**(Very) Basic LGBTQ Terminology**

*The definitions offered here may be useful for navigating the often complex world of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, but may not be perfect or agreed upon by everyone. That’s okay, and that’s part of the trickiness of language! While these expressions can be useful in developing an understanding of the diversity of the LGBTQ+ community, they are for the individual to use in self-identification and not for others to use as labels.*

**Advocate** – (noun) (1) a person who actively works to end intolerance, educate others, and support social equity for a marginalized group. (verb) (2) to actively support/plea in favor of a particular cause, the action of working to end intolerance, educate others, etc.

**Ally** – (noun) a straight or cisgender-identified person who supports, and respects for members of the LGBTQ community

**Androgyny/ous** – (adj) (1) a gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity; (2) occasionally used in place of “intersex” to describe a person with both female and male anatomy

**Asexual** – (adj) having a lack of (or low level of) sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest or desire for sex or sexual partners

**Bigender** – (adj) a person who fluctuates between traditionally “woman” and “man” gender-based behavior and identities, identifying with both genders (and sometimes a third gender)

**Biological Sex** – (noun) a medical term used to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female or male or intersex. Often abbreviated to simply “sex”.

**Biphobia** – (noun) a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, or discomfort) that one may have/express towards bisexual individuals. Biphobia can be seen within the queer community as well as straight society.

**Bisexual** – (adj) a person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to males/men and females/ women. This attraction does not have to be equally split between genders.

**Butch** – (noun & adj) a person who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. ‘Butch’ is sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but is also claimed as an affirmative identity label.

**Cisgender** – (adj) a person whose gender identity and biological sex assigned at birth align (e.g., man and male-assigned)

**Cisnormativity** – (noun) the assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to trans\* identities or people. Leads to invisibility of non-cisgender identities

**Closeted** – (adj) an individual who is not open to themselves or others about their (queer) sexuality or gender identity. This may be by choice and/or for other reasons such as fear for one’s safety, peer or family rejection or disapproval and/or loss of housing, job, etc. Also known as being “in the closet.” When someone chooses to break this silence they “come out” of the closet. (See coming out)

**Coming Out** – (1) the process by which one accepts and/or comes to identify one’s own sexuality or gender identity (to “come out” to oneself). (2) The process by which one shares one’s sexuality or gender identity with others (to “come out” to friends, etc.).

**Cross-dresser** – (noun) someone who wears clothes of another gender/sex.

**Drag King** – (noun) someone who performs masculinity theatrically.

**Drag Queen** – (noun) someone who performs femininity theatrically.

**Fluid(ity)** – generally with another term attached, like gender-fluid or fluid-sexuality, fluid(ity) describes an identity that is a fluctuating mix of the options available (e.g., man and woman, bi and straight)

**FTM / F2M** – abbreviation for female-to-male transgender or transsexual person.

**Gay** – (adj) (1) a term used to describe individuals who are primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same gender. More commonly used when referring to males, but can be applied to females as well. (2) An umbrella term used to refer to the queer community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual.

**Gender Binary** – (noun) the idea that there are only two genders – male/female or man/woman and that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or.

**Gender Expression** – (noun) the external display of one’s gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally measured on scales of masculinity and femininity.

**Gender Fluid** - (adj) gender fluid is a gender identity best described as a dynamic mix of boy and girl. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix of the two “traditional” genders.

**Gender Identity** – (noun) the internal perception of one’s gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don’t align with what they understand their options for gender to be. Common identity terms include man, woman, and genderqueer

**Gender Pronoun** (or Preferred Gender Pronoun/PGP)- is simply the pronoun or set of pronouns that an individual would like others to use when talking to or about that individual. In English, the singular pronouns that we use most frequently are: I, you, she, her, he, him, and it. “I”, “you” and “it” are what we call “gender neutral” or “all gender”, but “she”, “her”, “he” and “him” are gendered. This can create an issue for transgender and gender nonconforming people, because others may not use the pronouns they prefer when speaking to them or about them. Some choose to use “they/them” as singular gender-neutral pronouns. Some choose to use new pronouns such as “ze/hir” (See Ze/Hir).

**Genderqueer** - (adj) is a catch-all term for gender identities other than man and woman, thus outside of the gender binary and cisnormativity (sometimes referred to as non-binary). People who identify as genderqueer may think of themselves as one or more of the following:

* both man and woman (bigender, pangender)
* neither man nor woman (genderless, agender)
* moving between genders (genderfluid)
* third gender or other-gendered; includes those who do not place a name to their gender

**Gender Variant** – (adj) someone who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g. transgender, transsexual, intersex, gender-queer, cross-dresser, etc.).

**Heteronormativity** – (noun) the assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. Leads to invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexualities.

**Homophobia** – (noun) an umbrella term for a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, or discomfort) that one may have towards members of LGBTQ community. The term can also connote a fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as LGBTQ.

**Intersex** – (adj) someone whose combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals differs from the binary-defined patterns of male or female. Formerly known as “hermaphrodite,” but this term is now considered outdated and derogatory.

**Lesbian** – (noun) a term used to describe women attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other women (trans\* or cisgender)

**LGBTQIA** (or QuILTBAG) – Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\*, queer/questioning, intersex, and ally/asexual. Has many variations, and also limitations (difficult to represent all identities in the acronym without becoming unwieldy.)

**MTF/ M2F** – abbreviation from male-to-female transgender or transsexual person

**Pansexual** – (adj) a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions

**Queer** – (adj) used as an umbrella term to describe individuals who identify as non-straight. Also used to describe people who have non-normative gender identity or as a political affiliation. Due to its historical use as a derogatory term, it is not embraced or used by all members of the LGBTQ community. The term queer can often be use interchangeably with LGBTQ.

**Questioning** (verb, adjective) - an individual who is unsure about or is exploring their own sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Same Gender Loving / SGL** – (adj) a term sometimes used by members of the African-American/Black community to express an alternative sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols of European descent.

**Sexual Orientation** – (noun) the type of sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction one feels for others.

**Straight** – (adj) a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the opposite sex. A more colloquial term for the word heterosexual.

**Trans\*** – (noun) an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans\* people may identify with a particular descriptive term (e.g., transgender, transsexual, genderqueer, FTM).

**Transgender** – (1) An umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially defined gender norms. (2) A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex.

**Transman** – (noun) An identity label sometimes adopted by female-to-male transgender people or transsexuals to signify that they are men while still affirming their history as females. (sometimes referred to as transguy)

**Transphobia** –(noun) the fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of trans\* people, the trans\* community, or gender ambiguity. Transphobia can be seen within the queer community, as well as in general society.

**Transsexual** – (noun & adj) a person who identifies psychologically as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals often wish to transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex.

**Transwoman** – (noun) an identity label sometimes adopted by male-to-female transsexuals or transgender people to signify that they are women while still affirming their history as males.

**Two-Spirit** – (noun) is an umbrella term traditionally used by Native American people to recognize individuals who possess qualities or fulfill roles of both genders

**Ze / Hir** – alternate pronouns that are gender neutral and preferred by some trans\* people.  Pronounced /zee/ and /here/ they replace “he” and “she” and “his” and “hers” respectively.  Alternatively some people who are not comfortable/do not embrace he/she use the plural pronoun “they/ their” as a gender neutral singular pronoun.