

Common terms associated with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Ally community

Advocate: A person who actively works to end intolerance, educates others, and supports LGBT issues, concerns, equal rights legislation, etc.

Ally: A person who supports and honors sexual and gender diversity, challenges biased remarks and behaviors, and who openly explores one's own biases. An ally can identify as LGBTQ or heterosexual.

Asexual: One who has no significant (to oneself) interest in sexual activity, or who identifies as asexual.

Biological Sex: A binary system (male/female) set by the medical establishment, usually based on reproductive organs or number of certain chromosomes in the DNA.

Biphobia: The oppression or mistreatment of bisexuals. Mistreatment may occur from both members outside and inside the LGBTQA community.

Bisexual: A person who is emotionally, physically, spiritually, and sexually attracted to members of more than one gender, not necessarily at the same time or the same extent. Also can be referred to as Omni-sexual and pansexual.

Camp: A form of humor, in which one makes fun of one's oppression by taking on and exaggerating stereotypes which the oppressor projects onto the oppressed. Camp makes fun of the stereotype and laughs at the sting of the oppression,

Closeted: Hiding one's sexual orientation in all or some part of one's public or personal life.. One who has not "come out of the closet" or who has come out to only a few people.

Coming Out: The life-long process of discovering, defining, and proclaiming ones (non-heterosexual) sexuality. For many gay men and lesbians this is a continuing process which occurs every time they meet someone new. Some gay men and lesbians choose to never come out to others.

Cross Dressing: The act of wearing the clothing of the "opposite" sex for performance, sexual encounters, or comfort. Generally, the term cross dresser is preferred to transvestite.

Drag- King: a person who consciously performs masculinity, sometimes in an exaggerated/theatrical manner, usually in a show or theatre setting.

Drag-Queen: a person who consciously performs femininity, sometimes in an exaggerated/theatrical manner, usually in a show or theatre setting.

Dyke: Dyke is derived from Dike of Ancient Greece, who was a storm goddess. It is a shortened version of Bulldyke. The word is sometimes positively and other times negatively used to capture the image of a masculine woman. Though sometimes used as a derogatory slang term used to identify lesbians, dyke has been positively used by some members of the lesbian community since the second wave of feminism.

Faggot: The term faggot originated in medieval times when a faggot was a bundle of sticks used to stoke a fire. The term came to refer to the burning of Gay men and Lesbians which occurred at the time. Flamer and Flaming Faggot also originated from this experience. Though sometimes used as derogatory a slang term for gay men, faggot has been positively used by some members of the gay community since the major onset of the Gay Rights Movement.

Family of Choice: Persons forming an individual's close social support network, often fulfilling the function of blood relatives. Many gay persons are rejected when families learn of their sexual orientation, while others may remain closeted to biological relatives. In such cases, it is the families of choice who will be called upon in times of illness or personal crisis.

Family of Origin: Biological family or the family in which one was raised. May or may not be a part of a person's support system.

Female: One who has (only) female primary sex characteristics.

Feminine: The gender role assigned to females. Stereotypically includes: nurturing, emotional, timid, quiet, wears dresses and makeup.

Gay: Common word for men with emotional and sexual attraction to other men, but often used in reference to both genders. This word appeared in popular culture in the 1970's to describe homosexuals. It is used mainly as an adjective and underscores sexual orientation as one aspect of an individual, not as the total individual. Frequently used as an umbrella term for the LGBT community.

Gender: Socially constructed view of how one should act in relation to their sex. Examples: masculine, feminine, androgynous.

Gender Identity: Gender identity is how one thinks about their own gender, whether they think of themselves as a man or a woman: masculine or feminine, and to what degree they identify with the arbitrary gender roles placed on us by society.

Gender Roles: Society places arbitrary rules and roles, how one is supposed to act, dress, feel, think, relate to others, etc., on each of us based on a person's sex (what genitalia they have).

Genderqueer: Any LGBT person whose gender presentation is an intentional mixture of gender signifiers, usually a political identity in support of transgender persons and against the binary gender system.

Hate Motivated Offenses: Assault, rape, arson, and murder are crimes under any circumstance, but when a victim of such a crime was targeted simply because of their affiliation (or perceived affiliation) with a minority group, the FBI considers the crime a 'hate crime.' In some states, hate crimes carry an additional penalty beyond the standard penalty for assault, murder, etc. Also known as "gay-bashing", acts of intolerance, or hate crimes.

Heterosexism: Heterosexism is the oppressive idea that there is a natural form of sexuality, which is inevitable and good. Institutionally enforced assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is inherently superior to and preferable to homosexuality or bisexuality. Some examples are: the invisibility of gay men and lesbians, the lack of role models in schools and the media, and the lack of legal and cultural recognition.

Heterosexual Privilege: Advantages that come with heterosexuality in this society and culture; i.e. Marriage and all the benefits that go along with it, acceptance from family, safety, and acceptance in their chosen career field.

Heterosexual: Heterosexual is the clinical term used to describe people who feel a sexual attraction to members of the opposite sex.

Homophobia: Fear, anger, discomfort, intolerance, or lack of acceptance toward LGBT people, or experiencing these feelings about one's own non-heterosexual preference.

Homosexual: The word Homosexual is a clinical term used to refer to people who are sexually attracted to members of their own sex.

Human Sexual Response: Behaviors, thoughts, dreams, fantasies; not just behavior.

Inclusive Language: Use of gender non-specific language to avoid imposing the limiting assumption of heterosexuality and to present an open social climate for non-heterosexuals (ex. Partner vs. husband/wife).

Internalized Homophobia: Experience of shame, aversion, or self-hatred in reaction to one's own feelings of attraction for a person of the same sex.

Intersexed: People born with ambiguous genitals. Formerly referred to hermaphrodites, intersexed people are not easily categorized as male or female because of ambiguous genitals. Most intersexed people do not possess "both" sets of genitals, rather a blending or a different appearance that has been medically unacceptable to most doctors. Intersexuality is fairly common. Many who identify as intersexed believe that early childhood surgical intervention is not only unnecessary but cruel and advocate counseling and support for children and families.

Lavender: This association goes back into ancient times and has been strengthened by the fact that lavender, or purple, is the combination of red (pink) and blue, the traditional gender-identified colors.

Lesbian: A woman who has emotional, physical, and/or sexual attractions to other women. The term Lesbian originates from ancient Greece where the homosexual poet Sappho lived on the isle of Lesbos with other Greek women. It is from this isle that the term originates. Homosexual women sometimes prefer the term Lesbian as opposed to the generic term "Gay," And may use the term dyke within their own community. This term acknowledges the fact that homosexual women have different priorities and experiences than homosexual men.

LGBT/GLBT: This is a very common acronym which stands for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender. Often times one may see LGBT+ (for ally) or LGBTQ (for queer or questioning).

Lifestyle: How a person chooses to live and behave. Being LGBT is not a choice, and therefore is not considered a lifestyle (ie: vegan, hobbies, rural/urban, etc.).

Male: One who has (only) male primary sex characteristics.

Masculine: The gender role assigned to males. Stereotypically includes: strong, stoic, good at sports, wears pants and does not wear makeup.

Monosexual: One who has significant sexual or romantic attractions only to members of one gender or sex. Referring to only those who are straight, gay, or lesbians, not bisexuals or asexual. Regarded as derogatory.

Normal: Can refer to what is statistically more common, but is often confused by heterosexuals to refer to whatever it is that they condone morally. Only the individual can decide what is normal for them and it need not be what is normal to others.

Oppress: To participate in or collude with the oppression of a group.

Oppression: Systematic, supported by society, mistreatment of and misinformation about people who are (perceived to be) members of a particular group. Mistreatment includes economic and social marginalization, which ranges from not including members of the group in one's circle of friends and media reports on and representations of society; the cold shoulder; not consulting with or accepting input from them on decisions which concern them; snide comments, verbal harassment, assault, rape, and murder, all based on the perception that the target person is a member of that group.

Out: As a verb: To disclose a person's sexual orientation to another person. As an adjective: To be open regarding one's sexual orientation in a given situation.

Outing: To declare a person's identity publicly; people can out themselves, or someone can out them either with or without their permission. See "Coming Out"

Pansexuality- or omnisexuality is a sexual orientation, characterized by the potential for aesthetic attraction, romantic love, or sexual desire towards people, regardless of their gender identity or biological sex.

Partner: Primary domestic partner or spousal relationship. Partner can be used in relation to heterosexual and homosexual couples.

Pass: To be perceived by others as a member of the group one chooses, instead of as a member of another group, especially of the gender one was assigned at birth.

Pride: Not being ashamed of oneself and/or showing your pride to others by coming out, marching, etc.

Queer: Derogatory slang terms used to identify LGBT people. In the past few years, Queer has been adopted by many Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender people as a strong, all-inclusive, confrontational, and political label for sexual minorities. It underscores and celebrates the dictionary definitions of "Differing from what is usual and ordinary; odd; singular; strange." When LGBT people identify themselves as queer, they are attempting to defuse a hostile label and throw it back in the face of their oppressors.

Queer Theory: A field of critical theory that emerged in the early 1990s out of the fields of gay and lesbian studies and feminist studies.

Questioning: The process of exploring one's on sexual identity, including but not limited to one's upbringing, expectations from others (family, friends, church, etc.), and inner motivation.

Rainbow Flag: In 1978, San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker designed a flag for the city's Gay Freedom celebration and LGBT movements worldwide have since adopted it as a symbol of gay identity and pride. It has six stripes in the traditional form, but can be seen as streamers, etc, which run in the order of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple. The flag also symbolizes diversity within unity.

Sexual Identity: Sexual Identity is the consistent and enduring sense of one's own sexuality and repeated sexual thoughts, feelings and/or behaviors. Sexual identity is how one thinks of oneself in terms of whom one is sexually and romantically attracted to. The process of sexual identity is on-going and not limited to a LGBT individuals.

Sexual Orientation: Sexual Orientation is defined as a predominant erotic attraction for the same or other sex, or for both sexes in varying degrees. Few, if any, obvious identifiable mannerism exists that distinguish between individuals of different sexual orientations.

Silent Minority: The term silent minority refers to the idea that LGBT individuals are not a visible group to a casual observer. A person cannot solely be picked out as LGBT because of their appearance.

Stonewall: On June 28, 1969, NYC police attempted a routine raid on the Stonewall Inn, a working class gay and lesbian bar in Greenwich Village. Unexpectedly, the patrons resisted, and the incident escalated into a riot that continued for several days. Most people look to this event as the beginning of the American Gay Liberation movement and all subsequent LGBT movements.

Straight: Colloquial for heterosexual.

The Closet: LGBT individuals who conceal their sexual identity from others are sometimes said to be "in the closet." For individuals, the closet may become a place in which you live, unable to tell your secret or a haven away from heterosexism and homophobia.

Transgender: Broad term used to describe the continuum of individuals whose gender identity and expression, to varying degrees, does not correspond with their genetic sex.

Transsexual: A person whose core gender identity is "opposite" their assigned sex. Transsexuals may live as the opposite sex, undergo hormone therapy, and/or have sex reassignment surgery to "match" their bodies with their gender identity.

Transvestite: Man or woman who enjoys wearing the clothes of and appearing as the other gender. While many transvestites are heterosexual, the use of transvestitism in the gay "drag" culture is well documented.

Triangle: Pink Triangle: This was a symbol used by the Nazi's to label gay men in the concentration camps. It has since been adopted as a symbol of identity and pride. Black Triangle: This was a symbol used by the Nazi's to label lesbians and other women deemed 'antisocial' in the concentration camps. It has since been adopted as a symbol of identity and pride.

Unisex: Clothing, behaviors, thoughts, feelings, relationships, etc. which are considered appropriate for members of both genders/sexes.

*Provided with permission from the LGBTQA Advisory Committee at Eastern Illinois University.
www.eiu.edu/~lgbtqa.*