



# BI+ CENSORSHIP IN THE NEWS





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Cover photo: 2023 Pride in the Park in  
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## Acknowledgements

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## About Rewrite the BiLine

*Rewrite the BiLine is a social enterprise, which aims to rewrite the narrative on bi+ people and nontraditional families in film, television, and the media through script-to-screen consulting, public education, and investment in bi+ voices in order to create lasting social and political change. Learn more at [www.rewritethebiline.com](http://www.rewritethebiline.com).*

## I. Introduction

“There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with lit matches,” wrote Ray Bradbury in the Coda to the 1979 edition of his classic novel, *Fahrenheit 451*. In the wake of discriminatory book bans instituted across the country—largely targeting stories about LGBTQ+ issues and race—it is time we ask ourselves, what other ways are we burning stories?

For one, we are largely leaving bi+ people, particularly bi+ people of color, out of the narrative.

This inaugural Bi+ Censorship in the News report explores the visibility of bi+ people and bi+ issues over the last three decades in print news, the way bi+ people have been depicted, and to what extent bi+ people have been given a platform to tell their own stories. Unfortunately, our findings show that print newspapers underreport on bi+ issues; and although media representation of bi+ people is becoming less negative and more accurate, media representation of bi+ people continues to be biased, perpetuate harmful stereotypes, and not reflect the lived experience of bi+ people.

We hope this report inspires journalists, news editors, reporters, scholars, and advocates to challenge the myths that reflect and shape common prejudices about bi+ people and include the perspectives of bi+ people in more articles.

## II. Methodology

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) issued a resolution in 1973 stating that homosexuality was no longer considered a mental illness, but it was not until 1992 that the World Health Organization (WHO) removed homosexuality from the International Classification of Diseases. The declassification of homosexuality as a mental illness by the APA and WHO were necessary steps toward eliminating negative stigma surrounding LGBTQ+ identities. However, the coverage of LGBTQ+ people and issues in the news reveals continued widespread bias.

This report focuses on coverage of bi+ people and bi+ issues in print news over the past 30 years, since the declassification of homosexuality as a mental illness. This report defines bisexual, or bi+, as “the potential to be attracted — romantically and/or sexually — to people of more than one gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree.”<sup>1</sup>

The “bi” in bisexual refers to genders the same as and different from one’s own gender. Bi does not mean attraction to men and women. This report uses the term “bi+” rather than “bisexual” when referring to sexual identity because terms such as “bisexuality” and “homosexuality” are scientific terms that describe sexual orientation and have been weaponized against LGBTQ+ people by anti-LGBTQ+ extremists.<sup>2</sup> Bi+ is intended to be inclusive of those who call themselves bi, pan, omnisexual, plurisexual, fluid, queer and other words that describe people who have the potential to be attracted to more than one gender.<sup>3</sup>



We began by conducting quantitative analysis of the manifest content of 45 major national and international print newspapers through ProQuest as well as more than 2,300 major U.S. local, regional, and national newspapers through Gale OneFile:News between January 1993 and May 2023. We then conducted an inductive qualitative content analysis of print news coverage in the last decade to determine the depth of coverage (whether bi+ issues are tangential or central to each article) and the visibility of the coverage (whether bi+ issues are in top newspapers and/or on front pages). Of the articles where bisexuality was the central focus, we categorized the articles based on the subject-matter to establish the various ways bi+ people and bi+ issues were covered in the news.

This report is not a comprehensive examination of all newspaper articles. While the report primarily focuses on the numbers and percentages associated with print news media reporting on bi+ people and issues, it is just the beginning of the story.

***Although bi+ people make up approximately 60% of the LGBTQ+ community, only 6.67% of LGBTQ+ news coverage is of bi+ people and issues.***

CHRISTINA FIALHO

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### III. Literature Review

#### A. Media shapes public opinion.

The way in which people and issues are covered in the news shapes public debate.<sup>4</sup> In fact, there is a relationship between negative coverage of people from a particular group and a hardening of attitudes towards members of that group.<sup>5</sup> Media portrayals and practices create barriers to inclusion for diverse groups and normalize existing patterns of discrimination.<sup>6</sup> This is a particularly critical point for bi+ people who face stigma, prejudice, and discrimination regarding their sexual identity from both straight individuals as well as LGBTQ+ individuals. While opinions toward bi+ people are improving, a 2002 study on social attitudes about a wide range of different groups found that only injection drug users were seen in a worse light than bi+ people.<sup>7</sup> More recently, a 2013 Pew Study found LGBT Americans perceive bisexuality to be the least accepted sexual orientation, although bisexual women tend to fare far better than bisexual men.<sup>8</sup>

On the flip side, media also has the potential to constructively contribute to group identities and intergroup dynamics in society.<sup>9</sup> For instance, a 2014 study found that internet-based new media are increasingly utilized by LGBTQ+ youth, and internet-based new media enabled research participants to access resources, explore identity, find likeness, and digitally engage in coming out.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, a 2011 study found that increasing the availability of GLB role models in the media may positively influence GLB identity.<sup>11</sup>

## **B. Bi+ characters are left behind in film & television.**

To date, most studies on bi+ people or bi+ issues in the media have focused on representation in film and television. Researchers found that there are only 409 LGBTQ+ speaking characters across 900 of the top grossing films of the last decade (2014 to 2022). This correlates to only 1.1 percent of all the speaking characters. Of these 409 LGBTQ+ speaking characters, only 55 of them are bi+. <sup>12</sup>

Similarly, in its 2022-2023 Where We Are on TV annual report, <sup>13</sup> GLAAD counted 596 regular and recurring LGBTQ+ characters across broadcast, cable and streaming. This was a decrease of 6.44 percent from the previous year's 637 LGBTQ+ characters. Bi+ characters made up only 25 percent (149 characters), a decrease of four percent from the previous year and far below the actual population of bi+ people. These characters included 104 bi+ women, 39 bi+ men, and six bi+ nonbinary characters.

Unfortunately, representations of bi+ people in the media are infrequent, and those that are available too often follow inaccurate stereotypes. <sup>14</sup> "When bisexuality is portrayed in media it is most commonly portrayed in a disingenuous manner where the bisexual is portrayed as being torn between potential lovers, on a pathway from straight to gay, or as a serial liar and cheater who cannot remain monogamous due to overwhelming attractions." <sup>15</sup>

## **C. More research into bi+ representation in the news is needed.**

To the best of our knowledge, we found no prior broad and in-depth studies on how bi+

people and bi+ issues have been covered in the news.

Traditional media representations of queerness have tended to homogenize LGBTQ+ identities. For example, the predominant depictions of queer sexuality are biased towards whiteness, thus conflating whiteness with queerness. <sup>16</sup> One researcher argues that even *The Advocate*, a leading news magazine for the LGBTQ+ community, "deliberately attempted to produce a largely normative LGBT minority in the interests of achieving mainstream acceptance of homosexuals," and that the magazine has "struggled to maintain an essentialist and binary view of gender and sexuality, even at the cost of disenfranchising part of its audience." <sup>17</sup> However, *The Advocate* may not be an outlier.

A 2018 *Daily Beast* article, <sup>18</sup> which provided a "cursory glance" at mainstream news coverage of bi+ people and issues, found that "the media has continued to erase bisexual people on the mere level of terminology and journalistic style." Several newspapers use the phrase "gay rights" when discussing battles affecting the entire LGBTQ+ community. For example, *The New York Times'* article covering the Masterpiece Cakeshop U.S. Supreme Court case was entitled, "Justices Sharply Divided in Gay Rights Case." In addition, "'gay and transgender' remains a common mainstream media parlance for the acronym LGBT even though, ironically, LGBT is much shorter."

Newspapers also tend to affirm stereotypes about bi+ people. One researcher who looked at the representation of bi+ celebrities in the media found that media and news outlets deliberately promote stereotypes about bi+ people when they report on the actions and follies of these

celebrities.<sup>19</sup> Another study, more specifically, identified 19 online news media articles published following the release of a Canadian study on the role of anxiety in the use of cannabis by bi+ woman; these researchers concluded, among other things, that “the most prevalent theme” found across the articles was that bi+ women “were portrayed as unredeemable oppressed subjects” who were “disempowered, sad, and powerless.” The articles accomplished this in two specific ways:

“First, bisexual women’s experiences of oppression were exaggerated, whereas capacity for resistance was understated. Second, stereotypes of bisexual women as pleasure seeking were operationalized to portray bisexual women as powerless...[and] the vast majority of images depicted hypersexual figures who presented as young, White, feminine, and conventionally attractive. Such representations of bisexual women are anything but coincidental; the content of the articles is largely coded for mainstream consumption by conforming to traditional beauty standards.”<sup>20</sup>

The news media’s amplification of harmful stereotypes can have real life effects on the lived experience of bi+ people. In particular, one study found that media can amplify stigma and impact access to HIV care and prevention as well as interactions with healthcare providers for young Black gay and bi+ men.<sup>21</sup>

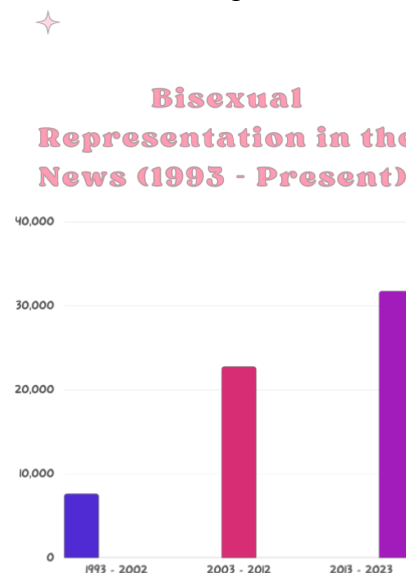
## IV. Our Findings

While this report is not a comprehensive examination of all newspaper articles, it does offer a broad and in-depth analysis on how bi+ people and bi+ issues have been covered in the news.

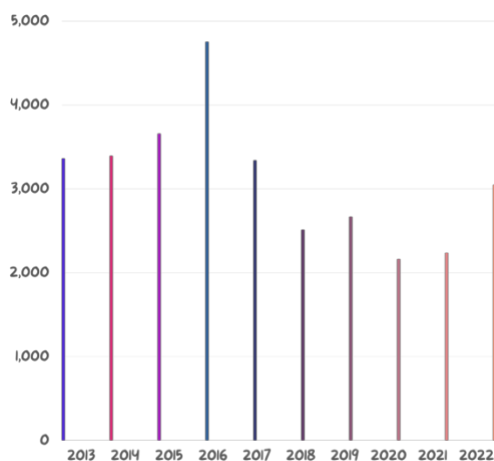
### A. By the Numbers

#### a. Although improving, newspapers underreport on bi+ issues.

Over the last three decades, we have seen an over 300 percent increase in the use of the term “bisexual” in print newspapers. Between 1993 and 2002, the term “bisexual” was mentioned only 7,586 times in the newspapers surveyed, compared to 22,726 times between 2003 and 2012, and 31,721 between 2013 and the present.



In the most recent decade (2013 to present), the term “bisexual” appeared in newspapers at a relatively similar rate year after year with a median appearance each year of 3,190 times. In 2016, we saw a marked increased usage of the term “bisexual” with 4,752 mentions. This correlates to a turning point in 2016 in LGBTQ+ representation in film and media.<sup>22</sup>



Other terms under the bi+ umbrella were used with increasing frequency by newspapers over the last three decades. For example, we saw an increase in the use of the term “pansexual,” but with much more modest numbers. Between 1993 and 2002, the term “pansexual”<sup>23</sup> was used only 112 times, compared to 327 times between 2003 and 2012, and 1,018 between 2013 and the present.

As some bi+ people are polyamorous or ethically nonmonogamous, we also conducted a review of newspapers discussing issues of nonmonogamy. Consensual non-monogamy describes “any relationship in which all participants explicitly agree to have multiple concurrent sexual, intimate, and/or romantic relationships.”<sup>24</sup> The terms “nonmonogamous” and “nonmonogamy” appeared only 120 times in the last three

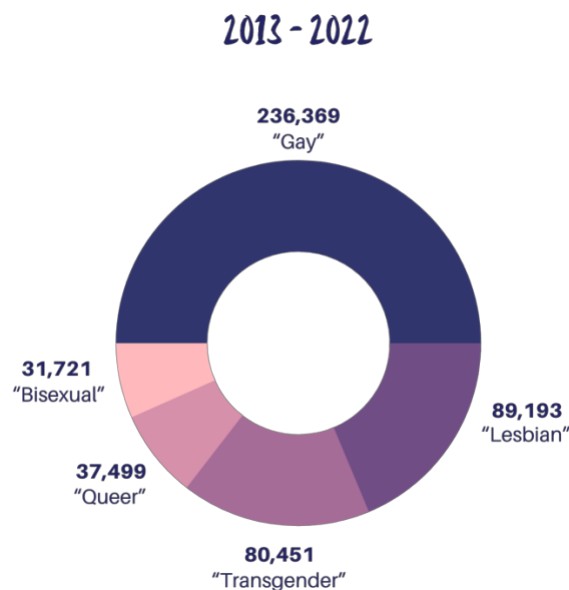
decades, and the term “bisexual” appeared only in 12 of these articles. Of these 12 articles, only one of the articles appeared in a top news outlet; an opinion editorial entitled, “The Prospects of Polygamy”<sup>25</sup> appeared in *The New York Times* on May 30, 2015, authored by the conservative<sup>26</sup> Ross Douthat. The article argues that “Polygamy is bobbing forward in social liberalism’s wake” and erroneously conflates “polygamy” with “polyamory”:

“And we also know that ‘polygamy’ is just the uncool, biblical-sounding term of art. Call it polyamory or ‘ethical nonmonogamy’ and suddenly you have a less disreputable demographic interested — not only the commune-and-granola set, but the young and fashionable in Silicon Valley, where it’s just another experiment in digital-age social life.”

According to *Psychology Today*, there are many differences between “polygamy” and “polyamory” and these terms are not interchangeable. For one, while “polygamy is almost universally heterosexual, and only one person has multiple spouses of a different gender,”<sup>27</sup> polyamory is when “anyone of any gender can have multiple partners”<sup>28</sup> and “with the knowledge and consent of everyone involved.”<sup>29</sup> The terms “polyamory” and “polyamorous” have appeared to gain recognition. Between 1993 and 2002, these terms were mentioned only 41 times in the newspapers reviewed, compared to 465 times between 2003 and 2012, and 1,398 between 2013 and the present. Of the 1,398 articles in the last decade, the term “bisexual” appeared only in 40 of these articles; four of these articles were in top news outlets.

## b. Bi+ people and bi+ issues receive disproportionate visibility in the news.

Although improving, newspapers disproportionately cover bi+ issues. Bi+ people make up the majority (nearly three-fifths) of the LGBTQ+ community,<sup>30</sup> yet “bisexual” appeared in the media less than “lesbian,” “transgender,” and “queer.” In the most recent decade (2013 to present), the term “gay” appeared in mainstream media at 7 times the rate of the term “bisexual.” The term “bisexual” also appeared in the media less than “lesbian,” “transgender,” and “queer.” In fact, in the most recent decade, only 6.67 percent of LGBTQ+ news coverage has been of bi+ people or issues.



While the term “bisexual” appeared in news coverage 31,721 during this most recent decade, it appeared only 7,084 times in top news outlets (*New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Wallstreet Journal*, and the *Washington Post*). In addition, “bisexuality” was only the main subject of 661 articles in the most recent decade. The term appeared on the front page of a print newspaper only 7 times, and only in small

regional papers in Maryland (3 times), North Carolina (1), Pennsylvania (2), and Virginia (1). These front-page news articles discussed:

- how a Maryland state senator had been “heartbroken” and “disgusted” after his daughter came out as bi, which prompted the family to seek conversion therapy for her;
- the sentencing of a female-identified bi teacher who had inappropriate relations with a female-identified minor;
- a study allegedly showing how “gay and bisexual teen boys use illicit steroids at a rate six times greater than do straight kids”;
- opposition from the CEO of PepsiCo and 10 other business executives to a North Carolina law that prevents specific anti-discrimination rules for LGBT people for public accommodations and restroom use;
- a Pride parade in Harrisonburg, Virginia, that “celebrates lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender diversity.”



### Delegate says her father, a state senator, sought conversion therapy for her

By CHASE COOK  
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Del. Megan Simonsire said in a speech Wednesday she would vote for a ban on conversion therapy for homosexuality and revealed that her father — state Sen. Bryan Simonsire — asked her to try the discredited treatment after she revealed she was bisexual.

The Republican from Pasadena, who is not seeking re-election after one term, split with her father over the measure.

On the Senate floor last week, saying families should have the right to use “loving” conversion therapy. The bill bans licensed medical professionals from practicing the



Megan Simonsire

She said she was attracted to both men and women but ended a relationship with a woman she loved for fear of losing her family.

Upon telling her family about her attraction to women, they were “heartbroken” and “disgusted” and sought conversion therapy as an answer, she said.

“They weren’t ever hateful... but were fully convinced that she was living in sin and desperately wanted to get her the

therapy on minors.

Simonsire told a “girl” story on the House floor as the measure was being debated, but ended the speech with the phrase “my story.” She said she supported the bill to protect children who could be at risk of suicide due to the therapy.

“Help the needed,” Simonsire said on the floor.

“While she never actually had to endure conversion therapy, the pain of having her good-intentioned parents convinced of its ability to ‘fix her’ was enough to cause significant pain, self-loathing and deep depression. There were times when she seemingly couldn’t stop the tears from falling.”

Simonsire declined to comment after her speech except to confirm she was the “girl” in the story.

The House of Delegates voted 66-27 in favor of Senate Bill 2018. The Senate passed the bill last week and it now goes before Gov. Larry Hogan. It bans conversion therapy by licensed medical professionals on minors. It also prohibits the use of state funds for support or referral of the practice.

After his daughter’s speech, Bryan for DELEGATE, page A3

### Big early drop in 2018 city crime

Figures show a 33 percent decline

By PHIL DAVIS  
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Major crime in Annapolis dropped 33 percent during the first three months of 2018, a trend police say may be a sign that



## B. Qualitative Content Analysis

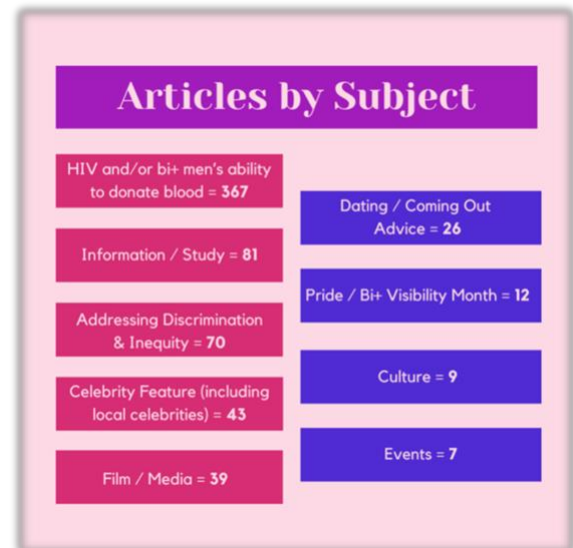
### a. Approximately half of news articles on “bisexuality” concern HIV and/or bi+ men’s ability to donate blood.

Of the 654 articles in the most recent decade (2013 to present) in which “bisexuality” was the main subject, more than half of them (367) focused on either HIV and/or bi+ men’s ability to donate blood. On the whole, these articles provided helpful information relevant for bi+ people, such as news about how the United Kingdom ended its restriction on blood donations from gay and bi+ men and the U.S. Food & Drug Administration’s shift in its blood donation policy. Other articles discussed health official recommendations for people with HIV, such as an advisement to people with HIV to get vaccinated against Meningococcal Disease.

However, it is problematic that approximately half of all the articles focusing on bisexuality were about either HIV and/or bi+ men’s ability to donate blood. When there is a lack of intergroup contact, people tend to rely on media stereotypes to formulate ideas about people outside of their own social group. For instance, the media’s biased coverage of criminal defendants of color contributes to public support for harsher punishments for people of color.<sup>31</sup> The same is true for bi+ people. If most of the news articles we read about bi+ people are associated with HIV, the stigma of the slutty, diseased bisexual will proliferate. As mentioned above, stigma can impact bi+ access to HIV care and prevention.<sup>32</sup>

Of the remaining 287 articles in the most recent decade (2013 to present) in which “bisexuality” was the main subject, we

found they focused on 8 main subject-matter categories. More articles focused on a new study, followed by articles addressing discrimination and inequity.



### b. Many of these news articles perpetuate harmful stereotypes and do not reflect the lived experience of bi+ people.

“A New Generation Seems Ready to Give Bisexuality a Place in the Spectrum,” *New York Times*, June 12, 1995.

“Straight, Gay, or Lying? Bisexuality Revisited,” *New York Times*, July 5, 2005.

“The Scientific Quest to Prove Bisexuality Exists,” *New York Times*, March 20, 2014.

“Why Bisexual Adults Report Higher Rates of Mental Distress,” *New York Times*, September 23, 2022.

Attention-grabbing *New York Times* headlines such as these on “bisexuality” track a general trend toward less negative and more accurate representation of bi+ people and bi+ issues in the media over the last few decades. In fact, many of the news

articles reviewed presented a neutral representation of bi+ people. A few examples include:

- *The Chicago Tribune* published an article on July 3, 2015, entitled, “In wake of cases, free meningitis vaccines offered.” This article presented helpful information about the meningitis vaccine for gay and bi+ men and did not present any overt stereotypes of bi+ people, explaining that the “Chicago Department of Public Health leaders continue to push meningitis prevention for gay and bisexual men, launching an online app for vaccination locations and planning more free vaccines at Black Pride events during the holiday weekend.”
- *The Boston Standard* published an article on June 1, 2015, entitled, “Survey launched to look into health needs of LGBT people.” This article offered information about participating in a national LGTBQ survey, referencing “lesbian and bisexual women” and “gay and bisexual men” when discussing sexual orientation.

While our review reveals a trend toward less negative representation of bi+ people in the newspaper of record and potentially overall, many print news articles continue to perpetuate harmful stereotypes of bi+ people that do not reflect an understanding of the definition of “bisexuality.”

By way of one example, the *New York Post* published an article in April 2023 entitled, “Gen Z women are identifying as bisexual in unprecedented numbers – but are they just following a trend?”<sup>33</sup> This article raised a number of issues. First, the title implies that people who call themselves “bisexual” may

either be lying or just seeking attention. While the author does not directly answer this highly problematic question, the author writes, “Many have wondered what’s behind this unprecedented spike. One theory is that social media could be a motivating factor.” The article concludes by quoting Iris Olympia, a Gen Z YouTuber as saying: “‘There’s this trend of straight girls and straight women basically being like, ‘Oh, men suck and girls are pretty. I wish I was bisexual... You’re straight, and you’re just wishing you were part of the club. Like shut up... As someone who is in the club, that is so annoying, and you should not be using your straight voice to drown out queer people.’”<sup>34</sup> The article cherry picks this quote of Iris Olympia from a longer video where she validates bi+ people, but this quote (especially out of context) incorrectly implies that being bi+ requires action on one’s attraction.

Second, this article also fails to include the lived experience of any bi+ person. While it quotes actresses who have come out as bi+, the only person interviewed for the article is Christine, a mother of a girl who came out as bi. Christine is quoted saying, “‘It is [where we live] a wealthy community, and I think these kids have a lot of guilt about their environment. I definitely think, in their mind, it’s super cool to be bi, or gay, for sure.’” The author explains that Christine has been wondering, “Was her teenager — living in one of California’s most affluent cities and a freshman at one of the state’s top-performing schools — just following a trend?”

Many of the articles reviewed presented a negative representation of bi+ people through using language that erased bi+ people. A few examples include:

- *The Baltimore Sun* published an article on September 28, 2015, entitled, “Finding Ways to Address Gay & Transgender People as They Age.” The article excluded “bisexual” in the title and used the phrase “gay and transgender” six times when referring to the LGBTQ+ community; it also excluded bi+ people when referring to same sex marriage, stating that “[y]ears of laws prevented gay men and lesbian women from marriage.”
- *The Christian Science Monitor* published an article on October 20, 2016, entitled, “‘Turing law’ to pardon thousands of gay men convicted under British law.” The article excluded “bisexual men” in the title and used only “gay men” when referring to a UK law pardoning gay and bi+ men who were convicted of “gross indecency” many years ago for same sex relations.
- *The New York Times* published an article on June 25, 2016, entitled, “How ‘Gay’ Should a Gay Bar Be?” The article talks about queer spaces as only “gay bars” or “lesbian bars,” failing to include bi+ people who frequent these spaces in the conversation.
- Many newspaper articles used the term “gay and trans” or “gay and transgender” when referring to LGBTQ+ issues. In fact, in the most recent decade (2013 to present), our research revealed 9,162 articles that used the term “gay and trans” but failed to ever mention “bisexual” people.

In addition, only a handful of the articles reviewed quoted a person who was identified in the article as bi+. For example,

The *Texas Observer* published an article on November 1, 2013, entitled, “East Texas Couple Eviction Prompts Landmark Transgender Rights Case” about a trans woman who was evicted from her trailer along with her bi+ partner. Articles that quote a bi+ person do not always reveal a positive perception of bisexuality. For example, *The Chicago Tribune* published an article on February 23, 2020, entitled, “Queer is becoming increasingly popular: Modern meaning of the term encompasses a wider range.” The article interviews a person named Lea Grover who used to use the term “bisexual,” but now prefers “queer.” The article explains that one reason “queer” is growing in popularity is that it “short-circuits intrusive and insensitive questions aimed at bisexual and pansexual people.”

Even articles that generally reflect a positive representation of bi+ people fail to quote an identifiable bi+ person. For example, on January 7, 2016, *The Christian Science Monitor* published an article entitled, “Why are more people identifying themselves as bisexual?” The article discusses a then-new report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggesting bisexuality in the United States is on the rise, specifically among women. The article reflected an understanding of the definition of bisexuality, did not present any stereotypes of bi+ people, and did not invisibilize bi+ people through language. While the article quotes four experts—two professors, the CDC demographer who authored the report, and a large mainstream LGBTQ+ organization—the article fails to interview and identify a single bi+ person.

## V. Recommendations

While this inaugural Bi+ Censorship in the News report contains a number of concerning findings that need to change, Rewrite the BiLine encourages journalists and news agencies to address these most startling findings first:

- Newspapers underreport on bi+ issues. For example, although bi+ people make up between 58% and 62% of the LGBTQ+ community, only 6.67% of LGBTQ+ news coverage is of bi+ people and issues.
- Media representation of bi+ people is becoming less negative and more accurate, but consistently failing to present a positive representation of bi+ people. While this is due to many issues as described above, it is troubling that over 66% of articles in the most recent decade (2013 to present) in which “bisexuality” was the main subject focused only on medical issues (i.e. HIV and/or bi+ men’s ability to donate blood), discrimination, and inequality.
- Media representation of bi+ people does not reflect the lived experience of bi+ people, manifested in the lack of bi+ people quoted in articles.

In order to begin to address these findings, we offer these recommendations:

### **1. Journalist covering LGBTQ+ issues should significantly increase coverage of bi+ issues.**

Journalists should build stronger relationships with grassroots bi+ advocacy nonprofits led by bi+ people. These

organizations tend to be smaller and less well-known than mainstream LGBTQ+ organizations, but bring unique perspectives to help ensure balanced reporting. These organizations also often have leads on newsworthy and/or breaking issues.

### **2. News agencies should expand solutions-based reporting on bi+ issues.**

If all we read about bi+ people involves disease and oppression, how will we reimagine a society where bi+ people are thriving? We need to see more news agencies adopt a solutions-based approach to coverage of bi+ issues.

The Solutions Journalism Network explains, “Solutions journalism investigates and explains, in a critical and clear-eyed way, how people try to solve widely shared problems. While journalists usually define news as ‘what’s gone wrong,’ solutions journalism tries to expand that definition: Responses to problems are also newsworthy. By adding rigorous coverage of solutions, journalists can tell the whole story.” This type of coverage would focus primarily on what is being done to improve issues for bi+ people. It also would center bi+ voices as the people leading the effort to change society on these issues. For example, rather than simply reporting on the fact that bi+ people are paid less than gay, lesbian, and straight people due to social perceptions of bi+ people,<sup>35</sup> a solutions-based article also would highlight the work of communities or organizations taking steps to address this problem.

Using the Solutions Story Tracker, created by the Solutions Journalism Network, we searched 15,400 articles classified as solutions-based reporting to determine the number of articles including the use of the



term “bisexual.” Unfortunately, there were only 39 results, and none of the articles focused on bisexuality as the main subject. So, there is considerable work to do here.

## Noteworthy

In a 2014 interview with actress Anna Paquin, Larry King asked the out bi actress if she is a “non-practicing bisexual” because she is married to a man. Many bi+ people are monogamous and others are polyamorous. In fact, many straight people are polyamorous or nonmonogamous. However, there is a common myth that a person is only bi+ if they are at all times in a relationship with a woman and a man. This is false. Bi+ people do not have to be in any relationship to be bi+ just as straight people are not required to be in a relationship to identify as straight. Moreover, many bi+ people are in monogamous relationships with nonbinary or genderqueer people, and many nonbinary or genderqueer people are bi+.

### 3. Bi+ people should be seen and uplifted as experts of their own experiences.

Coverage of bi+ people and bi+ issues is increasing, which provides new opportunities for news agencies to include the voices of bi+ people, and especially bi+ people of color who are at the axis of multiple systems of oppression. If “bisexuality” is the main subject of a news article, there is no reason why the article should be published without quoting bi+ people. While short reporting deadlines often do not leave much time for journalists to gather stories of individual bi+ people, journalists can reach out for comment to bi+ advocacy nonprofits led by bi+ people, particularly bi+ people of color. These organizations are in strong positions to connect journalists to bi+ people for comments.

Additionally, journalists covering a wide range of issues, from business to environmental sustainability to arts and culture, should be considering how to uplift the voices of bi+ leaders across industries.

Overall, our findings underscore the limiting ways bi+ people are portrayed in news print media and the importance of building more diverse and inclusive coverage. As states continue to advance a record number of attacks on LGBTQ+ rights, it is more important now than ever for LGBTQ+ people to be accurately represented in the media.

## Citations

- <sup>1</sup> Since the 1990s, Robyn Ochs, the editor of *Bi Women Quarterly*, has defined bisexuality in this way, and this report adopts this definition.
- <sup>2</sup> See, e.g. <https://bi.org/en/101/when-to-use-bi-vs-bisexual>.
- <sup>3</sup> Please note that the term “M-spec,” or “multiple-attraction spectrum” is a preferred umbrella term by some because it does not highlight one label over another. To learn more about M-Spec, see <https://bipanlibrary.com/mspec/>. This report acknowledges that there is no single identity label that resonates equally with all people who experience attraction to more than one gender.
- <sup>4</sup> Happer, C., & Philo, G. (2013). The Role of the Media in the Construction of Public Belief and Social Change. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 1(1), 321-336, available at <https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v1i1.96>.
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<sup>33</sup> “Gen Z women are identifying as bisexual in unprecedented numbers – but are they just following a trend?” *New York Post* (2023), available at <https://nypost.com/2023/04/18/gen-z-women-identify-as-bisexual-in-unprecedented-numbers/>.

<sup>34</sup> It is noteworthy that Iris Olympia’s video specifically discusses how being bi+ is valid, and she also includes a message: “if you are watching this and you are bi or queer or lgbtq+ in any way i want you to know that your existence is valid and beautiful and it might feel like there’s no one else like you and that’s still okay! and it is okay to be confused too!”

<sup>35</sup> “Bisexual Workers Earn Less Than Straight, Gay Counterparts: Study,” *NBC News* (2016), available at <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/bisexual-workers-earn-less-straight-gay-counterparts-study-n686081>.



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