

The CalArts Dictionary

Student Identity Project



Glossary of terms: 2018-19 edition

There are many different terms and acronyms related to gender identity, sexuality and expression. Here are some of the most common words, acronyms and phrases, adapted from Portland State University.



Glossary of terms: 2018-19 edition

Ally

A person (outside, part, or all of the LGBTQIA community) who supports LGBTQIA people. Someone who actively confronts heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexual, and cisgender privilege in themselves and others; has a concern for the well-being of LGBTQIA people; and a belief that heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, monosexism, transphobia, and cissexism are social justice issues.



Asexual

A person who does not experience sexual attraction to others and/or does not experience interest in sex. Asexuality is distinct from abstention from sexual activity and celibacy, which are behavioral and generally motivated by factors such as an individual's personal or religious beliefs. Some asexual people may engage in sexual activity for various reasons including to please romantic partners.



Biphobia

The fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of bisexuals, which is oftentimes related to the current binary standard. Biphobia can be seen within the LGBTQIA community, as well as in general society.



Bisexual

A person who is emotionally, physically, spiritually, and sexually attracted to members of more than one gender. Some prefer less binary based terms such as omnisexual and pansexual.



Cisgender

The prefix 'Cis' is of Latin origin, meaning "on the same side as or of". Therefore, someone who is cisgender has a gender identity that is the same as the gender they were assigned at birth. Cisgender is the opposite of transgender/trans. "Cisgender" is preferred over terms like "biological", "genetic", or "real" male or female which set up cis people as the norm and trans people as the inadequate other.



Cissexual

Someone who feels comfortable with the gender identity and gender expression expectations assigned to them based on their assigned sex at birth.



Crossdresser

Someone who dresses as and presents themselves as a gender other than the one they typically identify with. Cross dressing can be purely aesthetic, sexual, a facet of someone's gender identity, or have other meanings.



Drag

Taking on the appearance and characteristics associated with a certain gender, usually for entertainment purposes and often to expose the humorous and performative elements of gender.



FTM

Abbreviation which stands for “female-to-male” and is usually synonymous with trans man but which can also be used by other AFAB (assigned female at birth) trans people. This term is problematic to some AFAB trans people as they feel they were never female and because X to Y terms can put too much focus on traditional means of physical transition.



Gay

Can refer to a man who has emotional, physical, and/or sexual attractions to other men. Also used for homosexual people generally.



Gender

A complex combination of roles, expressions, identities, performances, and more, that is assigned gendered meaning by a society. Gender is defined by both individuals and by society, and how gender is embodied and understood varies from culture to culture and from person to person. Gender is more complex than a binary or even a simple spectrum.



Gender Expression

The way you present or appear to other people.



Gender Identity

An individual's internal sense of their gender. One's gender identity may or may not align with their assigned gender, and one's gender identity is not visible to others.



Genderqueer

This term can be used as an umbrella term for all people who queer gender, as a similar term to gender nonconforming or as a specific non-binary gender identity.



Heterosexual

A man who has emotional, physical, spiritual, and sexual attractions to women or vice versa. This is also the sexuality that dominant discourse prescribes.



Homophobia

Fear, anger, discomfort, intolerance, or lack of acceptance toward LGBTQ people, homosexuality, or any behavior or belief that does not conform to rigid sex role stereotypes. The internalized version of this is having these feelings about one's own non-heterosexual orientation.



Intersex Person

A person born with any manner of “ambiguity” in terms of gendered physical characteristics. This can include genitals, reproductive organs, hormones, chromosomes, or any combination thereof. Intersex is a more modern term that replaces the out of date term 'hermaphrodite'. Many intersex people believe that early childhood surgical intervention is not only unnecessary but cruel and advocate counseling and support for children and families.



Lesbian

A woman who has emotional, physical, and/or sexual attractions to other women.



LGBTQQIAAP

*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning,
Intersex, Asexual, Ally, Pansexual*



MTF

Abbreviation which stands for “male-to-female” and is usually synonymous with trans woman but which can also be used by other AMAB (assigned male at birth) trans people. This term is problematic to some AMAB trans people as they feel they were never male and because X to Y terms can put too much focus on traditional means of physical transition.



Pansexual

A person who is emotionally, physically, spiritually, and sexually attracted to members of all genders. While bisexuality categorizes attraction based on people of the same and different gender from oneself, pansexuality is a term that is often used to reflect the fluidity of the gender spectrum. Some pansexual people may also describe themselves as gender blind, meaning gender does not play any role in to whom they are attracted.



Pronouns (currently in use at CalArts)

He/him/his • She/her/hers • They/them/theirs • Ze/hir/hirs • Ze/zir/zirself • A person's name



Queer

Derogatory slang term used to identify LGBT people. This term has been embraced and reinvented as a positive, proud, political identifier when used by LGBT people among and about themselves.



Questioning

The process of exploring one's own sexual and/or gender identity.



SEX

A medical term designating a certain combination of gonads, chromosomes, secondary sex characteristics, and hormonal balances. A binary system (male or female) set by the medical establishment, usually based on genitals and sometimes chromosomes. Because this is usually divided into 'male' and 'female' this category assigns gendered meaning to bodies and ignores the existence of intersex and trans people.



Sexual Orientation

The direction of one's sexual interest toward members of the same, different, both, or multiple genders. It is based on to whom a person is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted.



Trans Man

A man who was assigned female at birth (meaning they were medically and legally designated as female and likely raised as such) but then came to identify as a man. Some people may identify as transmen, without the space, to indicate that their gender is somehow more complex than simply being a man.



Trans Woman

A woman who was assigned male at birth (meaning they were medically and legally designated as male and likely raised as such) but then came to identify as a woman. Some people may identify as transwomen, without the space, to indicate that their gender is somehow more complex than simply being a woman.



Transgender

An umbrella term for a range of people, behaviors, and expressions that transgress society's view of gender as necessarily fixed, unmoving, and following from one's biological sex.



Transphobia

The irrational fear of those who are trans, gender non-conforming, or those perceived as such due to the inability to deal with gender ambiguity. Transphobia can be seen within the LGBTQIA community, as well as in general society.



Transsexual

This term often refers to binary trans people (trans men and trans women), or to trans people who physically transition in any way. While still a preferred term for many, some people dislike the term because of its connection to the medicalization of trans people and the focus it can put on physical transition.



World Gender Customs

For more information about World Gender Norms, view the [World Gender Customs map via PBS](#).

