

The Basics – A Guide to Terminology

Androgynous

Being neither distinguishably masculine nor feminine, as in dress, appearance, or behavior. Of indeterminate sex.

Asexual

Lacking interest in or desire for sex. Not sexually attracted to individuals of any gender.

Bisexual

Type of sexual orientation in which a person is emotionally and sexually attracted to either males or females.

Coming Out

The process by which a person begins to self-identify as a sexual and/or gender minority. Coming out is a continual and life-long process that may occur to varying degrees (e.g., a person may be out to their friends, but not to their family).

Cross Dresser

Usually refers to heterosexual men who at times wear clothes, makeup, and/or accessories culturally associated with women. Cross-dressing is usually engaged in for emotional and/or psychological purposes related to gender expression and not for entertainment purposes. People that cross-dress are not seeking to permanently change their sex or live full-time as women. Some cross dressers may also identify as transgender.

Cisgender

Cisgender and cissexual describe related types of gender identity where an individual's self-perception of their gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth; an individual whose gender identity by nature or by choice aligns with culturally determined appropriate roles and behavior based on their sex. Kristen Schilt and Laurel Westbrook define *cisgender* as a label for "individuals who have a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity."

Drag

A person who performs in clothes, makeup, and uses mannerisms usually associated with the opposite sex or gender. Most people that do drag do not consider themselves transgender. Drag is usually done for entertainment purposes. There are Drag Queens (men dressing up as women) and Drag Kings (women dressing up as men).

Gay

A person whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions are to others of the same sex. Sometimes *lesbian* (n. or adj.) is the preferred term for women. See Sexual Orientation. [Some men who have sex with men do not identify as gay.]

Gender Identity

An individual's internal emotional, psychological, and/or spiritual sense of one's gender. For transgender people, their internal gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. Most people have a gender identity of man or woman (or boy or girl). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices. Unlike gender expression (see below) gender identity is not visible to others.

Gender Expression

Refers to the way in which people externally communicate their internal, personal sense of gender (e.g., one's name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, behavior, voice, or body characteristics) to others through behavior and appearance. For transgender people, their birth-assigned sex and their own internal sense of gender identity do not match, and they seek to make their gender expression match their internal identity, rather than their birth-assigned sex.

Gender Non-conforming

A person who doesn't conform to society's expectations of gender expression based on the gender binary, expectations of masculinity and femininity, or how they should identify their gender. It's important to note that not all gender non-conforming people identify as transgender; likewise, not all transgender people are gender non-conforming.

Gender Queer

A person whose gender identity is neither man nor woman, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders. This identity is usually related to or in reaction to the social construction of gender, gender stereotypes and the gender binary system. Some genderqueer people identify under the transgender umbrella while others do not.

Gender Variant

A synonym for "gender diverse" and "gender non-conforming"; "gender diverse" and "gender non-conforming" are preferred to "gender variant" because variance implies a standard normativity of gender.

Hermaphrodite

Considered a pejorative term, referring to a person who is intersex.

Heterosexism

Belief that heterosexuality is superior or more valid than other sexual orientations. Gives people who identify as heterosexual greater social privilege, including increased opportunities for legal, medical, and economic assistance and status.

Heterosexual

People whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions are to people of the opposite sex (males attracted to females, females attracted to males).

Homonegativity

Another term for homophobia that refers to a fear, hatred, and/or disgust for homoeroticism. Homonegativity assumes many forms such as acts of violence, verbal assault, overt discrimination as well as other more subtle forms.

Homophobia

Fear and hatred of anyone who identifies as anything other than heterosexual. Can often be internalized by someone who is having difficulty with her/his own gay, lesbian, or bisexual orientation. A direct result of heterosexism. *Intolerance* or *prejudice* is usually a more accurate description of antipathy toward LGBT people.

Homosexual

People whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex (males attracted to males, females attracted to females). A term originally used by the

medical community to "diagnose" people who were not heterosexual. Considered pejorative to many people who prefer the terms "gay," "lesbian," or "queer."

Intersex

A variety of conditions that lead to atypical development of physical sex characteristics and can involve uncommon and non-binary presentations of the external genitals, internal reproductive organs, sex chromosomes or sex-related hormones. Use "intersex" rather than "hermaphrodite." People who identify as intersex may or may not identify as transgender.

Lesbian

A woman whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to other women. Some lesbians may prefer to identify as gay or queer.

LGBTQIQ

Common abbreviation for (L)esbian, (G)ay, (B)isexual, (T)ransgender (Q)ueer, (I)ntersex and (Q)uestioning.

Pansexual

People whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is encompassing of all gender identities, not those solely represented within the gender binary of male or female (as bisexuals are limited to).

Queer

An umbrella term used for anything not heterosexual. Historically, it has been considered pejorative. However, the term has recently been reclaimed by many GLBT people as a preferred self-identifier, as well as an adjective (e.g., Queer Politics, Queer Studies). Queer should only be applied when describing someone who self-identifies that way or in a direct quote. When Q is seen at the end of "LGBT," it typically means queer and/or questioning.

Questioning

Refers to people who may feel uncertain regarding their gender and/or sexual identity and are in the process of exploring how they identify.

Sex

The classification of people as male, female, or intersex. At birth infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the visual assessment of their external anatomy. However, a person's sex is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.

Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)

Refers to surgical procedures some transgender individuals pursue as part of their transition (*see transition* below). Avoid the phrase "sex change operation." Do not refer to someone as being "pre-op" or "post-op." Not all transgender people choose to, or can afford to, undergo medical surgeries.

Sexual Orientation

Refers to an individual's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. Includes heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, and pansexual. *Transgender is not an indicator of a person's sexual orientation.

Transgender

An umbrella term for people whose anatomy, appearance, self-identification, and/or expression differs from what is stereotypically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth and thus challenges traditional societal gender role expectations and norms. People under the transgender umbrella may identify themselves as cross-dressers, drag queens/kings, or gender queer. Can also be the preferred self-identifier for people who feel their gender identity differs from their birth-assigned sex; they may or may not transition.

Transition

The process by which a person who identifies as transgender changes to align sex with their gender identity. Transitioning can include some or all of the following: changing name and/or sex on legal documents, using different pronouns, dressing differently, hormone therapy, and/or one or more types of surgery. Not all transgender people choose to transition; those that do may choose some but not all of the options related to transition (an F+M or M+F may choose hormonal therapy but never have Sex Reassignment Surgery).

Transsexual

An older term that originated in the medical and psychological communities that still may be preferred by some people who have permanently changed their bodies through medical interventions (including but not limited to hormones and/or surgeries). Unlike transgender, transsexual is not an umbrella term. Many transgender people do not identify as transsexual and prefer the word transgender. It is best to ask which term an individual prefers.

Transvestite

Considered a pejorative term when used to describe someone who is a Cross Dresser.

Terminology adapted from the following sources: apa.org; glad.org, geneq.berkeley.edu/

For a more extensive glossary, please visit the Safe zone website
<http://www.montana.edu/safezone/>