

SHORT DEFINITION LIST

Ally: Describes a person who confronts and challenges heterosexism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexual privilege in herself or himself and others.

Bisexual: Describes a person who is attracted to both men and women.

Cisgender: Describes a person whose gender identity matches his or her sex assigned at birth.

Coming Out: Describes the act or process of voluntarily disclosing one's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Gay: Describes a person who is attracted to individuals of the same gender. While historically used to refer specifically to men, it is often used to refer to women attracted to other women, as well.

Gender: A social construct used to classify a person as a man, woman, or some other identity. Fundamentally different from the sex assigned at birth, it is often closely related to the role that a person plays or is expected to play in society.

Gender Expression: Describes how individuals communicate their gender to others. People express and interpret gender through hairstyles, clothing, physical expression and mannerisms, physical alterations of their body, or by choosing a name that reflects their own idea of gender identity.

Gender Identity: A person's internal identification or self-image as male, female, something in between, or outside of the male/female binary. Everyone has a gender identity. One's gender identity may or may not be consistent with one's sex assigned at birth.

Gender Non-Conforming (GNC): Describes a person who does not subscribe to gender expression or roles imposed by society. Similar terms include: *gender creative*, *genderfluid*, *gender variant*, *genderqueer*, and *pangender*. One example would be a girl or woman who, in the past, may have been referred to as a "tomboy."

Heterosexuality: Describes a sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to individuals of the opposite sex.

Homophobia: The irrational hatred and fear of lesbian or gay people, or disapproval of other sexual orientations, regardless of motive. Homophobia includes prejudice, intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and acts of violence against people on the basis of their gay or lesbian identity. It occurs on personal, institutional, and societal levels, and is closely linked with transphobia and biphobia. Internalized homophobia is the fear and self-hate of one's own gay or lesbian identity, which can occur for individuals who have been conditioned throughout childhood with negative ideas about sexual orientations other than heterosexuality.

Intersex: Describes a set of medical conditions that feature congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system. That is, intersex people are born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, or internal reproductive systems that are not considered "typical" for either males or females.
[Note: *Hermaphrodite* is an offensive and out-of-date term for an intersex person.]

“In the Closet”: Refers to a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex person who chooses not to disclose his or her sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity to friends, family, co-workers, or society. There are varying degrees of being “in the closet.” For example, a person can be “out” in his or her social life, but “in the closet” at work or with family. Also known as “Down-low” or “D/L.”

Lesbian: Describes a woman who is attracted to other women.

LGBT: An acronym used to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, or the community as a whole. There are many other variations or extensions of the LGBT/GLBT acronym that include initials to represent terms such as questioning, queer, intersex, allied and two-spirited.

This curriculum uses the acronym “LGBT” in the broadest sense possible. While there are many other acronyms that reflect a more nuanced understanding of the breadth of identities that exist within the SOGIE spectrum (e.g., LGBTQIAA2-S), the choice to use “LGBT” was made for the sake of brevity and uniformity. Because terminology is constantly evolving and because certain groups may gravitate to certain terms and abbreviations over others, it is difficult to come to a commonly agreed-upon acronym that reflects all perspectives. The Equity Project’s use of “LGBT” is intended to be as inclusive of all other identities as possible, unless otherwise specified (e.g., with regard to research that focuses on particular demographics).

Queer: An umbrella term used to refer to all LGBT people; the term can be a political statement as well as an identity, seeking to expand upon limited sexual and gender-based categories. For some, “queer” has a negative connotation, given its historical use as a pejorative term. Many LGBT people, however, have reclaimed the word and now use it in a positive light. Many people use the term “queer” because other terms do not accurately describe them.

Questioning: People who are unsure of, or in the process of, discovering, their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Sex: Assigned at birth, a biological construct based primarily on physical attributes such as chromosomes, external and internal genital and reproductive anatomy, and hormones.

Sexual Orientation: An attraction to others that is shaped at an early age (usually by about the age of ten). Sexual orientation falls on a spectrum that ranges from attraction to only men or only women, to varying degrees of attraction to both men and women, to attraction to neither men nor women.

Transgender: Describes a person whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth do not match.

Two Spirit: A term used in some Native American communities for persons who identify with gender roles of both men and women, and/or are considered a separate or third gender.