

Of Sexuality, Labels and Identities ...



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Guest Columnist

Perhaps someday I will be able to walk into a neurologist's office and undergo a prolonged investigation in which the doctor measures the size of different areas of my brain or levels of certain chemicals. Following this investigation, he or she might explain that I am 62.5 percent attracted to males and 31.8 percent attracted to females with the remaining 5.7 percent representing attractions to drag queens, bull dykes and tight jeans regardless of who's wearing them. All of this with a 5.897 percent margin of error, of course.

Or perhaps I will make an appointment with a psychologist and spend several hours filling in circles with a No. 2 pencil. I might be told I am 67.9 percent attracted to females and 29.1 percent attracted to males with the remaining 3 percent representing attractions to hairy legs, freckled shoulders and people who are taller than me. I would argue that 95 percent of all my attractions have been

to people who are taller than me, simply because so much of the population is taller than 5 feet 3 inches. However, the doctor would assure me the test's results are completely accurate within a 4.32 percent margin of error.

Now, if both of these situations were to occur, I would probably laugh and forget about the whole thing. If only one or the other occurred, or if I were to go to both doctors and the results seemed to agree, perhaps that would encourage me to take on a label concerning my sexuality, for example: lesbian, straight or bisexual. Perhaps the doctors' reports would even include a suggested label based on scientific definitions. Luckily, such tests are not yet available (or at least I don't know about them and I hope I never will).

So, as it is, I'm left to determine my sexuality for myself. What's a girl to do? Which label is appropriate? If I choose lesbian, I also need to consider whether I'm femme or butch, and if I'm femme, I must then decide if I think I could pull off the "lipstick

lesbian" label. But considering the many men I've dated in the past, I'm not sure many women who consider themselves lesbians would necessarily welcome me.

The straight label seems to be crossed out even before I start to consider it. Since, oh yeah, I've been dating a woman since last summer, and we're planning to live together next year.

I guess that leaves bisexual. It's definitely the most liberating alternative, but life is never that simple. Alas, I have a problem with that one too. It all started with a conversation I had with an old high school boyfriend during Winter Break. I had already told him about Sarah (my girlfriend), and he asked me one night whether I was a lesbian. I told him that lesbians are women who like only women, but that yes, I am gay. He responded that I couldn't be gay, since gay people are men. I told him that I didn't think it worked that way and that I was pretty sure gay can apply to both men and women. But he could call me bisexual if he was more comfortable with that.

After introducing the term bisexuality, he asked me whether I thought I would be with this woman for a long time. I told him it certainly seemed possible, which prompted him to ask how exactly that would work. He asked me whether I also planned to be with men on the side. I laughed at him and told him no, to which he replied, "Oh, so you are a lesbian."

It seemed futile to continue the conversation, and since then I've also put an end to the dialogue inside my own head concerning labeling my sexuality. This current relationship, my first with a woman, happened naturally. It was confusing at first, and I wasn't always sure what my feelings meant, but I'm not questioning it anymore. I'm just in love. It feels as natural as any other relationship I've ever had. So despite the various labels, I'm still just me. And I'm in love, just like any other person in love. Whether it's biological or psychological or, as my mother thought at one point, a result of her not taking me to church often enough when I was younger, I don't know and I don't care. If this means something about my "identity" or my ability to love, I don't care. Call me what you want - labels don't change anything.

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