LGBTQIA+ Terminology

Language is constantly evolving, and these definitions are not by any means comprehensive. These are terms of self-identification and should not be used to label others without their consent.

**Ally**: any person who actively combats the oppression of groups of which the ally does not belong, i.e. a straight person combating heterosexism/homophobia or a cisgendered person combating transphobia

**Asexual/Ace**: a person who feels no significant physical or sexual attraction to other people. Asexuality is a spectrum that ranges includes sexual and romantic attractions

**Biological Sex/Natal Sex/Birth Sex/Sex**: The medical term used for the identification of male, female, or intersex i.e. chromosomes, gonads, and/or genitalia

**Binding**: the act of pressing one’s breast to one’s chest with restrictive materials to have the appearance of a more masculine chest

**Bisexual/Bi**: a person who has significant romantic, emotional, physical and/or sexual attractions to people who identify as male and female. The frequency, intensity, or quality of attraction is not necessarily directed towards both genders equally.

**Butch**: A term typically used to identify a person with a masculine gender presentation, although this term has and is still used negatively towards members of the LGBTQIA+ community, this term has been re-appropriated by some queer people to self-identify

**Cisgender/Cis/Gender Normative/Gender Straight**: A person who has a normative gender presentation, when a person's gender identity, gender expression, and biological sex align. A person who is not transgender.

**Cisgender Privilege/Cis privilege**: The societal assumption and norm that all people are cisgender. There are basic civil rights and social privileges that a cisgendered person automatically receives that are systematically denied to transgender persons, simply because of their gender identity/gender presentation

**Closet**: a metaphorical place in which queer people exist when they are unable/willing/unsafe to express their queer identities publicly. Can be very damaging to the psyche and lead to internalized homophobia and transphobia, also used as an adverb “closeted”

**Coming out/Coming out of the Closet**: coming to terms with one’s sexual or gender identity. Can also mean stating openly that one is gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer. Not a necessary process to identify as a member of the queer community

**Cross Dresser**: Typically defined as someone who identifies as one gender who dons clothes or traits of another gender.

**Demisexual**: a person who is not immediately sexually attracted to other people. A person who’s sexual attraction to another person develops after developing a relationship (not necessarily romantic). Often considered within the asexuality spectrum

**Down low**: A term typically used to describe men who have secret sexual relationships on occasion, while maintaining heteronormative identities and lifestyles

**Drag King**: Someone who identifies as a woman but publicly performs male gender, not typically a permanent presentation

**Drag Queen**: Someone who identifies as a man but publicly performs female gender, not typically a permanent presentation

**Dyke**: although this term has and is still used as a slur, this term has been re-appropriated by some lesbians to identify themselves as a type of lesbian that are characterized as tough and more masculine in presentation

**Femme**: A term typically used to describe a person with extremely feminine gender presentation.
**Gender Expression Spectrum**

- **Gender Bending**: The process of any gender expression that is non-normative.
- **Gender Binary**: The socially constructed idea that all people identify as either male or female. This concept ignores all identities that fall on the gender spectrum between male and female.
- **Gender Cues**: Societal norms and practices that indicate gender.
- **Gender Expression**: The outward presentation and performance of gender.
- **Gender/Gender Identity**: How one thinks of one’s own gender. This conviction is not contingent upon the individual’s sex. There are ranges of different gender identities and everyone has an individualized experience.
- **Genderqueer**: A rejection of the gender binary (male/female) in favor of a more fluid, nontraditional identity. This is sometimes used as an umbrella term for all gender non-conforming individuals. Sometimes known as Gender Fluid or Gender Non-Conforming.
- **Gender Spectrum**: The idea that not all people identify as either male or female, some identify somewhere in between male or female or do not identify with the terms ‘male’ or ‘female’ at all. This concept replaces the gender binary.
- **GSM/Gender and Sexual Minority**: Another title for the queer community.
- **Heteronormative**: Societal structure that assumes heterosexual lifestyles/identities are the normal/appropriate way of living.
- **Heterosexism**: The system of oppression that reinforces the belief in the inherent superiority of heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships, thereby negating gays’, lesbians’, and bisexuals’ lives and relationships.
- **Heterosexual Privilege/Heteronormativity**: The societal assumption and norm that all people are heterosexual. There are basic civil rights and social privileges that a heterosexual person automatically receives that are systematically denied to queer persons, simply because of their sexual orientation.
- **Homophobia**: Negative feelings, attitudes, actions, or behaviors towards anyone who is queer, or perceived to identify as queer. Internalized homophobia is a fear of same-sex or queer tendencies within oneself and can lead to repression. Institutionalized homophobia refers to the systematic enforcement of heteronormativity such as homophobic laws, policies, and positions taken by social and governmental institutions.
- **Homosexual**: A person who is attracted to people of the same gender. A bit of an outdated term. Most people prefer the terms “gay”, “lesbian”, “bisexual”, or “queer” to describe their identities.
- **Homosexuality**: Attraction to the same gender. A bit of an outdated term. Most people prefer the terms “gay”, “lesbian”, “bisexual”, or “queer” to describe their identities.
- **Hormone Replacement Therapy, HRT**: The use of biological hormone treatment for gender-variant or trans people to make their body align more closely with their gender.
- **Intersex**: A biological condition, in which a person has non-definitive biological or physical indicators of sex, can manifest in genitalia or chromosomal abnormality. Formally known as hermaphrodite, although the queer community has moved away from that term as it has been determined to be offensive.
- **Lesbian**: A woman-identified person whose primary romantic, emotional, physical, and sexual attractions are to other people who identify as women.
- **Lipstick Lesbian**: An extremely feminine presenting lesbian.
- **LGBTQIA+ (also GLBTQ)**: The acronym for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual”, the acronym may be expanded to a variation of LGBTQIAAPP to include questioning, ally, pansexual, and polyamorous. Often shortened to “the Queer Community” or “Gender and Sexual Minority/GSM”.
- **MTF**: Male-to-female. Indicates a trans individual who was assigned a male identity at birth, but has claimed a female identity.
**Outing**: the act of disclosing the sexual orientation or gender identity of another person against their will. In some cases can be life threatening

**Packing**: wearing something in one’s groin region to have a more masculine appearance

**Pansexual**: someone who is sexually and emotionally attracted to people regardless of their gender. People who do not restrict their emotional and physical attraction to people identifying exclusively as “male” or “female” often use this identity. This term adheres to the idea of a gender spectrum rather than a gender binary.

**Passing**: the ability of a queer person to blend into a gender and heteronormative society, mostly used for gender expression, but can also refer to a cisgendered lesbian or gay person going unnoticed in heteronormative society

**Polyamorous/ Poly**: derived from “Poly” meaning many and “amour” meaning love. Polyamorous sometimes shortened to poly generally refers to a consensual and ethical relationship between three or more people that involves both physical and emotional intimacy between all members of the relationship.

**Queer**: anything outside the ‘norms’ of heterosexuality or cisgendered. Originally used with negative connotations, but is currently being reclaimed by many within the LGBTQIA+ community. Can also denote a political identity or ideology.

**Queer Bashing**: Slang term for hate crimes directed at LGBTQIA+ people

**Questioning**: a state of being in which one is unsure of their gender expression, sexuality, or queer status

**Same Gender Loving**: a term often used by African American queer people to describe gay, lesbian, or bisexual people

**Sex/ Sexual Behavior**: An act, or series of acts, that humans do as a part of the expression of their sexuality.

**Sexuality/ Sexual Orientation**: how one thinks of oneself in terms of to whom one is sexually or romantically attracted. Orientation is not dependent on physical experience, but rather on a person’s feelings and attractions.

**Stud/ Aggressive/ AG**: terms that typically describe a more masculine and dominant presenting lesbian

**Trans/ Transgender**: used both as an umbrella term and as an identity. Broadly, referring to a person who’s gender identity and biological sex do not align. As an identity the term refers to anyone who transgresses traditional sex and gender categories. This can include transgender, transsexual, genderqueer, queer, transvestite, cross-dresser, MTF, FTM, Two-Spirit, etc.

**Transman**: a person whose biological sex was female and whose gender identity is male

**Transphobia**: negative feelings, attitudes, actions or behaviors towards trans people, or people perceived to identify as trans. Can originate from within or outside of the Queer community. Internalized transphobia is a fear of trans tendencies within oneself and can lead to repression of one’s identities. Institutionalized transphobia refers to the systematic enforcement of gender normativity such as transphobic laws, policies, and positions taken by social and governmental institutions

**Transwoman**: a person whose biological sex was male and whose gender identity is female

**Transvestite**: a person who crossdresses. The term has been used as a slur for queer people, some have appropriated the term particularly in England (Hill, Camilla, 2016)