

frequently asked pansexual related questions

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how are mspec labels defined?

mspec is an **umbrella term** describing people who experience **attraction to more than one gender**.

- this includes all the labels defined below (pansexual, bisexual, polysexual, and omnisexual), as well as anyone who is attracted to more than one gender and is unlabeled or uses a different label (fluid or queer, for example)

bisexual is a **personal label** describing people who experience **attraction to two or more genders**.

- or attraction to more than one gender, or attraction to genders similar and different than your own
- bisexual historically has endless **personal definitions**, but those definitions are the most common **general definitions** of bisexuality
- bisexual is also commonly used (with mixed reception) in place of mspec as the **umbrella term** for all people who experience attraction to more than one gender

pansexual is a **personal label** describing people who experience **attraction to people of all genders**.

- or more specifically, attraction regardless of gender

polysexual is a **personal label** describing people who experience **attraction to multiple but not all genders**.

omnisexual is a **personal label** describing people who experience **attraction to all genders**.

notes on language:

- ❖ “**umbrella term**” refers to a label that encompasses a number of different labels within it and is *generally* acceptable to apply to people in a broad, inclusive manner. (think of how “lgbt” and “queer” encompass the entire community.) whereas “**personal label**” refers to a label that individuals choose for themselves and should not be applied by us to others. (bisexual is often used as both, which can be tricky to navigate. more on that later.)

- ❖ **“general definition”** refers to the definition used by activists, organizations, and communities to encompass the most broad spectrum of experiences within a label for the sake of inclusivity, language, and understanding. **“personal definition”** refers to the definition an individual uses for themselves that makes sense to them and their experience, but isn’t necessarily a general definition.

how are mspec labels different?

generally speaking, the easiest way to understand the difference between these labels is

- bisexual can mean anything from attraction to two to all genders
- polysexual means attraction to multiple but not all genders
- pansexual and omnisexual only ever mean attraction to all genders

it’s important to remember that these are just basic, general definitions, and by no means are meant to draw hard lines between each identity. they very much overlap, and each individual who uses them has their own way of understanding, defining, and relating to them.

you might be wondering, **“what’s the difference when a pansexual and bisexual are both attracted to all genders?”** and it’s understandable to be curious about that.

when either label could **“apply,”** or the label choice isn’t based on definitions, things like history, community, visibility, and feelings about each label come into play.

someone could choose bisexual because it comes with a more detailed/known history and is more visible. someone could choose pansexual because it comes with a feeling of connection and home that they don’t get from bisexual. someone could choose either label because of their communities, bisexual being larger/more accessible, and pansexual being largely online but just as welcoming and supportive.

someone might feel both labels aren’t truly **“options”** for them, despite both definitions **“fitting.”** defining/differentiating pansexual and bisexual are important, but not more than our feelings. someone may “fit” both definitions, but only feel connected to and represented by one label, and therefore their label isn’t merely a result of “choosing/preferring it over” the other.

ultimately, the best way to understand mspec labels is to listen to what the labels mean to those who use them, instead of relying on one single person or group to define them for everyone.

notes on language:

- ❖ by a label “**applying**,” i mean the individual feels the label could be applicable to them, not that we as outsiders feel the label could apply to them. because while we might feel a label could “**apply**” to someone based on “**fitting**” a definition, that person might not feel the label is an “**option**” due to not feeling a connection or the nuances of their feelings not being captured the way they want them to be. remember: labels are personal choices.

further reading:

1. [pansexual and bisexual definition and explanation psa](#)

what’s the difference between “attraction to all genders” and “attraction regardless of gender”?

- attraction to all genders indicates **attraction to people of any and all genders**
- attraction regardless of gender indicates specifically that **gender doesn’t determine, affect, and/or play a role in the attraction**

attraction regardless of gender is a more specific version of attraction to all genders, and attraction to all genders can be “regardless of gender,” but isn’t always. this is why when i define pansexuality, i say “attraction to all genders, or more specifically, regardless of gender.”

when someone says their attraction is “**regardless of gender**” it usually means gender either doesn’t affect their attraction at all, or it isn’t what determines it (the former being more in line with not having a gender preference). when someone says they’re **attracted to people of all genders**, their attraction could be “regardless of gender” and it could not be. they could mean their attraction is affected in different ways depending on gender, or their attraction could be unaffected or not determined by gender and they just don’t feel the need to explain or say that.

some people (still) might not see or care about that difference or think it’s being pedantic, but everyone is different and the specificity, nuance, and personal connotations are things some people like, want to express, and find important. and that’s okay. you don’t necessarily have to understand it, but as long as you’re trying or at least respecting the language people use, you’re good.

can people identify as more than one mspec label?

of course! these labels are **similar** and **overlap** with one another, as the definitions above show, so many mspec **people use more than one** label.

how people use multiple mspec labels differs. people might:

- use more than one label all the time, consistently using each label equally
- fluctuate between more than one label, using different labels at different times
- have a **primary label** and one (or more) **secondary label(s)**
- be very strict, using only the specific two or more labels that they choose
- be relaxed, using any/all labels or not caring which ones people use to refer to them

the choice to use more than one label is a personal one, and one that not every mspec person makes. before using more than one mspec label to refer to someone, make sure they're okay with it.

note on language:

- ❖ “**primary label**” refers to the main label one uses, it might be the one they connect with the most or the one they’ve been using the longest. “**secondary label**” refers to the label one uses in addition to that, it might be one they recently discovered, aren’t as connected to, or even use as more of an umbrella term for themselves.

can pansexual people have preferences?

of course! some people are drawn to the pansexual label because to them it indicates a lack of preference and their attraction isn’t affected by gender at all, in any way. but that’s not the case for all pansexuals. being attracted to all genders doesn’t mean being attracted to them all equally in the same way to the same degree at all times, and gender not being what determines your attraction doesn’t mean it can’t affect your attraction.

and you might be thinking...but **doesn’t “regardless of gender” mean you don’t have a gender preference?**

no, experiencing attraction regardless of gender doesn’t preclude having gender preferences.

“regardless of gender” to some can indicate attraction that isn’t affected by gender in any capacity whatsoever. they might not have any differing feelings or preferences

regarding gender at all. some people might use this definition to express neutral or equal feelings about gender across the board.

but “regardless of gender” is also often a way of expressing attraction that isn’t determined by gender, which indicates attraction that isn’t based on gender. some people might use this definition to express that gender can affect their attraction to someone, how much or often they’re attracted to any given gender, but it isn’t a defining or central aspect of their attraction itself.

in other words, gender can affect one’s attraction in a number of different ways, without it being what defines or determines the attraction.

are “hearts not parts” and “genderblind” harmful?

yes. the issue with those phrases are not the messages they mean to convey, which is generally attraction being independent from or not determined by gender.

the issue is what they’re actually conveying. which is:

- a dismissive attitude toward gender
 - ◆ describing yourself as “genderblind” conveys the message that you don’t “see” gender, meaning you don’t care about or acknowledge the gender of the people you’re attracted to. and a person’s gender is often important to them.
- a conflation of gender and sex
 - ◆ describing your attraction as “hearts not parts” is saying you’re attracted to or care about a person’s character over their genitals, but attraction as we describe it is based on gender, not sex, which are different things. and equating gender and sex is not only a false equivalency but also transphobic.
- an implication that non-pan people only care about genitals
 - ◆ many people who aren’t pansexual have explained how describing pansexuality as “hearts not parts” gives the impression that everyone else’s attraction is based on genitals, whereas the enlightened pansexuals are above such shallowness.
- an erasure/invalidation of aromantic people
 - ◆ some people have criticized the prioritization of “hearts” or romantic feelings over “parts” or sexual feelings (which plays into the general stigmatization of caring about or only feeling sexual attraction for

someone) as invalidating, insensitive, or alienating to aromantic people, who experience little to no romantic attraction.

- a misrepresentation of what it means to be pansexual in general
 - ◆ not having gender preferences or attraction affected by gender is not how every pansexual person feels, thus these phrases are not universal pansexual slogans
- an idea of superiority over other identities
 - ◆ similar to the previous one, some people feel that the use of this phrase often comes with the belief or vibe that one is more open minded or enlightened than others for experiencing attraction that isn't limited to any specific gender(s)
- use of a disability as a metaphor
 - ◆ “genderblind” uses blindness as a metaphor, which is something disabled people have criticized for a long time. using disability as a metaphor not only obfuscates the meaning of these words, but they negatively affect the way disability and disabled people are viewed, whether that is the intent or not.

whether or not you personally got all of that or mean that when you say those phrases is irrelevant. pan and non-pan people alike have been speaking out against these phrases for a long time now.

notes on “hearts not parts”:

- ❖ it gained use around 2013 (i struggled to find google results before then) and was as criticized within pansexual communities as it was used.
- ❖ around 2014-2015, it was being used as a general pride slogan (fckh8 edited “marriage should be about hearts not parts” and “love is about hearts not parts” onto images of celebrities and sold shirts that said the latter and “marriage is about hearts not parts” was written on a sign at a rally for marriage equality in australia in 2015).
- ❖ people have claimed that it was originally a slogan in the bisexual community and pansexuals stole it. not only have those saying this never provided a source for it, but pansexuals and bisexuals have always shared a community and therefore language. how can you steal what you're a part of?
- ❖ for further reading: a [sourced/referenced post i made digging into the use of and claims about “hearts not parts”](#)

notes on “genderblind”:

- ❖ it gained use around 2006, but picked up use in 2010.
- ❖ it's generally more common than “hearts not parts.”

is pansexual a new label or was it created on tumblr or livejournal?

absolutely not. the claim goes that pansexual was coined on *livejournal* in 2002 on the “i am pansexual” group, which had defined pansexual as attraction to all genders in comparison to a trans/nonbinary-exclusionary definition of bisexual on a welcome post. because of this misconception of pansexual’s coinage, people argue this *livejournal* is “proof” that pansexuality and pansexual people are biphobic (more on this specific accusation up next).

notes on the “i am pansexual” livejournal:

- ❖ it was created in 2002 and last updated in 2017
- ❖ it has 1,584 members, 2,115 entries, and 19,432 comments
- ❖ according to the archive, it had the most entries in 2003-2005, with over 400 each year
- ❖ in 2006-2009, it got around 100 entries a year
- ❖ in 2010-2017, it got around 60 entries total, with 0 in 2014 and 2016
- ❖ the assumption that the entire “i am pansexual” community is biphobic/transphobic because of one entry is categorically wrong and unfair

(a more general claim is that pansexual was cooked up by quirky youngsters on *tumblr*, launched in 2007, looking to be unique or different or whatever.)

now that the accusations are detailed and a little background is provided, **let’s get to debunking**, shall we? pansexual has been used as sexual identity in the context of human sexuality **since at least the 1960s**, and has gone through shifts in usage.

the **1960s–1990s** saw pansexual indicating **androgyny, fluidity, and universal appeal**, often in musicians, icons, styles, lyrics, movements, etc., particularly in the glitter/glam rock scene.

- ★ jackie curtis is credited with the pansexuality of the glitter/glam rock scene ([1960-70s](#))
- ★ david bowie is described as having “showbiz pansexuality” ([1973](#))
- ★ peter allen’s appeal is described as pansexual ([1977](#))
- ★ joan jett is described as having a pansexual strategy ([1985](#))
- ★ morissey’s love songs are described as pansexual ([1985](#))
- ★ “androgynous” by the replacements is described as a “piano-only ballad of pansexual solidarity” ([1985](#))
- ★ rock music is described as pansexual ([1987](#))

- ★ mick jagger is described as the “closest to fulfilling rock’s pansexual fantasy” ([1987](#))
- ★ “diamonds and pearls” by prince is described as a “new mark for ambiguous pansexuality” ([1991](#))
- ★ the music of artists like david bowie, lou reed, and marc bolan are described as inspiration for a “giddy, glittery pansexual liberation” ([1993](#))
- ★ k.d. lang is described as having a pansexual appeal ([1993](#))
- ★ the members of suede are described as “british pansexual adrodg-rockers” ([1993](#))
- ★ rod stewart is described as having a pansexual quality in his voice ([1994](#))
- ★ keanu reeves is described as having a “pansexual affect and appeal” ([1994](#))
- ★ david bowie is described as having “dramatically presided over the glittery, pansexual pop utopia” ([1998](#))
- ★ the glam rock era is described as “embracing nonconformity, willing to be bisexual, pansexual, and shocking with lipstick, eye shadow, or attitude” ([1998](#))
- ★ madonna is described as “flirting with a pansexual appeal” ([1998](#))

the **1980s-1990s**, it indicated in **kink communities** that an event, party, club, group, sex, etc. was **open to people of all genders, sexes, and sexualities**.

- ★ club x, a kink/fetish club, is described as a “pansexual gathering” ([1980s](#))
- ★ the “pansexual trend” in d&s communities is discussed ([1993](#))
- ★ *cuir underground* was a magazine for the “pansexual kink community” ([1994-1998](#))
- ★ the “pansexual movement” in kink communities is discussed ([1995](#))
- ★ pansexuality or “cross orientation play” in s/m communities is discussed ([1995](#))
- ★ national leather association: houston is described as a “pansexual social service organization” for the leather, s/m, and fetish lifestyle ([1995](#))
- ★ a “kinky summer reading” list includes several “pansexual magazines” ([1996](#))
- ★ society of janus is described as pansexual ([1996](#))
- ★ pansexual parties and venues are discussed ([1996](#))
- ★ grey hankie night, a bondage social, is described as a “pansexual event” ([1997](#))
- ★ a “pansexual play party,” “pansexual groups,” and a club for “pansexual perverts” are discussed ([1997](#))
- ★ society of janus is described as a “pansexual space to safely explore one’s desires” ([1999](#))

then and onward, pansexual was a **sexuality label**, indicating generally an **openness to all people and sexual experiences**, as well as an **attraction to all (or regardless of) genders/sexes**.

sleeping with anyone/sexually free:

- “indiscriminate sexual behavior in regard to sex.” ([1962](#))
- “getting gratification from oneself, those of one’s own sex, and those of the other.” ([1964](#))
- “a person who is able to have sex with a male or female.” ([1974](#)) ([2003](#))
- “i’m equal opportunity. i sleep with people of all genders.” ([2001](#))
- “open to all kinds of sexual experiences, with all kinds of people. it means you could relate sexually to any human being.” ([1966](#)) ([1974](#)) ([1974](#)) ([1988](#)) ([1989](#)) ([1999](#)) ([2000](#)) ([2001](#)) ([2003](#)) ([2003](#)) ([2003](#)) ([2005](#)) ([2005](#))
- “promiscuity.” ([1985](#)) ([1989](#))

openness/loving anyone:

- “open to loving anybody.” ([1982](#))
- “looking for love wherever you find it.” ([2002](#))

attraction to all genders:

- “attracted to all individuals and all sexes.” ([1997](#)) ([2003](#))
- “attracted to all genders.” ([2002](#)) ([2003](#)) ([2004](#))
- “attracted to people of any gender at all.” ([2003](#)) ([2006](#))

attraction independent of gender:

- “not about genders.” ([1973](#)) ([2000](#)) ([2001](#)) ([2004](#))
- “attraction to an array of individuals regardless of sex, gender or gender identity.” ([1999](#)) ([2001](#)) ([2005](#))
- “individuals who are pansexual assert that gender and sex are insignificant or irrelevant in determining whether they will be attracted to others.” ([2006](#))

and let’s not forget that we as queer people are constantly discovering new and different aspects of ourselves that we feel the need to label, and labels all have to start somewhere. where/when and by whom that happens to be, whether it’s a new social media site; a decades old newsletter; teenagers; adults; activists, does not determine the validity or importance of it.

further reading:

1. [a very detailed and extensive but non-exhaustive sourced timeline of the pansexual label](#)

is pansexuality biphobic?

definitely not. why do people even argue pansexuality or pansexuals are biphobic in the first place, you ask? let me explain and debunk the arguments for you.

- “pansexuality originated in biphobia”
 - there is zero proof that shows pansexuality was created out of hateful or ignorant beliefs about bisexuality (and individuals explaining why they identify as pansexual in biphobic ways is not proof). as i show below, pansexuality has a long history of existing within the bisexual community before it branched off on its own.
- “pansexuality says/implies bisexuality isn’t inclusive”
 - pansexuality doesn’t say or imply anything about bisexuality (or any other sexuality, for that matter), because it’s not actually defined in opposition to bisexuality. have some pansexuals defined pansexuality that way? sure. but again, that is not proof. they don’t represent every pansexual or pansexuality as a whole.
- “pansexuals stole the definition of bisexuality”
 - there is no such thing as “the” definition of bisexuality, now or ever. bisexuality has [historically defied a single, universal definition](#), because there are [as many definitions of bisexuality as there are bisexuals](#). while you can find bisexuals, both currently and historically, who use “all genders” and “regardless of gender,” these definitions have never been [the most common community bisexual definitions](#).
- “pansexuals are invading bisexual spaces”
 - pansexuals have always been in the bisexual community (pansexuals have been [“actively involved in the bisexual community since the 1970s.”](#)), so we can hardly invade a space that is ours, too. plenty of bi events/spaces/etc. are explicitly inclusive to pansexuals, such as [bi week](#), [bi visibility day](#), [bi health month](#), [various bi conferences/workshops](#) (to share a few), various bi texts (as shown below), and [various bi organizations and groups](#) (to share a few).
- “bisexual already covers what pansexual means so it’s a redundant biphobic label”
 - first, bisexual is a label with a purposely broad meaning, whereas pansexual has a specific meaning. some people like broad terms, others like specificity. there’s nothing wrong with that. second, there’s no such thing as a “redundant” label. if even one person finds a label useful and necessary, then it’s useful and necessary. because that’s what labels exist to do, help us express ourselves. third, the bisexual community has [historically embraced playing with language and terminology](#).

- “people identify as pansexual because they don’t want to be associated with bisexuals”
 - this is just an assumption turned into a generalization about why people identify as pansexual. not using or wanting to be referred to as bisexual has nothing to do with not liking or wanting to be associated with bisexuals. it’s about wanting to control our self-identification and have people respect it.

pansexuality has **historically been included in the bisexual community** and **many people identify as both bisexual and pansexual**. some texts showing the historic inclusion of pansexuality/involvement of pansexuals in the bisexual community:

- *view from another closet: exploring bisexuality in women* by janet bode ([1976](#))
- “are you suffering from the bla’s?” by lucy friedland, *bi women quarterly* ([1989](#))
- “the first national nz bisexual conference report” ([1990](#))
- *bisexuality: a reader and sourcebook* by thomas geller ([1990](#))
- *closer to home: bisexuality & feminism* edited by elizabeth reba weise ([1992](#))
- *bisexual centrist newsletter* ([1992](#))
- “a bisexual feminist perspective” by liz highleyman, *fifth estate* ([1993](#))
- *the very inside: an anthology of writings by asian & pacific islander lesbian and bisexual women* edited by sharon lim-hing ([1994](#))
- “bisexual liberation” by liz highleyman, *anarchy* ([1994](#))
- *bisexual politics: theories, queries, and visions* edited by naomi s. tucker ([1995](#))
- *bisexuality: the psychology and politics of an invisible minority* by beth a. firestein ([1996](#))
- “international confab draws 900 bisexuals” by liz highleyman, *bay area reporter* ([1998](#))
- *bisexuality: a critical reader* edited by merl storr ([1999](#))

some people who have publicly identified as both bisexual and pansexual are actors [sara ramirez](#) and [kirsten vangsness](#); activist [robyn ochs](#); comedian [joe lycett](#); journalist [liz highleyman](#); and musicians [demi lovato](#), [nicholas petricca](#), and [janelle mon  e](#).

is pansexuality transphobic?

nope! have individual pansexual people defined pansexuality in transphobic ways or just been transphobic in general? of course, **there are transphobic people of all sexualities**. those people don’t represent all pansexuals and their way of (mis)defining pansexuality **doesn’t actually represent pansexuality**.

pansexuality gaining popularity around the 1990s-2000s in response to transphobia as a way to be explicitly inclusive to and supportive of transgender people has been **discussed both in published works and by people who experienced it.**

[*the sage encyclopedia of lgbtq studies*](#) states pansexual “emerged” in the 1990s alongside pomosexuality “in an effort to further deconstruct ideas about sexual identity, desire, and activity” and that the trans community was at the forefront of it, “there was a strong desire from trans communities for a term that more accurately reflected both the desires of trans people and the desires of people who were attracted to both trans and cisgendered people.”

[“challenging the binary: sexual identity that is not duality”](#) also discusses pansexual and pomosexuality “emerging from the trans movement and trans people’s experiences.”

a non-binary trans person explained the two approaches to transphobia in [“cis privilege and identity policing in the bi and pan community”](#) stating, “pansexuality as an identity was originally formed for folks to specifically include recognizing attraction to non-binary people. bisexuality responded to allegations of transphobia by clarifying that the definition of bisexuality isn’t always limited to attraction to men and women.” it’s explained further that pansexual was a way to include non-binary people during a time when they were “even less widely recognized” and “much of the bi community defined itself as people who were attracted to men and women” but that not all of the bi movement was using that definition and how they too were actively challenging transphobia and exclusion.

bisexual activist shiri eisner touched on this topic twice, [once briefly stating](#), “bisexuality was largely defined and spoken about in binary and cissexist ways before pansexuality came into prominence. it course-corrected, but pansexuality was the source of that push.” and [then went further into it](#), explaining how claims that bisexuality had never been defined in binary ways is “ahistorical, disingenuous, and only serves to invalidate our case when arguing that bisexuality isn’t binary” and how up to the early-mid 2000s, one would be “hard pressed to find a nonbinary definition of bisexuality in bi writings.” support for trans and nonbinary people could be “found in the margins,” eisner added, and that the solidification of nonbinary definitions of bisexuality began in 2010s, “largely as a response to the criticism forwarded by pansexual communities” and that pansexuality “came into prominence *because* some people were alienated by bisexuality’s binary definitions.” eisner concludes, “we need to acknowledge our full history, as it took place in reality, without inventing indulgent myths whose only purpose is to rid ourselves of an imagined ‘taint.’”

tumblr user “intersex-ionality” [shared their personal experience](#) regarding pansexual becoming an identity label in the late '90s. they detail how there were two responses to the binary “corruption of bi”; reclaiming and redefining bisexual as nonbinary *and* making “something new, something that would be self defined rather than reclaimed from medical studies, and that would be clearer and more transparent even in its basic design.” according to them, that’s how pansexual “rose to prominence” and that this “political context is why it became a big deal rather than staying a niche concept.” they go on to explain “the old claim that ‘bi is transphobic’ is nonsense today, but that claim came from a very real historical problem. the pansexual identity spread as a way to try to combat that problem.”

“bigbunnyenergy” on twitter [shared their experience](#) with pansexual being adopted as a label, “back then, saying you were pan was a response to actual transphobia that was present in the bi community! discomfort identifying with a community that ostracized you isn’t bigoted, and we need to stop pretending it’s not a nuanced discussion deeply rooted in personal experience.”

twitter user “assistant2snout” [shared](#), “nb transwoman here that has identified as pan for 20+ years. the prevalence of pansexual was literally spearheaded by trans people because of their regular experiences of transphobia from bisexual peers during a time where being out even slightly was terrifying and dangerous. the label was helpful in making many trans people feel safer/understood and making it clear who was safe... you may not understand it now with how much transphobia in the bisexual community has been called out and amended at this point, but calling pan transphobic is both ahistorical and an affront to trans people everywhere that had to deal with some very hard and dark times. to say a label trans and nb people picked up and helped spread, to have something that feels clearer and safer for them, is transphobic only serves to rekindle a lot of fears again.”

“rainbowstarbird” on twitter [mirrored previous accounts of pansexual’s adoption as an identity label](#), “pansexuality as a term was largely created by nonbinary people. there’s nothing wrong with bisexuality. but just like any other community, it has a history of transphobia. the same amount that the rest of the queer community and culture at large have, but it is still a fact. we wanted a term that put nonbinary-ness (and yes, general trans acceptance) front and center. that conceptually, linguistically, and in practice prioritized our existence outside the binary. that’s where pansexuality came from. none of that implies that the bisexual community is inherently transphobic, or beyond saving, or w/e. but there was an important reason to create pansexuality.”

- ❖ note: if it wasn't already clear, none of this is to say or imply pansexuality is or ever was the only trans inclusive label or that every trans person felt excluded by other labels or identified as pansexual. the adoption of pansexuality in an effort to be explicitly trans inclusive during a time when queer spaces were often very binary and transphobic was simply *one choice some people made*.

plus, **many people are both pansexual and transgender and/or non-binary:**

here are some surveys/studies that show the commonality of being both pansexual and transgender/nonbinary:

- lgbt communities and substance use - what health has to do with it! [\(2003\)](#)
- the experiences of transgender youth in our nation's schools [\(2009\)](#)
- transgender people's experiences of domestic abuse in scotland [\(2010\)](#)
- exploring diversity of gender and sexual identities of transgender individuals [\(2011\)](#)
- research into sexual orientation and gender identity equality in adult learning [\(2011\)](#)
- first, do no harm [\(2012\)](#)
- pansexual identification in online communities [\(2013\)](#)
- from blues to rainbows [\(2014\)](#)
- supporting and caring for bisexual youth [\(2014\)](#)
- transgender and hiv: risks, prevention, and care [\(2014\)](#)
- trans needs assessment report [\(2014\)](#)
- an assessment of the health needs of the transgender community in montana [\(2015\)](#)
- the national school climate survey [\(2015\)](#)
- the report of the u.s. transgender survey [\(2015\)](#)
- toward a broader conceptualization of trans women's sexual health [\(2015\)](#)
- descriptions of sexual identity among bisexual, pansexual, and queer individuals [\(2016\)](#)
- how do lgbt youth in new york state talk about gender and sexual orientation? [\(2016\)](#)
- who adopts queer and pansexual sexual identities? [\(2016\)](#)
- face validity ratings of sexual orientation scales by sexual minority adults [\(2017\)](#)
- investigation of health risk patterns across sexual and gender minority identities [\(2017\)](#)
- meeting healthcare needs of transgender, nonbinary, and gender expansive youth [\(2017\)](#)
- national school climate survey [\(2017\)](#)

- perceptions of polyamory in canada [\(2017\)](#)
- sexual health among transgender people [\(2017\)](#)
- texas statewide lgbtq community needs assessment [\(2017\)](#)
- an analysis of fanfiction and its influence on sexual development [\(2018\)](#)
- the australian trans and gender diverse sexual health survey [\(2018\)](#)
- demographic comparison of american polyamorous and monogamous individuals [\(2018\)](#)
- family functioning and mental health of trans and gender-nonconforming youth [\(2018\)](#)
- gender-expansive youth report [\(2018\)](#)
- learning from the religious experiences of bi+ trans people [\(2018\)](#)
- maintaining dignity [\(2018\)](#)
- comparing pansexual and bisexual participants in a new zealand national sample [\(2019\)](#)
- differences in physical/mental health between trans and cis sexual minorities [\(2019\)](#)
- foreclosing fluidity at the intersection of gender and sexual normativities [\(2019\)](#)
- research everyday life of trans persons in slovenia [\(2019\)](#)
- suicidality disparities between transgender and cisgender adolescents [\(2019\)](#)
- affirming lgbtq+ youth identity and building community [\(2020\)](#)
- exploring the rainbow [\(2020\)](#)

so when you see a pansexual defining or explaining pansexuality as something along the lines of “attraction to men, women, and trans people” (which is obviously othering and transphobic), **they aren’t showcasing the supposed problematic nature of pansexuality, they are showcasing their own ignorance**, both about pansexuality and transgender identity. they don’t represent anyone other than themselves, just like a person of any other sexuality who explains their attraction in a transphobic way is not representative of their sexuality as a whole, just themselves.

is bisexual an umbrella term?

i prefer to say “bisexual **can be** an umbrella term,” instead of “bisexual **is** an umbrella term.”

a brief history of bisexual as an umbrella term:

the exact term “bisexual umbrella” has been in use for over a decade (the earliest use i could find is a [blog post from activist shiri eisner](#) in 2011, though the phrasing “[under the umbrella label of bisexual](#)” is used in 1992), however, bisexual had been thought of

and treated as an umbrella term long before then. [the bisexual community has a long history of embracing different ways of self-identifying as mspec people](#) and [hosting open and honest dialogues about the labels used within the community](#) since at least the 1970s.

[most organizations/groups, both general queer and bisexual specific](#), consider bisexual an umbrella term, and often add a plus sign to bisexual/bi to express that.

all that said, when it comes to bisexual as an umbrella term, everyone has their own view on it or way of using it, thus it's not black and white. it's actually a very layered topic.

some mspec people don't like or support the use of bisexual as an umbrella term due to feeling the identities that are supposed to be included are **often further shadowed**, or they don't want to be **categorized in a way they haven't chosen** or doesn't match how they feel about and express their own identity. there are also people who feel it leads to bisexual people **no longer having things that are specific to and just for them**.

while other mspec people do conceptualize their identity that way, and who maybe **need or want** it to be an umbrella term. some might not be able to find resources, community, groups, etc. for their identity, so **having the bisexual community open to them if they so choose is important**, and it can **aid in coming together as one community** on the basis of our shared experience despite (or maybe because of) our different labels.

all in all, the bisexual umbrella **should be an option for those who want or need it**, but **not a universal or required understanding of mspec identities**.

does the bisexual manifesto invalidate pansexuality?

absolutely not. there **isn't a single thing in it that supports any argument against pansexuality**. in fact, the bisexual manifesto, *anything that moves* (the magazine it was published in), and the bay area bisexual network (the group who published it) are **explicitly inclusive/supportive of pansexuality** and all mspec identities.

this is the portion of the bisexual manifesto that makes the rounds on various social media, often very popular among panphobes:

- “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 not mistake our fluidity for confusion,

irresponsibility, or an inability to commit. do not equate promiscuity, infidelity, or unsafe sexual behavior with bisexuality. those are human traits that cross all sexual orientations. nothing should be assumed about anyone's sexuality—including your own. we are angered by those who refuse to accept our existence; our issues; our contributions; our alliances; our voices. it is time for the bisexual voice to be heard." ([bisexual manifesto, 1991](#))

none of that says anything about pansexuality nor proves any panphobic argument.

people zero in on "do not assume that bisexuality is binary" and "don't assume that there are only two genders" as meaning that bisexuality was never defined as "attraction to men and women" (because they think pansexuality was created out of the misconception that bisexuality didn't include nonbinary genders), but this is a **misunderstanding** of what "binary" in this context means.

the rest of the sentence, "or duogamous in nature: that we have 'two' sides or that we must be involved simultaneously with both genders to be fulfilled human beings" makes it clear that "**binary**" here means "**consists of two parts,**" not "**only inclusive of men and women.**"

people also argue that the bisexual manifesto defines bisexuality once and for all, some say as "attraction to all genders," some "attraction to two or more genders," and others "attraction regardless of gender." but **the bisexual manifesto does not provide a single definition of bisexuality.** it explicitly rejects that idea, as stated in **the rest of the text** shown below:

- "about our name... our choice to use this title for the magazine has been nothing less than controversial. that we would choose to re-define the stereotype that 'bisexuals will fuck anything that moves,' to suit our own purposes has created myriad reactions. those critical of the title feel we are purporting the stereotype and damaging our image. those in favor of its use see it as a movement away from the stereotype, toward bisexual empowerment. we deliberately chose the radical approach. we are creating dialogue through controversy. we are challenging people to face their own external and internal biphobia. we are demanding attention, and are re-defining 'anything that moves' on our terms.

read our lips: we will write or print or say anything that moves us beyond the limiting stereotypes that are displaced onto us. this magazine was created by bisexuals and their friends. all proceeds are invested into its production and the bisexual community. it is published by the bay area bisexual network and reflects the integrity and inclusive nature of the babn statement of purpose. atm was created out of pride; out of necessity; out of anger. we are tired of being analyzed,

defined and represented by people other than ourselves—or worse yet, not considered at all. we are frustrated by the imposed isolation and invisibility that comes from being told or expected to choose either a homosexual or heterosexual identity. monosexuality is a heterosexist dictate used to oppress homosexuals and to negate the validity of bisexuality.

we are angered by those who refuse to accept our existence; our issues; our contributions; our alliances; our voices. it is time for the bisexual voice to be heard. do not expect each magazine to be representative of all bisexuals, for our diversity is too vast. do not expect a clear-cut definition of bisexuality to jump out from the pages. we bisexuals tend to define bisexuality in ways that are unique to our own individuality. there are as many definitions of bisexuality as there are bisexuals. many of us choose not to label ourselves anything at all, and find the word 'bisexual' to be inadequate and too limiting. do not assume that the opinions expressed are shared by all bisexuals, by those actively involved in the bisexual movement, by the atm staff, or the babn board of directors. what you can expect is a magazine that, through its inclusive and diverse nature, creates movement away from external and internal limitations. this magazine is about anything that moves: that moves us to think, that moves us to fuck (or not); that moves us to feel; that moves us to believe in ourselves—to do it for ourselves!

about babn...the bay area bisexual network is an alliance of bisexual and bi-supportive groups, individuals, and resources in the san francisco bay area. babn is coalescing the bisexual community and creating a movement for acceptance and support of human diversity by coordinating forums, social events, opportunities, and resources. we support relationships among people regardless of gender, which can include relating intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, sensually, and sexually. we support celibacy, monogamy, and non-monogamy as equally valid lifestyle choices. we support open expression of affection and touch among people without such expression necessarily having sexual implications. the babn is by nature educational in that we are supporting the rights of all women and men to develop as whole being without oppression due to age, race, religion, color, class or different abilities, nor because of sexual preference, gender identity, gender preference and/or responsible consensual sexual behavior preferences. we also support acceptance in employment, housing, healthcare, and education. this includes access to complete sexual information, free expression of responsible consensual sexual activity, and other freedoms. membership is open to all bi-positive people whether or not they consider themselves bisexual.”
([bisexual manifesto, 1991](#))

notes on the bisexual manifesto:

- ❖ the bisexual manifesto published in *anything that moves: beyond the myths of bisexuality* was the magazine's "about" page before it ever became known as the "bisexual manifesto"
- ❖ according to my research, it became known as such over two decades after its publication, when [bialogue shared a portion of it on tumblr dubbing it the bisexual manifesto in 2012](#)
- ❖ google and twitter results for "bisexual manifesto" didn't pick up until 2018, coinciding with when fighting over the bisexual and pansexual labels became heated
- ❖ there isn't just one bisexual manifesto; there are two in the [1988 book *bisexual lives*](#) and one in the [2005 book *getting bi: voices of bisexuals around the world*](#), so don't be fooled into believing calling a text a "manifesto" makes it more unique or important than others.
- ❖ the bay area bisexual network, the group who published the bisexual manifesto, has since [changed their name to the bay area bi+ & pan network](#)
- ❖ you can [read each issue of *anything that moves* in full here](#)

lastly, some quotes from *anything that moves* that support pansexuality/other mspec identities:

- "the women in *closer to home* give themselves many names. bi-dyke, bi-lesbian, lesbian-identified bisexual, bi-affectional, lesbian, and formally-lesbian bisexual. anything but straight. as margaret mihee chloe points out in her essay, 'identity is that which makes one recognizable to self and other.' the plurality of names, and the combinations used, are all attempts in our clumsy and woman-wordless language, to create this identity, to make ourselves recognizable." ([anything that moves, 1992](#))
- "i prefer pansexual." ([anything that moves, 1992](#))
- "our liberation struggle, in a community that comprises a vast breadth of people and issues - transgender, bi/pan-sexual, lesbian and gay - is deeply linked to other liberation struggles, which are all struggles to respect each person as a whole person, to not allow anyone to be used as a tool against their will. our difference are our riches, and our similarities make community." ([anything that moves, 1995](#))
- "call for submissions: *anything that moves* welcomes unsolicited manuscripts, photographs, and illustrations. *atm* is particularly interested in work by bi/pan/or-similar-sexuals, people of color, transgender- or transsexual-identified, those who are differently abled, and those challenged by aids or hiv, as well as material not previously published and/or from new or unpublished writers." ([anything that moves, 1996](#))

- “whether you call yourself bisexual, polysexual, multisexual, pansexual, me-sexual or refuse to be labeled altogether, if you are like me and find people attractive regardless of their sex or gender, then we need you. and why, for heaven’s sake, should we poly-pervse people limit ourselves to one label anyway? be a polysexual bisexual. be a bi-dyke or a bi-gay or a bi-androgyne or a bi-anything-that-moves-you.” ([anything that moves, 1999](#))

is it ableist to use “panphobia” to mean pansexual-hate?

emphatically no. in recent years, people started accusing pansexuals of ableism for using the term panphobia for pansexual hatred/erasure/invalidation, claiming it’s a medical disorder. the only source i’ve seen provided from those making the accusation is the literal first thing on google when you search panphobia, which is a [wikia page with no sources](#).

the wikia page lists all the phobias that woody allen has to back the claim that he has panphobia, but **that’s not what panphobia in this context even means**; when it was used in this way, it was a phobia of its own, not a term for having a lot of specific phobias. it also links to [wikipedia](#), which states “**panphobia is not registered as a type of phobia in medical references**” and “pantophobia may actually be considered the more accurate name to describe the non-specificity associated with a fear of all.” **the one “source” for this claim doesn’t even support the argument.** this is a recurring theme with panphobes.

if you want the long story short, “panphobia” is one of many outdated terms for what is now known as generalized anxiety disorder and panic disorder.

if you want the full story, complete with a history lesson and sources, keep reading!

let’s dive into the history of the fear of everything, shall we? the fear of everything has had many terms throughout history, such as panophobia, pantophobia, panaphobia, pantaphobia, panphobia, neurasthenia, anxiety neurosis, generalized anxiety disorder, and panic disorder. pantophobia, pantaphobia, and panaphobia were the more commonly used medical terms until the early 20th century. panophobia and panphobia were also used, but less so and argued to be not as accurate as others. they were first employed by fifth century physician caelius aurelianus, [“alluding to patients who supposedly were afraid of everything.”](#)

nosologie methodique vol. 7 (1772) divided mental disorders into four orders. panophobia was in [“morositates”](#) and was the main disorder dealing with anxiety. there were [subtypes](#)

of panophobia, one similar to generalized anxiety disorder, which included avoidance, pain, and tension due to extreme worry. *the physiognomy of mental diseases* (1840) defined panaphobia as a “dread of everything” or “vague and undefined terror.” a portrait was captioned, “a female, in whom delusive fear of every object and person, panaphobia, keeps her in a state of perpetual distress.”

the psychology of the emotions (1897) defined “panphobia, or pantophobia” as a “vague but permanent state of anxiety or terror. a state in which the patient fears everything or nothing, where anxiety floats as in a dream, and only becomes fixed for an instant at a time.” in 1917, devaux and logre argued that pantophobia is a more accurate term than panophobia, as the latter could refer to the worshipping of the god pan.

the popular former diagnostic term “neurasthenia” included most symptoms of anxiety. a practical treatise on neurasthenia (1905) stated “pantophobia/fear of everything” is a common symptom of “neurasthenia/nervous exhaustion.” “anxiety neurosis” was a criticized effort to detach a particular syndrome from “neurasthenia.” including symptoms such as irritability, anxious expectation, anxiety attacks, and phobias, it was the precursor to generalized anxiety disorder and panic disorder.

in *dsm-i* (1952), “anxiety reaction” was characterized by “anxious expectation and frequently associated with somatic symptomatology,” differentiated from normal apprehensiveness/fear. it was diagnosed when anxiety was diffuse and not restricted to definite situations or objects. in *dsm-ii* (1968), the diagnostic category “anxiety neurosis” was characterized by “anxious over-concern extending to panic and frequently associated with somatic symptoms.” and in *dsm-iii* (1980), “anxiety neurosis” was split into generalized anxiety disorder and panic disorder.

panphobia is an outdated term for gad/pd. even when it was used, it was seldom used because there were several similar terms determined more accurate, all of which were replaced and eventually evolved into gad/pd. the claim of ableism due to using the term panphobia is as weak and poorly researched as every other argument made against pansexuality and pansexuals. that’s what happens when people prioritize panphobia over being factually, historically correct.

lastly, words can mean more than one thing. even if panphobia was still used as a medical term, that wouldn’t mean it couldn’t be used for pansexual hatred/erasure/invalidation, too. also, using “phobia” in the context of bigotry has been criticized due to ableism for at least a decade. if the people arguing against panphobia truly cared about ableism, they wouldn’t only be arguing against panphobia, nor would they be ignoring all the people with gad/pd addressing this.

what does freud have to do with pansexuality?

nothing. his theory about human behavior being driven by sexual instincts, which was called “pansexualism” is not related to pansexuality, the human sexuality we use today. they are fundamentally different things.

it’s **inherently queerphobic** to insist that an outdated (and heavily criticized even in its time) **theory for treating mental disorders** is in any way related to a **very real, very natural human sexuality**. bringing up freud in relation to pansexuality at this point is just not done in good faith.

did pansexuality “give us conversion therapy”?

a little background: in 2021, ian lawrence-tourinho ([founder of bisexual organization bi.org](#) and [online publication queer majority](#), [head of bisexual network ambi](#), [executive director of bisexual organization the american institute of bisexuality](#), and [chair of bisexual steering committee of the network ilga world](#)) tweeted denying the pansexuality of david rose from schitt’s creek (which is a whole other can of worms i [discuss in detail elsewhere](#)) and added [“bisexuality has meant the same thing since 1892. pansexuality gave us conversion therapy.”](#)

rio veradonir ([assistant director of the american institute of bisexuality, creator/editor in chief of queer majority, and a producer at bi.org and ambi](#)) issued a [statement](#), saying bisexual had a scientific origin in 1892, claiming austrian neurologist sigmund freud derailed “born that way” progress by creating the belief that gayness is an illness to be cured (which he contradicts by stating conversion therapy existed prior and freud just spread it into “medical and academic settings”), and using pansexualism interchangeably with pansexual and pansexuality (most notably “pansexuality further pathologized non-heterosexuality and represented a major setback for lgbt human rights”), among other offensive, ignorant, and baseless things.

so, is there any truth to that? in short, **absolutely fucking not.**

the 1892 coining of bisexual is by [american psychiatrist charles gilbert chaddock](#) when translating *psychopathia sexualis* by [richard von krafft-ebing](#), a german psychiatrist who believed in curing gayness and influenced freud (as did australian physiologist eugen steinach, who [tried to cure gayness with testicle transplantation experiments in the 1920s](#)). rio contrasted pansexual being medically stigmatized “from its beginning” against other labels being “coined by lgbt pioneers,” but this is simply not true. you can’t remove the context just because you want to cling to the definition, which [isn’t even the definition widely used today](#).

furthermore, german psychiatrist albert von schrenck-notzing is said to be the [first to claim turning a gay man straight](#) in 1899, over a decade before freud supposedly created the medical belief of curing gayness. conversion therapy can be traced back medically to the [late nineteenth century and doctors were already realizing their methods weren't working by 1913](#). edmund bergler, an american psychoanalyst outspoken about curing gayness, was considered the [“most important analytic theorist of homosexuality in the 1950s”](#), the same decade homosexuality was [classified in the dsm-i as a “sociopathic personality disturbance,” often justified with a later study by irving bieber](#), who is considered one of the [most influential and prominent american psychoanalysts who believed gayness could be cured](#).

in 1935 freud said he [didn't view homosexuality as a curable illness](#); his theories were [widely misappropriated after his death](#); and conversion therapy was [most entrenched in the decades between his death and stonewall](#). by the 1970s, conversion therapy was broadly discredited in the medical community and homosexuality was removed from the dsm-i (which had [greater repercussions](#)), then [“faith-based groups took over the practice.”](#)

nowhere is there even an inkling of backing to the claim that pansexuality was the advent of conversion therapy, not that one should have expected some kind of historical proof, as the people making and defending this claim have contradicted it many times even as they're doubling down on it. “pansexuality gave us conversion therapy” is just a vile, egregious, desperate, baseless attempt at denigrating pansexuality by self-important, pretentious, queerphobic, bigoted people who wish to enforce a uniform, outdated scientific approach to queerness.

is the pansexual flag/its creator problematic?

absolutely not.

in 2010, upon identifying as pansexual and not liking any of the proposed pan pride flags, [jasper decided to create their own](#), one that was aesthetically pleasing to “plaster” on their blog. they “didn't expect it to take off” but it did and is now used and known well beyond their *tumblr*. **pink and blue were chosen to represent women and men, because of their “gendered traditions,” and yellow was chosen to represent nonbinary folks, as it's a “generally non-gendered colour.”** any claims of the meanings of the pansexual flag being transphobic or othering trans people are simply not true (the [transgender flag](#) also uses pink and blue for their gendered traditions). the flag was **created for everyone “for whom pan is part of their identity.”** including but not limited to panromantics, pansexuals, pangender people, questioning folks, those who use the

split attraction model or multiple labels, pan lesbians, pan gays, and anyone else who “uses pan alongside other niche, micro, or custom labels.”

the first attempt to replace the pansexual flag happened in 2020, a small group of people started [spreading around a “new” pansexual flag](#) (a six stripe version of the pansexual flag with two different shades of each color) out of the belief that the pansexual flag is transphobic, due to a random jpg of the pansexual flag with inaccurate, transphobic meanings attributed to the stripes. jasper didn’t create the jpg, nor are those meanings what they created the pansexual flag to mean. jasper also is not cis and throughout all of this they were called transphobic and misgendered. even after the group of people who created the “new” flag admitted that they were wrong, they still promoted their “new” flag. if the entire reason for the flag being created isn’t actually true, what purpose does the flag then serve?

a second attempt happened later in 2020, jasper expressed support for bisexual lesbians and queerphobic people used that as a reason to spread around this “new” flag, [as well as others](#). the most popular among the “new” pansexual flags is a three stripe version of this [six stripe green, orange, pink flag](#).

- ❖ mspec lesbian/gay are harmless identities that have existed peacefully in the queer community for decades. i have a post [explaining what the identities mean and why someone might use them](#), as well as an [article detailing the history of the terms](#), dating back to the 1950s. not knowing the history of this identity or understanding why someone might identify with it does not make it harmful. one person’s self-identification does not and cannot harm or diminish someone else’s.

a third round of “cancel the pansexual flag and its creator” came after that, still in 2020. this time jasper was accused of stealing the pansexual flag from a defunct indian kingdom of cochin. this is laughably false, as the kingdom’s flag is no longer in use and wasn’t even the same as the pansexual flag (red and pink aren’t the same color, y’all). (and anyways, pink, yellow, blue is a common set of colors, did pansexuals steal from ink cartridges, too? no one owns a sequence of colors.) any similarities between the flags is entirely coincidental, [jasper didn’t even know about it until the claims started](#). how can you steal something you didn’t even know was a thing? panphobes completely pulled this out of thin air, not out of care or concern about theft or an indian kingdom, but out of desire to slander pansexuality and pansexuals; as shown in them [vandalizing wiki pages](#) and being [gleeful to say pansexuality is “cultural appropriation.”](#)

early 2021 saw a fourth attempt to slander jasper and replace the pansexual flag. every year there is “discourse” about whether or not kink belongs at pride and that year [jasper](#)

[tweeted in support of kink at pride](#), and people who take issue with that saw it as an opportunity to renew the campaigns to replace the pansexual flag. this led to people vandalizing the pansexual flag wikipedia page to the point where cleaning it up resulted in the erasure of pansexual history; [mentions of the pansexual flag's creation/origin were removed](#).

- ❖ it's important to know what is actually being referred to when we say kink belongs at pride. [we're talking about communities who have always been a part of pride, that have played important roles in queer history](#). the assumption that we are advocating for public sex, sexual harassment, or sexual assault shows exactly what kind of people this "discourse" comes from and how easily people buy into homophobic "think of the children" narratives that presume queer people are sexual predators.
- ❖ it's also important to remember that there isn't one singular pride event. there are many, all over the place, and they're all different. they could be family friendly, focused around kids/teens, alcohol free, kink inclusive/focused, allow nudity/near nudity, 18+, have alcohol, daytime events, nighttime events, and so on and so forth. not every pride event is for everyone. research to find out what a pride event is like/includes/allows to make an informed decision about whether or not you'd be okay to go to it.
- ❖ a lot of the arguments people make are hypocritical (not wanting kids to see near nudity or anything sexually suggestive, but having no criticism of beaches, musical festivals, or pda in general) and recycled homophobia ("think of the children," "i support you, i just don't want to see it," and "keep it in the bedroom, i don't need to know about your sex life" sound a little familiar, don't they?).

when was "pannie" coined and is it related to the t slur?

the earliest known use of "pannie" to negatively reference pansexual people is from **2001, and it was used derogatorily in the same breath as the t slur**. claims that it was coined in recent years completely independent from the t slur are not true. (not to mention the very clear mimicking of the t slur and all the transgender people who have expressed discomfort with it.)

a little background on this use of "pannie" in a [2001 issue of the advocate](#):

(warning for uncensored transphobic slur as quoted from the article)

the article is about how being a lesbian is no longer "hip" or accepted within the community. the author is upset about how lesbians aren't cared for in the way they care

for others, but the author uses that as an excuse to take shots at others. they recount a conference they spoke at, and when the crowd was cheering for transgender films and pansexual filmmakers, they explained, “unity was our theme! still, as talk of trannies and pannies excited the crowd, i felt compelled to interject a warning against the fashionable labels that seem to imply our old ways of being are just passé,” so they told the crowd, “welcome to the newcomers, but don’t forget those of us who are still proud to be dykes.”

you can’t promote unity by calling people slurs, warning against different identities, reducing those identities to a trend, assuming those identities threaten or look down on your identity simply by existing, referring to visibility and representation for other queer people a “storm cloud darkening” your visibility and representation, and dismissing transgender and pansexual people as “newcomers.”

what are panphobic dogwhistles?

first, a **dogwhistle** is a way of expressing a **controversial or offensive opinion or belief subtly or disguised** enough that it **doesn’t appear so** and therefore **does not attract a negative response**. a **panphobic dogwhistle** is a way of expressing **panphobia that doesn’t appear blatantly panphobic**.

saying a statement is a panphobic dogwhistle is letting people know that it’s used often enough by panphobes to indicate or imply panphobia, so they should be aware and check to be safe. it is not claiming those statements in and of themselves are inherently panphobic or that everyone who says/shares them are panphobes. remember, the whole point of a dogwhistle is its intentions are masked, it is not blatant or obvious or inherent.

a **dogwhistle** is a statement **coded to garner support from a particular group of people through specific language they’re familiar with but is seemingly innocuous to others**. the goal is to **convey a message without provoking opposition from those outside the intended audience**. a **panphobic dogwhistle** is panphobia intended to fly under the radar of everyone, including pansexuals, except panphobes.

when discussing panphobic dogwhistles, the response is often *“that’s not inherently panphobic”* or *“so now anyone who says that is panphobic?”* or *“why don’t you use an example that’s more blatantly panphobic so people don’t get upset.”* however, **referring to something as a panphobic dogwhistle is not saying it’s inherently panphobic**, just because someone shared a panphobic dogwhistle **doesn’t automatically make them panphobic**, and the **panphobia not being blatant is the point** of a panphobic dogwhistle.

with the basics covered, let's break down some examples.

1. "you can identify as pansexual, if..." "i support you being pansexual, but..."

the "if..." is often followed by "you accept that differentiating bisexual and pansexual is inherently biphobic/transphobic" or "you accept that pansexual originated in biphobia/transphobia," which are not true. the "but..." tends to be followed by "don't be biphobic/transphobic," wrongly supposing pansexuals are more likely to be biphobic/transphobic and need to be told not to be.

these statements create hoops for pansexuals to jump through, usually our acceptance of panphobia, for support and respect. but support and respect contingent on us suppressing our understanding of our identity and disregarding our history in favor of internalizing and regurgitating panphobia isn't support or respect.

2. using scare quotes around pansexual

this one might be a little obvious, due to queer people often criticizing the use of scare quotes. putting pansexual in quotes when it isn't necessary is a way of disrespecting the legitimacy of pansexuality, a way of casting doubt or judgment on it, especially if pansexual is the only one in scare quotes.

3. "analyze why you're uncomfortable being associated with bisexuals"

this is less about challenging biphobia and more about portraying pansexual people as inherently biphobic. not wanting to be called bisexual isn't about not wanting to be associated with bisexuals, it's about wanting our identity to be recognized and respected for what it is and how we understand and label it.

the "association" here is never actually association. the association between pansexual and bisexual isn't the issue. the issue is pansexual people being vilified and portrayed as biphobic for criticizing the erasure of our identity, which we're told isn't worth acknowledging or respecting.

4. "behaviorally/scientifically bisexual"

this is common among academics/researchers who categorize people based on things they think are innate, universal indicators of bisexuality. it's a workaround to respecting pansexual (and other non-bisexual mspec) people's self-identification that hides identity policing and erasure behind "science."

conversely, researchers have said the issue in determining who is “actually bisexual” is that [“individuals determine this for themselves.”](#) in other words, there aren’t innate or universal indicators, we simply are who we say we are.

5. “new labels damage the community. validity/feelings don’t matter. usefulness, material differences, and political purposes matter”

this targets all labels beyond lgbt. we don’t owe our self-identification to anyone, nor do we have to use it as a calculated political strategy. labels are “useful” if they help someone understand and communicate their queerness in a way that makes sense and is authentic to them. queer folks [playing with language](#) to express themselves how they see fit, be it [queer men](#), [bisexual people](#), or [transgender folks](#), is not new nor is it damaging.

what’s actually damaging is creating an environment where any difference in identity, language, and expression or rebellion against norms, status quo, and rules is met with hostility, fostering fear and distrust of the people who are supposed to support and nurture that kind of self-discovery and expression.

6. “all pansexuals are bisexual, but not all bisexuals are pansexual”

people think this is a nice, easy way of explaining bisexual and pansexual, borrowing from “all squares are rectangles, but not all rectangles are squares.” only problem is queerness isn’t geometry and labels don’t work like that. labels are chosen by us, not for us. the only pansexuals who are bisexual are the ones who also identify as bisexual.

7. “when a character ‘just likes people’ or is ‘attracted to all genders’ or ‘attracted regardless of gender’ they aren’t automatically pansexual and not bisexual”

i’ve actually seen this from panphobes who are literally just mad at pansexual interpretations. to argue a pansexual interpretation of the definitions and a common explanation of pansexual must be because of a misunderstanding of what bisexual can mean is a false, bad faith assumption to fuel the narrative that pansexuals are inherently biphobic. thinking a character is pansexual doesn’t mean thinking they can’t be bisexual. not to mention, it’s much more common for people to treat mspec characters as automatically bisexual to the actual exclusion or erasure of other mspec identities.

8. “all genders/regardless of gender has always been the definition of bisexual”

pansexual and bisexual share some definitions, currently and historically, because they come from the same community of people who have shared experiences and language, but this statement is common among panphobes to express the counterfactual idea that pansexuals stole “the” bisexual definition and/or isn’t necessary because “bisexual already meant that.”

this is [erasure of bisexual history](#) and [people who do not relate to those definitions](#). there has [never been one “true” definition](#) of bisexual ([“there are as many definitions of bisexual as there are bisexuals”](#) is a [common sentiment](#) throughout [bisexual history](#)) and “more than one” and “two or more” tend to be [the most common definitions, both activism- and community-wise](#).

9. “bisexual has always included trans/nonbinary people”

the message this often hides is “pansexual was created because biphobes thought bisexual didn’t include trans/nonbinary people, but it did, so pansexual doesn’t need to exist.” that is not the [origin of pansexual](#). pansexual was used [within the bisexual community](#) for decades before it gained more popular use and was unfortunately and inaccurately attributed transphobic and biphobic meanings that most pansexuals don’t ascribe to and most non-pansexuals don’t spread.

10. “these labels broadly overlap but the distinction matters to some and that’s okay”

i’ve seen this shared endlessly in response to questions about what mspec labels (such as bisexual, pansexual, polysexual, and omnisexual) mean and how they differ, in place of accurate and helpful information. what good is it to say the distinction matters while not saying what that distinction is? when used this way, it encourages ignorance and discourages dialogue about mspec labels.

11. “people identify as pansexual due to internalized biphobia”

this writes pansexual off as a product of biphobia. however, pansexual is a longstanding legitimate way of self-identification. a person who is actually bisexual and identifying as pansexual due to internalized biphobia has nothing to do with pansexuals. people struggling with internalized queerphobia shouldn’t be used to throw other queer people under the bus.

and let's not forget, [“many people who are sexual with both men and women, yet not bi-identified, do not seem to be plagued with internalized biphobia or an unsupportive environment.”](#)

12. “bisexual is an umbrella term that includes pansexual”

the bisexual umbrella was once (and sometimes still is) [genuine inclusion of all mspec people](#). however, it's quite common to see “bi+” content that has nothing to do with any other mspec people. it's often a meaningless, performative gesture, but because activists and organizations use it, most people don't think to ever question it. panphobes also cling to this as a way of saying pansexual is the same as, a subset of, or covered by bisexual and doesn't need its own, specific visibility, representation, or acknowledgment.

13. “pansexuals need to let bisexuals have something and stop making everything about themselves”

seems like an understandable request for pansexuals to not be like “well what about us?” when bisexuals are doing something, but when said by panphobes, they aren't advocating for bisexual visibility and community. they're maliciously and ahistorically advocating for pansexual exclusion. we aren't [“invading”](#) or [“derailing”](#) anything by being in [spaces we've always been in](#), or by engaging with bisexual content.

14. “read the bisexual manifesto”

a lot of the time, people say this because they think the bisexual manifesto supports panphobia. they claim it states the “true” definition of bisexual and proves pansexual is unnecessary and biphobic. however, [the full text](#) explicitly states there isn't one true definition of bisexual and [the magazine](#) it was [published](#) in [explicitly supports all mspec people](#) and [identities](#).

as an aside, people who treat the bisexual manifesto as a sacred bisexual text that is all anyone needs to read [should broaden their reading](#).

15. “bisexuals and pansexuals need to stop fighting, both are valid”

this statement wrongly implies the “fighting” is equal. there are very popular bisexual accounts that are dedicated to or share panphobia, [“battleaxe bi” was coopted for panphobia](#), [major bisexual organizations spread panphobia](#), [bisexual authors/activists are supported despite their panphobia](#), and [researchers subsume pansexual data into](#)

[bisexual data](#). biphobia from pansexual people just isn't on the same scale. this isn't disregarding or downplaying biphobia from pansexuals. this is stressing the importance of acknowledging the reality, severity, and disparity of the situation. erasing that by saying or implying it's just a silly mutual argument about which word is better is disingenuous at best and malicious misrepresentation and gaslighting at worst.

now that i've explained and given examples of panphobic dogwhistles, i hope you will be encouraged to think a bit deeper about the things people say and the possible intent behind them before sharing, or at the very least, listen to pansexuals when we talk about panphobia instead of fighting us on it.

(and if you're still doubting any of these being actual dogwhistles: on multiple occasions, i have actually seen panphobes admitting to these unsaid meanings and laughing at pansexuals and non-panphobes for sharing dogwhistle posts not knowing the true intent. they've gone as far as claiming unknowingly sharing panphobic dogwhistles means that deep down we agree with their panphobia. which makes zero sense, but panphobes aren't known for their sense.)

when are pan pride/visibility dates?

- pan visibility day is may 24th
- pan pride day is december 8th
- [pan week](#) is december 6-12th
- pansexual pride day during pride month is june 5th
- panromantic pride day during pride month is june 29th