

LGBTQ+ 101

South Central Library System

September 21, 2023



OutReach
LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY CENTER

www.LGBTOutReach.org

608-255-8582

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OutReach LGBTQ+ Community Center

- **Peer counseling**
 - AODA Advocate
 - Transgender Advocate
 - Elder (50+) Advocate
 - Opioid Overdose Prevention Program Coordinator
 - Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project Coordinator
- **Social/support groups**
 - Madison Area Transgender Association (MATA)
 - Harm Reduction and Al-anon groups
 - Queer Faith
 - Q Cinema
 - Gay, Gray and Beyond
 - CQ (Curious Queers)
 - And others...
- **Speaker's Bureau/LGBTQ+ cultural competency training**
- **Lending library**
- **The Directory (on-line)**
- **Community meeting space**
- **Willma's Fund**

Agenda

- 1. The Power of Labels**
- 2. Social Privilege and Intersectionality**
- 3. Sexual Orientation, Sex, Intersex, and Gender**
- 4. Gender Identity and Expression**
- 5. Coming Out**
- 6. Discrimination and Mental Health**
- 7. Being an Effective Ally**
- 8. Creating Affirming Spaces**



The Power of Labels



The Double- edged Sword

- **The words we choose to describe ourselves have power.**
- **Labels can be inclusive**
 - Provide a common language for a shared experience
 - Reduce isolation/alienation/loneliness/depression
 - Define characteristics of a group
- **Labels can be exclusive**
 - Provide a basis for invalidating others
 - Increase isolation/alienation/loneliness/depression
 - Used to “other” groups of people

Self- identification

- **Self-identifying is subjective, complex, and very personal process for LGBTQ+ people.**
- **In the past, some labels that are commonly used today were stigmatizing.**
 - For example, the words “queer” or “homosexual”
- **New ways of self-identifying are always evolving.**
- **Identity is personal. Don't assume that you know someone's gender or sexuality based on their appearance, voice, or other characteristics.**
 - When someone discloses how they self-identify to you, it's often a sign of trust.



Social Privilege and Intersectionality



Social Privilege

- **Privilege** refers to the benefits that an individual has by virtue of belonging to certain social identity groups have cultural, economic, or political power.
 - The privilege of certain social identities is often due to the historical disenfranchisement of minority groups.
- **Having social privilege does not erase individual experiences and difficulties in life.**
- **People can experience privilege due to one of their identities and discrimination due to another.**

Reflection: Check Your Privilege

Think about how many ways that you carry privilege in your everyday life.

Check your privilege BINGO!

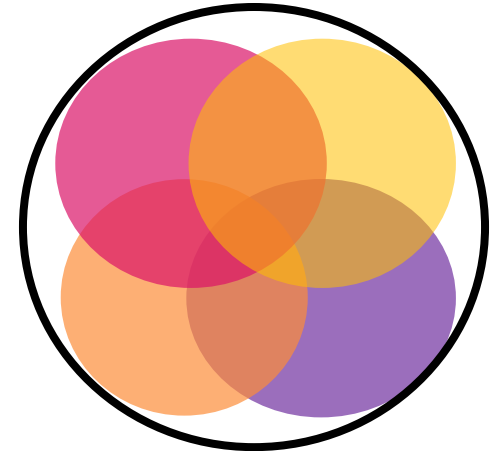
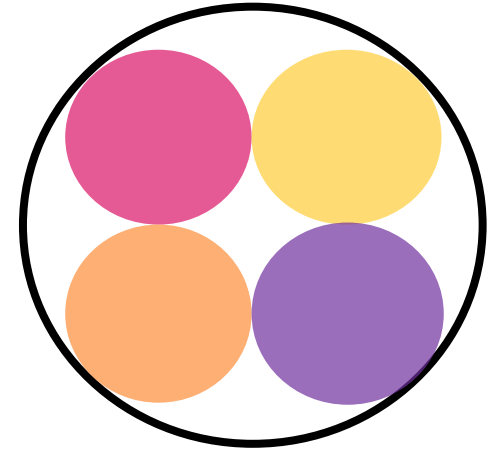
Native English speaker	Cisgender	Thin	No speech impediment	Christian
Male	White	Attractive	Heterosexual	Able-bodied
Standard accent	No criminal record		Tall	Mentally healthy
Mainstream political party	Adult	Born in country of residence	Wealthy	Hold a college degree
Employed	Housed	Well-connected family	Not a red-head	Neuro-typical

Intersectionality



Two Perspectives:

- Considers the separate interactions of discrimination and privilege. Identities do not overlap.
- Overlapping forms of discrimination based on social identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, education, and others.



Truly knowing or understanding another person requires awareness of their intersecting identities.

Intersectionality



- **Intersectionality is an important way to understand the experiences of people within the LGBTQ+ community.**
 - Each person experiences their own unique set of intersecting identities.
 - The LGBTQ+ community is diverse.
 - There is not one universal LGBTQ+ experience.
- **For example, the discrimination that a transgender woman of color faces is very different from that of a white transgender man, despite both belonging to the transgender community.**



Sexual Orientation, Sex, Intersex and Gender



Sexual Orientation

- **The gender(s) that someone is attracted to, how often or intensely they feel sexual or romantic attraction, and the conditions under which they experience sexual or romantic attraction**
 - **Attraction to one sex or gender:** gay, lesbian, straight
 - **Attraction to multiple sexes or genders:** bisexual, omnisexual, pansexual, polysexual, and others.
 - **Attraction to no sexes or genders, or very infrequent attraction:** asexual or aromantic, and others.

Sexual Orientation

- **Sexual orientation is distinct from gender identity and gender expression.**
- **“Queer” has been reclaimed by some in the LGBTQ+ community to refer to any sexual orientation other than heterosexual.**
- **A person’s past or current partners do not define their sexuality.**
 - For example, a bisexual woman dating a man is still bisexual even though she is in a heterosexual-appearing relationship.

Sex

- **Sex** is a person's physical or biological assignment, most often of male or female, at birth by medical professionals.
 - Based on genitalia, chromosomes, or other sex characteristics.
- **People can be born male, female, or intersex.**

What does it mean to be intersex?



The intersex pride flag

- **Intersex** is an umbrella term for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a body or chromosomes that are neither strictly male nor female.
- **According to experts, around 1.7% of the population is born with intersex traits – comparable to the number of people born with red hair.**
- **Five intersex myths:**
 - Myth 1: Everybody is born male or female.
 - Myth 2: Being intersex is very rare.
 - Myth 3: Being intersex is a condition that needs to be corrected.
 - Myth 4: Intersex people are transgender.
 - Myth 5: No one is speaking out for intersex people.

Gender

- **Gender** - Subjective, socially-mediated roles, expectations, behaviors, expressions, and identities.
 - We are socialized to accept our culture's concept of gender as ideal/normal but expectations and roles vary from culture to culture
- **Gender Binary** - a system of classification in which everyone is either male or female – with nothing in between.

Understanding Gender

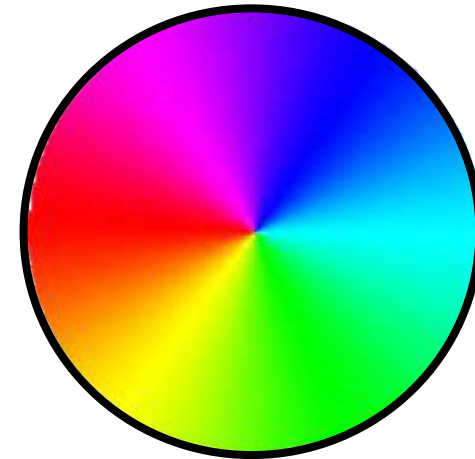
The linear view

- Gender is a continuum with male/masculine at one end and female/feminine at the other
- This perspective reinforces the idea of a gender binary



The non-linear view

- Gender is a constellation with infinite variety
- No binary and no extreme ends of the continuum





Gender Identity and Expression

Gender Identity

- **Gender identity** is internal and personal, it is how an individual understands and experiences their gender.
- Some examples of **gender identities** are:
 - Cisgender
 - Transgender
 - Genderqueer or non-binary
- **Gender identity ≠ gender expression**

Gender Identity: Cisgender

- **Someone whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth**
 - Cisgender man, woman, or intersex person
- **It is inappropriate to use “normal” or “non-transgender” because those terms imply that being cisgender is the default, and that transgender people are abnormal.**
- **Cisgender privilege:** benefits that result from having the gender that people assume you are match what was assigned to you at birth
 - For example, can you use gendered restrooms or other public facilities without fear of verbal or physical harassment and abuse?

Gender Identity: Transgender

- **Transgender or trans person** - an individual whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth
 - Transgender is an umbrella term that includes trans women, trans men, and some non-binary or genderqueer people
- **Transition** - the process of affirming one's gender identity through social, legal, medical, and/or surgical processes. Not all transgender people transition.
- **Gender dysphoria** – significant stress due to incongruence between sex assigned at birth and gender identity
 - Can cause depression, anxiety, and thoughts of self-harm or suicide in some people.
 - A clinical diagnosis necessary for insurance coverage of gender affirming care.

Gender Identity: Genderqueer or Non-Binary

- **An umbrella term for gender identities that exist outside or beyond the gender binary**
 - Neither a man nor a woman
 - A combination of man and woman
 - Multiple genders at the same time
 - Flowing between genders (genderfluid)
 - Not identifying as any gender (agender)
- **Genderqueer or non-binary people may or may not consider themselves to be transgender**

Gender Expression



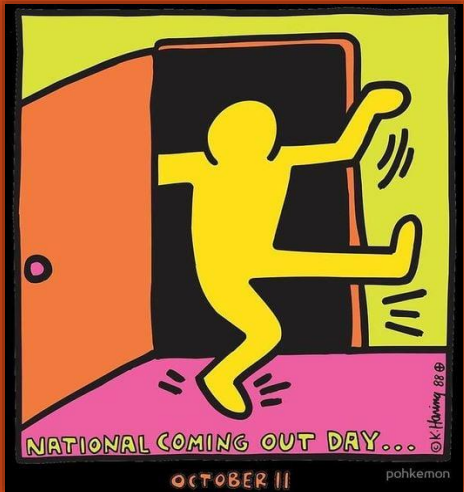
- **Gender expression** is how we communicate our gender to others through our clothing, voice, or other perceived characteristics.
 - Gender expression can be private (i.e., painting your toenails in winter) or public (i.e., the way you style your hair).
- **Gender expression can be feminine, masculine, androgynous, or other.**
- **Gender expression does not always signify gender identity.**
 - A trans women may choose to keep her facial hair. A non-binary person may wear feminine clothes. A cisgender woman may have short hair and wear masculine clothing.



Coming Out



Coming Out





- **Coming out** is the process by which one accepts or comes to identify one's own sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
- **Two separate processes:**
 - Coming out to oneself
 - Coming out to others
- **People can come out at any age:**
 - LGBTQ+ youth may wait to leave home before coming out.
 - LGBTQ+ youth may come out to people at different times, choosing to talk to friends, family, or other trusted adults based on safety and comfort.
- **Coming out occurs many times for each person**

Coming Out

- **Always let people come out for themselves.**
 - Disclosing someone's gender identity or sexual orientation without their consent is called "**outing**".
- **Outing people damages trust and can be incredibly dangerous.**
 - Disclosing someone's gender identity or sexual orientation can lead to bullying, violence, and other negative outcomes.
- **Ask someone if it is ok to discuss their sexual orientation or gender identity with others (i.e., parents, teachers, etc.).**
 - When in doubt, leave it out! If you are unsure of whether or not someone would be ok with you discussing their gender identity or sexual orientation, default to keeping the information private.

Coming Out

	Feelings	Behaviors
+	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-acceptance• Connection• Relief• Authenticity• Pride 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased sense of community• <i>With acceptance and affirmation</i>, reduced suicidal ideation and better mental health outcomes
-	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internalized homophobia• Internalized transphobia• Isolation• Fear• Anger• Uncertainty• Depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leaving home/forced homelessness• Dropping out of school• Self-inflicted violence• Increased drug and alcohol use/abuse• Suicidal ideation and attempts

The Silver Lining

- **Negative outcomes are not intrinsic in LGBTQ+ people but are consequences of the ways in which LGBTQ+ people are treated in our culture.**
- **LGBTQ+ people are, by necessity, resilient:**
 - Politically
 - Socially
 - Emotionally
- **LGBTQ+ people are often more well connected and have stronger support systems outside of their nuclear families.**

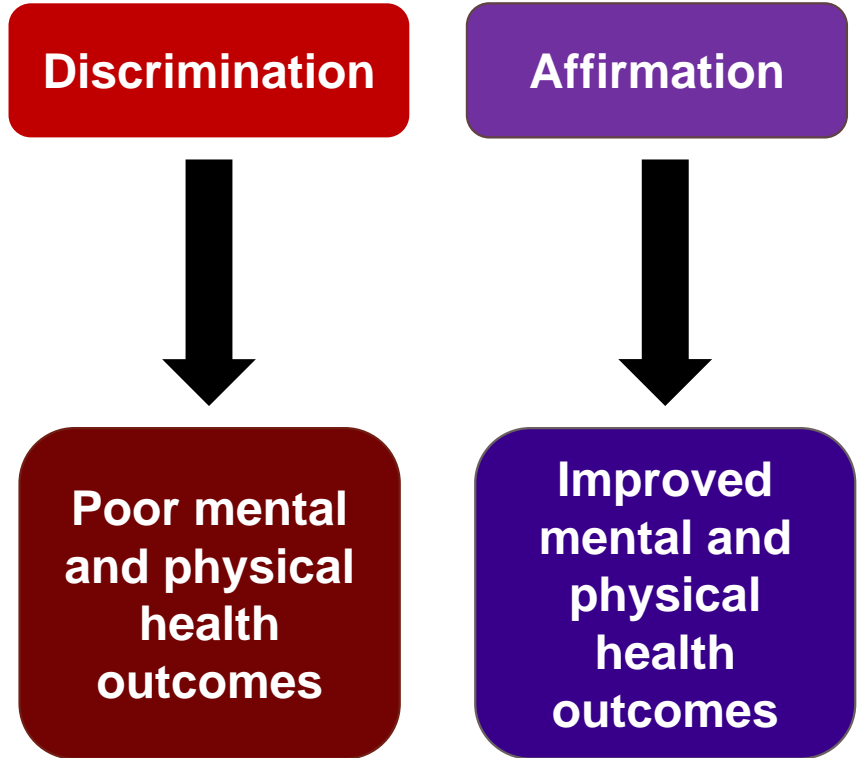


Discrimination and Mental Health



Addressing Root Causes

- **LGBTQ+ people experience shame, stigma, discrimination, and rejection based on their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.**
- **Improving LGBTQ+ mental health outcomes relies on countering negative attitudes and providing culturally competent, affirming care and support.**



Minority Stress

- **Social factors like discrimination, shame, and stigma cause daily stress that builds up over time and leads to long-term health consequences. This is minority stress.**
- **LGBTQ+ people, especially transgender people, experience discrimination in the following areas:**
 - Housing
 - Education
 - Employment
 - Healthcare
 - Public accommodation
 - Interactions with law enforcement

Affirmation Saves Lives

- **Transgender people who live in states with gender identity non-discrimination laws reported fewer suicidal thoughts and attempts.**
- **Transgender youth with supportive families are at a lower risk of suicide.**
- **Transgender youth with families that use their chosen name have less suicidal ideation.**
- **Transgender adults with supportive classmates or co-workers have fewer suicidal thoughts and attempts.**



Being an Effective Ally



Allies in Action



- **LGBTQ+ allies are people who are not LGBTQ+ but who accept and affirm their LGBTQ+ neighbors, co-workers, family members, and friends.**
 - Being an ally is about *action*.
- **Allies are people who:**
 - Are aware of their privilege and acknowledge that there are some things they'll never experience or even have to think about.
 - Use their privilege to advocate on behalf of marginalized communities when needed, ***without speaking over the voices of people in that community.***

Use Your Privilege

- **Allow space for LGBTQ+ individuals to share what our community needs, rather than creating or implementing policies or programs without our input.**
 - Listen to and validate the things that people in marginalized groups are saying.
- **Understand that being cisgender and/or heterosexual means you are safe to speak up or intervene in situations where an LGBTQ+ person might be at risk.**
 - If friends or colleagues make a joke or disparaging comments about LGBTQ+ people, say something.
 - If you witness someone being harassed or bullied, step in.

Be Aware of Micro- aggressions

- **Microaggressions are subtle but offensive comments or actions directed at people in a marginalized community.**
 - Microaggressions are often unintentional and consist of expectations that cisgender and/or heterosexual people take for granted.
 - Microaggressions may not be **intended** to be aggressive, but they are **experienced** by marginalized populations as oppressive.
- **Common microaggressions:**
 - Assuming that everyone is heterosexual or cisgender
 - Verbal or nonverbal cues that indicate discomfort with LGBTQ+ people
 - Assuming someone's pronouns
 - Denying that homophobia or transphobia exist in your community
 - Misrepresentation or lack of LGBTQ+ representation
 - Denial of bodily privacy



Creating Affirming Environments

Working with LGBTQ+ Youth and Families

- **Let families of LGBTQ+ youth tell their own stories.**
- **Educate families and loved ones on how rejection will affect their LGBTQ+ family member.**
 - Family rejection leads to increased risk for mental health issues, substance use, and suicide
- **Link acceptance of sexual orientation and/or gender identity to LGBTQ+ individual's long-term:**
 - Physical health
 - Mental health
 - Overall well-being

Respect Pronouns



- **Many non-binary or genderqueer people use gender neutral pronouns (they/them/theirs) and honorifics (i.e., Mx. instead of Mr. or Ms.)**
 - People who use gender neutral pronouns or honorifics can dress or appear feminine or masculine, they do not have to be androgynous.
- **When in doubt (not everyone uses “they” as pronouns), use the individual’s first name.**
- **Asking about and using the name and pronouns identified by an individual is part of being respectful and supportive.**
- **Including your pronouns in your email signature, when you introduce yourself, or on a nametag helps LGBTQ+ people feel comfortable and safe sharing theirs.**

Avoid Misgendering and Dead- naming

- **Dead-naming:** Referring to a transgender person using a name other than what they currently use.
- **Misgendering:** Referring to or describing someone in ways that do not affirm their gender, including using incorrect pronouns and honorifics (e.g., Mr., Ms.).
- **Misgendering and dead-naming are harmful behaviors, even when unintentional.**
 - Repeatedly misgendering or dead-naming someone, even unintentionally, can make them feel disrespected and unwelcome.
 - These behaviors “out” transgender people without their consent, making them vulnerable to verbal or physical harassment and discrimination.

Acknowledge Mistakes

- **Mistakes *will* happen.**
- **Apologize quickly and move on.**
 - Dwelling on your mistake can make the person you misgendered, misnamed, or otherwise offended feel responsibility for making you feel better in the moment.
- **Let it be a learning experience for the next time.**
 - The feelings of guilt or shame that may come from hurting someone can inform how you act in the future.

Commit to On-going Education

- **Seek out high-quality, reliable sources of information.**
 - Look for things written by people who are a part of the community that you are learning about.
 - Misinformation is harmful and often perpetuates dangerous and potentially deadly stereotypes.
- **Stay up-to-date with what is impacting the LGBTQ+ community where you live.**
 - Are there anti-LGBTQ+ laws or policies being put in place by school boards or local governments where you live?
 - What are LGBTQ+ people doing to counter discrimination and how can you support their efforts?

Conclusions



- **The LGBTQ+ community is diverse and there is no singular LGBTQ+ experience.**
- **Though resilient by necessity, our community regularly confronts discrimination from individuals and institutions based on our various and intersecting social identities, and this can seriously impact our health.**
- **Providing safe spaces for discussion and learning for youth and affirming LGBTQ+ youths' identities leads to better mental health outcomes, lower suicidality, and lower rates of substance use in adulthood.**
- **Creating and maintaining safe and affirming environments for LGBTQ+ people relies on input from LGBTQ+ people and work from cisgender and/or heterosexual allies.**



Resources and References



Resources

- *OutReach LGBTQ+ Community Center*: <https://www.lgbtoutreach.org/>
- *Our Lives Magazine*, a Wisconsin-based publication covering LGBTQ+ topics: <https://ourliveswisconsin.com/>
- *GSAFE*, a Wisconsin non-profit that works on equality in education: <https://gsafe.org/>
- *The Trevor Project*, a national mental health and suicide prevention organization focused on LGBTQ+ youth: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help/>
- *FORGE*, a Wisconsin-based non-profit focused on mental health and wellbeing of transgender and non-binary people of all ages: <https://forge-forward.org/>

References

- *Gender Neutral Pronouns*. Forge, February 2021. <https://forge-forward.org/resource/gender-neutral-pronouns/>
- *Kimberlé Crenshaw Discusses Intersectional Feminism*. Lafayette College. September, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROwquxC_Gxc
- *Microaggressions Resource Guide*. University of Arizona Office of LGBTQ Affairs, February 2018. https://lgbtq.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/MicroaggressionsResourceGuide_June2018.pdf
- *Core Concepts Resource Guides*, FORGE. <https://forge-forward.org/resources/core-concepts/>