ETIQUETTE GLOSSARY

We fully acknowledge that this glossary may not speak for the experiences, realities, or perspectives of all individuals. We have tried to be open-ended and inclusive while simultaneously striving to be as descriptive and useful as possible to those this conference serves. We recognize that it is impossible to capture the full range of experiences within our community, and we encourage you to explore each of these terms in greater depth.

ALLY: A person whose attitudes and behaviors who challenge heterosexism, cissexism, homophobia, and transphobia, both on a personal and institutional level. Most commonly used for those who do not identify as LGBTQIA (A in this case meaning assexual), etc.—in other words, those who identify as straight and cisgender—however anyone can be an ally.

AROMANTIC: One who lacks a romantic orientation or is incapable of feeling romantic attraction. Aromantics can still have a sexual orientation (e.g., "aromantic bisexual" or "aromantic heterosexual"). A person who feels neither romantic nor sexual attraction is known as an aromantic asexual.

ASEXUAL/ACE: An individual who does not experience sexual attraction. Individuals may still be emotionally, physically, romantically, and/or spiritually attracted to others, and their romantic orientation may also be LGBTQIA (A in this case meaning asexual). The prefixes of hetero-, hetero- or pan-, poly-, demi- and - have been used to form terms such as heteroromantic, biromantic, homoromantic asexual, and so on. Unlike celibacy, which people choose, asexual is intrinsic. Some asexual people do engage in sexual activity for a variety of reasons, such as a desire to please romantic partners or to have children.

BIGENDER: Refers to those who have masculine and feminine sides to their personality. This is often a term used by cross dressers. It should not be confused with the term two-spirit, which is specifically a term used by Native Americans.

BISEXUAL/Bi: An individual who is physically, romantically, emotionally, and/or spiritually attracted to men and women. "Bisexual existence/invisibility" refers to the tendency for some people to forget about those who are attracted to more than one gender.

BUTCH: An identity or presentation that leans towards masculinity. Butch can be an adjective ("she's a butch woman"), a verb ("he went home to butch up"), or a noun ("they identify as a butch"). Although commonly associated with masculine-identified women, it’s used by many to describe a distinct gender identity and/or expression, and does not necessarily imply that one identifies as a woman.

CATFAB AND CAMAB: Acronyms meaning “Coercively Assigned Female/Male at Birth.” Sometimes AFAB and AMAB (without the word "coercively") are used instead. No one, whether cis or trans, has a choice in the sex or gender to which they are assigned when they are born, which is why it is said to be coercive. In the rare cases in which it is necessary to refer to the birth-assigned sex of a trans person, this is the way to do it.

CISGENDER / CIS: A prefix of Latin origin, meaning “on the same side as.” Cisgender individuals have a gender identity that is aligned with their birth sex, and therefore have a self-perception and gender expression that matches behaviors and roles considered appropriate for their birth sex; for example, a person who is femininely-identified that was born female. In short, cisgender is the opposite of transgender. It is important to recognize that even if two people identify as men (one being cis and the other being trans), they may lead very similar lives but deal with different struggles pertaining to their birth sex.

CISSEXISM: Synonymous with transphobia, this definition is associated with negative attitudes and feelings toward transgender people, based on the expression of their internal gender identity. Cissexism is also the belief that cisgender individuals are superior to transgender people and that a cisgender lifestyle is more desirable to lead.

CRIP: Increasingly used to refer to a person who has a disability and embraces it, rather than feeling sorry for themselves. Historically used as a disparaging term for a person that is partially disabled or unable to use a limb or limbs. It is similar to the word queer in that it is sometimes used as a hateful slur, so although some have reclaimed it from their oppressors, be careful with its use.

CROSS-DRESSING: the act of dressing and presenting as the “opposite” binary gender. One who considers this an integral part of their identity may identify as a cross-dresser. Transvestite is an obsolete (and sometimes offensive) term with the same meaning. Cross-dressing and drag are forms of gender expression and are not necessarily tied to erotic activity, nor are they indicative of one’s sexual orientation. Do NOT use these terms to describe someone who has transitioned or intends to do so in the future.

DRAB: Exaggerated or theatrical gender presentation and/or performance. Although most commonly used to refer to cross-dressing performers (drag queens and drag kings), anyone of any gender can do any form of drag. Doing drag does not necessarily have anything to do with one’s sex, gender identity, or orientation.

FEMME: An identity or presentation that leans towards femininity. Femme can be an adjective (he’s a femmefella), a verb (she feels better when she ‘femmes up’), or a noun (“they’re a femme”). Although commonly associated with feminine-identified women, femme is not limited to women. Anyone can be a femme, regardless of gender identity.
women, it’s used by many to describe a distinct gender identity and/or expression, and does not necessarily imply that one identities as a woman.

GAY: A common word for a man who is physically, romantically, emotionally and/or spiritually attracted to similarly-gendered individuals. It is often used in reference to anyone attracted to similarly-gendered individuals.

GENDER: The set of social expectations for attitude, behavior, capability, dress, gender role, profession, etc., assigned to an individual at birth, usually based on sex. These expectations vary between cultures. While gender is said to be fluid, social expectations may be rigidly-defined, and those who violate these norms may face prejudice or discrimination. Related terms: genderqueer, woman, man.

GENDER BINARY: A system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two categories (termed woman and man) which are biologically-based (female and male) and unchangeable, and in which no other possibilities for gender or anatomy are believed to exist. This system is oppressive to anyone who defies their birth assignment, but particularly those who are gender-variant people and do not fit neatly into one of the two categories.

GENDER EXPRESSION/PRESENTATION: The physical manifestation of one’s gender identity through clothing, hairstyle, voice, body shape, etc., typically referred to as feminine or masculine. Many transgender people seek to make their gender expression (how they look) match their gender identity rather than their birth-assigned sex.

GENDER FLUID: A general term for non-binary gender identities. This term overlaps with genderqueer and bigender, implying movement between gender identities and/or presentations.

GENDER IDENTITY: One’s internal sense of being man or woman, neither of these, both, etc.

GENDERQUEER: A general term for non-binary gender identities. Those who identify as genderqueer may identify as neither woman nor man, may see themselves as outside of the binary gender boxes; may fall somewhere between the binary genders; or may reject the use of gender labels. Genderqueer identities fall under the “trans umbrella.”

GENDER NON-CONFORMING: A term for individuals whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender.

GSM: Gender and Sexual Minority. This is a basic catch-all for people who are not cisgender and/or heterosexual, and is sometimes used as a shorter and more inclusive alternative to “LGBTQIA” etc.

HATE CRIME: Any act of intimidation, harassment, physical force or threat of physical force directed against any person, or their property, motivated either in whole or in part by hostility toward their actual or perceived age, disability, gender identity, ethnic background, race, religious/spiritual belief, sex, sexual orientation, etc.

HETEROFLEXIBLE: Similar to bisexual, but with a stated heterosexual preference. Sometimes characterized as being “mostly straight.” Commonly used to indicate that one is interested in heterosexual romance but is “flexible” when it comes to sex and/or play. The same concepts apply to homoflexible.

HETERONORMATIVE/HETERONORMATIVITY: A culture or belief system that assumes that people fall into distinct and complementary sexes and genders and that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation. A heteronormative view is one that involves alignment of biological sex, sexuality, gender identity, and gender roles.

HETEROSEXISM: The assumption that all people are heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior and more desirable than non-heterosexual identities. Heterosexism is also the stigmatization, denial and/or denigration of anything non-heterosexual.

HOMONORMATIVE/HOMONORMATIVITY: The assimilation of heteronormative ideals and constructs into LGBTQIA culture and identity. Homonormativity upholds neoliberalism rather than critiquing monogamy, procreation, normative family social roles, and binary gender roles. It is criticized as undermining citizens’ rights and erasing the historic alliance between radical politics and gay politics, the core concern being sexual freedom. Some assert that homonormativity fragments LGBTQIA communities into hierarchies of worthiness; those that mimic heteronormative standards of gender identity are deemed most worthy of receiving rights. Individuals at the bottom of the hierarchy are seen as an impediment to this elite class of homonormative individuals receiving their rights. Because LGBTQIA activists and organizations embrace systems that endorse normative family social roles and serial monogamy, some believe that LGBTQIA people are surrendering and conforming to heteronormative behavior.
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HOMOSEXUAL: A person who is physically, romantically, emotionally and/or spiritually attracted to a person of the same gender. Many prefer "gay," "lesbian," etc. because of the term's origin as a medical term at a time when homosexuality was considered a disorder.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE: The use of non-identity specific language to avoid imposing limitations or assumptions on others. For example, saying "you all" instead of "you guys" in order to not impose assumptions regarding a person's gender identity.

INTERSEX: Describes a person whose natal physical sex is physically ambiguous. There are many genetic, hormonal or anatomical variations which can cause this (e.g. Klinefelter Syndrome, Adrenal Hyperplasia, or Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome). Parents and medical professionals usually assign intersex infants a sex and perform surgical operations to conform the infant's body to that assignment, but this practice has become increasingly controversial as intersex adults are speaking out against having had to undergo medical procedures which they did not consent to (and in many cases caused them mental and physical difficulties later in life). The term intersex is preferred over "hermaphrodite," an outdated term which is stigmatizing and misleading.

-isms: Ableism, ageism,cissexism, classism, heterosexism, mentalism, monosexism, racism, sexism, sizism, etc. See "Phobias."

LESBIAN: A femininely-identified individual who is emotionally, physically, romantically, sexually and/or spiritually attracted to femininely-identified individuals.

LGBTQIAAP: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Ally, Asexual, Pansexual (and more) communities. While the acronym may get a little exhausting, this list is not exhaustive.

MONOSEXUAL/MULTISEXUAL: Umbrella terms for orientations directed towards one gender (monosexual) or many genders (multisexual).

PASSING: A term used by transgender people to mean that they are seen as the gender with which they self-identify. For example, a transgender man (born female) who most people see as a man. Also a term used by non-heterosexual people to mean that they are seen as or assumed to be heterosexual.

PANSEXUAL/OMNISEXUAL: "Pan," meaning "all." Someone who is emotionally, physically, romantically, sexually and/or spiritually attracted to all gender identities/expressions, including those outside the gender-conforming binary. Similar to bisexual, but different in that the concept deliberately rejects the gender binary. Polysexual people are attracted to "many," but not necessarily all, genders.

PHOBIAS: Biphobia, heterophobia, homophobia, lesbophobia, transphobia, fat-phobia, xenophobia, etc. See "-isms."

POLYAMORY: Having more than one intimate relationship at a time with the knowledge and consent of everyone involved. It is distinct from both swinging (which emphasizes sex with others as merely recreational) and polysexuality (which is attraction towards multiple genders and/or sexes). People who identify as polyamorous typically reject the view that sexual and relational exclusivity are necessary for deep, committed, long-term loving relationships.

QUEER: General term for identities, presentations, and sexual orientations that reject conventions and expectations. There's a lot of overlap between queer and trans, but not all queer people are trans and not all trans people are queer (many trans people do in fact conform to gender norms and expectations). The word queer is still sometimes used as a hateful slur, so although many have reclaimed it from their oppressors, be careful with its use.

QPOC: "Queer People Of Color" or "Queer Person Of Color."

ROMANTIC ORIENTATION: A person's enduring emotional, physical, romantic and/or spiritual — but not necessarily sexual — attraction to others. Sometimes called affectional orientation. "Romantic orientation" is often used by the asexual community in lieu of "sexual orientation."

SAFE SPACE: A place where people who identify within the LGBTQIA communities feel comfortable and secure in being who they are. In this place, they can talk about the people with whom they are involved without fear of being criticized, judged or ridiculed. Safe spaces promote the right to be comfortable in one's living space, work environment, etc. It is focused toward the right to use the pronoun of a significant other in conversation, and the right to be as outwardly open about one's life and activities as anyone else.
SAME-GENDER LOVING: A term created by the African-American community that some prefer to use instead of “lesbian,” “bisexual” or “gay” to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender. SGL is an alternative to Eurocentric homosexual identities which may not culturally affirm or engage the history and cultures of people of African descent.

SEX: Sex refers to the biological traits, which include internal and external reproductive anatomy, chromosomes, hormones, and other physiological characteristics. The assignment and classification of people at birth as male or female is often based solely on external reproductive anatomy. Related terms: intersex, female, male.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION: A person’s enduring emotional, physical, romantic, sexual and/or spiritual attraction to others. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Trans* people can be heterosexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, queer, etc., just like anyone else. See affectional/romantic orientation.

STEALTH: Going stealth means for a trans* person to live completely as their gender identity and to pass in the public sphere; when a trans* person chooses not to disclose their trans* status to others. This can be done for numerous reasons including safety, or simply because the person doesn’t feel others have the right to know. For transsexuals, going stealth is often the goal of transition.

TRANS*: Prefix or adjective used as an abbreviation of transgender, derived from the Greek word meaning “across from” or “on the other side of.” Many consider trans* to be an inclusive and useful umbrella term. Trans (without the asterisk) is most often applied to trans men and trans women, and the asterisk is used more broadly to refer to all non-cisgender gender identities, such as agender, cross-dresser, bigender, genderfluid, genderfuck, genderless, genderqueer, non-binary, non-gendered, third gender, trans man, trans woman, transgender, transsexual, and two-spirit.

TRANS WOMAN / TRANS MAN: Also, transwoman and transman. Trans woman refers to a woman of transgender experience. She might actively identify herself as trans*, or she might identify as a woman and simply consider being trans part of her medical history. Some say it is better to include a space between trans and woman/man so that trans* becomes an adjective rather than an all-encompassing noun (just as it is better to say “gay men” rather than “gays” or “a disabled person” rather than “a handicap”). Using trans* as an adjective allows trans* to be simply one of many components of a person’s identity.

TRANSGENDER: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex or gender they were assigned at birth, and for those whose gender expression differs from what is culturally expected of them. The term transgender is not indicative of sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life.

TRANSITION: The complex process of leaving behind one’s coercively assigned birth sex. Transition can include: coming out to one’s family, friends, and/or co-workers; changing one’s name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) some form of surgery. It’s best not to assume that someone will “complete” this process at any particular time: an individual’s transition is finished when they are finally comfortable with how their gender identity is aligned with their body, and may not include going through all of the aforementioned steps.

TRANSSEXUAL: Similar to transgender in that it indicates a conflict between one’s gender identity and sex assigned at birth, but with implications of hormonal/surgical transition from one binary sex to the other. Unlike transgender, transsexual is not an umbrella term, as many transsexual people do not identify as transsexual. “NTF” indicates a person who has or intends to transition in some way from Male-to-Female; “FTM” indicates a person who has or intends to transition from Female-to-Male.

TWO-SPIRIT: A contemporary term that references historical multiple gender traditions in many First Nations cultures. These individuals were sometimes viewed in certain tribes as having two spirits occupying one body; two-spirit indicates a person whose body simultaneously manifests both a masculine and a feminine spirit. Many Native/First Nations people who are LGBTQIA or gender non-conforming identify as Two-Spirit; in many Nations, being Two-Spirit carries both great respect and additional commitments, responsibilities to one’s community.