



BI AMERICA

MYTHS, TRUTHS, AND STRUGGLES
OF AN INVISIBLE COMMUNITY

WILLIAM E. BURLESON

William E. Burleson

Bi America *Myths, Truths, and Struggles of an Invisible Community*



*Pre-publication
REVIEWS,
COMMENTARIES,
EVALUATIONS . . .*

"Bi America has been waiting for a book like this. Written in an engaging, witty, and conversational style, it vividly paints a picture of the hopes, dreams, and struggles of bisexual people in the United States today. Burleson combines information and personal interviews from the Bi History Project, an online support group, and bi community activists and participants to convey a sense of the out and proud bisexual community—who we are and where we are heading.

Burleson lovingly embraces some of the tough questions about bisexuality and the bi community. He makes bold and definitive statements about the limits of language in describing bisexual life and experience, raises tough questions about the viability of a separate bi community, and leans into controversial topics, such as the relationship between bisexuality and nonmonogamy.

I highly recommend this book to everyone who is curious about bisexual-

ity, loves a bisexual person, or thinks they may be one. They will come away from their reading experience happy to be a Bi American."

Beth A. Firestein, PhD
Licensed Psychologist,
Inner Source Psychotherapy



"Bi America offers in-depth knowledge of bisexual activism and communities in the United States, including local, regional, and cyberspace groups. This book situates bisexual practices in the context of other queer practices and communities in the United States, including transgender, HIV, and nonmonogamous. The testimonial evidence it provides opens a view on the interests and complexities that lives in these communities entail."

Serena Anderlini-D'Onofrio, PhD
Associate Professor,
Department of Humanities,
University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez;
Editor of *Plural Loves: Designs for Bi
and Poly Living*



More pre-publication

REVIEWS, COMMENTARIES, EVALUATIONS . . .

"Burleson writes beautifully and provides an evenhanded depiction of the bisexual in America. It is enjoyable and informative reading. There is no question that *Bi America* will provide readers with a better understanding of the social, sexual, political, and HIV-associated situations of bisexuals and help to quell the related misunderstandings that surround them."

Martin S. Weinberg, PhD

Professor, Department of Sociology,

Indiana University;

Co-author of *Dual Attraction:*

Understanding Bisexuality



Harrington Park Press®
An Imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc.
New York • London • Oxford

***NOTES FOR PROFESSIONAL LIBRARIANS
AND LIBRARY USERS***

This is an original book title published by Harrington Park Press®, an imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc. Unless otherwise noted in specific chapters with attribution, materials in this book have not been previously published elsewhere in any format or language.

CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION NOTES

All books published by The Haworth Press, Inc. and its imprints are printed on certified pH neutral, acid-free book grade paper. This paper meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences-Permanence of Paper for Printed Material, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

This page intentionally left blank

Bi America
*Myths, Truths, and Struggles
of an Invisible Community*

HARRINGTON PARK PRESS

Bisexuality
Fritz Klein, MD
Senior Editor

Bisexual and Gay Husbands: Their Stories, Their Words edited by Fritz
Klein and Tom Schwartz

Bi America: Myths, Truths, and Struggles of an Invisible Community
by William E. Burleson

Eros: A Bi/Cultural Journey by Serena Anderlini-D'Onofrio

Bi America

Myths, Truths, and Struggles of an Invisible Community

William E. Burleson

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2005 by
Harrington Park Press®

Published 2014 by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY, 10017, USA
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2005 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, microfilm, and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Cover design by Jennifer M. Gaska.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Burleson, William E.

Bi America : myths, truths, and struggles of an invisible community / William E. Burleson.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Bisexuals—United States—Social conditions. I. Title.

HQ74.2.U5B87 2004
306.76'5'0973—dc22

2004012047

ISBN 13: 978-1-560-23478-4 (hbk)

ISBN 13: 978-1-560-23479-1 (pbk)

To Mariann

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William Burleson is a Twin Cities HIV-prevention educator, activist, and writer. He is one of the founders of the Bisexual Organizing Project in Minneapolis and is a past coordinator of BECAUSE, the Midwest conference on bisexuality. Burleson is a regular speaker and workshop facilitator discussing the bisexual community and the nature of sexuality at conferences and on college campuses. In addition he is a columnist for the *GLBT Press* in Minneapolis. Current and recent projects include producing a weekly Minneapolis cable access television show, *Bi Cities!*, and helping to plan the Eighth International Conference on Bisexuality, held in the Twin Cities in August 2004.

CONTENTS

Foreword	xi
<i>Fritz Klein, MD</i>	
Preface	xv
Acknowledgments	xvii
Introduction	1
My Own Story	1
Sources	2
Who and What This Book Is About	5
Chapter 1. BECAUSE	7
Welcome to BECAUSE	7
The Workshop	10
Chapter 2. Relating Bisexuality to the World	13
“Bring Out the Bisexuals”: <i>The Jerry Springer Show</i>	13
The Invisible Bisexual	14
The Relationship Between the Bi and the Lesbian and Gay Communities	19
Chapter 3. Bisexuality Defined	29
“Something Men Just Do”	29
Sex, History, and Culture	30
Models of Sexual Orientation	38
Perspectives on Bisexuality	41
Bisexuality As an Orientation	43
Bisexuality As an Identity	53
Chapter 4. In Search of a Bisexual Community	57
The Picnic	57
Who Are They?	60
Is There a Bi Community?	62

Meet the Bi Community	65
Back to the Picnic	76
Chapter 5. Women's and Men's Experiences: <i>Penthouse</i> Bisexuals and Support Group Men	79
Kiss the Girls	79
Bisexual Women	80
Bisexual Men	89
Chapter 6. The Transgender Community	103
<i>Bi Cities!</i>	103
What Is "Transgender"?	105
Transgender History	109
Bisexual and Transgender	111
Chapter 7. What Is the Relationship Between Nonmonogamy and Bisexuality?	115
The Wog	115
Bisexuality, Monogamy, and American Society	117
Styles of Nonmonogamy	124
Last Thoughts About Monogamy	133
Chapter 8. Bisexuality in the Time of AIDS	135
Safer Sex Sluts	135
HIV/AIDS 101	136
HIV Risk and Bisexual Men	141
HIV Risk and Bisexual Women	143
AIDS and the Bisexual Community	145
Chapter 9. The History of the Bisexual Community	151
Boston, June 2002	151
The Seeds of Bi Activism in the 1960s and 1970s	153
The 1980s and the Second Wave of Activism	157
The 1990s and Conference Culture	163
Where Does That Leave the Bi Community Today?	166

Chapter 10. The Future of the Bi Community: GLBT Identity versus Cyberspace	169
The College Workshop	169
Into the Future	170
Bisexual Inclusion	171
Here Comes the Internet	175
Do We Want to Have a Community?	177
What Is the Future of the Bisexual Community?	179
Chapter 11. BECAUSE Reprise	185
Back to the Workshop	185
Sunday Morning Breakfast	190
Appendix A. The Survey	191
Appendix B. The Bisexual History Project	209
Appendix C. Resources and Further Reading	243
Notes	247
Bibliography	255
Index	259

This page intentionally left blank

Foreword

I first met Bill when I came to Minneapolis to keynote the 1999 BECAUSE conference. I was being shuttled around town by a long-time activist and mutual friend, Victor Raymond, who took me to meet Bill. Bill was the coordinator of the conference that year, and we were able to spend quite a bit of time getting to know each other. Since then, we've been colleagues as well as friends. I find him to be a caring and intelligent man who is a bi activist in the best sense of the word. Therefore, when Bill told me he was planning to write a book about bisexuality, I was excited to introduce him to my publisher, The Haworth Press.

When I started research in the 1970s, almost nothing was written about bisexuality. I remember going into the main New York Public Library on Fifth Avenue and finding only two cards in the catalog pertaining to the subject. In 1978 I published *The Bisexual Option*, which I updated in 1993. The book explored the many facets of this authentic sexual orientation and was the first in-depth look at the subject.

A good deal has happened in the world since 1978, even since 1993, and the bisexual community's ups and downs have reflected those changes. AIDS, the increasing trend away from liberalism toward a more conservative country, yet increasing success for gay and lesbian people in their fight for acceptance, have all helped shape what is now a small but vocal bisexual community.

In the mid-1970s when I started a bisexual support group in New York, it was one of a handful in existence in the United States. There I found people looking for answers, looking for support for being, what they thought, the only ones who felt this way. Now in 2005, I am sure it is still common for a bisexual support group to be the only one in existence, comprised of relatively few people in any of the larger cities of the country. Most of the country's smaller cities and towns still do not have these small support groups where people come looking to find out what this all means. However, in those cities that do have one, an individual can, with a minimum of research, find and

join it. Even if people don't join, they know it exists and is out there if they ever decide they need it.

Although this change is important, even more dramatic has been the effect of the Internet on the bisexual community. All anyone has to do is type <www.bisexual.org> into a Web browser to be connected to a world of international, national, and local resources, offering support and information. In the twenty-first century this is indeed a valid community. A bisexual person, no matter where he or she lives, need not be completely isolated any longer.

Since my trip to the library in the 1970s, a number of books about bisexuality have been published (including several of my own). Of these books, several are of an academic nature, reflecting a newfound validity of bisexuality as a research topic. Several books of essays have also been compiled by bisexual editors. It is good news that the community is finding its own voice, as well as reflecting the growth and increased influence of the greater lesbian, gay, transgender, and bisexual communities. These general books, plus a few more about specific topics regarding bisexuality, are a small but decent start in creating a bisexual section in a bookstore.

Yet, despite all these changes, since the *Bisexual Option* came out no other mass-audience book looking at bisexuality in American culture has been available. Now there is with the publication of Bill's book. We know subcultures such as the bisexual community face great societal pressures and are usually in a constant state of change. What the bisexual community is at the present time is neither what it was in the past nor what it will be in the future. It is too easy even in this age of rich information to lose a segment of people, to forget to document their unique history and culture, and to have them disappear into history, forgotten. This book effectively addresses that issue. People will be able to see and understand this unique group, and when someone in the future wants to understand how bisexuality and bisexuals came to mean whatever it will mean then, he or she will have this in-depth book.

The more immediate use of this book is just as important. As people consider or come out as bisexual and want to understand what that means, they now have a new resource in that journey. When bisexual people want a parent or friend to better understand their lives, there is now a good book to recommend. Anyone interested in the richness of

what it means to be human and wanting to understand a different subculture will be able to learn about the bisexual community.

I hope this book makes you question your assumptions about bisexuality and broaden your world to include people from a diversity of sexual expressions. But most of all I hope this book makes you feel comfortable with yourself, whatever your sexuality or gender expression.

Fritz Klein, MD

This page intentionally left blank

Preface

Some Notes About Language

Throughout this book and in doing the survey, I fought a losing battle between the fluidity of gender and the rigidity of the English language. With great trepidation I have chosen to accept *they* and *their* as newly crowned singular pronouns. I would rather suffer the slings and arrows of language purists than use *him or her* or *he or she* and leave out the transgender community and many good friends. Harder was avoiding the use of *opposite sex* and *same sex* to describe forms of partner relationships. The duality of sexual orientation that makes bisexuals invisible has a parallel in gender orientation (as I discuss in [Chapter 6](#)), erasing many transgender people. Also, the dance between *sex* and *gender* can be more complex than the language easily allows. I apologize.

I switch freely between LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) and GLBT. Both are in common usage, but depending on where one lives in the United States, one or the other predominates. I decided to use both. When I quote people, I might also use GLBTI (“I” for *intersex*). In addition, in the world, if not in this book, one may hear GLBTQ (“Q” for either *queer* or *questioning*) or GLBTA (“A” for *allies*). Indeed, I once spoke at a BTLGIQQA conference.

Also, I generally use *gay* to mean homosexual men and *lesbian* to mean homosexual women. Some may argue *gay* simply means homosexual, so if I mean homosexual men, I should say *gay men*. Perhaps so, but *gay and lesbian* is in common usage, whereas *gay men and lesbians* is a bit awkward and, I think, wordy.

I also indiscriminately flip between usage of *bi* and *bisexual*. I do so for poetic reasons only; I intend for both words to mean the same thing. I acknowledge a small number of people in the bisexual community don’t like “bi.” I guess I do. The argument has been made that “bi” is trivializing. The 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights used *bi* so as to erase “sexual” from the title in an attempt to desexualize the image of the event. This abbreviated

identity offended many bisexuals who maintain we are bisexuals and we should be proud of that name. I agree. On the other hand, I like bi too, especially when it makes for a better read (and for that matter, book title). Again, I apologize if I have offended.

Last, using *America* is asking for it. I know. At one time I might have resisted using it to refer to the United States. It seems so jingoistic, so U.S.-centric. That is all true, but its use is also very common, especially in other countries. People the world over refer to the United States as “America,” and when referring to the countries of North and South America, it is typical to use “the Americas.” The point of writing is communication, and I think when “America” is used it is clear what is meant.

None of these matters are trivial. Language is important, particularly when language has the power to intellectually delegitimize a whole community. I hope I have reached a good balance between understandability and politics.

Acknowledgments

This book is the collective wisdom of many, many people—certainly those people quoted in the book, but numerous others as well who did not make it onto these pages. My journey as a bisexual has been informed along the way by many good, kind, smart people who taught me through words and deeds what it means to be bisexual and what it means to be part of a community. I thank everyone who guided me and informed me, even though I usually pretended I already knew what they were talking about.

A special thank you to Dr. Fritz Klein for his guidance, patience, and wisdom.

Thank you to my partner of thirteen years who saved my behind with her skills in copyediting and help in making the book readable.

Thank you to Michael Ronn, Bob Grams, PhD, Anne Phibbs, PhD, Scott Bartell, MSW, as well as Dr. Klein for reading my rough draft and pointing out the many times I made little or no sense.

Thanks to Steve Parker for making me look thinner than I really am in the book-jacket photo—truly an extraordinary photographer!

And a big thanks to Anissa Harper, my copy editor at The Haworth Press. How she managed to make this book legible is beyond me. May we someday meet in person now that we've exchanged about a thousand e-mails.

Thank you to all who contributed to the online bisexual support group: Ravenmajel, Ronald, Eric, Happy, Tezza, Nancy, Julz, Valia, Glenn, Jennifer, Erika, Cool, Dominique, Paul, Jessie, Juli, Mike, Kimberly, Ron, Lori, Stephanie, Maria, Juliet, Areusa, and Diana, plus all those who contributed but are not quoted directly. I didn't realize how important the group would be when I started. Your input, whether you were directly quoted or not, was incredible.

Thank you to Sean Kinlin, Mark Schuller, and Dawn Pankonien for all their hard work on the Bisexual History Project, as well as to the Bisexual Organizing Project for their permission to reprint it. Last, but certainly not least, thanks to the participants of the Bisexual History Project: Scott, Magenta, Carey, Brian, Alix, Kevin, Rob,

Jodi, Elizabeth, Anita, Kathleen, and David, plus all those others who provided their stories. Your input was the start of everything, and if not for your heartfelt testimonies about your lives as bisexuals, this book could not exist.

Introduction

MY OWN STORY

I came out to myself on the corner of Twenty-Fourth Street and Hennepin Avenue in Minneapolis while riding the number 17 bus. I thought, “That’s it! I’m bisexual!” I was seventeen years old, and I was privileged to know something about bisexuality, as my high school sweetheart identified as bisexual. I had also spent most of my life in the inner city where gay people undeniably existed. My parents and friends may have stereotyped and disparaged them, but they were our neighbors and clearly part of the fabric of the community. Still, it was ten more years until I came out to my friends and family.

At the time I had this epiphany in 1977, the gay liberation movement was going strong and making rapid headway in securing basic civil rights. The gay community was in a golden age of nightclubs, discos, and bathhouses, with no idea of the plague already beginning. For me, it all seemed so simple. I was attracted to women and men, which I thought was okay. I saw that most other people didn’t share that feeling; I thought that was okay, too. I always knew some people would hate people like me; got it. It turned out anything but simple. Being bisexual put me, and others like me, in the center of the storm over gay and lesbian rights and challenged many people’s core beliefs about sexuality and gender. It turned out it was just not that easy for me to be a bi American.

As an adult, I practiced serial monogamy as I went from relationship to relationship. My relationships with females were public and longer lasting, and my relationships with men private and short. My awareness of my bisexuality was a simple one of desires, secrets, and theory.

Throughout the 1980s I knew no one who was bi, yet I thought I understood what it all meant. As the decade came to a close, my life began to change. I quit drinking. I quit fooling myself that it didn’t matter that I was bi, that it wasn’t important. I started coming out publicly, little by little. By 1990 I was fully involved in the gay community and its culture. I loved it. After living a secret for so long, it was liberating to finally begin to talk about it.

But I wasn't gay. It didn't take very long before I was reminded of that. When I met my present partner of thirteen years, a woman, my life took another left turn. My newfound community of lesbian and gay friends quickly disintegrated when confronted with my flagrant violation of cultural taboos and community norms. I found I could not continue to travel in the gay community with a woman partner. I found out the hard way that I had much to learn about what it means to be bisexual in our society.

Then, in 1993, I attended my first BECAUSE, the Midwest conference on bisexuality. There, in a room filled with 150 other bisexuals, I found my home. Since that time I have attended eight more BECAUSE conferences, plus a few others around the country, and had the honor of being the coordinator of the event twice. I have attended support groups, as well as facilitated and founded other bi groups from scratch. I have helped build a bi organization in the Twin Cities and now produce a bi cable-access television show. I have edited newsletters, published articles in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender press, and been a speaker about the issue throughout Minnesota. And now, I am writing this book.

I am telling my story because this book depends on stories. It would be disrespectful of me not to write about my own life when so many others have contributed their stories of strength, pain, hope, and redemption. Because they did tell their own very personal stories, we are able to see and better understand what it means to be bisexual in America.

SOURCES

Most of the quotes come from three sources: interviews, the Bi History Project, and an online bi support group. The people in this book are all real people. However, depending on the desires of the person, sometimes names have been changed and details may have been altered to maintain varying degrees of confidentiality.

The Bi History Project

In the spring of 2000, fellow volunteers Mark Schuller, Sean Kinlin, and I created the Bisexual History Project. The goal was to document the stories of real people, to capture this moment in history

as a community, and to start to document our history as a people. We told the attendees at the conference what we had planned, set up a camera in a public area of the conference, and waited to see who would come by and tell their stories. An audience gathered. By the end, fourteen people took the time and challenged their shyness to sit down and tell the entire world their stories. That summer Dawn Pankonien, a student at a local liberal arts college, volunteered to spend uncounted hours transcribing the four hours of tape into what is now the Bi History Project. By the end of summer, we achieved our goal by donating the entire document to the Minnesota History Center as part of The GLBT Collection.

The people from this project are not necessarily representative of all bisexuals. As out bi's (some more than others), they certainly do not represent all those who are attracted to more than one gender. What they represent most is the established, visible bi community: those people who will go to community events, attend the local Pride festival, become involved in the politics of the community, and, of course, be interested in attending a bi conference.

Many of the participants I have known for several years, and others I have just met. They are diverse both in gender, including transgender people, and in age, from the mid-twenties to the mid-fifties. What they share in common is self-awareness—an intelligence born of years of hard, personal work.

I have included the complete transcript of the Bisexual History Project in [Appendix B](#). Although I use parts of it to illustrate topics throughout the book, much can be gained by reading it in its entirety. In fact, it may be a helpful place to begin reading this book before turning to the several chapters.

The Online Support Group

I know many of the participants in the Bisexual History Project, but the online support group is the complete opposite. It is anonymous by design, a place on the Web where people can write frankly about themselves and their experiences.

I formed the group to help me write this book. To find members, I e-mailed all the groups listed at the bisexual.org Web site and asked whoever received it to take the survey, to consider joining my book advisory group, and to pass the request along to others. Ultimately,

270 surveys were completed, and at its peak the support group had ninety members from all around the United States.

I must admit, I created the Web site more for the survey data and the group was more of an afterthought. I obtained the data I was after, but it turned out the group was more interesting. I've often said, only half in jest, if you put a quarter in a bisexual they'll talk about bisexuality for hours; it is so seldom that anybody asks, we are bursting to tell everyone about it. The support group members shared tales of isolation, joy, fear, love, heartache, and redemption; each story was unique, very personal, and yet very familiar. A pattern, very clear, very sincere, ran through the stories. Those patterns, those commonalities, are what make up this book.

The Survey

No one hates junk data more than I do. My online survey is just that: junk data. (1) It is not a representative sample of the bi community or the population as a whole. (2) There is no way to guarantee that people didn't take the survey more than once. (3) The sample group necessarily includes only people who go online, leaving out about half the population. (4) I found the participants through their affiliation with bi groups throughout the country active enough to have their own Web sites and therefore probably left out the vast majority of online bi's who are not part of a group. This is not how sociologists and cultural anthropologists like to gather data.

The survey does provide a picture of those who responded. It tells about the people who made up the online support group and, to a lesser degree, about those who are actively involved in the bi community (a group that is a tiny subset of all bi's). The survey gives anecdotal data about this population. It is important, because many of these questions have not been asked before, especially regarding community affiliation and feelings of acceptance. It would be wonderful if an academic researcher could do a more thorough survey of bisexuals someday, but until that day, and for my purposes, these data will have to do.

All the survey data can be found in [Appendix A](#). Some of it is interesting because it is surprising; some of it is interesting because it affirms what one might have guessed. Either way, an individual is not a survey, and all those data do not tell about any one person. What it

does is reveal patterns that can be used to help get a wide-angle view of a community.

The survey data are not very important in the scheme of the book. What *is* important are the stories of real people, living their lives. That is what I set out to do with this project: tell our story. Data are great, academia is wonderful, and I give the reader a good dose of both. But I believe what really matters are the people and their stories. No matter what readers' sexual orientation, political beliefs, or religious convictions are, I hope some commonalities with the individuals speaking here will be identified, connecting us to the human struggle we all have in our lives. Bi people, as is true of many other groups, are often reduced to stereotypes. I hope to reduce bisexuality to its humanity.

WHO AND WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT

The meaning of *bisexual* is elusive. In the *Stanford Law Review*, Kenji Yoshino argues in "The Epistemic Contract of Bisexual Erasure" that a person's orientation may be defined along three axes: behavior, attraction, and self-identity.¹ This is a very useful model for my purposes.

With that in mind, I will be talking about three groups. The largest group is composed of those who "behave" bisexually. *Behave* is an elusive term all on its own, and people who have had or do have sex with people of more than one gender may or may not identify as bisexual. However, I am less interested in this group than I am the second group: those who identify as bisexual. As discussed in [Chapter 3](#), people who call themselves bisexual are a tiny subset of those who behave bisexually.

The third group, and a population of special interest in this book, is a yet tinier subset of those who identify as bisexual. That group is the bi community. [Chapter 4](#) reveals the small communities of bisexuals that exist at least in some places in America. Living below the pop-culture radar, they hold support groups, social events, and conferences; publish Web sites and newsletters; and possess community norms, history, and culture. All this, yet they enjoy neither attention nor acknowledgment from the rest of society, the gay and lesbian communities, or even the vast majority of bisexuals.

This categorization raises several questions: First, why don't more people who have or have had sex with people of more than one gender call themselves bisexual? Second, since a good number of people do identify as bisexual, why is there little—or in most places no—sign of a bisexual community? Finally, given the scarcity of bisexual community, what is different about those who *have* found and joined the bi community, and what makes that community unique?

These are the questions I had when I first went looking for my community twelve years ago, and these are the questions I attempt to address in this book.

Before going any further, it will be helpful to start at the beginning, or my own beginning at least. In the Midwest, many people discover the bisexual community—as I did—at BECAUSE.

Chapter 1

BECAUSE

WELCOME TO BECAUSE

The hotel was pretty much like any other suburban hotel, perched on former swampland just off the interstate. It was pretty much in the middle of nowhere, but it would be just as correct to say it was pretty much anywhere. Standing in the vast parking lot, looking out over the traffic on the freeway, it could have been in any city in any state in the United States. That impression is reinforced inside the hotel: it would be impossible to tell what part of the country you were in unless you noticed the framed tourist pictures of the Twin Cities hanging by the check-in desk.

On this beautiful Friday afternoon in April, the hotel was getting busy. Families were checking in for the weekend so the kids could use the pool and the parents could have a good meal in peace. A wedding party, complete with several generations of relatives, checked in. Businesspeople, apparently in some unfortunate industry requiring them to travel on weekends, glumly rode the elevator. It was a large hotel, and two meetings were taking place at the same time this weekend. There was a Christian group sporting a three-by-four foot foam-core poster of their charismatic leader and selling books and tapes to a well-dressed group of followers. And then there was BECAUSE.

BECAUSE, the Bisexual Empowerment Conference: A Uniting Supportive Experience, is an annual meeting for bisexuals from throughout the Midwest. This was the second time BECAUSE was held at a hotel. Although hotels are the traditional venue for conferences, previously BECAUSE had been held on college campuses and hosted by college GLBT student groups. Colleges seemed to be, or at least to have been, more in keeping with the culture of the event. Borrowed classrooms in Coffman Union at the University of Minnesota had felt more apropos than well-appointed, modern hotel facilities