

Supplemental Material: Writing Clearly and Concisely

Reducing Bias by Topic

3.13 Sexual Orientation

Another term to be familiar with is *queer*. Although once a pejorative term, young people have reclaimed it and often use it as an umbrella term for lesbian women, gay men, and bisexual women and men (Horner, 2007). It is appropriate to use the term *queer*.¹

Sexual behavior does not always agree with sexual orientation; some men and women engage in sexual behavior with others of their own sex but do not consider themselves to be lesbian or gay or bisexual. Likewise, some women and men engage in sexual behavior with members of the other sex but do not consider themselves to be heterosexual. People who identify as bisexual often have a preference for one gender over another gender. When that manifests in either same-sex or other-sex partners, these individuals will identify as bisexual. Whereas the terms *lesbian* and *gay* refer to identities (“a gay man”), the terms *heterosexual* and *bisexual* refer to both identity and behavior. However, when referencing sexual behavior, it is clearest to refer to the sex of the partners engaged in the activity. *Same-sex*, *male–male*, *female–female*, and *male–female sexual behavior* are appropriate terms for specific instances of sexual behavior, regardless of the sexual orientation of the partners (e.g., a heterosexual man who engages in a same-sex sexual experience).

Research is often conducted to assess attitudes toward lesbian women, bisexual men and women, and/or gay men. In the past, discriminatory attitudes toward these populations have been termed *homophobia* or *biphobia*. Although these terms are still used, more accurate terms such as *homonegativity* and *binegativity* are currently used. Another important principle for researchers is to avoid collapsing bisexual individuals into the lesbian women and gay male sample. Bisexual individuals are not the same as lesbian women and gay men.

When writing about the sexual orientation of transgender persons, authors should clearly specify whether they are referencing sexual orientation to biologic sex or to gender identity or gender expression. For example, a male-to-female transsexual who is sexually oriented toward men would be described as having a *gay* orientation with reference to biologic sex, but a *heterosexual* orientation with reference to gender presentation. In scientific literature, sexual orientation is commonly referenced to biologic sex, but many transgender persons feel strongly that their sexual orientation should be referenced only to their gender identity or gender expression and consider the alternative disrespectful.

¹Horner, E. (2007). Queer identities and bisexual identities: What’s the difference? In B. A. Firestein (Ed.), *Becoming visible: Counseling bisexuals across the lifespan* (pp. 287–311). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.