

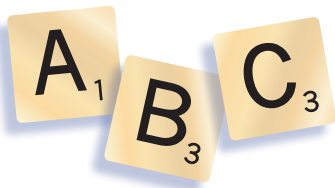
biphobia conscious or unconscious hatred of, fear of, and discrimination against people who are bisexual. Experienced in not only the heterosexual but also the lesbian and gay communities, it is often characterized by a lack of understanding and invisibility of bisexuality as a valid sexual orientation.

transphobia conscious or unconscious hatred of, fear of, and discrimination against individuals who do not conform in appearance and/or identity to cisnormative or “traditional” conceptions of gender. Experienced in both the heterosexual and lesbian/gay/bisexual communities, it is typically demonstrated through disrespect, denial of rights and needs, and often harassment and violence. As with heterosexism, transphobia can be personal or systemic, overt or covert, and intentional or unintentional.

transmisogyny understood as “sexism that specifically targets those on the trans female/trans feminine spectrums. It accounts for why MTF spectrum trans people tend to be more regularly demonized and ridiculed than their FTM spectrum counterparts, and why trans women face certain forms of sexualization and misogyny that are rarely (if ever) applied to non-trans women.”²

This handout is an excerpt from Celebrating Gender Diversity: A Toolkit on Gender Identity and Trans Experiences for Communities of Faith, 2019 edition. For more information on this topic, search www.united-church.ca for “gender diversity.”

To format this handout for photocopying and distribution, print or photocopy the pages double-sided and fold down the middle.



² Definition is reprinted with permission from *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity* by Julia Serano (Seal Press, 2007).



The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada



GENDER AND SEXUALITY: GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

A HANDOUT ON GENDER IDENTITY AND TRANS EXPERIENCES FOR COMMUNITIES OF FAITH



Disclaimer: Language has power and is constantly changing. The terms used in this resource and listed in the glossary are designed to empower you with language that will help you better understand discussions of gender and sexuality. Many of the terms are self-identifications; they mean something different to each person who identifies with the term. For the most part, terms are based in Western understandings of gender and sexuality so they may not speak to the experiences of those from many cultures. Remember not to apply labels to individuals. Understand that identities are fluid and contextual—just because someone shares part of their identity with you doesn't mean they're comfortable with you sharing this with others.

General Terms

ally a heterosexual and/or cisgender person who supports equal rights for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. They actively challenge heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia; they are aware of heterosexual and cisgender privilege in themselves and others.

intersex refers to people who are born with any of a range of sex characteristics that may not fit a doctor's notions of binary “male” or “female” bodies. Variations may appear in a person's chromosomes, genitals, or internal organs like testes or ovaries. Some intersex traits are identified at birth, while others may not be discovered until puberty or later in life. There are over 30 specific intersex variations and each intersex person is different. Potential causes of intersex traits include random genetic variations, changes in a person's number of sex chromosomes, gonadal differences, natal exposure to unusual levels of sex hormones, or different responses to sex hormones.¹

¹ Definition is reprinted with permission from InterACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth (<https://interactadvocates.org/intersex-definitions/>).

LGBTQIA+ an acronym used to denote identities of individuals and groups. It is a Western placeholder that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual/allies, and all other sexual and gender identities. The understanding behind the acronym is that sexuality and gender are fluid and that language is contextual and evolving. The intent of the acronym is to be inclusive while recognizing that it is not perfect.

SOGIE an abbreviation combining **S**exual **O**rientation, **G**ender **I**dentify and **E**xpression that has become one of the main reference terms to describe the LGBT (or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community outside of North America. It is currently being introduced in legal doctrines and United Nations documents, and is becoming popular in social media. Its usefulness lies in its inclusiveness: The term “LGBT” is specific to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, but “SOGIE” refers to characteristics common to all human beings because everyone has a sexual orientation and a gender identity. Everyone also has a gender identity and gender expression, not just lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

Sexuality

sexuality beyond the physical aspects of our body, sexuality covers our sexual desires, sexual identity, and emotional and physical sexual health. Sexuality impacts our relationships with our own bodies as well as our relationships with other people. It involves our thoughts, desires, and experiences. Our understanding of sexuality is based on culture; religion, family, media, and more all play a role. In this sense, sexuality is something that can feel deeply personal and also be understood on a societal level.

sexual orientation (also known as *sexuality*): refers to a person's emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and sexual attraction

asexual a person who does not experience sexual attraction or desire. This person may or may not have spiritual and emotional attraction to others.

bisexual some bisexual communities, reflecting an understanding that there are more than two genders, define bisexuality as a person who is sexually and/or emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually attracted to both their own gender and people of other genders. However, a popular understanding of bisexual is an individual of any gender who is attracted to both men and women.

lesbian/gay/homosexual a person whose primary sexual and/or emotional, spiritual, and intellectual attraction is to a person of the same gender

pansexual someone who identifies as being attracted to all gender identities or for whom gender is not a consideration when choosing a romantic or intimate partner

queer a term that may include lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans people, and people who challenge the boundaries of sexual orientation, sex, and gender. The term can sometimes be an insult. It is also used frequently as an affirmative political and/or identity statement, and it describes a school of thought called queer theory.

straight/heterosexual a male-identified person who is attracted to female-identified people, or a female-identified person who is attracted to male-identified people

See p. 56 of *Celebrating Gender Diversity (June 2019)* for the “Umbrella Activity,” a small group activity to help participants become more familiar with some of these terms and definitions. Go to www.united-church.ca and search “gender diversity.”

Gender

gender a social construct that differs from culture to culture. The World Health Organization defines *gender* as referring to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women (such as certain roles, as well as appearance).

gender identity a self-determined identity that reflects an individual's personal understanding of gender in regard to their own embodied experiences

gender presentation/expression how a person chooses to express their gender to others (through clothing, behaviour, etc.)

gender binary the concept that there are only two genders – male and female; and understands this as the only one “right,” “normal,” or “healthy” way for gender to be understood, identified, and expressed—that is, as either male or female, masculine or feminine. The gender binary tells us that there are no grey areas, no middle ground, no continuum.

afab and amab A child born with female genitalia is typically assigned female at birth, or afab. A child born with male genitalia is typically assigned male at birth, or amab. Some trans people prefer the terms dfab/dmab which stands for *designated* female/male at birth.

agender Some agender people feel that they have no gender identity, while others feel that agender is itself a gender identity. This is similar to and overlaps with the experience of being gender-neutral or having a neutral gender identity.

androgynous, **gender blender**, and **gender bender** individuals who challenge cisnormative gender binary boundaries through their gender presentation.

bigender someone who identifies as having two gender identities.

cisgender a term that describes individuals whose gender identity is the same as the gender they were assigned at birth.

cross-dresser a person who, on occasion, deliberately dresses in clothes traditionally associated with a gender different than they were assigned at birth and takes on the social behaviours associated with the gender being portrayed. A person who cross-dresses does not necessarily identify as trans, but is fulfilling other needs or desires.

drag kings and **drag queens** individuals who present larger-than-life images of men (kings) and women (queens), exaggerating sexual stereotypes for entertainment or self-gratification.

enby a short form of non-binary or NB. It is used instead of boy or girl to refer to non-binary people. Not all people who identify as non-binary are uncomfortable with the word enby, however.

gender dysphoria a term that has replaced gender identity disorder. It characterizes the experience of distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify.

genderfluid refers to those whose gender identity and expression are fluid and change depending on personal circumstance and desire.

gender non-conforming refers to people whose gender expression or appearance does not conform to what society considers appropriate for one's perceived gender. While some gender non-conforming people

identify under the trans umbrella, not all do. You may be considered gender non-conforming if you are a cisgender man who wears make-up or paints his nails, or a cisgender woman who shaves her head or repairs and maintains the family car. Not all cisgender people conform to society's gender expectations, and not all transgender people defy them.

genderqueer someone who does not necessarily identify as a man or a woman, may identify as both a man and a woman, or identifies outside the confines of traditional Western ideas of gender.

gender variant a word used to describe some people whose gender identity and/or gender expression does not conform to conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity. People who express gender variance may also be called gender non-conforming, gender non-binary, gender diverse, gender atypical, or genderqueer.

non-binary an umbrella term used to describe a number of gender identities. It is used by people who do not identify as a man or a woman; who may feel like a combination of man and woman; who have a sense of their gender being beyond the categories of man and woman entirely; or who do not identify with any gender at all. Non-binary may also refer to gender identities that are specific to a culture that recognizes more than two genders.

questioning a word often used by youth who are in the process of coming out or are still discerning their sexuality, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation.

trans/transgender an umbrella term whose meaning remains in flux. The term is used to refer to a person who has a gender identity that is different from the gender they were assigned at birth, and/or expresses their gender in ways that differ from societal expectations for men and women. Trans people may identify with any sexual orientation. *Trans* is often used as a substitute for *transgender*, to include people of a wider variety of gender identities who may not feel comfortable adopting the term *transgender*.

transition Trans men (sometimes called FTMs—female-to-male) and trans women (MTFs—male-to-female) may often decide to undergo a transitioning process that can include sexual confirmation surgery (also known as sexual reassignment surgery, SRS) and/or hormone replacement therapy (HRT). They may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual,

and/or queer. It is important to note that not all individuals who transition or identify as transgender/transsexual feel that FTM or MTF labels reflect their experience with their gender.

transsexual/transgender someone who is transitioning from male-to-female (MTF) or female-to-male (FTM), or someone for whom the gender they were assigned at birth does not match their felt or lived gender.

Two-Spirit a term used by some Indigenous people whose spirits contain both male and female attributes. Being Two-Spirit is not about sexuality or even gender presentation, but is about a person's spirit. There is no one definition of Two-Spirit, allowing each Indigenous person to define it for themselves. Each experiences and expresses it personally within their own context (including nation, language, and culture). "Two-Spirit" should only be used by Indigenous people for self-identification; it could be considered cultural appropriation to apply it outside of a First Nations context.

Trans Grammar

Trans and cis are considered adjectives that can describe an aspect of someone's gender identity. Therefore, the spelling of trans man/men and trans woman/women should always have a space between the two words. Trans women are still women and trans men are still men, and failing to include a space between these words may communicate otherwise.

Trans is an adjective that can describe an element of someone's gender identity. It is incorrect to speak of "transgendered" individuals or use the term *transgender* as a verb (i.e., "transgendering").

Gender-neutral pronouns are the most effective way to ensure that individuals of all genders feel included when discussing hypothetical situations. Commonly used gender-neutral pronouns are **they/them/theirs**.

Example 1: "Do you have a brother or sister? How old is he or she?"
can be said as: "Do you have a sibling? How old are they?"

Example 2: "That stranger looked upset. I hope they are all right and someone has helped them."

Example 3: "A new employee is starting on Monday. Where are we going to put their workstation?"

Some people might feel awkward using "they" as a singular pronoun. But when you think about it, it's not that different from using "you" for both the singular and the plural.

The singular "they" is a well-established usage in spoken English and can be used when the speaker does not want to specify a gender (i.e., "he" or "she"). Dictionaries and style guides—including the Oxford English Dictionary and Merriam-Webster—are increasingly supportive of the practice, citing examples going back to Shakespeare.

Discriminatory Practices

lesbian, **gay**, **bisexual**, **transgender**, **queer discrimination**

These varieties of discrimination take many forms and exist between and within individuals, as well as across institutions and cultures. Most commonly referred to as homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism, they are manifested through the denial of human rights; through processes of silencing, exclusion, and ostracism; and through violence and verbal abuse that can be experienced daily.

heterosexism the assumption by individuals, institutions, and societal customs that everyone is heterosexual. It is also the belief that the normal, natural, healthy, and mature way for humans to bond sexually, affectionately, and emotionally is with a partner of the opposite sex. Heterosexism is the systemic societal promotion of heterosexuality, and the simultaneous stigmatization of all other sexual orientations.

cissexism the assumption by individuals, institutions, and societal customs that everyone is cisgender and adheres to the gender binary. It is also the belief that the normal, natural, healthy, and mature way for humans to express their gender is by upholding the norms of the gender an individual was assigned at birth. Cissexism is the systemic societal promotion of cisgender identities, and the simultaneous oppression of folks with trans identities.

lesbophobia/homophobia/queerphobia conscious or unconscious hatred of, fear of, and discrimination against lesbians and gay men. It is based in a belief system and set of priorities that assert heterosexuality as "normal" and superior, and view homosexuality/queerness as deviant, abnormal, criminal, or sinful. Lesbophobic, homophobic, and queerphobic feelings can be described as fear, hatred, disgust, etc.