

Bi Inclusion

What do we mean by bi?

When Queen Mary talks about bi people, we are using bi as an umbrella term used to describe a romantic and/or sexual attraction towards more than one gender. Bi people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including, but not limited to, bi, bisexual, pan and/or queer. There are a range of terms under the umbrella, and no 'right' way to be bi.

Bi people can be trans, including non-binary. Bi people can be cis. Bi people can be ace. See more information on language in our Glossary of Terms.

What is biphobia and bi-erasure?

Biphobia is the fear or dislike of someone who identifies as bi based on negative attitudes, beliefs or views about bi people. Biphobia can be targeted at people who are, or who are perceived to be, bi.

Bi-erasure is the act of ignoring, explaining away and dismissing bi identities in culture, media and/or history.

What might biphobia and bi-erasure look like?

Below are some examples of biphobia and bi-erasure. Many of these are based on myths, misconceptions and stereotypes about bisexuality and bi people. You have probably come across some of these yourself. It's important to recognise these common examples and understand how damaging they can be for bi people, as well as people of all orientations.

- ***'It's just a phase'***
- ***'You're just ashamed/scared/embarrassed to say you're gay or a lesbian'***
- ***'You just need to make up your mind'***

These examples are often underpinned by the belief that it is simply not possible to be bi, that is not a valid sexual orientation, and that at some point a bi person will either come out as gay or a lesbian or 'admit' they are straight.

Bisexuality tends not to be taken seriously. Bi men for example are often assumed to be gay, and that coming out as a bi is them taking a step towards this. Bi women, however, are often seen as curious, promiscuous and ultimately, straight.

These statements dismiss and undermine bi people's experiences and/or feelings about their own sexuality and identity. Of course, some people do feel that sexuality and gender is fluid, but this doesn't make it ok to dismiss someone else's sexual orientation as a 'phase'.

- ***'You're just [sexually] greedy'***
- ***Bi people are more often seen as promiscuous, adulterous and untrustworthy***

Sexual promiscuity is neither related to any particular sexual orientation, and nor should it ever be shamed.

Being bi, or of any other sexual orientation, has nothing to do with whether you are 'faithful' to partners in relationships or how trustworthy you are. Bi people are, like others, capable of having trusting, healthy relationships with clear boundaries, whatever those may be.

- ***'You can't really be bi/queer because you've only ever dated people of X gender'***
- ***'You can't really be bi because you have a girl/boyfriend'***

Someone's sexual orientation cannot be assumed based on who they're dating. Relationship or sexual history or current relationship status should not be used as 'proof' of someone's sexual orientation. This is an example of bi-erasure or bi invisibility: where people are assumed to be straight or gay based on their past or present relationships, and where being bi is simply not seen as valid. Statements like these also reinforce the gender binary, and exclude non-binary people (see below for more information on this).

- ***'But how do you know that you're bi?'***

How do you know you're straight? How do any of us know anything about ourselves and our identities? Some of us know it really easily, and for others it takes more time. It can be tiring and upsetting for bi people to continually 'come out' as bi, and feel like they have to justify their sexuality in a way we would never ask straight people to.

- ***'You can't be attracted to non-binary or trans people if you're bi'***

Many people believe this common misconception: that being bi is about being attracted to men and women only. This has arisen because historically the word 'bi' has been associated with the gender binary. However, this is not the case. As we mentioned earlier, being bi is about attraction to *more than one* gender: this includes anyone of any gender, including trans and non-binary people.

How to be a bi ally

Everyone can do more to be bi inclusive, including those within the LGBTQA+ community. Here are some simple things you can do to create safe and supportive environments for bi people.

- **Believe bi people** - Bi people exist, and all bi identities are valid. It is all too common for bi people to be challenged and scrutinised on their identity. One bi person might generally date one gender, another might have been in a monogamous relationship with somebody for many years – and they can both still be bi. Believing bi people about their identity is the bare minimum of allyship.
- **Make no assumptions** - Don't assume someone's identity based on their current or previous partner/partners). The gender of someone's sexual or romantic partners doesn't

define them. Take their lead on the language they use to describe their relationships and identity, whether they identify as bi, pan, queer, any of the other labels under the bi umbrella, or no label at all. Some bi people might also use the terms lesbian or gay to describe themselves in some contexts.

- **Recognise and challenge biphobia and bi-erasure** - Whether it's street harassment or a harmful generalisation about bi people, make sure to challenge biphobia and bi-erasure when you see or hear it if you feel safe to do so. Don't leave it to bi people to do all the work, and support other allies when they challenge prejudice.
- **Uplift and support marginalised bi people** - This goes for everyone in the bi community, as well as our allies. BAME/PoC bi people are doubly underrepresented, erased and discriminated against. Bi men face stigma within and outside of the LGBTQA+ community. Ace bi people are told they 'can't' be bi. Bi people of faith are often invisible in narratives about LGBTQA+ inclusion in faith spaces. And sometimes trans bi people are invalidated when people question how their bi identity intersects with their gender identity. Check out and support [Bi's of Colour](#) and [#BisexualMenExist](#) as a first step.
- **Use inclusive language** - Think carefully about who you're talking about. You can erase and exclude bi people when using words like 'gay' as catch-all terms, especially if you don't know whether everyone you're referring to identifies in that way. But remember that outing someone or asking intrusive questions to pin down their identity is harmful – there are plenty of resources online about bi-inclusive language.
- **Make your LGBTQA+ spaces and events inclusive** - Having a safe space to find community and belonging can be life-changing, and every LGBTQA+ person deserves to feel accepted and respected in our communities. Make it explicit that bi people and their partners of any gender are welcome at your event or venue, and that biphobia will not be tolerated. If you're hosting speakers or performers, plan ahead to ensure you have bi representation and that everyone has been briefed about your bi-inclusive stance.
- **Support bi organisations and campaigns** - There are some amazing groups that have been amplifying bi voices, tackling biphobia and building communities for years. Many of them are run by volunteers, but you can support them by donating, sharing their work or lending your time: [BiPhoria](#), [Bi Pride UK](#), [Bi's of Colour](#), [Bi Survivors Network](#), [Biscuit](#), [The Bisexual Index](#).
- **Celebrate bi people** - Amplify and celebrate bi people and their stories. Days like Bi Visibility Day are a great, but ensure that you're also giving our identities and experiences a platform throughout the year. As a start, look up bi creators on social media, follow them and share their content.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Human Resources
Tel: +44 (0)20 7882 3697
Email: hr-equality@qmul.ac.uk

qmul.ac.uk
