

For several years, I resisted the term “bi” and embraced “queer.” Yet, I came out as bi and I’ve always been somewhere on the spectrum of bisexuality/non-monosexuality. I was one of those people who thought “bi” wasn’t inclusive of non-binary genders and was, thus, reductive and antiquated. This was the early aughts and “queer” still felt like a political identity as much as a sexual orientation. I took great pleasure in writing in “queer” on forms that only gave three choices: gay, straight, bisexual.

That said, my sexual orientation has always been bi, in the definition of the word as having attraction inclusive of people of the same gender as me and people of a different gender than me. Bi. Two, but not binary. And I’ve come all the way around. I identify intentionally as bi now as a way to make bisexuality more visible. Queer still feels right, and when I tell people I’m queer, they immediately think “gay” and then jump to “lesbian.” I want to be clear about who I am, for myself and for other bi people around me.

I’ve known I was bi pretty much since I figured out puberty. I was attracted to Devon Sawa *and* Christina Ricci in *Now and Then*. I also figured out pretty early on that I was attracted to people who had a gender expansive gender expression, though I wouldn’t have called it that at the time. I didn’t have a lot of models for being young and bi, though. There were no out bi women and very few gay people at my high school. I came out to myself and my parents and close friends as bi when I was 17, picked up queer identity in college, and came found me way back to bisexual identity as a grown adult.

My sexuality doesn’t fluctuate too much, so I think I’ll be bi and queer for life. I still think Christina Ricci is hot and I’m still attracted to women, trans people, and non-cis men who look like Devon Sawa in the 80’s.



Natalie, Writer

I currently identify as bisexual or queer and, oddly enough, coming to terms with those descriptions of my identity caused me more consternation than the actual acceptance of my identity. I started identifying as bisexual fairly early on almost as a default — it was just the word that you used — but as I realized that my capacity for attraction existed outside the binary, I started to wonder if bisexuality was the right fit for me. The lexicon was evolving: not just with the addition of “pansexual” but also in terms of the understanding of what the “bi” in bisexuality actually represented.

Noted Bisexual activist Robyn Ochs’ definition felt right to me: “I acknowledge that I have in myself the potential to be attracted — romantically and/or sexually — to people of more than one sex and/or gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree.” When I talk to other bisexual people, there’s near unanimity in ascribing to that idea of what it means to be bisexual.

But while I found comfort in that definition for myself, I still wondered: how do other people see me when I identify that way? So many people come to the table with preconceived notions about bisexuality — namely that it excludes trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming folks — and if I was out in the world, identifying solely as bisexual, was I coloring how people saw me? Did my definition of bisexuality matter outside my comfort zone? I still wonder and worry about this. I’m trying to be more vigilant about being explicit about my bisexuality and not defaulting to the term queer (which comes with a greater sense of community) because I know that the best way to erase those preconceived notions is to be more vocal.



Nico Hall, A+ Director

It was NOT always clear to me. When I was younger, I was a very crush-ridden individual. I had crushes on tons of fellow kids, movie characters, people I saw once on a walk, who knows — and none of it seemed to be ruled by gender. I went through a process that I think was somewhat common where I would go back and forth, when I was 11 or 12, thinking I must be a lesbian and then if I got a crush on a boy thinking I had to be straight. I had never heard the word bisexual. Then, one day, back stage at drama club I was reading *Twist* magazine I think it was, and saw the word bisexual. That’s all it took. There were lightbulbs, fireworks, all of it. That summer my witchcraft-practicing little bi self followed my best friend to Christian camp because she always went and it was a good way to spend time with her even if singing all the songs drove me nuts. At camp, this other girl with tons of dark eyeliner gets in my face and is like “Are you bisexual?” and told me she was, too!? (For reference, this would have been very unacceptable if anyone at camp found out.) I was so called out. Anyway, we wound up talking some about it, so, happily, shortly after discovering my identity on my own, I met another person in the wild who shared it, which was validating beyond reason. I stayed fully closeted until I was about 14, but it was a start. Nevertheless, a lot of confusion could have been dealt with head-on if queer media had existed in the same way at the time as it does now. When I think of why Autostraddle’s important to have around, I remember the swirl of self-hatred and fear and ignorance and desire I experienced, and I hope it’s a bit better now that we have this vast online resource, and a little more media representation, too.

I still hold onto the bi label because it’s the first one that felt right. I do worry about the etymology of the word reinforcing some false idea of a gender binary, but at the same time, language is adaptive and is here to serve the users of language, so the bi+ label is really what we make of it. When I say I’m bisexual, I mean I’m someone who is attracted to all genders, inherently, by nature, not as something I can put on or take off. Most people initially think that I identify as a lesbian because of my relationship, but that’s not the reality, and I think I’ll probably always identify as bi, unless I gain some understanding of myself that I can’t see or expect right now. I’ll probably never date a cis man again, and I’ll still be bi. It feels important, somehow, for all of us to keep working for visibility...so thank you Rachel for editing Bi+ Week 2020!





Rachel Kincaid, Former Managing Editor

I tried to think about the ‘first’ time I used the term bisexual for myself, and it’s harder than I thought it would be? Was it the first time I was talking with my incredibly obviously obsessive crush at age twelve and said “I mean of course I’d date a girl, like if I liked her, why wouldn’t I?” Was it the time I was fifteen and spooning my best-friend-who-I-didn’t-call-my-girlfriend and she asked “how long have you known you were bisexual?” and I didn’t pretend like I didn’t know what she was talking about? Was it when I came out to my high school boyfriend at 17, with a mixture of urgency to confide in someone and fear about how he’d react? I think in some ways I’m a very literal person, and the reality that I was attracted to people of multiple genders was very obvious to me; growing up in the genesis of GSAs and marriage equality debates, I had a lot of access to terminology that made IDing as bisexual easy for me in some ways.

I think in some ways, it’s been more interesting how I’ve chosen to continue IDing as bisexual (after all, coming out is a continuous process, for us in particular ways). I also ID as queer, as do many of us, and am often aware that using it allows me to drop the signifier bisexual entirely if I choose to. I’m not sure how to articulate what keeps me committed to it – a contrarian streak, maybe, and a love of the parts of us that are not always in vogue, easily legible, or have obvious political or social utility. We talk a lot about queer as a disruptive or oppositional identity, which resonates with me (the term lesbian is certainly also these things, in ways that I love and admire!); I like being aware of the ways that bisexual is as well, if most obviously with respect to how many people would prefer to flatten it and make it something elementary and pedantic and are frustrated in their attempt to do so. It’s interesting that “bisexual” specifically so often comes up when the topic is about someone who “doesn’t do labels” or “doesn’t like being put in a box” because it seems to me so obviously resistant to those types of oversimplified categorizations; I love having the only hard-and-fast commitment being one to possibility and change.



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