

## Anoka-Ramsey Community College LGBTQIA Terminology

“Language is dynamic; it grows, changes and develops. Language also creates and expresses meaning. This is particularly true with the language of diversity and terms (labels) we use to identify ourselves. Language must not demean, exclude or offend. We must allow others to self-identify, for definitions of terms vary for everyone. The following definitions are given to provide a starting point for discussion and understanding” (North Dakota State University, 2014).

ORIENTATIONS		
a-	romantic sexual	does not experience ____ attraction towards anyone.
gray-	romantic sexual	rarely experiences ____ attraction towards anyone.
demi-	romantic sexual	experiences ____ attraction towards someone only after developing a very strong bond.
hetero-	romantic sexual	experiences ____ attraction towards gender(s) other than their own.
homo-	romantic sexual	experiences ____ attraction towards the same gender as their own.
bi-	romantic sexual	experiences ____ attraction towards the same gender as well as to other gender(s) than their own.
pan-	romantic sexual	experiences ____ attraction towards all genders / regardless of gender.
poly-	romantic sexual	experiences ____ attraction towards multiple (but not necessarily all) genders.

note: orientations are listed in no particular order.

*(Created by Queer as Cat)*

**LGBTQIA:** An acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic. Some people change the order of the letters in the acronym, some people only use some of the letters, and some people have differing opinions about which letters should be included.

**Anti-LGBTQIA Violence:** Bias-related violence and crimes committed against the LGBTQIA community; includes physical assault, abuse, rape, vandalism, terrorism, and murder. Hate crimes are now reportable under the federal Hate Crimes Statistics Act, but are often under-prosecuted.

**Aromantic (aka Aro):** A person who does not experience (or rarely experiences) romantic attraction to anyone.



**Asexual (aka Ace):** A person who does not experience (or rarely experiences) sexual attraction to anyone.

**Bisexual (aka Bi):** A person who forms sexual and/or affectionate relationships with people of their same gender as well as to genders other than their own.

**Cis Het:** A person who is both cisgender and heterosexual; commonly used within the LGBTQIA community as a shorthand for people who are not part of the LGBTQIA community.

**Cisgender (aka Cis):** An individual whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth align in such a way that they do not experience being misgendered or experience discomfort with their own gender.

**Cisgender Privilege (aka Cis Privilege):** The basic civil rights and social privilege that a cisgender person automatically receives, but are systematically denied to trans people on the sole basis of their gender identity.

**Cisnormativity:** The (often subconscious) assumption that everyone is cisgender, and the attitudes associated with that assumption.

**Cissexism:** The institutionalized belief that being cisgender is inherently superior to being transgender.

**Civil Union:** A commitment between life partners of the same gender. Civil Unions do not provide all of the same legal protections, rights, and responsibilities as marriages.

**Coming Out (of the Closet):** Being “closeted” refers to not disclosing one’s sexual orientation or gender identity. “Coming out” is the process of first recognizing and acknowledging a non-heterosexual orientation or non-cisgender gender identity and then disclosing it to others. This usually occurs in stages and is a nonlinear process. An individual may be “out” in some situations or to certain family members or associates and not others. Some may never “come out” to anyone other than themselves.

**Demisexual:** A person who experiences sexual attraction toward someone only after developing a very strong bond.

**Family:** “Two or more persons who share resources, share responsibility for decisions, share values and goals, and have commitments to one another over a period of time. The family is that climate that one comes home to; and it is that network of sharing and commitments that most accurately describes the family unit, regardless of blood, or adoption, or marriage” (American Association of Family and Consumer Science, 2015).

**Gay:** A man who forms sexual and/or affectionate relationships with another man. This is the preferred term instead of “homosexual.” Some people use this term to refer to gay men and also lesbians.

**Gender Identity:** An individual’s basic self-conviction of their gender. This conviction is not contingent upon the individual’s sex assigned at birth. This also has no bearing on the individual’s sexual/romantic orientation.



**Gender Roles:** The socially constructed and culturally specific behavior and appearance expectations imposed on women (femininity) and men (masculinity). These social constructions perpetuate the oppression of women.

**Gender:** A socially constructed way of categorizing different roles, behaviors, activities, attributes, and/or expressions. Often mistakenly thought of as a binary (male or female) or spectrum (maleness to femaleness). There are infinite combinations and conceptualizations of gender that do not conform to a binary or a spectrum.

**Heteronormativity:** The (often subconscious) assumption that everyone is heterosexual, and the attitudes associated with that assumption. Heterosexual privilege allows individuals to ignore gay, lesbian, and bisexual people and issues.

**Heterosexism:** The institutionalized belief that heterosexuality is inherently superior to all other sexual orientations.

**Heterosexual (aka Het or Hetero):** A man who forms sexual and/or affectionate relationships with a woman, or a woman who forms sexual and/or romantic relationships with a man; also referred to as “straight.”

**Heterosexual Privilege (aka Het Privilege):** The basic civil rights and social privileges that a heterosexual person automatically receives, but are systematically denied to gay, lesbian, and bisexual people on the sole basis of their sexual/romantic orientation.

**Homophobia:** Fear/hatred of, aversion to, or discrimination against gay, lesbian, or bisexual people. “Biphobia” is a more specific term when discussing prejudice toward bisexual.

**Homosexual:** Someone who forms sexual and/or affectionate relationships with members of the same gender. This term is now considered offensive by many, and the shortened form, “homo,” is widely considered to be a slur. The terms “gays” and “lesbians” are preferred.

**Internalized Homophobia/Biphobia:** The experience of shame, aversion, or self-hatred (caused by society at large) in reaction to one’s own feelings of attraction to the same gender/multiple genders.

**Internalized Transphobia:** The experience of shame, aversion, or self-hatred (caused by society at large) in reaction to one’s own gender identity.

**Intersex:** Formerly known as “hermaphrodites” (a term that is now considered a slur), this term refers to people whose genitalia, chromosomes, and/or hormones do not fit the typical definitions of male or female.

**Lesbian:** A woman who forms sexual and/or affectionate relationships with another woman.

**Non-Binary:** A person who does not conform to the gender binary. Often abbreviated as NB or “enby.” There are many different terms for non-binary people, and each term reflects a distinct and



separate identity. Some terms include: genderqueer, agender, gender fluid, neutrois, demi boy or demi girl, etc.

**Othering:** Language and behavior that refers to or creates “them” or “others”; typically used to identify as separation between and among groups. It has been used in social sciences to understand the processes by which societies and groups exclude others who they want to subordinate or who do not fit into their society.

**Outing:** Revealing someone else’s sexual/romantic orientation or gender identity to others without consent of the person.

**Pansexual (aka Pan):** A person with the potential for aesthetic attraction, romantic love, or sexual desire for people, regardless of their gender identity or sex assigned at birth.

**Partner or Significant Other:** Primary domestic partner or spousal relationship(s). May be referred to as “girlfriend/boyfriend,” “lover,” “roommate,” “life partner,” “wife/husband,” or other terms.

**Polysexual:** A person who forms sexual and/or affectionate relationships with multiple (but not all) genders. This is not the same thing as polyamorous, which refers to multiple partnerings at one time.

**Pronouns:** The ways people refer to themselves. Some examples include: she/her/hers, they/them/theirs, he/him/his, zie/hir/hirs, etc.

**Queer:** Originally a slur; now often reclaimed. It has multiple, debated meanings and is often used as an umbrella term to describe the LGBTQIA community (i.e., “the queer community”). In addition, many use it as a radical term that describes not just a sexual or gender identity, but a politicized stance against the norms of sexuality and gender.

**Sex Assigned at Birth:** The decision made when a person is born (usually by a doctor) to decide that person is male or female, usually based on visible genitalia. This is different than gender.

**Sexual and Romantic Orientation:** The inclination or capacity to develop intimate sexual and emotional relationships with people of the same gender. There are many sexual and romantic orientations. Most people have aligned sexual and romantic orientations, such as heterosexual and hetero-romantic, or bisexual and bi-romantic, but many people experience this differently.

**Transgender (aka Trans):** An umbrella term referring to people who identify with (because they are) a gender that is not entirely associated with their sex assigned at birth. If that identification is strong enough that they need to express it, they are transgender.

**Transition:** The shift of a trans person from expressing one gender to another in their personal life and workplace. This can involve several elements, such as declaring a preferred name or wearing different clothing. A **medical transition** can involve beginning hormone therapy or undergoing surgery. Not all trans people are transitioning from one binary gender (e.g., male) to another binary gender (e.g., female), and not all trans people pursue medical transition.



**Transphobia:** Fear/hatred of, aversion to, or discrimination against transgender people. “Transmisogyny” is a more specific term when discussing the unique experiences of transphobia that trans women face.

**Transsexual:** A trans person who medically transitions and lives “full time” as their gender identity. This term is now considered offensive by many.



## References

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