hymn. Singing The Living Tradition is an excellent resource. Other options are a moment of silence, a prayer, or a brief check-in. You are encouraged to also begin with a chalice lighting. Please submit any readings and/or hymn choices that you have used successfully to the OBGLTC as feedback for possible inclusion in future editions of LWC.)

Activities:

Forced Choice

(25 minutes)

Explain to the participants that you are going to ask them to respond to a series of statements. They will respond not with words but by standing in a certain place. The left side of the room will be “I strongly agree.” The right side of the room will be “I strongly disagree.” Tell people that they may also stand somewhere in the middle between the two sides, if, for example, they tend to agree or disagree. Standing in the middle means feeling equally split between agreeing and disagreeing. After you have completed each question allow for a few comments from people before moving on to the next statement.

Statements:

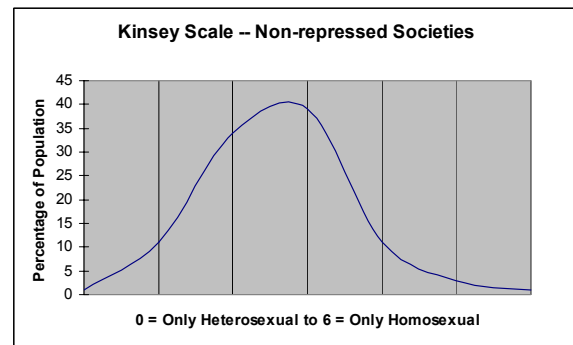
1. There is no such thing as bisexuality.
2. Everyone is bisexual really.
3. The only true bisexuals are the people who are attracted equally to men and women.
4. Bisexuals are more promiscuous than heterosexuals or homosexuals.
5. Bisexuals are perceived in our society as being more promiscuous than heterosexuals and homosexual people.
6. Bisexuals have it easier than gay men or lesbians.
7. There are more people who are in actuality bisexual than heterosexual or homosexual.
8. Some of the most homophobic people are actually more bisexual or gay than they would like to admit.

9. If our culture were less repressed about sexuality, more people would identify as bisexual.
10. If our culture were less repressed sexually more people would be bisexual, whether they claimed the identity or not.

Take a few moments to allow participants to discuss the exercise and share what they experienced and learned from doing it. Ask participants to have a seat to move on to the next activity.

Kinsey Scale

(20 minutes)



Show a diagram of the Kinsey Scale (above without the curve) on the newsprint. Briefly explain the continuum from exclusively heterosexual to exclusively homosexual. Ask participants to guess what percentage of the population is exclusively heterosexual and homosexual.

After a few guesses have been made, inform the participants that there have been two worldwide studies that have been done in relation to the Kinsey Scale.

The findings from these studies indicate that the cultural norms play a huge impact on how people identify and act.

Place on the Kinsey scale a curve as shown above that indicates how people identify in a non-repressed culture as far as sex goes. Tell the participants that in such cultures, 1-2% of the

respondents identify as exclusively homosexual, and 1-2% identify as exclusively heterosexual. Most people identify between 2 and 3 though there is a broad range between all seven numbers.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Heterosexual Bisexual Homosexual

Inform the class that in more sexually repressed cultures, 10% of the population will be placed at 0 or 6 on the Kinsey Scale and that the majority of people would identify between 1 and 2.

Invite comments and discussion. Where would the US/Canada be—less or more or repressed? What do people think of these two studies that were done in the 60's and 70's? Allow for ample discussion, and, if asked, inform people that these were two reputable studies, which have not been widely discussed. Why do they think that is?

How do these studies make people feel in terms of comfort? Understanding of sexuality? About our society?

Close this part of the session by saying there has been even more advanced work done.

Klein scales (15 minutes)

Present newsprint, which shows the Klein scales (following numbered 1 – 9), developed by Fritz Klein. Tell participants that Fritz Klein, in an attempt to better understand sexuality and attraction, developed a multitude of scales in which to more accurately reflect our society. These scales offer a more complex understanding of bisexuality and sexual orientation.

Go over quickly each of the scales and explain that some of the scale names are very close to each other. Encourage people if they want to know more about the individual scales to pick up a book of Fritz Klein's but that the purpose of this time is to encourage people to examine that sexuality is multi-layered.

1. Sexual Attraction (Who are you attracted to?)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Heterosexual Bisexual Homosexual

2. Sexual Behavior (Who do you engage in sex with?)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Heterosexual Bisexual Homosexual

3. Sexual Fantasies (Who do you fantasize about?)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Heterosexual Bisexual Homosexual

4. Emotional preference (Loves and likes)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Heterosexual Bisexual Homosexual

5. Social Preference (Who do you want to spend time with?)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Heterosexual Bisexual Homosexual

6. Self-identification (How do you identify?)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Heterosexual Bisexual Homosexual

7. Lifestyle (Where do you spend time with whom?)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Heterosexual Bisexual Homosexual

8. Community Affiliation

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Heterosexual Bisexual Homosexual

9. Political Identity

0 1 2 3 4 5 6
Heterosexual Bisexual Homosexual

Invite comments on the scales. What stands out for them? Are the categories useful?

Explain that these scales are also not set against a particular time, and that Klein understood that a person's answers might differ at a various times in a person's life.

Many people find the Klein scale scary. Why would this scale be scary to some people?

What do these scales say about sexual orientation to you?

Dualism (10 minutes)

Much of our society is based on dualism—either/or. The stove is hot or cold. The room is light or dark. What are some dualisms we have in our society today? Brainstorm some other examples and list them on newsprint.

In pairs, ask participants to answer the following questions: How does a tendency to think in dualisms affect our understandings of bisexuality? Is dualism a good thing—why or why not? How might we as a society do better about teaching people about those in-between areas?

Tell the participants the following example. In a recent University of Georgia study a researcher interviewed heterosexual-identified men who claimed to be homophobic and those who claimed not to be homophobic. These men were then shown a series of pictures that included naked men. The men were monitored through electronic devices, and when the men who identified as homophobic were shown pictures of the naked men, they tended to get aroused more easily than those who did not claim to be homophobic.

What does this say about bisexuality and homophobia? Do you think the men who got more aroused were actually gay or bisexual or heterosexual? Why do you think this? What would the Klein scales indicate about this? What would the world culture study using Kinsey say about this?

Art activity (20 minutes)

Give each participant a sheet of paper (preferably light gray) and some crayons or markers, and ask them to think about places in their life where they are “in the middle of a continuum”. Ask them to draw a picture of what it is like to be in the middle. Encourage them to be either as concrete or as abstract as they wish. Some people will draw the actual example others may draw a picture that represents the feelings. Some may wish to do more than one. Allow 15 minutes for the drawings and then invite anyone who wishes to share their drawings with the class.

Being an Ally (20 minutes)

In groups of 4, provide each group with a sheet of newsprint and ask them to create a poster that has the title and illustrates “How to Be an Ally to Bisexual People”. Encourage people to be creative in terms of depicting things that would be useful for people who are not bisexual to know or to do. Allow 15 minutes to create their posters and five minutes to share them with the entire group.

Closing Reading/Hymn (5 minutes)

(You are encouraged to find a suitable one. The difference between the Opening and Closing is that we suggest that one reading and/or one hymn is selected to be used as the closing for all sessions. The Opening may vary from session to session.)

Suggested Hymns

Suggested Readings

Add Your Suggestion

Ask participants to hold hands as they are willing, able, and comfortable.