



C O N V E R S A T I O N S

Ally

Someone who is a friend, advocate, and/or activist for LGBTQ+ people. A heterosexual ally is also someone who confronts heterosexism in themselves and others. The term ally is generally used for any member of a dominant group who is a friend, advocate or activist for people in an oppressed group.

Bisexual, Bi

An individual who is physically, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to men and women. Bisexuals need not have had a sexual experience with both men and women; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all to identify as bisexual.

No, bisexuality is not a state of confusion.

Bi-phobia

Range of negative attitudes (fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure, discomfort) that one may have or express towards bisexual individuals. Bi-phobia can come from and be seen within the queer community as well as the larger heterosexist and heteronormative society.

Cisgender; Cisnormativity

Cisgender is a person whose gender identity and biological sex (assigned at birth) align. Person who is not transgender is cisgender. Cisnormativity is a false assumption, that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to transgender identities. Leads to invisibility and marginalization of non-cisgender identities.

Closeted

Individuals who are not open to themselves or others about their 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 or job. Also known as being "in the closet."

Only clothes and childhood monsters belong in a closet.

Coming Out

Individuals who are not open to themselves or others about their 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 or job. Also known as being "in the closet."

Only clothes and childhood monsters belong in a closet.

Cross-Dressing

To occasionally wear clothes traditionally associated with people of the other sex. Cross-dressers are usually comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth and may not wish to change it. “Cross-dresser” should NOT be used to describe someone who has transitioned to live full-time as the other sex or who intends to do so in the future. Cross-dressing is a form of gender expression and is not necessarily tied to erotic activity. Cross-dressing is not indicative of sexual orientation.

Derogatory synonym: Transvestite

Deadnaming

Act of referring to a transgender person's 'birth' name instead of their chosen name.

The practice of referring to a transgender person with their non-affirmed name (used prior to transition) is disrespectful to their identity and could trigger dysphoric feelings.

E.g.: Many news articles continue to deadname Chelsea Manning by referring to her as Bradley Manning.

Dyke

Term referring to a masculine presenting (butch) lesbian. Formerly used as a derogatory term to stereotype and stigmatize lesbians, the term dyke has been reclaimed affirmatively by many, as an act of taking back control of words. However, the word could trigger bad memories for some, and is still used as an insult by many homophobes.

Tip: When used by the ingroup (lesbians) the word has a neutral or affirmative interpretation, and when used by the out group its viewed as an insult and offensive.

Drag Queen/King

Used by people who present socially in clothing, name, and/or pronouns that differ from their everyday gender, usually for enjoyment, entertainment, and/or self-expression. Drag queens typically have everyday lives as men. Drag kings typically live as women when not performing.

Unless they are drag performers, most trans people would be offended by being identified as drag queens/kings.

Endosex

Opposite of intersex. It means that a person has innate physical sex characteristics (anatomy, chromosomes, genitals) that match what is conventionally expected for female or male bodies.

Endosex bodies are in no way superior to intersex bodies.

Fluid | Fluidity

Describes an identity that may change or shift over time. Belief that gender and sexual identities are more fluid (on a continuum/spectrum) than the conventional binary categories of male vs female and heterosexuality vs homosexuality.

Example of usage: gender-fluid, fluid-sexuality.

Femme

Someone who identifies as feminine (womanly, ladylike, girlish, effeminate, soft, tender) whether physically, mentally or emotionally. Historically used in the lesbian community, it is being increasingly used by other LGBTQ* people to describe gender expressions that reclaim and disrupt traditional constructs of femininity.

Gay

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 people who are attracted to males/men-identified people. Can be applied to females/women-identified people as well.

Gender

A social construct used to classify a person as a man, woman, or some other identity. Fundamentally different from the sex one is assigned at birth. Genders come with: societal roles and expectations of how an individual should act, think, and/or feel based on an assigned gender in relation to society's binary biological sex system. Often incessantly associated to neutral constructs like fashion and aesthetic preferences.

Gender Identity

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 labels include man, woman, genderqueer, non-binary, transgender, and more.

Question: How many genders exist?

Answer: As many as the people on earth.

Hint: Gender is a spectrum.

Gender Expression

External (social) display of one's gender, through a combination of dress, demeanour, social behaviour, and other factors, generally measured on scales of masculinity, femininity, or androgyny.

Individuals may embody their gender in a multitude of ways and have terms beyond these to name their gender expression(s).

Gender Non-Conforming

Adjective for people who do not subscribe to societal expectations of typical gender expressions or roles. The term is more commonly used to refer to gender expression (how one behaves, acts, and presents themselves to others) as opposed to gender identity (one's internal sense of self).

Genderqueer

Gender identity label often used by people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman. An umbrella term for many GNC identities - agender, bigender, gender creative, genderfluid, genderflux.

Genderqueer people may think of themselves as one or more identities; they may define gender terms differently; may not identify with a gender (genderless, agender); move between genders (genderfluid); refer to themselves as third gender or other-gender.

Gender Dysphoria

Discomfort with an assigned sex and/or gender and/or the gender norms and roles associated with either. Gender dysphoria is commonly experienced by transgender and transsexual people, but the nature of the experience can vary from person to person.

Heterosexism

Oppressive behaviour that grants preferential treatment to heterosexual people, reinforces the idea that heterosexuality is somehow better or more “right” than queerness, and makes other sexualities invisible or marginalised.

Heteronormativity

Assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. Leads to invisibility and stigmatises other sexualities. This idea often includes such concepts as gender normativity, gender roles, the assumption that individuals should identify as men and women, the rule of masculine men and feminine women, and the idea that men and women are a complementary pair.

Heterosexuality

Medical/clinical term that describes a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the opposite sex. Also known as straight.

Homosexuality

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

Homophobia

Umbrella term for a range of oppressive negative attitudes (fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, hate, erasure, discomfort) that one may have towards LGBTQ* persons.

Some Queer activists argue against the use of the term because (1) It inaccurately describe systems of oppression as irrational fears, and (2) for some people, phobias are a very distressing part of their lived experience and co-opting this language is disrespectful to their experiences and perpetuates ableism.

Homoparentality

The paternity of homosexuals. So a homoparental couple is a homosexual couple who have children, adoptive or not. Bridging the gap and for information, homoparentality is not unique to the human species, it also occurs in other species.

Internalised Oppression

The process whereby people in the target group make oppression internal and personal by coming to believe that the lies, prejudices, and stereotypes about them are true.

Members of target groups exhibit internalised oppression when they alter their attitudes, behaviours, speech, and self-confidence to reflect the stereotypes and norms of the dominant group. Internalised oppression can create low self-esteem, self-doubt, and even self-loathing.

Internalised oppression may manifest itself in varying ways:

- Denial of sexual orientation to self & others.
- Attempts to pass as heterosexual or cis-gendered to gain acceptance.
- Low self-esteem and negative body image.
- Contempt for the LGBTQ* individuals who are open about their identity.
- Denial that LGBTphobia, heterosexism or heteronormativity are serious social problems.
- Becoming psychologically/behaviourally abusive or remaining in an abusive relationship.
- Increased social withdrawal

Institutional Power

The official authority to decide what is best for others; to decide who will have access to resources; capacity to exercise control over others. Institutional discrimination against LGBTQ* people and the social climate remains of serious concern across the globe. Around 70 countries continue to criminalise homosexuality, in 12 countries adults who engage in consensual same-sex acts can still face death penalty, and the rates of crimes against transgender people are increasing globally, while their protective laws are being reversed or deterred.

Positive use of institutional power may include:

- Legalisation and protection of diverse sexual and gender identities.
- Entitlement to third gender status and right to self-determination.
- Access to affirmative health-care services
- Affirmative actions in educational and employment sectors.
- Rights to marriage, surrogacy and adoption.

Intersex

An umbrella term to describe a wide range of natural body variations that do not fit neatly into conventional definitions of male or female. Intersex variations may include, but are not limited to, variations in chromosome compositions, hormone concentrations, and external and internal characteristics. Many visibly intersex people are mutilated in infancy and early childhood by doctors, to make the individual's sex characteristics conform to society's idea of what normal bodies should look like (refer to end intersex surgery movement).

Intersex people are relatively common, although society's denial of their existence has allowed very little room for intersex issues to be discussed publicly.

Intersectionality

A term coined by law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 80's to describe the way that multiple systems of oppression interact in the lives of those with multiple marginalised identities. The intersectionality of race, class, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs and queer identity in the current struggle for justice and equality reminds us that no person can be defined simply by their skin colour, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation or their gender identity.

Being a person with an intersectional identity is like standing in the middle of the road being hit by cars from many sides.

Having an intersectional identity often generates a feeling that someone does not completely belong to one group or another, and can lead to isolation, depression and other mental health issues.

A gay man has to deal with homophobia.

A black man has to deal with racism.

But a black gay man will have to deal with homophobia and racism (often at the same time). It is often the case that he will face racism inside the LGBTQ* community and homophobia in the black community.

Similarly, a disabled lesbian Muslim/Dalit will have to deal with ableism, homophobia, Islamophobia/casteism, racism and sexism.

She might find physical barriers to accessing LGBTQ* venues, but even when she can get into the building she might still face Islamophobia and casteism from the upper-caste LGBTQ* persons.

Lesbian

Usually, a woman whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same gender. However, some nonbinary people also identify as lesbians often because they have some connection to womanhood and may primarily be attracted to women.

Lifestyle

An inaccurate term used by anti-gay extremists to denigrate lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender lives. As there is no one straight lifestyle, there is no one LGBTQ* lifestyle. To believe that there is a “Gay lifestyle” is to believe that LGBTQ* persons choose an inappropriate sexual/gender identity when they could just be “normal” instead. Such belief perpetuate hatred and violence against LGBTQ* persons.

Microaggressions

Subtle behaviors, whether intentional or not, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages of commonly oppressed identities. These actions cause harm through the invalidation of the target person's identity and may reinforce stereotypes. Examples of microaggressions include a person who is not white being told they speak "good English" or someone saying something is "gay" to mean they think something is bad.

Misgendering

Attributing a gender to someone that is incorrect/does not align with their gender identity. Can occur when using pronouns, gendered language (i.e. “Hello ladies!” “Hey guys”), or assigning genders to people without knowing how they identify (i.e. “Well, since we’re all women in this room, we understand...”)

Mx

(Typically pronounced mix)

Title that is gender neutral, replacing Mr, Ms, Miss, Mrs. It is often the option of choice for folks who do not identify within the cisgender binaries of man and woman.

Non-Binary

A gender identity and experience that embraces a full universe of expressions and ways of being that resonate for an person, moving beyond the man/woman gender binary. It may be an active resistance to binary gender expectations and/or an intentional creation of new unbounded ideas of self within the world. For some people who identify as non binary there may be overlap with other concepts and identities like gender expansive and gender non-conforming.

Outing

The act of publicly declaring (sometimes based on rumour and/or speculation) or revealing another person's sexual orientation and gender identity without that person's consent. Every individual has their own right to identity and a right to safeguard that identity. Outing someone's identity can have harmful socio-legal repercussions.

Orientation

Orientation is one's attraction or non-attraction to other people. An individual's orientation can be fluid and people use a variety of labels to describe their orientation.

Some, but not all, types of attraction or orientation include: romantic, sexual, sensual, aesthetic, intellectual and platonic.

Pride

Term referring to a variety of celebrations, demonstrations, presentations, and events (including parades, marches, festivals, and similar activities) to promote a sense of solidarity and community and to express pride and support. Additionally, the purpose of these events is to raise public awareness of LGBTQ* issues and concerns; to protest injustice, inequality, and oppression; and to acknowledge and affirm LGBTQ* accomplishments.

Pansexual

Person who experiences sexual, physical, romantic, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities.

“Pan” means “all.”

Has some overlaps with bisexuality, polysexuality, and is synonymous to Omnisexual.

Polyamory

Refers to the practice of, desire to, or orientation towards having ethically, honest, consensually non-monogamous relationships; relationships that may include multiple partners. This may include open relationships or polyfidelity (involves more than two people being in romantic and/or sexual relationships which is not open to additional partners).

Preferred Gender Pronouns

Opposite, different, or generic pronouns used by a person whose gender is fluid. A male may prefer “she/her/hers” and a female may prefer “he/him/his.?” Or a person may prefer the singular they by using “them/they/their.” Or they may prefer “ze/zem/zir.” Used to show respect to individuals and groups whose gender identity is non-binary, variant, non-conforming, or fluid.

Queer

Umbrella term referring to a broad range of orientations and identities that are not heterosexual or cisgender. Refers to sexual minorities, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, pansexual, asexual, gender variant, and more.

Historically used as a derogatory term, queer has been positively appropriated by some LGBTQ* people.

Questioning

The process of exploring one's own gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation. Some people may also use this term to name their identity within the LGBTQ* spectrum.

Questioning as an identity status is relatable to many because sexuality and gender is a spectrum.

Sex (identity)

Physical elements of one's biology and anatomy. Person's medical assignment (or label) as manifested through organs, genitals, hormones, and chromosomes.

A person might identify as male or female
Or a person might be intersex.

Sexual Orientation

Type of sexual, romantic, and/or emotional attraction one feels for others, often labeled based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are attracted to. Orientation is more personal/intrinsic than identity. Sexuality can be mapped on a spectrum between asexuality, heterosexuality and homosexuality. Sexual orientation is innate, not chosen.

Sexual Identity

Refers to the label that people adopt to signify to others who they are as a sexual being, particularly regarding sexual orientation. In general, most people adopt a sexual identity that matches their sexual orientation. However, there is a sizeable number of people for whom sexual orientation does not coincide with their sexual identity.

Sexual Preference

Types of interaction, stimulation, and gratification one likes to receive and participate in. Indicating one's favourite qualities, features, characteristics, arrangements, positions, or activities.

Sexual preference connotes personal choice.

Skoliosexual

Someone who is attracted to genderqueer and transsexual people and expressions. Attracted to people who don't identify as cisgender.

Sex Reassignment Surgery

Term used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person's biological sex.

AKA Gender Confirmation Surgery.

Surgical procedures are referred to as “top” surgery (breast augmentation/reduction) and “bottom” surgery (genital reconstruction).

Transgender

Umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially defined gender norms. A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on sex assigned at birth. Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically.

Transition

Altering one's birth sex is not a one-step process; its a complex process that occurs over a long period of time. Transition includes some or all of the following personal, legal and medical adjustments: telling one's family, friends or co-workers; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more forms of surgery.

(See: Sex reassignment surgery).

Transphobia

Fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of transgender people, or gender ambiguity. As a group we argue against the use of terms like trans/homo/biphobia because

(1) it inaccurately describes systems of oppression as irrational fears, and
(2) for some people, phobias are a very distressing part of their lived experience & co-opting this language is disrespectful to their experiences and perpetuates ableism.

Alternative: cissexism.

Transman

Identity label sometimes adopted by female-to-male (FTM) transgender people or transsexuals to signify that they are men while still affirming their history as assigned female sex at birth.

Transwoman

Identity label sometimes adopted by male-to-female (MTF) transsexuals or transgender people to signify that they are women while still affirming their history as assigned male sex at birth.

Womxn

Some womxn spell the word with an “x?” as a form of empowerment to move away from the “men” in the “traditional” spelling of women. It has been used in a similar manner as womyn and wimmin, as a rejection of the English-only etymology of ‘woman’ to explicitly include non-cisgender women.

Want to learn more?

Contact Global shapers Jaipur hub to book a workshop session by Queerious conversations.

What to expect in a QC session:

- Introduction to inclusive terminologies for a range of sexual and gender identities while avoiding language bias.
- A discussion on power and privilege definitions (e.g.: LGBT-phobia), relevant to issues faced by the LGBTQ* community.
- Recommendations on how to be a supportive and visible ally.
- Do's and Don'ts of sensitive communication.
- Recommendations on how to build an inclusive space.
- A space for people to ask questions and/or share their personal experiences.

Reach out to us at:

Shikha Soni (project lead): shikhasoni994@gmail.com

Global Shapers Jaipur Hub: office@globalshapersjaipur.com