



A Guide to LGBTQIA+ Terminology

This glossary was written to give you the words and meanings to help you feel more comfortable working toward creating an LGBTQIA+ inclusive learning environment. We'd like you to note that language is always evolving and is context dependent, and thus it can never hurt to ask if a term is ok for you to use or what is meant when a term is used by others.

Allyship: The action of working to end oppression through support of, and as an advocate with and for, a group other than one's own.

Androgyne: A person with a gender that is both masculine and feminine or in between masculine and feminine.

Asexual: A broad spectrum of sexual orientations generally characterized by feeling varying degrees of sexual attraction or desire for partnered sexuality. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy, which is the deliberate abstention from sexual activity, despite sexual desire. Some asexual people do have sex and do experience varying levels of sexual attraction. There are many diverse ways of being asexual. A person who does not experience sexual attraction can experience other forms of attraction such as romantic attraction, as physical attraction and emotional attraction are separate aspects of a person's identity. These may or may not correlate with each other--for instance, some people are physically and romantically attracted to women. However, others might be physically attracted to all genders and only emotionally attracted to men.

Bisexual: A person whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same and other genders, or towards people regardless of their gender. Some people may use bisexual and pansexual interchangeably.

BlaQ/BlaQueer: Folks of Black/African descent and/or from the African diaspora who recognize their queerness/LGBTQIA+ identity as a salient identity attached to their Blackness and vice versa.

Cisgender: A gender identity, or performance in a gender role, that society deems to match the person's assigned sex at birth. The prefix cis- means "on this side of" or "not across." A term used to highlight the privilege of people who are not transgender.

Cissexism/Genderism: The pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion founded on the belief that there are, and should be, only two genders and that one's gender or most aspects of it, are inevitably tied to assigned sex. This system oppresses people whose gender and/or gender expression falls outside of cis-normative constructs. Within cissexism, cisgender people are the dominant group and trans/gender non-conforming people are the oppressed group.

Gay: Sometimes used as an umbrella term to refer to all people who have their primary sexual and/or romantic attractions to people of the same sex. However, people who identify as lesbian, bisexual, and transgender may feel excluded. The term can also exclusively refer to men who are attracted to other men.

Gender: A social construct used to classify a person as a man, woman, or some other identity. Fundamentally different from the sex one is assigned at birth.

Gender Expression: How one expresses oneself, in terms of dress and/or behaviors. Society, and people that make up society characterize these expressions as "masculine," "feminine," or "androgynous." Individuals may embody their gender in a multitude of ways and have terms beyond these to name their gender expression(s).

Gender Fluid/Genderfluid: A person whose gender identification and presentation shifts, whether within or outside of societal, gender-based expectations. Being fluid in motion between two or more genders.

Gender Identity: A sense of one's self as trans, genderqueer, woman, man, or some other identity, which may or may not correspond with the sex and gender one is assigned at birth.

Gender Non conforming (GNC): Adjective for people who do not subscribe to societal expectations of typical gender expressions or roles. The term is more commonly used to refer to gender expression (how one behaves, acts, and presents themselves to others) as opposed to gender identity (one's internal sense of self).

Gender Queer: A person whose gender identity and/or gender expression falls outside of the dominant societal norm for their assigned sex, is beyond genders, or is some combination of them.

Heteronormativity: Attitudes and behaviors that incorrectly assume gender is binary, ignoring genders besides women and men, and that people should and will align with conventional expectations of society for gender identity, gender expression, and sexual and romantic attraction. For example, someone assigned female at birth is expected to 1) have a body that is considered "female" by the dominant culture, 2) identify as a girl or woman, 3) act feminine and fulfill the roles associated with girls and/or women, and 4) be romantically and sexually attracted to men.

Heterosexism: The assumption that all people are or should be heterosexual. Heterosexism excludes the needs, concerns, and life experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer people while it gives advantages to heterosexual people.

Heterosexuality: A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of a gender other than their own.

Homophobia: The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex. Note that some people are moving away from using “phobia” as they believe it can perpetuate an irrational fear.

Homosexual/Homosexuality: An outdated term to describe a sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same gender. Historically, it was a term used to pathologize gay and lesbian people.

Intersectionality: A term coined by law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 1980s to describe the way that multiple systems of oppression interact in the lives of those with multiple marginalized identities. Intersectionality looks at the relationships between multiple marginalized identities and allows us to analyze social problems more fully, shape more effective interventions, and promote more inclusive advocacy amongst communities.

Intersex: People who naturally (that is, without any medical intervention) develop primary or secondary sex characteristics that do not fit neatly into society's definitions of male or female. (Hermaphrodite is an outdated and inaccurate term that was used in the past to describe people who are intersex.)

Lesbian: Usually, a woman whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same gender. However, some nonbinary people also identify as lesbians, often because they have some connection to womanhood and are primarily attracted to women. (See nonbinary below)

LGBTQIA+: Abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual. An umbrella term that is often used to refer to the community as a whole. The **Q** can also stand for questioning. The plus (+) sign is meant to include those who identify differently from these letters. Note that you may see shorter or longer acronyms as there has been debate within the community about how segmented the community is represented.

Microaggressions: Words or behaviors, whether intentional or not, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages of commonly oppressed identities. These actions cause harm through the invalidation of the target person's identity and may reinforce stereotypes. Examples of microaggressions include a person who is not white being told they speak “good English” or someone saying something is “gay” to mean they think something is bad.

Misgendering: Attributing a gender to someone that is incorrect/does not align with their gender identity. Can occur when using pronouns, gendered language (e.g., “Hello ladies!” “Hey guys”), or assigning genders to people without knowing how they identify (e.g., “Well, since we’re all women in this room, we understand...”).

Pansexual: A term used to describe people who have romantic, sexual or affectional desire for people of all genders and sexes.

Queer: Historically, queer was used as a slur. In recent years, it has been reclaimed by some who identify as LGBTQIA+, but not all. Thus, we recommend not referring to someone as queer unless that person self-identifies.

Sex: A medically constructed categorization. Sex is often assigned based on the appearance of the genitalia, either in ultrasound or at birth.

SOGIE: An acronym that stands for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression. It’s used by some in a similar way to the umbrella acronym: LGBTQIA+.

Transgender or Trans: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Transitioning: The time period during which a person begins to live according to their gender identity, rather than the gender they were thought to be at birth. While not all transgender people transition, a great many do at some point in their lives. Gender transition looks different for every person. Possible steps in a gender transition may include changing clothing, appearance, name, or the pronoun people use to refer to you. Some people are able to change their identification documents, like their driver’s license or passport, to reflect their gender. And some people undergo hormone therapy or other medical procedures to change their physical characteristics and make their body better reflect the gender they know themselves to be.

References

This document was adapted from the following sources:

<https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary>

https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms?utm_source=GS&utm_medium=AD&utm_campaign=BPI-HRC-Grant&utm_content=276004739490&utm_term=gender%20terms&gclid=EAlalQobChMIuZO8q8ng5wIVAZ-fCh0jGg0uEAAYASAAEgIVfPD_BwE

<https://www.montclair.edu/lgbtq-center/lgbtq-resources/terminology/>

[National Center for Transgender Equality](#)