

Episode 209: Bi/Pan Representation

[Women at Warp theme]

Andi: Hi, and welcome to Women at Warp: A Star Trek Podcast. Join us on our continuing mission to explore intersectional diversity in infinite combinations. My name is Andi and thanks to thanks for tuning in. With me today are Grace.

Grace: Hello, one and all.

Andi: [laughs] And Sue.

Sue: Hi-di-ho neighborinos.

Andi: [laughs] So, before we get into our main topic, we have a little bit of housekeeping to do first. Our show is made possible by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become a patron, you can do so for as little as a dollar per month and get awesome rewards from thanks on social media up to silly watch along commentaries. Visit www.patreon.com/womenatwarp. Looking for podcast merch? Check out our TeePublic Store. There are so many designs with new ones being added all the time and on so much more than just T-shirts. Find it at teepublic.com/stores/womenatwarp. So, we do have some upcoming events. Grace, do you want to give us a heads up about WonderCon?

Grace: Yeah, I'm going to be at WonderCon.

[laughter]

Grace: Raise your heads up. I am going to be this march at WonderCon and at Emerald City Comic Con, so it's going to be a busy month for me.

Andi: Excellent. And then we will also be having a presence at Trek Long Island in May. Sue, you want to talk a little bit about that?

Sue: Yeah. Right now, it looks like it's going to be me and Kennedy, but there could be more of us there. So, head on over to Trek Long Island. They are still announcing headliners and they've got some great guests coming for a first year con in a city that hasn't had a fan run con in a long time. So, it's exciting.

Andi: It's almost enough to get people to go to Long Island.

Sue: [laughs]

Grace: I guess you could say this is a real long con.

[laughter]

Sue: Look, Long Island Who is a very popular event.

Grace: Really? Ah.

Sue: So, if this one takes off. It could be a good thing.

Grace: Long Island moving up in the world. First iced tea and now this.

[laughter]

Andi: Awesome. So now onto our main topic, which is one near and dear to my heart and one that I have been kind of tangentially talking about throughout our whole show, I think. And finally, we are going to sit down and talk about bi and pan representation in Star Trek.

Grace: Yay.

Andi: Woohoo. You can't see me, but I'm doing finger guns.

[laughter]

Andi: So, this was a patron topic that was suggested by our lovely patron, Azucena, you might remember her from-- She was a guest on our show when we talked about *Dark Page*. And honestly, one of the best conversations I think we've ever had. Definitely check that out. She suggested this one. Basically, she wanted us to talk about bisexuality and its erasure in *Star Trek*. And she added, especially after Seven was hinted at starting a relationship with Raffi and Picard. And the comments flooded in about how she was a lesbian, completely erasing all traces of the many relationships she tried to foster with Ben while on Voyager. So, we kind of expanded that topic a little bit just to talk about overall bi/pan issues. But thanks very much to her for the excellent suggestion for a topic. So, to kind of get into it, a little bit of background, you guys may know that I am bisexual. I think I've said it once or twice.

Grace: Since when?

Andi: I know. I keep it very on the down low.

Grace: You're keeping that under your hat? Cause I'm blown away.

Andi: I know. I barely talk about it.

Sue: I've heard it more than anybody else. [chuckles]

Andi: That's true. Fun fact. People may have heard this story before too, but the first person I came out to was Sue.

Sue: Aw.

Andi: And I also talked to Grace about it, too, because I was like, "Grace, but I'm not sure. What if I'm taking up space in a place that like-- what if I'm just making it up?" And she was like, "Girl, that's not a thing."

[laughter]

Grace: There's no limited capacity. There is no this many bisexuals or pansexuals allowed in the room.

Sue: It's not pie.

Grace: No.

Andi: Yeah. So, I am happy to be discussing this with you two, especially because these two were very helpful on my journey.

Grace: You hear that, Sue, we're helpful.

Andi: Yeah. You are.

Grace: Amazing.

Sue: I know, right?

Andi: And Grace is our resident pansexual.

Grace: Hey.

Andi: You can't see her, but she's also doing finger guns.

Grace: Aggressively. I have invented a move that is doing finger guns and dabbing at the same time. It may be too powerful for human eyes.

[laughter]

Andi: And also, just know that we're not sitting properly in our chairs.

[laughter]

Grace: Oh, God, you said that and then I realized, "Oh, yeah, I'm not."

Andi: [laughs] That's right. One of us. One of us. And then we brought Sue along so she could be my emotional support asexual, which I really appreciate.

Sue: And I'm sitting here with some cake.

Andi: Excellent. We're really hitting all the stereotypes here.

Grace: We really are.

Andi: So awesome. I'm excited to talk about this near and dear to my heart obviously. I did want to kick it off with a couple of definitions, just because I think that sometimes people are afraid to ask questions about topics like this because they're afraid of, "Ooh, am I being offensive?" And sometimes this stuff can be nuanced and confusing. So, we'll just kick it off right off the bat with some definitions. So, bisexuality is being sexually or romantically attracted to more than one gender. And pansexuality is sexually or romantically attracted to people regardless of their gender.

So, the number one question I always get when I explain those things is, isn't that the same thing? Which, fair. Like, from the outside, if you see somebody and they're dating ladies, they're dating dudes, they're dating really cute enbies, maybe it looks the same from the outside. What that's really describing is attraction. So, it's a nuanced difference, but it's there. So, with bisexuality, you're attracted to all the genders, but gender does have an impact on who you are attracted to. So, this is, you can kind of see this play out with maybe somebody is usually attracted to men, and every once in a while, they'll see a lady and go, "Hey," so there's a preference there and so the gender does play a role in their attraction. They're just attracted to all genders.

And then with pansexuality, gender does not have an impact on who they're attracted to. So, I don't know, Grace, if you want to add anything to that, or if that's a good overall definition.

Grace: Unless you're a shitty straight guy, that's kind of the game changer there. Then I am in no way attracted to you.

Andi: That's true. It's true. No fedoras.

Grace: No fedoras. They're not fedorable.

Andi: [laughs]

Sue: But that has more to do with the shittiness than the straightness.

Grace: Yeah. We're generally thinking that.

Andi: Exactly.

Sue: So regardless of gender.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: Yes.

Grace: There are types of straight guy that I go out of my way to avoid though.

Andi: [laughs] One thing I do want to add, because this is a little bit of a pet peeve of mine, is for a while there were definitions that were kicking around with bisexuals liked either men or women, and pansexuals were open to trans people. No, not the case. Bisexuality includes trans people and non-binary people. It's all gender attraction. So just a quick note one of my pet peeves.

Grace: Remember when they put out that trailer for that season of *Big Mouth* and they were like, "Oh yeah, slam dunking it with a pansexual character," and then they completely mis-defined both pan and bisexuality in it.

Andi: I do not watch that show, but I did see that clip.

Grace: I don't either. And that clip was kind of my-- I'm good.

Sue: Mm-hmm

Andi: Flames. Flames on the side of my face.

Grace: Yeah, you could tell they thought they had slam dunked that shit hard.

Andi: [laughs] So, turning to another property that perhaps has not slam dunked the shit.

[laughter]

Andi: Let's talk about *Star Trek*.

Grace: This funk has not been fully slam dunked.

Andi: [laughs]

Sue: Yeah.

Andi: So, I thought we could start with characters that are the closest or are actually canonically bi or pansexual. And I will add that we're going to be using those terms a little bit

interchangeably, just because I don't think anybody on the show itself has ever said, "I am bisexual, I am pansexual." And that's really the only way you'd be able to know for sure.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Andi: So, in the case of our first person, Jadzia Dax, the actress Terry Farrell specifically said that Dax was pansexual-

Grace: Mm-hmm.

Andi: -but it was never said on screen.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: But we do see her be one of the first characters that we see be attracted to both men and women and have the infamous and groundbreaking first same sex kiss on *Star Trek*. So, overall, I would say that she is a good starting point. Thoughts on our lovely Dax?

Grace: Well, I think it's interesting to note that they go out of their way to establish that from the get-go that Dax has been a husband and a wife. But we never get any indication that Dax was outside of a heterosexual relationship in any of those previous iterations, which I think is kind of a missed opportunity there. Like, maybe in one form Dax was a gay man. Maybe Dax was pan in another and bisexual in another. I like to think about how sexuality can change with the different hosts for the Trill. I think that would be really interesting to dig into.

Sue: I think the Trill is a really interesting case, and I know we've talked about Trill and sexuality quite a bit.

Grace: Oh, yeah.

Sue: But, like, especially for a Joined Trill, because it's almost like a shared consciousness.

Grace: Yeah. Wouldn't you just develop all of the sexual attractions of every other person who'd had your symbiont.

Sue: But the symbiont itself is asexual and not in the like sexuality type of asexual, but in like the plant type of asexual. It does not have a biological sex to be assigned.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: That does not mean it does not have a gender-

Grace: Mm-hmm.

Sue: -necessarily, and it doesn't mean that it doesn't have a sexuality.

Grace: Mm-hmm.

Sue: But I would think especially based on the joining and having all of these past hosts experiences and memories and feelings accessible to you, that gender would become a lot less important.

Grace: You would think that as well.

Andi: I agree. The reason I've always found the Trill kind of interesting in this way is because not only do they have fluctuating genders, but that it feels like it might almost be inherent to Trill, that they'd be sexually fluid overall.

Grace and Sue: Mm-hmm

Andi: The first instance that we ever saw of the Trill in *TNG* kind of tackled this issue where Bev was having some happy times with Odan, and then they changed gender mid episode, and now Crusher has to analyse that and figure out how she feels about that and does she still want to be with this person, because now they've changed gender. And I think they tried to kind of walk a line here where they tried to make it not homophobic.

Grace: It's definitely weirded out by the concept of a same sex relationship though. Or at least Bev seems uncomfortable with it.

Andi: And see, I think that could actually be debated because I felt that. I felt that she was uncomfortable, but the way Gates talks about it is that she feels like Bev would have been open to it and that what she didn't like was the constantly changing nature and having to fall in love with a new person every time.

Grace: Though it's kind of funny that Bev is assuming Odan is going to die again, at least within two of them lifetime. That seems a little weird of an assumption to make to me.

Sue: I mean, presumably she also banged Riker the night before, so she could be a little bit reeling.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: [laughs]

Grace: she's been going through it. Bev has been on a fantastical sexual renaissance in the week leading up to this episode. So, I get it. She's been going through it.

Andi: She's still recovering from--

[laughter]

She can't really make any big decisions today.

[laughter]

I absolutely love that. That's so funny. Thank you, Sue.

Sue: However you want to define that.

[laughter]

Grace: Either way, she's having multiple life changing experiences in quick succession. So, either that or she just finished writing a really heartfelt, "Wesley, you're going to have a new dad letter," and has to go, "Oh, crap. I got to correct all of the pronouns in that."

Sue: If we delve into this character, which I can always do, so I don't want to eat up a ton of

time with it, but this is also a character who was previously married and whose husband died.

Grace: Right.

Sue: Right. And now she's having this other relationship, and he dies, but he's not dead, and then he is her good friend, and then she's a completely new person.

Andi: Yeah. I mean, I think overall conceptually, there's nothing offensive about any of that. I think kind of the way they've framed it and executed it got a little bit funky.

Grace: And that funk was not a slam dunk.

Andi: [laughs] Yeah. Agreed. Because I do agree with you, Grace, that she seemed not into it to me-

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: -which is fine-

Grace: Mm-hmm.

Andi: -but kind of at odds with how maybe they were trying to portray that, I don't know. But kind of going back to Dax, Terry Farrell on stage says that Dax was pansexual, and she defined it as, "The only rule was, are you interesting to me? And do I want to know more about you?" Which is kind of a lovely way to look at pansexuality. And I think it's nice to have the actor who portrayed her kind of come out and be like, "Oh, yeah, pansexual." I like that. But we also don't see her within another relationship with a woman-

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: -that does not define her sexuality, but it feels like it could have been cool to see her just bopping her way through *DS9*.

Grace: We do have one exception to that, and that is with Ezri in the *Mirror Universe*, and it's treated as like "Oh, everything's sexier in the *Mirror Universe* thing."

Sue: Well, yeah, the *Mirror Universe* is its own situation.

Andi: Which we should talk about.

Sue: [laughs]

Grace: Yes. Let's jump right into that.

Andi: So, I have ranted about this before, so apologies to all of you who have heard this rant from me before, but it must be said. So, the next couple of characters that we have to talk about is not just Ezri, apparently, but Kira and Georgiou. Apparently, if you are from the *Mirror Universe*, you are a wild and promiscuous person who just loves to sleep with whoever is around.

Grace: And predatory. Don't forget predatory.

Andi: True. And I would be fine with that, minus the predatory, except for the fact that it's treated like an aesthetic more than anything else.

Grace: It's treated like an aesthetic, and it's treated as a sign of very much like--

Andi: Deviance?

Grace: Yes, deviance. There's less moral fiber here, and therefore, people have less hang ups about sex, as though those two things are intrinsically tied together, which we're not here to slut shame. We're not here to say being queer is inherently wrong or being straight is inherently right, but this leans into that to a degree that's uncomfortable to watch sometimes.

Sue: And the thing recently about the *Mirror Universe* characters that really, really bugged me was in *Discovery* that perpetuated this with Georgiou. But they did it again with Stamets and Culber in the scene with Georgiou, and she's saying, "Well, in my universe, in the *Mirror Universe*, you have relationships with multiple genders," and both of them, both Stamets and Culber, kind of push back and say, "But we're gay. In every universe I can imagine, we're gay." And I'm not saying that being gay and not bi or not pan is a bad thing. It's the way the characters react to almost feeling like they had to defend themselves against bisexuality.

Grace: And let's be real, we've got a long standing and well recorded history of there being serious biphobia and pushback from pan and bi people being considered members of the LGBTQ community, from people who traditionally identified as gay. And there is some history there that's not comfortable to look at either, and that kind of pulls into that.

Sue: I remember in high school and college, it was very common to hear somebody refer especially to men as, "Oh, he's bi now." That means like in a couple months, he'll just be gay.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: Like as if bisexuality is a stepping stone, and it's not.

Grace: Yeah. Same thing with lesbians. And being, like, "She says she's bi. She's going to date a girl until she graduates and then be straight again." Heard that a lot in art school.

Andi: Yeah, which has always been interesting to me, that in both cases, the attraction that's real is the attraction to men.

Grace: Right. It's almost like there's something patriarchal at work here.

Sue: Hmm. Funny.

Andi: Misogyny, jazz hands.

Grace: [chuckles] Misogyny jazz hands is the opposite of bisexual finger guns.

[laughter]

Andi: It's true. It's true.

Sue: Oh, no [laughs].

Andi: And the thing that I don't like about it, besides everything you said, Sue, which I agree with, is the idea that in our universe, they're straight or they're gay or they're-- I think that the term is monosexual, which is fine, except for the fact that, like, "Oh, they crossed the *Mirror Universe*, and now they're not." So, in the case of Culber and Stamets, they were gay, and then they went into the *Mirror Universe*, and they started sleeping with ladies, which doesn't

even really make sense. But then both Kira and Georgiou, now I could see Kira being queer coded. And I could definitely see people head canning her as queer. But on screen, she is straight gal. She only ever dates men. She doesn't identify herself as any type of queer.

Grace: It's her main character flaw, let's be honest.

Andi: [laughs] And then with Georgiou, like, we don't really know prime Georgiou very well, but we get no indications that she was queer either. So, I just don't like it. It's like the idea of not just queerness, but sexual promiscuity, hedonism, enjoying sex is inherently immoral or evil or like part of a lack of goodness. I don't know how to put that better, but it's just annoying. I don't like it. Not a slam dunk.

Grace: Also, just that being bi or being pan is an inherently more devious, more dangerous situation, which is really not cool when you're aware of the fact that-- Ugh, this isn't fun to talk about. There is a very high rate of partner abuse amongst bisexual people, higher than there are definitely with straight people. And as far as I'm understanding, with just lesbians or gay men, that you, by being openly bisexual, are at a higher risk for being in danger from your partner. And the fact that's still very much an idea of, "Well, that's you having a high-risk lifestyle." It's pretty fucked. And seeing that get translated into media is not cool.

Andi: Especially not media we love.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: But there's a lot of stereotypes that common bi/pan stereotypes that are at play here. One is that they're promiscuous. Another is that they are indecisive or can't make a decision-

Grace: Can't commit.

Andi: -or go back and forth.

Grace: Another is that they're predatory.

Andi: Predatory.

Sue: And deceitful.

Grace: Yes.

Andi: Deceitful, yes. Like, can't be trusted.

Sue: Right. And there's, I think, Grace, part of what you were getting at is that especially in the more homophobic end of straight culture, there's this idea that if you are with someone who's not straight, that has somehow contaminated the straight person, please forgive the language. But it's sort of like the Kevin Bacon game, right? [laughs]

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: And then in queer culture, there's the concept of the gold star lesbian, or the gold star gay man.

Grace: Also, completely fucked.

Sue: Right. But there's almost like a weird pridefulness.

Grace: There is. There's a purity culture level to it.

Sue: Yeah.

Grace: Or a perceived idea of you're doing it better than someone else who had to have a journey of self-discovery or anything like that. And that's just so invalidating both for the journey that it takes for everyone to figure out their sexuality and for the fact that for some of us, it's not a linear road. It's not a straight shot to your personal definition.

Sue: And also, Andi, you were talking about with Kira, with Prime Kira, like, we only ever see her date men. And it got me thinking that like in this instance, so far in 90s Trek, we are assuming a straight default.

Grace: Yep.

Sue: And I think-

Grace: Still very much though.

Sue: -before 1990s Trek, I think that is correct. Not that it should be, but that was certainly the default in terms of television production at the time. And I just want to acknowledge that that is what we're doing. Because in reality, just because you see a woman only date men, that doesn't mean she's not queer.

Andi: Correct.

Grace: Just because you see a couple that is straight passing, like, if that one identifies as male and the other identifies as female, that does not make them automatically straight.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Andi: Yeah. And just to kind of bring this back around to these stereotypes from the *Mirror Universe*, these are harmful stereotypes. I don't know about Grace, but I have actively run into these stereotypes while trying to date.

Grace: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

Andi: And they're really hurtful.

Grace: I have run into these stereotypes while trying to talk about my dating life with older relatives, which is part of why I don't.

Andi: And when I came out and I started dating women, one of the very first slaps in the face was realizing that there are a lot of lesbians who won't date bi-women, and I was shocked by this.

Grace: That's more of that you need to be a gold star lesbian.

Andi: Well, and then also that idea that you're just going to be experimenting with a woman on your way to man town.

Grace: Yeah, there's very much that mentality.

Andi: Yeah. And, I had been ready, or at least as ready as I could be for homophobia from straight people, but I was not ready for biphobia from queer people, and it hurt a lot more.

Grace: You're never ready for that in your own community. And on the flip side, there's a very weird reaction with straight men, because they will find out that you have dated other women, that you have a past there, and then for some fucking reason, they will think that you're like their personal penthouse forum.

Andi: Yes.

Grace: And they're allowed to ask you everything about your sexual history and get all of the lurid details, and it's like, "No, no. You would not ask that of any other partner. Why would you think that's cool with me?" And I've had that happen with straight men who were just friends. Just be like, "Oh, you've dated women. Tell us everything." And it's like, "No, I'm not doing that." And it's messed up that you would assume I would.

Andi: Yeah. In my experience, bi and pan men are completely erased.

Grace: Absolutely. Yeah.

Andi: And by and pan, women are sexualized.

Sue: Yep.

Grace: That's very accurate. Yes.

Andi: And it's frustrating, and it does make dating hard. You'll be out there, and you'll be like, "Oh, this girl looks cool. Swipe right. Oh, no, it's a couple. And they're looking for a bi woman."

Grace: They're hunting for a unicorn. For those of you out of the know, hunting for a unicorn is when a couple is seeking a bisexual woman to be their third in a threesome.

Andi: Yeah. Essentially using her as a sex toy.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: And if you like threesomes, more power to you.

Grace: If you want that kind of hookup, awesome. But the incredible consistency of it and people assuming that--

Andi: Well. And the deceit, because they will actively try and hide that they're a couple.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: And then try and convince you. And it's very-- Ha. It's predatory.

Grace: Yeah. And the assumption that you being bisexual means you are automatically up for that.

Andi: Yeah.

Grace: It's like, "I don't even know one of you, much less both of you."

Andi: Yeah. No, I was going to say that their boyfriend is always gross, but-- [crosstalk]

Grace: Look, he's always super gross. She's always like goddess, and he's just a greasy pile [Andi laughing] of garbage in a suit shaped like a guy.

Andi: Correct.

Sue: I'm so glad I don't have to do this.

[laughter]

Andi: Yes. Don't. It's rough out there. It's rough out there, Sue.

Grace: There's also the fun aspect of straight women thinking, "You're so lucky you're queer and don't have to deal with this bullshit." And it's, like "Meh. Hmm."

Andi: So, veering away from our real-world problems.

Grace: Our personal experiences.

[laughter]

Andi: And back into *Star Trek*. I'd like to talk about one of the few instances where I do think they did a good job.

Grace: Yes.

Andi: And that is Mariner in *Lower Decks*.

Grace: Yep. They were asked, "Don't imply it. Please make it canon," and they did. And that's really great to see happen.

Andi: And apparently, they did it because Sue hurt Mike McMahan's feelings.

[laughter]

Grace: Oh, Sue, your power.

Sue: So-- [laughs] after season one, I was having a conversation on the bird app, and I used the phrase that the show was, "I liked it a lot, but my biggest issue was that it was aggressively heteronormative."

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: And somebody fought me on it and said, like, "We only really know 10 people, and you expect one of those to be gay?" I'm like, "Yes."

Andi: Yes.

Grace: Which do you not understand to statistics?

Sue: We run in packs, okay?

Andi: Like wolves.

Grace: We always know when to circle, when it's getting too straight in here, and we always got to watch each other's backs.

Sue: So, a little while later, I was watching Mike McMahan giving interview with actually, our friends Aaron Harvey, and Jessie Gender for their Drawn to Trek podcast. And he mentioned that phrase, like, somebody on Twitter called it aggressively heteronormative.

[laughter]

And I was like, "Oh, that's really funny." And I messaged Aaron, and I went and found my tweet and screen capped it, and I was like, "This is hilarious, blah, blah, blah." And then he did it again in another interview, and then he did it again in another interview. [laughs]

Andi: And then we met him at a Chicago Con.

Sue: And he brought it up.

Grace: [laughs]

Andi: He brought it up to Sue. So essentially, what we take from this is that Sue bullied Mike McMahan for putting queer people into the *Lower Decks*.

[laughter]

Sue: And the best part of that is most recently at New York Comic Con, I was at the press table for *Solar Opposites*, his other show, and he's like, "I recognize you. How do I recognize you?" And I like slide my mask down for half a second to see the whole face, and he goes "aggressively heteronormative."

[laughter]

Sue: It's like that is not the phrase I want to be associated with-

[laughter]

Sue: -but I'll take it, I guess. [laughs]

Andi: So big thanks to Mike McMahan for taking notes. And I personally read Mariner as queer pretty immediately.

Grace: I mean, she's very chaotic bisexual energy.

Andi: Yes. I was like, "That girl there is a bi," like, sorry.

Sue: [laughs]

Grace: Also, she just seems chill and open minded.

Andi: Yeah.

Sue: Yes to all of this, but the point is to make it explicit.

Grace: Yes.

Andi: Yes.

Grace: We are not taking implications anymore. We need you to say it, because otherwise people will insist that it's not there.

Sue: Exactly. No matter how many hints or coding or how much chaotic energy a character gives off, people who don't want queerness in their media are going to insist that it's not there. So, it has to be undeniable. It has to be explicit representation.

Andi: Essentially, what we're saying is, stop throwing crumbs at us and calling it a meal.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Grace: Because we're hungry as hell.

Andi: Yes. So, Mariner is my personal favorite of the new characters that is queer. And we get to see her in a long term and very nuanced and honestly, a little bit toxic relationship with a woman, Jennifer of "move" Jennifer fame. And I love it. I feel like they did such a good job with this because Mariner's queerness is just a facet of who she is. Nobody blinks an eye at it.

Grace: Her friends are happy to see her in a stable relationship.

Andi: Yeah. And then the relationship itself, the queer relationship itself that we see on screen is not sexualized. It's not unrealistic. It's like a flawed relationship between two people that are a little bit messed up. And I love that. That feels real to me.

Grace: And both of whom have really high maintenance friends.

Andi: [laughs] True. Very much so. That was just lovely, and I really appreciated that.

Grace: I'm really curious to see what they do next. And if we can squeeze more queer representation out of this show.

Andi: I think we can, because we also in the same season got Billups being one of our ace friends for representation, so that's lovely. But, in that same conversation we had with Mike McMahan in Chicago, after he recognized his nemesis, Sue.

[laughter]

They like locked eyes across the room and the *Kill Bill* music started up.

Grace: [laughs]

Sue: Just to be clear, I don't actually take credit for this.

[laughter]

It's just really funny to me.

Andi: So, I mean, he did open up to us a little bit about why it took so long. And he said that he had always kind of had it in the back of his mind. And I mean, I do think it shows on

screen. I do think that she's always had a vibe, but that he wanted-- He was nervous about making it explicit because he was like, what if I-- He's like, "He's a straight guy. What if he does it wrong? What if it doesn't feel real? Blah, blah, blah." And then I guess, hearing feedback, it was the catalyst he needed to be like, "No, let's just do this." And it was really lovely to have that conversation with him.

I did tell him that he wanted to make it even more clear Mariner was, bi or pan, that she needed to sit weirdly in chairs. And he was like, "What?"

[laughter]

Because he's a straight dude. And I was like, "Oh, let me explain. We can't sit right in chairs." And he was like, "Okay." And I was just like, "Literally, when I was growing up, there was a chair in my mom's living room that I would sit in upside down. Like, I would put my legs over the back of the chair and just read upside down. And I don't know why we do that. I don't know why that's a stereotype."

Grace: It's just because we're chaotic, I guess.

Andi: Yeah. We can't even sit straight.

[laughter]

Grace: Exactly.

Andi: So, I told him. He thought this was very funny, and it was so funny to watch the calculations in his brain, and he was just like--

Grace: The machinations of how do we use this?

Andi: And he just goes, "What about Riker?" And I was like, "Pansexual."

[laughter]

Grace: It's true. We have definitely claimed him as one of ours.

Andi: It was funny because they put it on Twitter, and so many people just were like, "Yes, correct. Thank you for your service."

[laughter]

And so, at the end of that conversation, he was like, "That's a good note." And I was like, "Excellent." So, if we get in season four, if we get Mariner sitting weird in chairs, I am definitely going to take credit for that.

[laughter]

Sue: But this goes to what we've said before, where he referenced his fear of doing it wrong. That speaks to the importance of having people of that experience in the writers' room.

Grace: Absolutely.

Andi: And luckily, I don't feel like he did do it wrong. And I think once he did, he took the plunge, it turned out well. But I do understand the hesitation.

Grace: Keep plunging, Mike. Keep pushing the boundaries.

Andi: Yeah.

Grace: We have to go deeper.

Andi: Deeper. Queerer. Tawny Newsome at one point posted a gif of Mariner doing finger guns, and she was like, "I don't know what my gal is doing here." And I was like, "Those would be bisexual finger guns."

Grace: Let us show you the way, friend.

Andi: [laughs] This is just really near and dear to my heart. I love Mariner. I love what they've done with her. And this, I would say, is a slam dunk. So, things are definitely improving, slower than I'd like. And *Discovery*, while being amazingly groundbreaking in some ways, just had this weird regressive view of bi and pansexuality that I feel like has been somewhat corrected in *Lower Decks*, which makes me feel better.

Sue: Yeah, I feel like *Discovery's* overall queerness has also improved.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: Yes. Moving on to another new show that actually has some representation for us. I want to talk a little bit about *Seven of Nine* and *Raffi*. This was kind of the basis of Azucena asking us to tackle this topic, just thoughts on this relationship and having a character like *Seven of Nine* that's so iconic within the fandom, be shown as queer.

Sue: This frustrates me. At the end of season one, the little handhold thing that set off the world was supposedly an improvisation by the actors, great. And then between seasons, we got this audio drama when they're actually in a relationship together. And then season two, they had broken up and are fighting the whole time. So, it's frustrating to me that they can't be happy, that they can't be in a relationship, and that sort of kind of resolves itself by the end of the season. And again, in season one with *Seven* and *Bjayzl*, they never actually say what their relationship is. We're just supposed to get it. So that, again, people who want to bury their heads in the sand can.

Grace: It's always about giving the people who don't want to see the queers the benefit of the doubt that they want.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Grace: And also, if I can jump a little bit to this. A thing we got immediately with that handhold was a bunch of people going, "Oh, my God, *Seven's* a lesbian now." It's like, "Well, does *Seven* actually identify as a lesbian or bisexual? Does her being in a relationship with a woman now just completely x-out the relationships with men she has had in the past?" Which is not how it works. This is the same issue I really intensely have with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and that we like--

Andi: I was going to bring up *Willow*.

Grace: *Willow* is a lesbian. It's like *Willow* was in a long term, committed relationship with a man. Is she saying that did not hit her the same way? Or is this just avoiding the concept of bisexuality?

Andi: Well, and the thing is like-

[clears throat]

-there are people who, after time and self-reflection sometimes do decide, "Oh, I am not bi or pan. I am a lesbian. I am gay," and that's totally valid.

Sue: For an actual living person.

Andi: Yes, for a person. But these are characters being written by mostly straight people.

Grace: Joss Whedon, specifically.

Andi: Yeah. So, like the idea that, "Oops, gay now."

Grace: Oops, all gay.

Sue: See the thing is with Seven of Nine, I'm very conflicted, because the relationships we saw her pursue on *Voyager* were sort of at the coaching of other members of *Voyager*. So, she's like being coached or coerced into having relationships with men.

Grace: Kind of like growing up queer in a heteronormative culture.

Sue: Right. And then we see her later, and we know about B'Jaysl and we know about Raffi.

Grace: And we definitely have a good chunk of the audience that feel like she and Janeway had chemistry.

Sue: Yes. But I think it's a legitimate storyline for Seven to realize that, yeah, she is a lesbian. And I also think it's a legitimate storyline for Seven to realize that she's bi or pan. And we don't-- She never says what she is, so we don't know.

Grace: Which feels like a cop out.

Sue: I believe that Jeri Ryan has said that Seven is bi.

Grace: Okay.

Andi: I agree because-- So I don't have a lot of firsthand experience of Seven of Nine as a character, but if I'm understanding her correctly, she's basically a teenager on *Voyager*. Like, she's young, not necessarily embodied-- in life experience.

Sue: Humanity. Yes.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: Yeah. So, to me it would make sense. A lot of teenagers and even in your early twenties, exploring your sexuality is pretty huge part of that. You can land on being a lesbian after having romantic relationships with men.

Sue: Yeah.

Andi: I just--

Grace: It's not a necessarily linear journey.

Andi: Yes. So that can happen, but you can't just erase what we saw on screen. So, yeah, I think it's a nuanced conversation, but I definitely think it's more likely to me that she would be bi or pan, and I would love to see this explored more on screen so we get more of an idea of where her character is coming from. And kind of speaking of the same thing, I wanted to talk a little bit about Sulu, because when Simon Pegg took over the reboot movies, he very specifically wanted to put queer representation in that because he's a standup dude, I guess. And he thought that Sulu was kind of the good choice, kind of as a tribute.

Sue: It was supposed to be like an homage.

Grace: Yeah, yeah. A tribute to George Takei, who then said that he didn't like it, which was kind of awkward. But essentially what he was trying to do is add queer representation to *Star Trek*, and he did. So, Sulu in *Star Trek Beyond* has a husband and a kid, very sweet, very cute. And then people immediately was like, "Well, Sulu's gay now." And I'm like, "Hmm, but is he?" We don't know that. He doesn't say that. And we have seen him show attraction to women in *The Original Series*.

Grace: Yeah, you can argue that this is different because it's a reboot, but you can also argue there's some--

Sue: Some character consistency?

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: This is part of the same issue I have with the *Mirror Universe*. If we say that our queerness is not a choice, it is the way we are, and we also accept multiple universes, does that mean that the way that we are, that our sexuality is different from universe to universe? Does that make sense? [laughs]

Andi: Well, I guess what I would say is, does it make more sense that Sulu in a different timeline suddenly had a different sexuality or that he's always just been bi, which seems more realistic, you know what I mean? So, I don't see how, "Oh, this thing happened in this universe and didn't happen in this universe, and the butterfly flapped his wing, and now Sulu only likes dudes," like, that doesn't make any sense.

So, to me, it makes much more sense that he's always been bi or pan and he just happened to end up with a man. And until Sulu says the words "I am gay or I am bi," we won't know for sure. But, yeah, just automatically going to-- I mean, I think this is what Azucena was getting at when she suggested this topic is bi erasure.

The fact that the default is not even always just going to be straight, it could also just be the default is gay or lesbian. So, I think that's all of our characters that we see on screen, but Lord knows that does not mean that's all the characters that are claimed by or head canonned as bi or pan.

Grace: That we hold near and dear to our hearts.

Andi: Indeed.

Sue: If I remember correctly, the only characters who have identified, who have said, "I am this" were Stamets and Culber.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: Yes.

Sue: Like, as I mentioned before, for a long time, our default was straight. Like, don't tell me otherwise, this character is straight and--

Grace: Which is some bullshit.

Sue: Yeah, I believe-- I mean, that it shouldn't be that way, obviously, but I also feel like that fandom, or at least the kind of fandom I participate in is not doing the same thing in new Trek.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: Correct.

Grace: Yes.

Andi: And honestly wasn't doing the same thing in old Trek because we claimed the hell out of a lot of characters all the way back to Kirk and Spock, who I think any character that has a major same sex ship, like Kirk or Spock is always going to-- people are going to read them in a kind of bi/pan way just because on screen we've seen Kirk with the ladies. We've seen Spock with the ladies. And then also, if you are shipping them and you feel like they are attracted to each other and in love, well, then kind of naturally you might head canon them as bi or pan.

Sue: I mean, then you got to throw McCoy in there too.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: True. There's lots of characters that can be thrown in here.

Sue: All of them.

Grace: [laughs]

Andi: All of them.

Grace: Everyone is queer forever.

Andi: [laughs] So, the big one for me who prompted a similar that there is a bisexual reaction is Bashir.

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Andi: That there is a bisexual. He just is. He's the most bisexual to bisexual ever.

Grace: This is a very good example of someone who's got a very prominent pairing with someone of the same sex, but who we see in relationships with women and striking out with women a bunch.

Andi: [laughs] So, I thought it was interesting, Sue, that you brought up, like, if it's not on

screen, that people will deny that they're queer. So, I remember once I tweeted about how Bashir was super bi, like ridiculously bi. And I stand by that. And some dude is like--

Sue: You stand by that?

Andi: Yeah, I stand by that. I tweeted that. And this dude with like 50,000 followers was like, "Bashir is not bi." And then he sent me a whole bunch of pictures of Bashir macking on women. And I was like, "Dude,-

Grace: Don't care.

Andi: -do you not know what bisexuality is?" Like, I don't know what to say to this. Like, a picture of Bashir and a woman does not mean he's not bi. That's not what that means. And it's frustrating to me, but it's also hilarious. I found it very funny. I was like, "Someone needs help with definitions."

Grace: Straight men being threatened by the concept of bisexuality in other men is also just so weird.

Andi: Yeah, definitely.

Grace: Speaking of which, Riker definitely bi, right?

Andi: [laughs] Yeah. I definitely feel like that's not a heterosexual.

Sue: [laughs] Riker-- I mean, we talked about how the difference is very nuanced, but Riker definitely reads more pan to me.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: Me too. And I could not-- If you were like, "Okay, why?" I'd be like, "I don't know. He just feels like a pan. I don't know."

Grace: Riker did fall for someone who, as far as he knew, didn't have an identifiable gender. So, it's kind of canon.

Sue: If you want to go back to the way that Terry Farrell kind of defined it, he gets interested in people, in individuals.

Grace: Oh, absolutely.

Andi: Yes. He also just has chemistry with basically everyone. And I mean, let's not forget, he sits weird.

Grace: He sits real weird.

Sue: He does sit weird.

Andi: The fact that immediately people started sending Riker gifts to Mike McMahan when I tagged him about bi/pan-

[laughter]

Andi: -people not being able to it right.

Sue: I mean, supposedly the production reason for all of that is that Jonathan Frakes has a bad back. He has weird sitting once he's already in the chair is that he has a bad back. And somebody once early on gave him a direction for sit down in this chair a cool way.

[laughter]

So, thank you to whoever gave that direction.

Grace: And history was made.

Sue: But the lean, the Away Mission lean and putting his leg up on the thing by data, all because he has a bad back. And as someone with two herniated discs can confirm.

Andi: He also does a lesbian slouch sometimes.

Sue: Yeah.

Grace: [laughs]

Andi: Which is one of my favorite ways of sitting.

Grace: No, no. Can we get that put in his Memory Alpha page Riker is known to have lesbian posture.

Andi: [laughs] It's true, though.

Sue: Crusher also sits weird in chairs.

Andi: Yes. And I have seen that. Here's the thing is like queer folks are going to claim whoever we claim, and we will come up with any reason that we feel-- Like sometimes it's just, "Nah, I don't feel like they're straight. I don't know what to tell you." But not sitting right in chairs is often PowerPoint slide one and this character is not straight.

Sue: And it's obviously a joke.

[laughter]

Andi: Is it?

Sue: I mean, you have to answer the emails then.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: Okay, I will. And I'm just going to answer them with a picture of me sitting upside down in a chair.

[laughter]

Andi: But, yeah, I mean, we can really-- Like, there's no end to the characters that you can head cannon as bi or pan, like, make them all queer, they can't stop you.

Grace: They can't stop us.

Sue: They can't. Mm-hmm.

Grace: And I will say it, I knew by my early tweens. And Dal does a lot of finger guns, just saying, just saying.

Andi: I could see that. I really actually could. I love how at the end of this, people who are learning more about bi and pansexuality have really just learned about finger guns and sitting weird in chairs.

[laughter]

Sue: I want to go back to pieosexuality because that's sounds great

Grace: Pieosexuality?

Andi: Pieosexuality. That's Dean Winchester.

[laughter]

Grace: Yeah. So, we're all very clearly coming at this from our personal experience of what bi and pansexuality mean to us, but there is a wide width and breadth of it out there.

Sue: And I think when we get deep into the-- like in universe *Star Trek* stuff, there are so many *Star Trek* races that are described as having multiple genders that are not a, "binary species." And not that humans are a binary species, but they're certainly described that way in writings about the universe. There's "male and female," not saying that, quoting that. We know of four genders on Andoria. We know of the-- I can't remember the name of it now, but we know of three genders on the Cogenitor's planet. So, if we think in terms of the amount of time there is before we "get to *Star Trek*," the idea that the importance of gender continues to be a big deal, doesn't make a lot of sense to me, but again, little experience with it as an ace person, but, I am totally fine, I guess, the point I'm getting at with everybody in *Star Trek* being pan.

Andi: Yeah.

Grace: Yes.

Andi: I mean, I honestly think we're getting closer to that.

Grace: This is the future that we want.

Andi: I mean sexuality is fluid and it's a spectrum. So, I just feel that putting ourselves in boxes isn't always helpful. So, I do think that as it's less stigmatized, more and more people are going to find out that they are not all one thing, and that's a good thing, and that's fun. It's fun to explore your gender and sexuality and get to know yourself better, and you never have to stop that process. You always get to continue to think about these things and fine-tune how you feel about yourself. And I just think that as our society has gotten more open to that exploration, more and more people are starting to find words that describe a feeling they've always had and come out. Like, I've had experiences where people of older generations will be like, "Well, I've been attracted to women, but I'm not bisexual." And I'm like, "Hmm."

Grace: You could be a little bit.

Andi: You could be. That's kind of what that is. I'm not going to say you have to identify one way or another, but I think a lot of these blocks towards, that is mental.

Grace: Yeah, mental and social, definitely.

Sue: We were socialized so long that there is a single right way to be and that queerness is deviance.

Grace: And I don't know if you've noticed it, but that right way kind of sucks.

Sue: [laughs] But the idea that, like, "Well, clearly I couldn't be bisexual because I'm not a deviant person," is I think the underpinning of a lot of that reaction.

Grace: Yeah, absolutely.

Andi: Well, and then I can say for myself, when I was growing up, I remember very clearly sitting cross legged on my bedroom floor and going, "Okay, I'm going to figure this out. Something's not quite right here, but I'm going to figure it out right now." And I was like, "Lesbian?" Thought about it. Thought about it. "No, I like boys." And that's where I stopped.

[laughter]

And I just was like, "Guess that's it. Answered that. We're all done here." And if you had asked me do you know what a bisexual is, I would have been like, "Yeah." And it just never occurred to me to apply that to myself. So, I think more and more people are going to be finding that it's not as simple as they thought it was.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: And it's going to be easier to figure that out if we stop erasing identities.

Andi: Yes.

Grace: Yeah.

Andi: And assigning moral judgments on them. Cool. Well, I really enjoyed this conversation.

Sue: Yay.

Andi: If you want to write me and tell me about how I talk too much about how I can't [Sue laughs] sit right in a chair, feel free. But overall, I really enjoyed this conversation. Thank you so much for having it with me, both of you. Is there any extra things we want to talk about before we wrap up?

Grace: More queer characters in Star Trek, please.

Andi: Yes. Agreed.

Sue: Finding the right language to talk about hypothetical genders is difficult. [chuckles]

Andi: Yes. Also, true.

Grace: Also true.

Andi: All right, so that's about all the time we have today. Grace, where can people find you on the internet?

Grace: You can find me across social medias, [@bonecrusherjenk](#), or [bonecrusherj](#).

Andi: And Sue. Where can people find you?

Sue: You can find me currently parked on Twitter [@spaltor](#).

Andi: And I'm Andi, you can find me on many platforms as *FirstTimeTrek*. To learn more about our show or to contact us, visit [womenatwarp.com](#). Email us at crew@womenatwarp.com, or find us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram [@womenatwarp](#). Thanks so much for listening.

Grace: Don't tell us our head cannons are wrong. We honestly don't care.

Sue: [laughs]

[Women at Warp theme music]

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