



Let's Talk About . . .

Understanding Sexual Orientation

Source: OutFront Minnesota
www.outfront.org

Bigenderist: A person who develops and expresses a distinctly male persona and a distinctly female persona. A bigenderist might, for example, work as a woman and socialize as a man (or vice versa). See also: Cross dresser.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to both sexes.

Cross dresser: A person who dresses in the clothing of the opposite biological gender. Cross dressers generally want to relate as, and be accepted as, a person of the gender they are presenting. Cross-dressing may be partial or total in amount of time and amount of clothing worn. See also: Bigenderist. Cross dressers may identify as heterosexual, lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

"Drag": Dressing in the clothing of the opposite biological sex, or in a manner different than how one will usually dress (i.e. "corporate drag" or "military drag"). 'Drag' is often theatrical, and often presents a stereotyped image. Individuals who dress in 'Drag' may or may not consider themselves part of the transgender community. They also may identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Female or Male Impersonator: Persons who cross-dress as performance art and, or as, stage personalities. They may also consider themselves 'drag performers.' They may or may not consider themselves to be cross dressers or bigenderists, and they may be heterosexual, lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

Gender Bending / Blending: Dressing in such a way as to question the traditional feminine or masculine qualities assigned to articles of clothing or adornment. Gender bending may be part of a 'fashion' trend, or possibly a 'political' statement. Gender bending often has no correlation to issues of gender identity or sexual orientation.

Gay: A term that can apply to either men or women who are physically and emotionally attracted to persons of the same sex. However, it is usually used to describe men.

Gender Identity: An individual's basic self-conviction of being male or female. This conviction is not contingent upon the individual's biological gender. The exact process by which boys and girls come to see themselves as males or females is not known. However, research indicates that

LET'S TALK



Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention, and Parenting

1619 Dayton Ave, Suite 111 • St Paul, MN 55104-8392 • (651) 644-1447 • www.moapp.org

gender identity develops some time between birth and 3 years of age.

GLBT: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender

GLBTQ: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning

Heterosexual: A person who is physically and emotionally attracted to a person of the opposite sex.

Heterosexual Privilege: The basic civil rights and social privileges that a heterosexual person automatically receives that are systematically denied to gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons simply because of their sexual orientation. Can also refer to the assumption that all people are heterosexual.

Heterosexism: Systems and ways of thinking that reinforce a belief in the inherent superiority of heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships, thereby negating the lives and relationships of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people.

Homosexual: 1) A person who is emotionally and physically attracted to a person of the same sex. 2) A term coined in 1869 by an early psychiatrist, who used it to describe a person who has an other than normal sexual urge which renders them physically and psychically incapable. Since the word was originally used to describe a pathology, most gays and lesbians do not like this term used to define them. The American Psychological Association, the American Medical Association, and most other reputable professional organizations no longer consider homosexuality an illness.

Intersexed: Generally applied to individuals born with ambiguous genitalia (an outdated term would be "hermaphrodite"). In the past, most intersexed individuals have had surgery shortly after birth in an attempt to give them an "identifiable" gender. There is now much discussion about this practice, but so far little has changed. Parents often feel forced to make a quick decision with little information. Most intersexed persons are raised as girls/women.

Lesbian: A term used to describe women that are emotionally and physically attracted to other women.

Queer: Some people who are a part of the GLBT community use this term to describe their sexual orientation. It is also a derogatory term.

"Out of the Closet" / "Being Out": Means that one states openly that one is lesbian, bisexual, gay, or transgendered, in contrast to 'staying in the closet' by hiding or denying one's gender identity or sexual orientation either from oneself or from others.

Sexual Orientation: The orientation within human beings, which leads them to be emotionally and physically attracted to persons of one gender or the other or both. One's sexual orientation may be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or asexual.

SGL: Same Gender Lovin'. A term that is used by some African Americans to describe their sexual orientation; men who are attracted to other men and women who are attracted to other women.

Transgender: A broad umbrella term for persons who have a self-image or gender identity not traditionally associated with their biological gender. Some transgender persons wish to change their anatomy to be more congruent with their self-perception, while others do not

have such a desire. There is no absolute correlation between sexual orientation and transgender issues. A transgender person may identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Transsexual: A person whose gender identity is other than their biological gender. This person may wish to change their anatomy to be more congruent with their self-perception. Most transsexuals would like to alter their bodies through hormonal therapy, gender reassignment surgeries or other means.

Transvestite: Often a person who may achieve sexual pleasure through the use of clothing or personal adornments of the other gender. Often incorrectly used interchangeably with 'Cross dresser.' There is no correlation between sexual orientation and transvestite behavior. Transvestites may identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual in their sexual orientation.

Transition: The time period when an individual changes from expressing one gender to another in their personal life and/or workplace. For most individuals the workplace transition is very carefully planned, often including appropriate levels of management in early discussions, and the transition process may be weeks to months in length. The personal life transition, also eagerly anticipated, may be more sudden.

In conclusion, people get to choose their own labels and they get to decide not to label themselves. If you do not know how to address a person's orientation or gender, ask! Do not assume!

For more information on sexual orientation, contact one of the following:

- District 202: 612.871.5559
- MPLS Youth Diversion Program: 612.252.1200
- P-Flag: 612.825.1660
- Pride Alive: 612.373.9165
- Pride Institute--612.934.7554
- Program in Human Sexuality: 612.625.1500
- OutFront Minnesota: 612.822.0127 or 800.800.0350
- Sexual Violence Center of Hennepin County: 612.871.5100
- The City, Inc. GLBT HIV/AIDS/STD Prevention & Awareness Program: 612.724.3689