

BiNet USA Bisexual Media Guide

Marriage Edition

(updated June 2015)

TERMINOLOGY

Bisexual, Bi A person whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is to other people of various sexes and/or gender identities. Individuals may experience this attraction in differing ways and degrees over their lifetime. Never use a hyphen or space when spelling bisexual. Avoid classifying information about bisexual people, communities, and identities as “bisexuality”; instead, use “bisexual” to refer to bisexual content. Using “bi” is often preferable, but when in doubt, always ask.

Biphobia Prejudice against and/or fear of bisexuals. Prejudice against bisexuals often occurs on both a cultural and personal level based on stereotypes, including inaccurate and harmful associations with infidelity, transphobia, binarism, confusion over their sexual orientation, promiscuity and transmission of sexually-transmitted diseases.

Bisexual erasure, Bi erasure Bisexual erasure or bisexual invisibility is the tendency to ignore, remove, falsify, or re-explain evidence of bisexuality in history, academia, news media and other primary sources. Bisexual erasure is often influenced by biphobia. Avoid bisexual erasure in headlines. If the story is about a bisexual person, the headline should NOT use “gay”; instead use “bi.”

Misorientation Misorientation occurs when bisexual people are identified incorrectly as gay, lesbian, or straight using current or previous relationship status instead of personal identification. When one or both members of a featured same-sex couple are bisexual, be sure to correctly identify them as such. Misorienting bi people leads to unnecessary and deeply harmful mental stress. AVOID: Opposite-sex couple, straight couple, heterosexual couple, gay couple, and lesbian couple, unless appropriate. USE: Different-sex couple, same-sex couple, and mixed-orientation marriage.

Mixed-Orientation Marriage A mixed-orientation marriage is a marriage between partners of differing sexual orientations and frequently occurs with bisexual people. Mixed-orientation marriages can have same-sex/gender or different-sex/gender partners but the bisexuals involved remain bisexual.

Different-Sex Couple A romantic pairing involving two people of different-sexes. The individuals involved may identify with any sexual orientation. Bisexuals and many other LGBT people may prefer to honor and recognize their relationship status with other ceremonies or ways than marriage. Seek to honor committed relationships no matter the sex or gender.

Same-Sex Couple A romantic pairing involving two people of same-sexes. The individuals involved may identify with various sexual orientations including gay, lesbian, bisexual, and asexual.

BISEXUAL TERMS TO AVOID

PROBLEMATIC TERMS

Problematic: “bi-sexual”, “BiSexual”

Preferred: “bisexual”

Do not use a hyphen in bisexual and only capitalize bisexual when used at the beginning of a sentence.

Problematic: “Chris Jones, who currently identifies as bisexual,” “Chris Jones, who identifies as bisexual,” “Chris Jones, a self-avowed bisexual.”

Preferred: “Chris Jones, a bisexual from Chicago...” or “Chris Jones, a bisexual mom of two.” It’s offensive to describe bisexual people as if their identity is transitory and is not a confirmed part of the person.

Problematic: “gay marriage,” “gay and lesbian couples”

Preferred: “marriage equality,” “the freedom to marry,” “gay, lesbian, and same-gender couples,” “couples in the LGBT community,” “same-/similar-sex couples”

Use “gay, lesbian, and same-gender” when discussing gay, lesbian and same-gender couples denied the right to have their marriages honored and acknowledged by state or federal law. See *misorientation*.

DEFAMATORY TERMS

Defamatory: “fence-sitter,” “breeder,” “bi-curious,” “lesbian until graduation,” “bisexual until graduation,” “college lesbian,” “gay for pay,” “buy-sexual,” “half-gay,” “swinger,” “Bi now, gay later,” “half-straight,” “Bi-Sexual,” “bar-sexual,” “down low,” “switch-hitter,” “try-sexual,” “Part-time Gay,” “Goes Both Ways,” “Swings Both Ways,” “Down Low”

The bisexual orientation is an integral, valid and permanent part of a person’s identity. Do not characterize bisexual people as “passing,” as “confused,” as “indecisive,” as “lying” to other people, or as “pretending” to be bisexual. Such descriptions are defamatory and insulting and should ONLY be used when discussing and explaining such negative stereotypes.

Defamatory: “bisexuality reinforces the gender binary,” “bisexuals are gender-binarists.”

Recent slur frequently used by those uneducated on the history of the bisexual and transgender/gender nonconforming communities, identities, and experiences. In 1990, the [manifesto](#) of the long-standing bisexual publication “Anything That Moves” stated: “Bisexuality is a whole, fluid identity. Do not assume that bisexuality is binary or duogamous in nature: that we have ‘two’ sides or that we must be involved simultaneously with both genders to be fulfilled human beings. In fact, don’t assume that there

are only two genders.” DO recognize that bisexuals define their identity as being attracted to those of the same-sex/gender or to those of different-sex/genders.

Defamatory: “hot sexy bi babe,” “bi babes,” “only hot because s/he’s bi,” “double your chances on a Saturday night”

Avoid any term that equates a bisexual person’s desirability to their bisexuality. Do not imply that being bisexual makes one more desirable as a sex partner. Doing so contributes to the high rates of sexual victimization bisexuals experience. Do not reference the Woody Allen quote about “doubling your chances on a Saturday night”: this is far different from what most bisexuals experience.

NAMES, LABEL USAGE, & DESCRIPTIONS

Numerous polls and surveys indicate the bisexual population to be 40–51% of the entire lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. Many transgender persons, regardless of gender identity, also identify as bisexual. As a large community, bisexual people predominantly use “bisexual” as a *Community Identity Label* (similar to “lesbian,” “gay,” “straight,” or “queer”).

Use of a Community Identity Label helps describe commonalities, create safe spaces, and is essential to tracking the [significant number of health and safety disparities](#) bisexuals experience. At the same time, many bisexuals use *Personal Identity Labels*, which serve a vital function in describing differences while giving each individual a space to be unique. Personal Identity Labels like “pansexual,” “bi-dyke,” or “queer” may also reflect a particular attitude toward ideas such as [Gender Theory](#).

While some bisexual people call themselves “pansexual,” “fluid,” “omnisexual,” “flexisexual,” “heteroflexible,” “non-monosexuals,” and/or “queer,” DO NOT use these terms UNLESS someone is explicitly self-identifying in this way. It’s important to note that many bisexuals use terms other than bisexual to avoid the immediate stigma that occurs when they self-identify as bisexual in gay, lesbian, or straight spaces.

The preferred shorthand for bisexual is “bi.” In recent years, the Bisexual Organizing Project has also popularized the use of the term “bi+” as shorthand for the long list of personal identity labels validated and celebrated in bisexual, pansexual, fluid, and queer communities.



Acknowledgments

A BiNet USA Project with co-sponsorship from:

The American Institute of Bisexuality; the Bisexual Resource Center; the Bisexual Organizing Project; the New York Area Bisexual Network (NYABN); Bialogue; DC Alliance of Multicultural Bisexuals (AMBi); Los Angeles Bi Task Force; and Bisexual Books.

Bi Media Working Group, chaired by Faith Cheltenham, BiNet USA President:

ABilly Jones-Hennin, Alison Walkley, Amy Andre, Aud Traher, Cynthia Connors, Denise Penn, Ellyn Ruthstrom, Emily Dievendorf, Estraven, Gary North, Helen Acosta, Heron Greenesmith, Jim Larsen, Lauren Beach, Lindasusan Ulrich, Loraine Hutchins, Martin Rawlings-Fein, Meredith Lively, Dr. Mimi Hoang, Morgan Goode, Peter M. Ruggiero, Ron Suresha, Sarah Stumpf, and Stacey Langley.

With additional marriage equality edits from Alison Walkley, Aud Traher, Dani Siragusa, Ellyn Ruthstrom, Faith Cheltenham, Heron Greenesmith, Lynnette McFadzen, Paul Nocera, Peter Ruggiero, Robyn Ochs, Ron Suresha, and Toby Adams.

Bisexual Community Organizations

American Institute of Bisexuality

www.bisexual.org

BiNet USA

www.binetusa.org

Bisexual Organizing Project

www.bisexualorganizingproject.org

Bisexual Resource Center

www.biresource.net

For more bisexual organizations in the United States

<http://www.binetusa.org/bi-groups-in-the-us>

For more bisexual organizations worldwide

<http://www.biresource.net/bisexualgroups.shtml>

FURTHER READING

Books

Bi Any Other Name, by Loraine Hutchins and Lani Ka'ahumanu

Bi Men: Coming Out, edited by Pete Chvany and Ron Suresha

Getting Bi: Voices of Bisexuals Around the World, edited by Robyn Ochs and Sarah Rowley

Recognize: The Voices of Bisexual Men, edited by Robyn Ochs and H. Sharif Williams (Dr. Herukhuti)

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

Links

Bisexual People of Color Mailing List and Resources ~ BiNet USA

www.binetusa.org/bipoc

“Way Beyond the Binary” ~ Bisexual Resource Center

<http://www.biresource.net/waybeyondthebinary.shtml>]]

Resource List for Mixed-Orientation Marriages ~ The BiCast

<http://www.thebicast.org/resources-for-mixed-orientation-marriages/>

“Supporting and Caring for our Bisexual Youth” ~ The Human Rights Campaign

<http://www.hrc.org/blog/entry/supporting-and-caring-for-our-bisexual-youth>

“Understanding Issues Facing Bisexual Americans” ~ The Movement Advancement Project

<http://www.lgbtmap.org/understanding-issues-facing-bisexual-americans>

Bi Women Quarterly

www.biwomenboston.org