



Office of Diversity, Inclusion  
and Multicultural Education

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*The ODIME Glossary of Terms*

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## *Index of Terms*

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**Ally:** anyone, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, whose attitude and behavior is anti-heterosexist and who works toward combating homophobia and heterosexism, both on a personal and on an institutional level.

**Androgyny (also androgynous, bi-gendered, no-gendered):** a person (a) who identifies as both or neither of the two culturally defined genders; and/or (b) who expresses and/or presents merged culturally/stereotypically feminine and masculine characteristics, or mainly neutral characteristics. May or may not express dual gender identity.

**Assigned Gender (also Sex Assignment):** the announcement by doctors (“It’s a boy/girl”) based on what one’s physical anatomy looks like. Based on this announcement, one is supposed to grow, to live, and to exist within a certain set of gender roles.

**Barriers:** policies and/or practices that prevent or block people from participating in society fully and equally; ex: stairs that deny people in wheelchairs access to a space; hosting meetings for college students during the day when they are in class.

**Binary gender system:** The socially constructed idea that there are two distinct, and opposite, genders in our culture: male and female. People who do not “fit” within one category or the other are erased by this understanding of gender.

**Bias:** a tendency to believe that some people, ideas, etc., are better than others that usually results in treating some people unfairly (Merriam-Webster.com).

**Bias:** preconceived opinion generally based on limited experience or misinformation that an individual may hold about individuals from a group(s) to which they do not belong.

**Bisexual (Bi):** a person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to both men and women (can be seen as a clinical

term). A person who accepts their bisexual orientation may identify as bi.

**Bondage and Discipline (B & D):** sexual fantasies and behaviors that involve: being tied up, bound, gagged, or restrained; giving or receiving orders; role playing that involves being dominant or submissive to one's sexual partner. Members of the B & D subculture adhere to strict rules of safety and consent.

**Breeder:** a pejorative term for a heterosexual male or female, referring to the oft-touted ability of heterosexuals to procreate in the traditional manner.

**Butch:** used to identify a person who expresses and/or presents culturally/stereotypically masculine characteristics. Often, a person who self-identifies to a great degree with the stereotypically masculine end of a gender characteristic spectrum. Can be used either as a positive or negative term.

**Cis-gender:** cis is latin for "on the same side" – individuals whose gender matches their assigned sex. The term is used to prevent further marginalization of transgendered people as "abnormal."

**Cisgender:** label for the dominant privileged reality of individuals who have a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity, complementing "transgender". There are a number of derivatives of the terms in use, including "cis male" for a male with a masculine gender identity, "cis female" for a female with a feminine gender identity, and "cissexism".

**Coming Out:** to "come out" or to publicly declare and affirm one's sexual orientation or gender identity, sometimes to one person in conversation, sometimes by an act that places one in the public eye. Coming out is not a single event, but instead is a life-long process. In each new situation, an LGBTQ person must decide whether or not to come out; accepting and/or disclosing to others that one is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

**Cross-living:** Cross-dressing full-time, which is also referred to as 24/7, and living as the gender that you perceive yourself to be.

**Culture:** a learned meaning system that consists of patterns of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, meanings, and symbols that are passed on from one generation to the next and are shared to varying degrees by interacting members of a community (Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2012).

**Cultural Competency:** creating the space and capacity to understand, appreciate, and interact with persons of cultures and/or belief systems other than one's own.

**Discrimination:** the practice of unfairly treating a person or group of people differently from other people or groups of people (Merriam-Webster.com).

**Discrimination:** a behavior, intentional or not, which results in the negative treatment of a group(s) based on race. Power is a necessary precondition for discrimination.

**Diversity:** the multitude of identities that we all carry; accepting and respecting that each individual is unique, and not assigning a hierarchy to identities.

**Diversity:** the inclusion of different types of people (as people of different races or cultures) in a group or organization (Merriam-Webster.com).

**Dominant group (dominance):** groups with access to privilege and social power (*e.g. white, men, heterosexual, Christian*).

**Drag (also Drag King, Drag Queen, Female/Male Impersonator):** wearing the clothing of another gender, often with exaggerated cultural/stereotypical gender characteristics. Individuals may identify as Drag Kings (females in drag) or Drag Queens (males in drag). Drag often refers to dressing for functional purposes such as

entertainment/performance or social gatherings (e.g., costume parties). Drag has held a significant place in LGBTQ history and community.

**Dyke (also Femme Dyke, Butch Dyke, Bi Dyke, Boydyke):** may have derived from the term “dyke-loupers” from old Scotland. They had “louped” or jumped over the “dyke” or low wall that divided the fields and had gone over to the other side. The word dyke represents the wall itself --hard, strong, rigid--and the concept of crossing over, of partaking of both the masculine and feminine worlds, is lost altogether. Recent history has abused lesbians with the use of the term in a hateful manner. Within the community, some have grasped the term as a pride word.

**Effeminate:** used to identify a person (usually male) who expresses and/or presents culturally/ stereotypically feminine characteristics. This is often viewed as a culturally negative term.

**Ethnocentrism:** the notion that one’s own culture is superior to any other (Nanda and Warms, 2007).

**Ethnorelativism:** the ability to understand events or situations from another person’s cultural frame of reference.

**F2M/FTM (Female to Male):** used to identify a person who was female-bodied at birth and who identifies as male, lives as a man, or identifies as masculine.

**Faggot (Fag):** according to Webster’s, “a bundle of sticks or twigs.” Historically, homosexual men were gathered, tied together and used for “kindling” when burning someone at the stake who was worthy of a “real” execution (like a witch or a heretic). Within the community, some have grasped the term “fag” from its painful past and use it as a pride word.

**Family of Choice:** persons forming an individual’s social, emotional, and practical support network and often fulfilling the functions of blood relations. Many LGBTQ people are rejected when their families

learn of their sexual orientation or gender identity, or they may remain “closeted” to their biological relatives. In such cases, it is their partner/significant other and close friends who will be called on in time of illness or personal crisis.

**Family of Origin:** biological family, or the family in which one was raised. These individuals may or may not be part of a LGBTQ person’s support system.

**Femme:** a person who identifies with being a woman, who understands the power and seduction of the feminine spirit and one who is willing to be powerful as a woman. Can be used to identify a person who expresses and/or presents culturally/stereotypically feminine characteristics. Can be used either as a positive or negative term.

**Fetishism:** the use of nonliving objects for the purposes of sexual arousal. Common fetishes include: women’s undergarments, stockings, shoes, and boots, but are not limited to apparel.

**Gay:** a homosexual person, usually used to describe males but may be used to describe females as well.

**Gender Bender (also Gender Blender):** A person who merges characteristics of all genders in subtle ways or intentionally flaunts merged/blurred cultural or stereotypical norms for the purpose of shocking others, without concern for passing.

**Gender:** While many people believe that the sex differences (i.e. anatomical, genetic, and hormonal differences) between men and women are biological, gender is considered the social concept by which particular characteristics construct men and women as “masculine” and “feminine.” [Although, not everyone believes that sex is 100% biological, either!] People are socialized into behaving appropriately for their sex based on the culture and historical time period in which they live. Gender is often considered

a social institution in our culture since it shapes our desires, behaviors, and identities so profoundly and is intimately related to power dynamics between men and women.

**Gender Dysphoria:** an intense continuous discomfort resulting from an individual's belief in the inappropriateness of their assigned gender at birth and resulting gender role expectations. Also, a clinical psychological diagnosis (also called **Gender Identity Disorder**), which many in transgender communities are offended by, but is often required by insurance companies in order to receive hormones and/or surgery.

**Gender Expression:** The external representation of one's gender identity, usually expressed through "feminine" or "masculine" behavior, clothing, voice inflection, body adornment, and behaviors, etc. Typically, people who identify as transgender work to make their gender expression match their gender identity and not their "biological" sex. [Many people who identify as transgender resist the two-gender binary system altogether by refusing to be categorized as either a man or woman.]

**Gender Identity:** One's personal sense of being a man or woman or neither; the name one uses to refer to his/her/their gender. For many transgender people, their "biological" sex does not match their own gender identity.

**Gender Queer:** A term that is used by some people who may or may not fit on the spectrum of transgender, or be labeled as transgender, but who identify their gender and their sexual orientation to be outside the assumed norm.

**Gender Roles:** the socially constructed and culturally specific behavior and appearance expectations imposed on women (femininity) and men (masculinity).

**Globalization:** the increasing interdependence among national governments, business firms, nonprofit organizations, and individual

citizens (Gannon, 2008); world-wide interconnectedness, evidenced in global movements of natural resources, trade goods, human labor, finance capital, information, and infectious diseases (Haviland, Prins, Walrath and McBride, 2008).

**Heteronormativity:** A concept used to describe how many social institutions and social policies reinforce the belief that human beings fall into two distinct and complementary categories, male and female, and the subsequent belief that those genders ought to fulfill complementary roles—that is, among others, that sexual relationships ought to exist only between males and females. To describe a social institution as heteronormative means that it has visible or hidden norms, some of which are viewed as normal only for males and others which are seen as normal only for females. Its purpose, as with many critical terms, is to help identify voices that have "fallen through the cracks" and who do not feel that they have an adequate means of expressing themselves within the current social worldview.

**Heterosexism:** the belief that being heterosexual (attraction to the opposite sex) is superior and right, as opposed to being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered.

**Heterosexism:** the assumption or belief that everyone is heterosexual, and if not, they should be. The systematic suppression of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons is directly linked to sexism, including prejudiced attitudes or discriminatory practices against homosexuals.

**Heterosexism:** the assumption or belief that everyone is heterosexual, and if not, they should be. The systematic oppression of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons is directly linked to sexism, including prejudiced attitudes or discriminatory practices against homosexuals.

**Heterosexual:** a person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted or committed to members of the other sex.

**Straight:** a term originating in the gay community describing heterosexuals and meaning “to enter the mainstream,” or “to go straight.”

**Homophobia:** fear or contempt of those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered.

**Homophobia (also biphobia, transphobia):** a fear of homosexuals, homosexuality, bisexuality, or any behavior, belief, or, attitude of self or others which does not conform to rigid sex-role stereotypes. It is this fear that enforces sexism and heterosexism. The extreme behavior of homophobia is violence against LGBTQ individuals. Also, disapproval of and irrational fear toward gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered individuals based on myths and cultural heterosexism.

**Homosexual:** a person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted or committed to members of the same sex. A clinical term that originated in the late 1800’s. Some avoid using the word because it contains the base word “sex.” Given that sexual orientation has more to do with the issue of love/attraction than of sex, it is believed that the use of “homosexual” devalues the orientation of individuals. The terms “gay, lesbian, and bisexual” are preferred by the majority of the community.

**Hormone Therapy (also Hormone Replacement Therapy, HRT, Hormonal Sex Reassignment):** administration of hormones to affect the development of secondary sex characteristics of the opposite assigned gender; HRT is a process, possibly lifelong, of using hormones to change the internal body chemistry. Androgens (testosterone) are used for female to males, and Estrogens are used for male to females.

**Identity:** reflective self-conception or self-image that we each derive from our family, gender, cultural, ethnic, and individual socialization process (Ting-Toomey, 2005).

**Identity:** a person’s conception and expression of their individuality or group affiliations.

**In the Closet:** to be “in the closet” means to hide one’s identity in order to keep a job, a housing situation, friends, or in some other way to survive. Many LGBTQ individuals are “out” in some situations and “closeted” in others.

**Inclusion:** a sense of belonging: feeling respected, supported, and valued for who you are and proactively ensuring the same for others.

**Inclusion:** the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in people, in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that increase one’s awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions (AAC&U, 2009).

**Intercultural competence:** the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Deardorff, 2008).

**Internationalization:** refers to the efforts of institutions to incorporate global perspectives into teaching, learning, and research; build international and intercultural competence among students, faculty, and staff; and establish relationships and collaborations with people and institutions abroad (acenet.edu); **Comprehensive internationalization:** a strategic, coordinated process that seeks to align and integrate policies, programs, and initiatives to position colleges and universities as more globally oriented and internationally connected institutions.

**Internalized oppression:** the belief that members of non-dominant groups are inferior to members of dominant groups. The internalization of this belief through negative messages, feelings about oneself and one’s group, and the beliefs about how people like oneself



should be treated. This may lead to individuals criticizing, making disparaging comments about, and/or demeaning other individuals of their same group.

**Internalized Oppression:** the belief that same-gender sexual orientation and/or gender identity is inferior to heterosexual orientation and/or masculine or feminine gender identity. The internalization of negative messages, feelings about oneself and one's group, and the beliefs about how people like oneself should be treated, which often leads to self-hate and difficulty with self-acceptance. Also, the irrational fear of breaking cultural or stereotypical gender roles.

**Intersex (also formerly Hermaphrodite):** an individual born with full or partial genitalia of both genders, or with underdeveloped or ambiguous genitalia. Surgery is common in infancy, when a singular gender is assigned. Many who have surgery develop feeling a sense of loss of an essential part of themselves.

**Institutional Racism:** system of inequality based on race; specifically policies, practices, and procedures that have a disproportionately negative effect on non-whites; component is systemic racism: value system that is embedded in a society that supports and allows discrimination against non-whites; can be intentional or unintentional and only applies to groups with access to power. Power is a necessary precondition for institutional racism.

**Lesbian:** a common and acceptable word for female homosexuals only; a name taken from the island of Lesbos where Sappho, the great women-loving poet of 600 BC lived. Most women-loving women adopt this name with pride.

**Leather:** a subculture that chooses to dress in black leather apparel (hats, vests, chaps, boots, wristbands, etc.) for the purposes of sexual arousal; may also include rubber, latex, and PVC wear. Often affiliated with the S & M and B & D communities.

**LGBTQ:** an acronym that stands for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer, and Questioning”. Sometimes seen as **LGBT** or **GLBT**, which are used when one is describing individuals who have decided upon their identity (see **Questioning**).

**M2F/MTF (Male to Female):** used to identify a person who was male bodied at birth and who identifies as a female, lives as a woman, or identifies as feminine.

**Men who have Sex with Men (MSM):** the term is often used when discussing sexual behavior. It is inclusive of all men who participate in this behavior regardless of how they identify their sexual orientation. The acronym MSM is conventionally used in professional literature.

**Multiculturalism:** the appreciation, acceptance, and promotion universal diversity.

**Outing:** disclosing someone's sexual orientation or gender identity to others without permission.

**Pansexual (also Omnisexual):** an individual who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to those of any gender or physical makeup.

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

**Passing:** the ability for a person to present themselves as another gender than which they live full-time or than which they were assigned at birth.

**Post-Op (also Post-Operative):** transsexual individuals who have attained gender reassignment surgery, and/or other surgeries to change secondary sex characteristics.

**Power and privilege:** the use of advantages that allow some groups to have preference over or oppress others.

**Power:** ability to control access to resources, decision makers, and the ability to influence others + **Prejudice:** attitude that is based on limited information or stereotypes = **Oppression:** systematic subjugation of a social group by another social group with access to social power.

**Prejudice:** deeply held negative feelings associated with a particular group (Samovar, Porter and McDaniel, 2010)

**Pre-Op (also Pre-Operative):** transgendered individuals who have not attained gender reassignment surgery, but who desire to and are seeking that as an option. They may or may not “cross-live” full time and may or may not take hormone therapy. They may also seek surgery to change secondary sex characteristics.

**Privilege:** unearned and unsolicited societal advantage or immunity assigned to an identity group (*e.g. white*) that is not enjoyed by others or by all.

**Queer:** This word emerged in the mid-to-late 1980s in order to reclaim a pejorative term that was once used to disparage LGBT people. Today, “queer” is used in many different ways. Some people use “queer” as an all-inclusive term to refer to anyone who is not heterosexual (i.e. all LGBT people). However, the term is also used in a highly political way by some non-straight people to refer to their sexuality and/or progressive ideologies that reject compulsory heterosexuality and the practices that are often associated with it, i.e. these people identify as “queer” to mark their counter-hegemonic/anti-mainstream lifestyles. Queer Theory is a body of literature that has developed from this latter definition in order to contest the widespread beliefs related to our current understandings of sexuality.

**Questioning:** used to describe an individual who is contemplating their own sexual orientation and/or gender identity, but who has not

yet decided upon their identity; often viewed as the beginning of an inner journey that may or may not result in an LGBT identity. Individuals who are questioning may or may not experiment with non-heterosexual types of sexual behavior or non-traditional gender roles or behavior.

**Reverse racism:** implies that dominant groups could be the victims of racism; used consciously or unconsciously to blame non-dominant groups.

**Sadomasochism (also, Sadism & Masochism, S & M):** sexual fantasies and behaviors that involve giving or receiving physical or psychological suffering or humiliation. Members of the S & M subculture adhere to strict rules of safety and consent.

**Sex and Gender:** terms used to describe the designation of an individual as male or female (or masculine or feminine). “**Sex**” relates to one’s biological/physiological/genetic maleness or femaleness and “**gender**” relates to one’s adherence to sociocultural standards of masculinity and femininity.

**Sexism:** the sentiment that someone is “less than” because of their biological sex and/or the idea that there should be specific social roles/limitations based on sex. This can manifest interpersonally and systemically.

**Sex and Gender:** terms used to describe the designation of an individual as male or female (or, masculine or feminine) according to biological or sociological/cultural standards. Although the distinction between these terms is debated, many consider “sex” as relating to one’s biological/ physiological/genetic maleness or femaleness, and “gender” as relating to one’s adherence to sociocultural standards of masculinity and femininity.

**Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS):** permanent surgical refashioning of genitalia to resemble the genitalia of the desired gender. Sought to attain congruence between one's body and one's gender identity.



**Sexual Orientation:** the inclination or capacity to develop intimate emotional and sexual relationships with people of the same gender (lesbian or gay), the other gender (heterosexual), or either gender (bisexual).

**Stereotype:** an overgeneralization toward a group of people without any attempt to perceive individual variations;... can convey both positive and negative information (Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2012)

**Transgender (also Trans, Trans\*, Female to Male, FTM, F2M, Male to Female, MTF, M2F, Pre-Operative, Post-Operative, Non-Operative, Cross-dresser):** those who transgress societal gender norms; often used as an umbrella term to mean those who defy rigid, binary gender constructions, and who express or present a breaking and/or blurring of cultural/stereotypical gender roles. Includes: androgynes, cross-dressers, gender queer, gender-benders, intersex individuals, and transsexuals.

**Trigger:** a comment or action that elicits a strong emotional and/or physical response. This response may be disproportionate to the trigger (original comment or action) because it's typically routed in hurt around one of our own identities.

**Tokenizing:** classifying a person and/or their actions as proof that this person/action is representative of the entire group.

**Women who have Sex with Women (WSW):** the term often used when discussing sexual behavior. It is inclusive of all women who participate in this behavior regardless of how they identify their sexual orientation. The acronym WSW is conventionally used in professional literature.

**Worldview:** a set of more or less systematized beliefs and values in terms of which the group evaluates and attaches meaning to the reality that surrounds it (Kraft, 1978).