

Core Vocabulary

Large Group 101 Low Trust 15 mins LGBTQ

Necessary supplies

- Participant vocabulary sheet
- Writing utensil

Goals & objectives

- To cover the essential vocab related to gender and sexuality
- Clarify any misconceptions or misunderstandings around commonly used terms

Step-by-step walk through

1. Start the activity by instructing the participants on what the activity will cover.
2. Give them about 2-3 minutes to go through the list of terms. Ask them to only read the terms, not the definitions.
3. Instruct participants to read the words and any words they've never heard before to put a star next to these words. Any words they feel unsure about they should put a check next to.
4. Once participants have looked through all the terms, beginning with the starred terms on the first sheet, review the vocabulary. Any terms people have a star next to or a check, ask a participant to read the definition aloud and then ask for clarifying questions.
5. Add tid-bits of your own and be sure to clarify parts of speech when important. If you get snagged on words that are around gender identity, transgender individuals, and the intersection of those and identities you can clarify that you'll go over these terms in more detail during the genderbread person lecture later in the training.
6. Advise participants in the resource guide they will find a link to the full list of terms for them to explore more on their own. Let them know you highly recommend taking time at some point to read through all the terms as they are all helpful and important to know.

Notes

All of the bullets under the words above are facilitator notes and additional tidbits for you to know, they are not provided on the participant version.

Vocabulary is essential to understanding and exploring LGBTQ issues. Be sure that you're comfortable explaining the words that you share with your participants.

Using the correct part of speech for certain words is crucial. Some words are not encouraged for use in their noun form and should exclusively be considered adjective only words. Other times a word can be both a noun and an adjective and be perfectly affirming. What's important to remember is when in doubt, adjectives are safer. They add on an aspect of someone's identity rather than reducing them to a single identity. Example: It feels different when you say, "Meg is a blonde," vs. "Meg is blonde." So keep in mind some words are adjective only, and if you're in doubt, adjectives are the way to go!

These definitions and terms change (sometimes quite rapidly), don't be alarmed if you haven't seen a term before or have heard a different definition, they evolve and shift often. They are all to be considered "working" definitions.

For some of these terms their connotations are just as important as their denotations - so be sure to pay attention to not only what they mean, but how they are received.

**This list is neither comprehensive nor inviolable. With identity terms, trust the person who is using the term and their definition of it, above any dictionary. These definitions are the creation of a cultural commons: emails, online discussions, and in-person chats, curated by Sam Killermann and Meg Bolger, honing and adjusting language to -- our humble goal -- have the definitions resonate with at least 51 out of 100 people who use the words. We change the language below as our culture changes its meaning. For a more expansive list of definitions check out - bit.ly/SZP_VocabFULL*



Ally - (noun) a (typically straight- or cis-identified) person who supports, and respects for members of the LGBTQ community. While the word doesn't necessitate action, we consider people to be active allies who take action upon this support and respect, this also indicates to others that you are an ally.

- “Coming out” as an ally is when you reveal (or take an action that reveals) your support of the LGBTQ community. Being an active supporter can, at times, be stigmatizing, though it is not usually recognized many allies go through a “coming out process” of their own.

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. Asexuality exists on a spectrum from people who experience no sexual attraction or have any desire for sex to those who experience low levels and only after significant amounts of time, many of these different places on the spectrum have their own identity labels. Another term used within the asexual community is “ace,” meaning someone who is asexual.

- Asexuality is different than celibacy in that it is a sexual orientation whereas celibacy is an abstaining from a certain action.
- Not all asexual people are aromantic.

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 referred to as simply “sex,” “physical sex,” “anatomical sex,” or specifically as “sex assigned [or designated] at birth.”

- Often seen as a binary but as there are many combinations of chromosomes, hormones, and primary/secondary sex characteristics, it's more accurate to view this as a spectrum (which is more inclusive of intersex people as well as trans*-identified people)
- Is commonly conflated with gender

Biphobia - (noun) a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have/express towards bisexual individuals. Biphobia can come from and be seen within the queer community as well as straight society. Biphobic - (adj) a word used to describe an individual who harbors some elements of this range of negative attitudes towards bisexual people

- Really important to recognize that many of our “stereotypes” of bisexual people - they're overly sexual, greedy, it's just a phase - are negative and stigmatizing (and therefore biphobic) and that gay, straight, and many other queer individuals harbor these beliefs.

Bisexual - (adj) a person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to male/men and females/women. Other individuals may use this to indicate an attraction to individuals who identify outside of the gender binary as well and may use bisexual as a way to indicate an interest in more than one gender or sex (i.e. men and genderqueer people). This attraction does not have to be equally split or indicate a level of interest that is the same across the genders or sexes an individual may be attracted to.

- Can simply be shortened to bi
- Because it is the most commonly understood term outside of gay/straight many people who do not believe in the binary categories that bisexual can imply still use the term to indicate their sexual orientation because it is largely understood by others.

Cisgender - (adj; pronounced “siss-jendur”) a person whose gender identity and biological sex assigned at birth align (e.g., man and male-assigned). A simple way to think about it is if a person is not trans*, they are cisgender.

- “Cis” is a latin prefix that means “on the same side [as]” or “on this side [of]”

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.).

- This is a continual, life-long process. Everyday, all the time, one has to evaluate and re-evaluate who they are comfortable coming out to, if it is safe, and what the consequences might be.

Gay - (adj) (1) a term used to describe individuals who are primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex and/or gender. More commonly used when referring to males/men-identified ppl who are attracted to males/men-identified ppl, but can be applied to females/women-identified ppl 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.

- "Gay" is a word that's had many different meanings throughout time. In the 12th century is meant "happy," in the 17th century it was more commonly used to mean "immoral" (describing a loose and pleasure-seeking person), and by the 19th it meant a female prostitute (and a "gay man" was a guy who had sex with female prostitutes a lot). It wasn't until the 20th century that it started to mean what it means today. Pretty crazy.

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. Also referred to as "gender presentation."

Gender Identity - (noun) the internal perception of an 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 labels include man, woman, genderqueer, trans, and more.

- Generally confused with biological sex, or sex assigned at birth

Genderqueer - (adj) a gender identity label often used by people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman; or as an umbrella term for many gender non-conforming or non-binary identities (e.g., agender, bigender, genderfluid). Genderqueer people may think of themselves as one or more of the following, and they may define these terms differently:

- may combine aspects man and woman and other identities (bigender, pangender);
- not having a gender or identifying with a gender (genderless, agender);
- moving between genders (genderfluid);
- third gender or other-gendered; includes those who do not place a name to their gender having an overlap of, or blurred lines between, gender identity and sexual and romantic orientation.

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. Often included in this concept is a level of gender normativity and gender roles, the assumption that individuals *should* identify as men and women, and be masculine men and feminine women, and finally that men and women are a complimentary pair.

Homophobia - (noun) an umbrella term for a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure, 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.

The term is extended to bisexual and transgender people as well; however, the terms biphobia and transphobia are used to emphasize the specific biases against individuals of bisexual and transgender communities.

- May be experienced inwardly as an individual begins to question their own sexuality

Homosexual - (adj) a [medical] term used to describe a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex/gender. This term is considered stigmatizing due to its history as a category of mental illness, and is discouraged for common use (use gay or lesbian instead).

- Until 1973 “Homosexuality” was classified as a mental disorder in the DSM Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. This is just one of the reasons that there are such heavy negative and clinical connotations with this term.
- There was a study done prior to DADT (Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell) being revoked about peoples’ feelings towards open queer service members. When asked, “How do you feel about open gay and lesbian service members,” there was about 65% support (at the time).” When the question was changed to, “How do you feel about open homosexual service members,” the same demographic of people being asked - support drops over 20%. There are different connotations to the word homosexual then there are to gay/lesbian individuals that is powerful and salient both to straight and queer people.

Intersex - (adj) someone whose combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals differs from the two expected patterns of male or female. In the medical care of infants the initialism DSD (“Differing/Disorders of Sex Development”). Formerly known as **hermaphrodite** (or hermaphroditic), but these terms are now considered outdated and derogatory.

- Often seen as a problematic condition when babies or young children are identified as intersex, it was for a long term considered an “emergency” and something that doctors moved to “fix” right away in a newborn child. There has been increasing advocacy and awareness brought to this issue and many individuals advocate that intersex individuals should be allowed to remain intersex past infancy and to not treat the condition as an issue or medical emergency.

Lesbian - (noun/adj) a term used to describe females/women-identified people attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other females/women -identified people.

- The term lesbian is derived from the name of the Greek island of Lesbos and as such is sometimes considered a Eurocentric category that does not necessarily represent the identities of Black women and other non-European ethnic groups.
- Many individual women from diverse ethnic groups, including Black women, embrace the term “lesbian” as an identity label.
- While many women use the term lesbian, many women also will describe themselves as gay, this is a personal choice. Many prefer the term gay because of its use in adjective form.

LGBTQ / GSM / DSG / + - (adj) initialisms used as shorthand or umbrella terms for all folks who have a non-normative (or queer) gender or sexuality, there are many different initialisms people prefer. **LGBTQ** is Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer and/or Questioning (sometimes people at a + at the end in an effort to be more inclusive); **GSM** is Gender and Sexual Minorities; **DSG** is Diverse Genders and Sexualities.

Other popular options include the initialism GLBT and the acronym QUILTBAG (Queer [or Questioning] Undecided Intersex Lesbian Trans* Bisexual Asexual [or Allied] and Gay [or Genderqueer]).

- There is no “correct” initialism or acronym -- what is preferred varies by person, region, and over time
- The efforts to represent more and more identities led to some folks describing the ever-lengthening initialism as “Alphabet Soup,” which was part of the impetus for GSM and DSG

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

- sometimes shortened to pan

Passing - (verb) (1) a term for trans* people being accepted as, or able to “pass for,” a member of their self-identified gender/sex identity (regardless of birth sex) without being identified as trans*. (2) An LGBT/queer individual who is believed to be or perceived as straight.

- Passing is a controversial term because it often is focusing on the person who is observing or interacting with the individual who is “passing” and puts the power/authority in observer rather than giving agency to the individual
- While some people are looking to “pass” or perhaps more accurately be accepted for the identity that they feel most aligns with who they are “passing” is not always a positive experience
- Some individuals experience a sense of erasure or a feeling of being invisible to their own community when they are perceived to be part of the dominant group.

Queer - (adj) used as an umbrella term to describe individuals who don’t identify as 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.

- If a person tells you they are not comfortable with you referring to them as queer, don’t. Always respect individual’s preferences when it comes to identity labels, particularly contentious ones (or ones with troubled histories) like this.
- Use the word queer only if you are comfortable explaining to others what it means, because some people feel uncomfortable with the word, it is best to know/feel comfortable explaining why you choose to use it if someone inquires.

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

Romantic Attraction - (noun) an affinity for someone that evokes the want to engage in relational intimate behavior (e.g., flirting, dating, marriage), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-non, to intense). Often conflated with **sexual attraction** or **emotional/spiritual attraction**.

Sexual Attraction - (noun) an affinity for someone that evokes the want to engage in physical intimate behavior (e.g., kissing, touching, intercourse), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-non, to intense). Often conflated with **romantic attraction** or **emotional/spiritual attraction**.

Sexual Orientation - (noun) the type of **sexual, romantic, emotional/spiritual attraction** one feels for others, often labeled based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are attracted to (often mistakenly referred to as sexual preference)

Straight - (adj) a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to people who are not their same sex/gender. A more colloquial term for the word **heterosexual**.

Trans*/Transgender - (adj) (1) An umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially defined gender norms. Trans with an * is often used to indicate that you are referring to the larger group nature of the term. (2) A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex.

- Because sexuality labels (e.g., gay, straight, bi) are generally based on the relationship between the person's gender and the genders they are attracted to, trans* sexuality can be defined in a couple of ways. Some people may choose to self-identify as straight, gay, bi, lesbian, or pansexual (or others, using their gender identity as a basis), or they might describe their sexuality using other-focused terms like gynosexual, androsexual, or skoliosexual

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. Transphobia is often manifested in violent and deadly means. While the exact numbers and percentages aren't incredibly solid on this, it's safe to say that trans* people are far more likely than their cisgender peers (including LGB people) to be the victims of violent crimes and murder.

Core Vocabulary - Participant Sheet

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