

Some First Thoughts!

In the U.S., you are likely to encounter people who are openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). It is important to know that it is illegal to discriminate against LGBT people in Milwaukee. Furthermore, you may be curious about cultural differences. This packet is designed to be an LGBT 101. Please note that the UWM LGBT Resource Center and other LGBT resources in the Milwaukee community are not trying to change your opinions about LGBT issues or to change your personal values about sexuality and gender. We respect that everyone may have different values in their own cultures and families. However, living in the U.S. means learning about and coming to understand the various standards and values within the U.S.

Lost in Translation!

Not every language has specific words to describe women or men who are attracted to or who fall in love with people of the same sex. Not every language has words to describe people who change their gender or sex or who are neither or both masculine and feminine. Words used to describe same-sex love or same-sex sexual activity do not always translate into English very well. Similarly, concepts and terminology used for transgender people and people with atypical gender expressions do not always translate into English very well. Same-sex love and sexual activity are not seen simply as behaviors in many Western cultures. They are usually a part of a person's sense of identity. There are many words used to describe these identities, such as 'gay'. In the U.S. the terms 'gay' and 'transgender' are not interchangeable. They refer to two different aspects of identity, sexual orientation and gender identity respectively.

Some Definitions!

Sexual Orientation: a person's attractions, emotional, physical and sexual, to other people and how a person expresses that attraction.

Gender Identity: a person's own sense of being a woman, a man, or neither, or some combination. This is a personal identity; it may or may not match biological sex, or assigned gender. This identity may or may not match how society perceives the person or how the person presents themselves.

Gay Man: a man who is attracted, emotionally, and physically, to other men.

Lesbian: a woman who is attracted, emotionally and physically, to other women.

Bisexual: a person who is attracted, emotionally and physically, to people of both genders.

Ally: a person who supports LGBT people and works to end oppression based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Coming Out: the process that individuals go through to accept and acknowledge their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. It is a lifelong ongoing process. The term is also used to mean the act of telling others about one's identity. **DO NOT OUT** someone without their permission.

Definitions Continued!

Transgender: people whose gender does not conform to traditional definitions. Transgender is an umbrella term, many identities and people fit under it. Some of them include:

=> **Crossdressers:** people who dress in the "opposite" gender's clothing by societal standards. Crossdressers see themselves as a man who enjoys wearing women's clothes or woman who enjoys wearing men's clothing.

=> **Transsexuals:** people who feel that they are the different gender than the gender assigned to them at birth (usually based on biological sex) - a man in a "woman's" body, or a woman in a "man's" body. Some (with medical technologies) change their bodies, while others do not.

=> **Genderqueer:** people identify their gender something other than "man" or "woman". For example, some people identify their gender as "third", "other", "fem" or "butch".

=> **Intergender:** people who feel that their gender is a combination of femininity and masculinity. Among some American Indian communities there is a similar identity: "two-spirited".

=> **Drag Queens:** men who enjoy dressing as woman for a theatrical performance. They may or may not identify as transgender.

=> **Drag Kings:** women who enjoy dressing as a man for a theatrical performance. They may or may not identify as transgender.

=> **Gender Non-Conforming:** people who do not fit the expectations of their gender assignment.

U.S. Culture and LGBT Issues

The U.S. is a vast multicultural nation. There is not one view of sexuality. Furthermore, opinions concerning LGBT people and their rights exist along a continuum. People in the U.S. vary in their responses to LGBT people. Likewise, on LGBT rights issues, such as civil marriage, a large spectrum of opinions exist. It is best not to assume anything about a person's identity or their views on LGBT issues. If confused, or uncertain, feel free to ask!

Use of Language

All words can be used in a derogatory way. This should be avoided. Certain words, such as 'faggot' or 'pervert' can create a hostile environment. This is not tolerated at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. If you are unsure if a word is appropriate do not use it. Always err on the side of caution in order to respect people's individual identities.

Basic Issues

In Milwaukee, and at UWM, it is not acceptable to discriminate against people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, among other identities. To learn about cultural differences instead of ignoring them, ask questions and withhold judgement of others. Ask others to do the same for you. The UWM LGBT Resource Center is here to advocate and work with UWM students and the campus community, we strive to create a welcoming and inclusive campus environment for everyone.

To Learn More:

GLSEN (Gay-Lesbian-Straight-Educators-Network)
Educational issues and support for instructors:
www.glsen.org

GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation)
Activism that fights homophobia and supports positive depictions of LGBT people in the media: www.glaad.org

PFLAG (Parents, Families, & friends of Lesbians and Gays)
Support for families and advocacy of LGBT issues: www.pflag.org

UWM LGBT Resource Center
Student Service Dept, Student Union, WG-89:
www4.uwm.edu/lgbt/



UWM L.G.B.T. Resource Center

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An International Student's Guide:
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) People and U.S. Culture