

# TEENS **in** PRINT BOSTON

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## Going **Bi**

Is their new flirtation with bisexuality a chance for teens to really express themselves – or to just look trendy?

By Milanes Morejon // Staff Writer

▲ AFH photo by Chris Rogers

**T**ypical Scene: The bell rings. Students scatter to their next classes. Some are shoving books and papers into their lockers. Others wave goodbye to their teachers. Then, there is that one girl leaning towards another girl for a kiss. Something's going on here. Is this a newfound display of true bisexuality? Or just a chance to look hip?

Lately, teens are saying that "being bi" has become the newest trend.

"In our generation people are willing to try anything that

is different," says Luis Sanchez, 19, from Brighton.

In several Boston Public Schools, teens say students have been finding it hard to ignore the girls they see kissing by the lockers, and the "Did you hear this girl is bisexual?" stories.

Many teens believe that the media has influenced the youth of today. Sensational pop singer Katy Perry captured the attention of many when she debuted her song, "I Kissed a Girl," which became a worldwide hit. Some of the lyrics such as, "I kissed a girl and I liked it," dived into the ears of teens, arousing many mixed reactions.

"It could make you curious about kissing a girl, and bring you face-to-face with a temptation you wouldn't have dealt with otherwise," wrote one woman in a web article entitled, "I like 'I Kissed a Girl,' So What?"

While some teens were only tapping their feet to the beat of this catchy song, Stephanie Robinson, 19, of Boston, analyzed the lyrics, too, on behalf of her bisexual community.

"She broke a barrier," Robinson says of Perry. "Whether she's bisexual or not, it's the bisexual anthem."

[Going Bi, PAGE 3]

Along with music, MTV reality shows such as Tila Tequila's "A Shot at Love" and the Ikki twin's "A Double Shot at Love," have sent the message that not only is it OK to be bisexual, but that it is also cool. The media has portrayed bisexuality as the newest thing by having gorgeous women on these shows making out with both women and men on people's TV screens.

Just as "mulattos" lie in between the lines of black and white, those who identify themselves as bisexuals lie between the lines of heterosexuality and homosexuality.

People who identify themselves as bisexuals have "the capacity to be romantically and/or sexually attracted to individuals of more than one sex," wrote Robyn Ochs of Jamaica Plain, an activist for the bisexual community and

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munity, but also the bisexual one.

"It's on the cultural menu now," says Ochs, making it a topic that more people are open to talk about.

Some experts say that due to the amount of support available nowadays, teens are more willing to uncover their true identities.

"Teens feel more comfortable and explore or experiment more than before," says Manou Joassaint, the health coordinator at Boston GLASS, a support group for young people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning their gender or sexual orientation.

But with more openness also comes a backlash of harsh rejection.

"Harassment is still a problem in every school district in metro Boston and it hasn't necessarily stopped," says



▲ AFH photo by Ping Zeng

editor of the Bisexual Resource Guide, and Getting Bi, in an essay entitled "Bisexuality."

There is a difference, though, between bisexual behavior and bisexual identity, which is something many teens struggle to understand. Though people may choose to have physical encounters with people of the same and opposite sex, they won't necessarily see themselves as being bisexual. In short, behavior does not determine one's sexuality.

"It's not about what I'm doing," says Ochs. "It's about what I am."

While engaging in bisexual behavior can attract attention, for some it can also be a turn-off.

"It's a way to turn guys on at a party, leaving the real bisexual people looking bad and...confused," says Bruna Lopez, 20, of Somerville, who identifies herself as a lesbian.

Some don't mind the blatant flirtation with bisexuality.

"I think it's OK to experiment; I didn't have to experiment to figure out what I was," says Robinson.

Others say it's one thing to explore bisexuality because you want to find your true self, and quite another to do it to be trendy.

"It's a problem if you're fake, but not if you really are bisexual," says Roem Bau, 17, of Brighton.

Today, society is acknowledging not only the gay com-

Jessica Flaherty, program director at the Boston Alliance of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Youth (BAGLY). "It is difficult to be a young person and know that most of the world has a heterosexual frame to it....Young people who feel different, feel very, very different."

Bisexual boys seem to have it worse than girls because, as Ochs puts it, "Girls have a much longer leash," when it comes to sexual identity and acceptance.

Still, whether teens are making out in the hallways with someone of the same sex, or truly coming out as bisexuals, Ochs has a message for them.

"Always remember to be true to yourself," she says. "No one else has the right to define you or tell you what to do." ■