



BRIAN BRANCH-PRICE / Associated Press
Gov. and Mrs. James E. McGreevey: Is it possible for a man to be attracted to both sexes, a study asked.

Carnal Knowledge *By Faye Flam*

Testing for bisexuals: A study that found none

It's been a year since former New Jersey Gov. Jim McGreevey came out of the closet, and I'm still wondering how he could be gay without either of his wives knowing. Wouldn't he at least have to be bisexual to have pulled that off?

And then came the even more baffling news from writer Terry McMillan that her soon-to-be-ex-husband is gay. The man inspired her 1996 best-seller, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*. Wasn't the groove partly about sex? Is this man gay or bisexual?

Research on bisexuality is sparse, but a few intrepid scientists have

tried to get data by wiring up a group of gay, bisexual and straight men to a machine that monitored their arousal when exposed to erotic images of men and women. The researchers found that, while some of their subjects called themselves bisexual, their male anatomy showed a notable preference for one sex or the other. That led to headlines proclaiming that bisexual men don't exist.

But such a proclamation would seem to depend on how you define bisexual. Does a person have to be absolutely equally attracted to both sexes? If you like both but prefer

one, do you qualify? Scientists don't know. What they do know from tracking the spread of HIV is that a number of men who have sex with men also have sex with women. A report from the Centers for Disease Control notes that 13 percent of white men who reported sex with other men also had sex with women. Among black men it was 34 percent, and among Hispanic men, 26 percent. Men can and do go both ways.

"This is something we don't quite understand," says Gerulf Rieger, a psychology graduate student at Northwestern University and lead

author of the study. Rieger, who told me he's gay, said he, too, is a bit baffled by the way other gay men manage to marry women.

In his study, he didn't see evidence for "bisexual arousal" among the 101 paid volunteers, recruited using alternative weeklies and gay publications. Of those, 38 identified themselves as gay, 33 as bisexual and 30 as straight. The researchers showed the men short films: one with two women having sex, one with two men having sex. They used lesbian sex because previous research showed it is more exciting

See **BISEXUAL** on D2

There's no such thing as bisexual?

BISEXUAL from D1 to heterosexual men than male-female pornography.

Before the viewing, Rieger and his colleagues hooked their test subjects to an arousal-meter of sorts. "It's quite simple — we put a rubber band around the penis," says Rieger. "It's filled with mercury and that's wired to hardware that goes into a computer."

Nearly a third of the volunteers were rejected from the study because they had no reaction. "It makes them very nervous," says Rieger. You don't have to be male to imagine how this apparatus might cause performance anxiety.

For the two-thirds who could handle it, the overwhelming response was always to one sex or the other, even for the bisexuals. And yet, the penis meter did register a small amount of expansion when the straight men watched the other men, and when gays watch the women.

But what really surprised Rieger was that some of those who identified as bisexual liked the women much more than the men. In that

The test's conclusion may have been affected by the test itself (a third of the subjects were disqualified). Or perhaps there is basic disagreement on the definition of "bisexual." Is it attraction — or the decision one makes of whom to love?

sense they reacted like the straight men. Why would a heterosexual man pose as bisexual?

"Maybe they're very open," Rieger says. "I'm not a straight guy, so I don't know."

An article on the subject in the New York Times appeared under the headline "Straight, Gay or Lying? Bisexuality Revisited." Rieger said the headline came from an ex-

pression often used in the gay community and was not meant to imply that bisexuals are liars, though that is what it implied. "Some might be truly confused — that's far from being a liar," he says.

But it may be the scientists who are confused. Lisa Diamond, a professor of psychology and gender identity at the University of Utah, said there's no agreed-upon definition of bisexual either in science or in society. Some people define their orientation by whom they're attracted to, others say it's whom you fall in love with that matters. "We have this delusion that we're all talking about the same thing when we talk about arousal and desire and orientation," she said.

If you're lucky, you can focus all those feelings and sensations on one person, and he/she will feel the same way about you. It's a good groove if you can get into it, but it doesn't always last.

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