



Let's Talk About . . .

Understanding Sexual Orientation

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to both sexes.

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 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. 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: 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. Homosexuality per se is no longer considered an illness by the American Psychiatric Association, nor by the American Psychological Association, the American Medical Association, or most other reputable professional organizations.

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

Queer: Some people use this term to describe their sexual orientations that are a part of the GLBT Community. 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 & 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.

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: Crossdresser.

Crossdresser: A person who dresses in the clothing of the opposite biological gender. Crossdressers generally want to relate as, and be accepted as, a person of the gender they are presenting. Crossdressing may be partial or total in amount of time and amount of clothing worn. See also: Bigenderist. Crossdressers 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 crossdress as performance art and/or as stage personalities. They may also consider themselves 'drag performers.' They may or may not consider themselves to be crossdressers 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.

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 inter-changeably with 'Crossdresser.' 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.

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.

*From OutFront Minnesota's Website www.outfront.org

Note: People get to chose 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

Sexual Violence Center of Hennepin County: 612.871.5100

P-Flag--612.825.1660

MPLS Youth Diversion Program: 612.252.1200

Pride Alive: 612.373.9165

Program in Human Sexuality: 612.625.1500

OutFront Minnesota: 612.822.0127 or 800.800.0350

The City, Inc. GLBT HIV/AIDS/STD Prevention & Awareness Program: 612.724.3689

Pride Institute--612.934.7554



Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention, and Parenting

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