

LGBTQ Terminology

While we have done our best to represent modern usage of queer terminology, it is important to note that meaning varies from person to person. This list is also not extensive, but rather covers common identities and concepts. For further questions, contact PrideCenter@uwlax.edu or Sawyer Johnson (johnson.nich@uwlax.edu).

Individuals are welcome to use this resource with citation.

Foundational Ideas: Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation: One's sexual attraction toward certain gender(s). This does not speak to romantic attraction; for instance, one may be romantically attracted to women and sexually attracted to another gender.

Romantic Orientation: One's romantic attraction toward certain gender(s). This does not speak to sexual attraction. For example, one may maintain a romantic relationship while lacking the desire for a sexual relationship.

Foundational Ideas: Gender Identity

Gender Identity: One's inner sense of their gender(s) or lack thereof.

Gender Expression: How one expresses their gender via clothing, haircuts, mannerisms, and other traits.

Assigned Sex: One's designation at birth as a certain gender. In Western cultures, this means one's assignment as either female or male. Some people may use the terms "AFAB" (assigned female at birth) or "AMAB" (assigned male at birth) to describe their birth assignment.

Gender Binary: The concept that only two genders exist: female and male.

Sex Binary: The concept that only two sexes exist: female and male.

Gender Confirmation Surgery: "GCS" refers to a variety of gender confirming procedures such as hormone therapy, top surgery, and so on. Trans* individuals may seek any number of these procedures, while others may have no interest in GCS.

Terminology: Sexual Orientation

LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer. This acronym represents the queer community,

with the Q enveloping lesser-known identities. Some people may also use GSM or LGBT, the former of which stands for Gender and Sexuality Minority.

Gay: an adjective describing a man who is attracted sexually and/or romantically to other men. Some women also describe themselves as “gay.”

Lesbian: a noun for women who are attracted sexually and/or romantically to other women.

Bisexual: an adjective describing someone who is attracted sexually and/or romantically to two or more genders.

Pansexual: an adjective or noun describing someone for whom gender is irrelevant in matters of sexual and/or romantic attraction.

Same Gender Loving: an adjective describing someone who is attracted romantically and/or sexually to the same gender. “SGL” originated in communities of color, and is thus a term reserved for people of color.

Asexual: an adjective or noun describing someone who experiences little to no sexual attraction. The level of sexual attraction varies from asexual person to asexual person. Some asexual individuals may describe themselves as “ace,” a general nickname, or “Grey A,” which refers to asexual people who experience some sexual attraction.

Questioning: an adjective describing someone who is questioning their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

Queer: an adjective used to encompass the entire LGBTQ community. It may also be used as a specific identity.

Terminology: Gender Identity

Transgender: an adjective used to describe those whose gender identity does not match their assigned sex.

Cisgender: an adjective describing someone whose gender identity matches their assigned sex. This may be shortened to “cis.”

Trans*: Many use “trans” or “trans*” as abbreviations for “transgender.” The asterisk after trans* is used to demonstrate inclusion of non-binary transgender individuals. However, if a transgender

individual identifies as a woman, it would be incorrect to call her a “trans* woman.” She is not non-binary, and thus would be referred to as a “trans woman.”

Transsexual: A transgender individual who seeks gender confirmation surgery.

Non-binary: An adjective describing people who identify as neither solely female nor male. It is an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of transgender identities, such as genderqueer, genderfluid, agender, and so on.

Two-Spirit: A term used to describe multiple gender traditions in many Native cultures. Some may title this a third gender, although Two Spirit experience varies from individual to individual. “Two Spirit” is a term coined by Native American communities, and is thus reserved for Native peoples’ usage.

Intersex: an adjective referring to individuals born with genitalia, anatomy, or chromosomes that do not match society’s strict definitions of “female” or “male.”

Questioning: an adjective describing someone who is questioning their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

Terminology: Slurs

Note: Not all queer individuals consider these words “slurs.” In fact, some members of the LGBTQ community have reclaimed historically offensive words and use them as identities. When in doubt, play it safe and avoid these terms.

Term: faggot, fag, dyke

Why not: These are demeaning words with a violent history.

Term: “That’s so gay!”

Why not: The usage of “gay” as “stupid” implies that the queer community is a negative thing.

Term: she-male, she-he, tranny

Why not: These terms are used to dehumanize transgender women. They also echo a pornographic industry that objectifies trans women.

Terms: “it” as pronouns, transvestite

Why not: These terms are offensive and demeaning to transgender people.

Term: hermaphrodite

Why not: The term “hermaphrodite” is not only inaccurate, but also demeaning. The term “intersex” is

preferable.

Term: transmen, transwomen,

Why not: The missing space between “trans” and “man/woman” implies that transgender women/men are not genuine women/men.

Term: “How far along are you?” “What procedures have you had?” “What is your ‘real’ name?”

Why not: These questions are invasive and unnecessary. If you wouldn’t ask a cisgender person questions about their genitalia, don’t ask a transgender person those questions.

Term: real man, biological woman, natural man, etc.

Why not: These terms imply that transgender people are “fake” men and women. It is preferable to use the term “cisgender” when referring to AMAB or AFAB people who match their assigned sex.

Terminology: Gender Neutral Pronouns

Some people use gender neutral pronouns rather than “she” or “he.” This is why it’s important to always request pronouns (sometimes called preferred gender pronouns, or PGPs) without assuming. Here (<http://web.mit.edu/trans/GenderNeutralPronouns.pdf>) are some common gender neutral pronouns and how to use them.

References: http://transequality.org/Resources/NCTE_TransTerminology.pdf

<https://docs.google.com/document/edit?id=1YKAAZgij2llyyCUWyZtcDz2N9cav2vH1kwaZWNDp3mSQ>

http://www.isna.org/faq/what_is_intersex

<http://www.mblgtacc2012.org/>