TERMS & DEFINITIONS

GENERAL LGBTQIA • SEXUAL ORIENTATION GENDER • BIAS • SOCIAL JUSTICE

GENERAL LGBTQIA

Coming out: To recognize one's sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex identity, and to be open about it with oneself and with others.

Family: Colloquial term used to identify other LGBTQIA community members. For example, an LGBTQIA person saying, “that person is family” often means that the person they are referring to is LGBTQIA as well.

Family of choice (chosen family): Persons or group of people an individual sees as significant in his or her life. It may include none, all, or some members of his or her family of origin. In addition, it may include individuals such as significant others, domestic partners, friends, and coworkers.

Family of origin: The family into which a person is born. Family of origin often refers to biological or adoptive parents, siblings, and extended family.

Gender-neutral: Nondiscriminatory language to describe relationships—e.g. “spouse” and “partner” are gender-neutral alternatives to the gender-specific words “husband,” “wife,” “boyfriend” and “girlfriend.”

GSRM: Gender, Sexual, and Romantic Minorities

In the closet: Keeping one's sexual orientation and/or gender or sex identity a secret, or choosing not to disclose this information to others.

Lambda: λ The Gay Activist Alliance originally chose the lambda, the Greek letter “L,” as a symbol in 1970. Organizers chose the letter “L” to signify liberation. The word has become a way of expressing the concept “lesbian and gay male” in a minimum of syllables and has been adopted by such organizations as Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund.


Out or Out of the closet: Refers to varying degrees of being open about one's sexual orientation and/or sex identity or gender identity.

Queer: 1) An umbrella term to refer to all LGBTQIA people 2) A political statement, as well as a sexual orientation, which advocates breaking binary thinking and seeing both sexual orientation and gender identity as potentially fluid. 3) A simple label to explain a complex set of sexual behaviors and desires. For example, a person who is attracted to multiple genders may identify as queer. Many older LGBT people feel the word has been hatefully used against them for too long and are reluctant to embrace it. However, younger generations of LGBT people have reclaimed the word as a proud label for their identity.

Questioning: The process of considering one's own sexual orientation or gender identity. Usually, an individual is considering an identity that is not heterosexual or not cisgender.

Rainbow Flag: The Rainbow Freedom Flag was designed in 1978 by Gilbert Baker to designate the great diversity of the community. It has been recognized by the International Flag Makers Association as the official flag of the LGBTQIA civil rights movement.

Triangle: A symbol of remembrance. Gay men in the Nazi concentration camps were forced to wear the pink triangle as a designation of being homosexual. Women who did not conform to social roles, often believed to be lesbians, had to wear the black triangle. The triangles are worn today as symbols of freedom, reminding us to never forget.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Affectional Orientation: The deep-seated direction of one's emotional, intellectual, and social affinity. It is on a continuum and not a set of absolute categories. Some aspects of affectional orientation tend to change over time, while other aspects remain relatively consistent. Affectional orientation can be fluid.

Asexual: A person who is not sexually attracted to any gender or sex.

Bisexual: Also “bi.” A person who is attracted to two sexes or two genders, but not necessarily simultaneously or equally. This used to be defined as a person who is attracted to both genders or both sexes, but since there are not only two sexes (see intersex and transsexual) and there are not only two genders (see transgender), this definition is inaccurate.

Fluidity: A notion or understanding that sexual orientation, sexuality, and gender are dynamic identities that may change over time as individuals discover more about themselves. Fluidity can be an identity, such as sexually fluid or gender fluid.

Gay: Men attracted to men. Colloquially used as an umbrella term to include all LGBTQIA people.

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Heterosexuality: Sexual, emotional, and/or romantic attraction to a sex other than your own. Commonly thought of as “attraction to the opposite sex” but since there are not only two sexes (see intersex and transsexual), this definition is inaccurate.

Homosexuality: Sexual, emotional, and/or romantic attraction to the same sex.

Lesbian: A woman attracted to women.

Men who have sex with men (MSM): Men who engage in same-sex behavior but who may not necessarily self-identify as gay.

Monosexual: People who are attracted to only one sex or gender. People who self-identify as straight, lesbian, or gay.

Nonmonosexual (NM): People who attracted to more than one sex or gender. People who self-identify as bisexual, pansexual, fluid, queer, or any other nonmonosexual identity.

Onnisexual: A person who is attracted to one or more genders regardless of the other person’s sexual orientation.

Pansexual: A person who is fluid in sexual orientation and is attracted to others regardless of gender. A common phrase used with this community is “hearts not parts.”

Polyamory: Polyamory is the practice of having multiple open, honest relationships simultaneously.

Sexual Orientation: The deep-seated direction of one’s sexual and/or erotic attractions. It is on a continuum and not a set of absolute categories. Sometimes referred to as affectional orientation or sexuality. Sexual orientation can change over time through a multistage developmental process.

Straight: A person who is attracted to a gender other than their own. Commonly thought of as “attraction to the opposite gender,” but since there are not only two genders (see transgender), this definition is inaccurate.

GENDER

Androgynous: A gender expression that expresses both masculine and feminine traits.

Berdache: A contemporary term that references historical multiple-gender traditions in many Native and indigenous cultures. Many Native/Indigenous people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or gender non-conforming identify as Two-Spirit; in many Nations, being Two-Spirit carries both great respect and additional commitments and responsibilities to one’s community.

Birth Sex: The sex an individual is assigned at birth, determined by normalized categories of genetic and physical characteristics.

Cisgender: Refers to people whose sex and gender are congruent by predominant cultural standards: women who have female bodies, men who have male bodies. This term was created to challenge the privileging of such people relative to those who are transgender.

Cissexual: People who are not transsexual and who have only ever experienced their subconscious and physical sexes as being aligned.

Cross Dresser/ Transvestite: Individuals who regularly or occasionally wear the clothing socially assigned to a gender not their own, but are usually comfortable with their anatomy and do not wish to change it (i.e. they are not transsexuals). Cross-dresser is the preferred term for men who enjoy or prefer women's clothing and social roles. Contrary to popular belief, the overwhelming majority of male cross-dressers identify as straight and often are married. Very few women call themselves cross-dressers.

Drag: The act of dressing in gendered clothing as part of a performance. Drag Queens perform in highly feminine attire. Drag Kings perform in highly masculine attire. Drag may be performed as a political comment on gender, as parody, or simply as entertainment. Drag performance does not indicate sexuality, gender identity, or sex identity.

FTM: Female to Male.

Gender: 1) A socially constructed system of classification that ascribes qualities of masculinity and femininity to people. Gender characteristics can change over time and are different between cultures. Words that refer to gender include: man, woman, transgender, masculine, feminine, and gender queer. 2) One’s sense of self as masculine or feminine regardless of external genitalia. Gender is often conflated with sex. This is inaccurate because sex refers to bodies and gender refers to personality characteristics.

Gender Conformity: When your gender identity, gender expression, and sex “match” (i.e. fit social norms). For example, a male who is masculine and identifies as a man.

Gender Expression: An expression of one’s own gender identity. This can include, but is not limited to, personality traits, behaviors, appearance, mannerisms, interests, hobbies, values, etc.

Gender Identity: The gender that a person sees themselves as. This can include refusing to label oneself with a gender. Gender identity is also often conflated with sexual orientation, but this is inaccurate. Gender identity does not cause sexual orientation. For example, a masculine woman is not necessarily a lesbian.
Gender Identity Disorder: The term used for a condition defined in the DSM4 by the American Psychiatric Association.

Gender-neutral Pronouns: The following pronouns offer alternatives to those people who identify outside of the gender binary of man and woman and prefer pronouns that are not masculine or feminine:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Binary</th>
<th>Gender Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He/She</td>
<td>Ze (zee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Him/Her</td>
<td>Hir (hearn), Zir (zeer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His/Her</td>
<td>Hir (hearn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himself/Herself</td>
<td>Hirself (hearn-self)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender Queer (or Genderqueer): A person who redefines or plays with gender, or who refuses gender altogether. A label for people who bend/break the rules of gender and blur the boundaries.

Gender-variant / Gender non-conforming: Displaying gender traits that are not normatively associated with a person’s biological sex. “Feminine” behavior or appearance in a male is gender-variant as is “masculine” behavior or appearance in a female. Gender-variant behavior is culturally specific.

Intersex: Intersexuality is a set of medical conditions that feature congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system. That is, intersex people are born with “sex chromosomes,” external genitalia, or internal reproductive systems that are not considered “standard” for either male or female. The existence of intersexuals shows that there are not just two sexes and that our ways of thinking about sex (trying to force everyone to fit into either the male box or the female box) is socially constructed.

Legal Sex: The sex assigned on an individual’s legal documentation.

MTF: Male to Female.

Omnigender: Possessing all genders; exhibiting cultural characteristics of male and female. The term is specifically used to refute the concept of only two genders.

On E: When a MTF takes the hormone estrogen.

On T: When a FTM takes the hormone testosterone.

Sex Identity: The sex that a person sees themselves as. This can include refusing to label oneself with a sex.

Sex: Refers to a person based on their anatomy (external genitalia, chromosomes, and internal reproductive system). Sex terms are male, female, transsexual, and intersex. Sex is biological, although social views and experiences of sex are cultural.

SRS: Acronym for Sexual Reassignment Surgery, the surgery done by transsexuals to make their bodies and their sex identity match. This is also referred to as Gender Confirmation Surgery.

Transgender: 1) An umbrella term for transsexuals, cross-dressers (transvestites), gender queers, and people who identify as neither female nor male and/or as neither a man nor as a woman. Transgender is not a sexual orientation; transgender people may have any sexual orientation. It is important to acknowledge that while some people may fit under this definition of transgender, they may not identify as such. 2) Transgender (sometimes shortened to trans or TG) people are those whose psychological self (“gender identity”) differs from the social expectations for the physical sex with which they were born. To understand this, one must understand the difference between biological sex, which is one’s body (genitals, chromosomes, etc.), and social gender, which refers to levels of masculinity and femininity. Often, society conflates sex and gender, viewing them as the same thing. However, gender and sex are not the same thing. For example, a female with a masculine gender identity or who identifies as a man.

Transfeminine: A person whose femininity or female identity is not universally considered valid. Often used to talk about a wider range of how a person might identify gender and would cover a spectrum of transwomen, as well as genderqueer people, and people with non-binary genders whose femininity or female-ness is being denied.

Transition: A complicated, multi-step process that can take years as transsexuals align their anatomy with their sex identity; this process may ultimately include sex reassignment surgery (SRS), or it may not include any surgical procedures. The most common procedure is “top surgery.”

Transman: A birth sex female person whose gender identity is somewhere along a masculine continuum.

Transmasculine: A person whose masculinity or male identity is not universally considered valid. Often used to talk about a wider range of how a person might identify gender and would cover a spectrum of transmen, as well as genderqueers, and people with non-binary genders whose masculinity or male-ness is being denied.

Transsexual: Transsexual refers to a person who experiences a mismatch of the sex they were born as and the sex they identify as. A transsexual person may undergo medical treatment to change his/her physical sex to match his/her sex identity through hormone treatments and/or surgically. Not all transsexuals can have or desire surgery.

Transwoman: A birth sex male person whose gender identity is somewhere along a feminine continuum.
Two Spirit: A contemporary term that references historical multiple-gender traditions in many Native and indigenous cultures. Many Native/indigenous people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or gender non-conforming identify as Two-Spirit; in many Nations, being Two-Spirit carries both great respect and additional commitments and responsibilities to one’s community.

**BIAS**

Bias: An inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment.

Biphobia: The irrational fear and intolerance of people who are bisexual.

Discrimination: The act of showing partiality or prejudice; a prejudicial act.

Genderism: Holding people to traditional expectations based on gender or punishing or excluding those who do not conform to traditional gender expectations.

Hate crime: Hate crime legislation often defines a hate crime as a crime motivated by the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of any person.

Homophobia: The irrational fear and intolerance of people who are homosexual or of homosexual feelings within one’s self. This assumes that heterosexuality is superior.

Marginalized: Excluded, ignored, or relegated to the outer edge of a group/society/community.

Stereotype: An exaggerated, oversimplified belief about an entire group of people without regard for individual differences.

Transphobia: Fear or hatred of transgender people; transphobia is manifested in a number of ways, including violence, harassment and discrimination.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE**

Ally: Someone who advocates for and supports members of a community other than their own. Allies often reach across differences to achieve mutual goals.

Domestic Partner: One who lives with their beloved and/or is at least emotionally and financially connected in a supportive manner with another. Another word for spouse, lover, significant other, etc.

Gender Role: 1) Socially defined expectations regarding behavior, mannerisms, dress, etc. as related to socially assigned gender. 2) How “masculine” or “feminine” an individual acts. Societies commonly have norms regarding how males and females should behave, expecting people to have personality characteristics and/or act a certain way based on their biological sex.

Heterosexism: Assuming every person to be heterosexual therefore marginalizing persons who do not identify as heterosexual. It involves a belief that heterosexuality is superior to any different form of sexuality and all other sexual orientations.

Heterosexual Privilege: Benefits derived automatically by being (or being perceived as) heterosexual that are denied to individuals who do not identify as heterosexual.

Institutional Oppression: Arrangement of a society used to benefit one group at the expense of another through the use of language, media education, religion, economics, education, and other social institutions.

Internalized Oppression: The process by which an oppressed person comes to believe, accept, or live out the inaccurate stereotypes and misinformation about their group.

Invisible minority: A group whose minority status is not always immediately visible, such as some people with disabilities and LGBTQIA people. This lack of visibility may make organizing for rights difficult.

Sexual minority: Refers to people whose sexual orientations are not heterosexual or people who engage in sexual activities that are not part of the mainstream notions of sexuality.

**CHALLENGING WORDS TO CONSIDER:**

Choice: When an individual refers to another person’s non-heterosexual identity as a choice. This is often used by opponents of the LGBT community who think that being LGBT is a choice and, consequently, think LGBT people should choose to be straight or cisgender.

Homosexual: This word is often used by opponents of the LGBT community. This word is used to emphasize the word “sex” to devalue the emotional and mental attractions that may occur between two same-sex/gender people.

Lifestyle: This word is often used to indicate that an LGBT person in choosing a way of living as opposed to simply living.

Preference: This word is often used to indicate that being LGBT is an inclination as opposed to an identity.