

This week's question to consider:

That acronym is long. What does 2SLGBTQIA+ mean? Can I just say LGBTQ? Also, is the word "queer" an okay word to use? Also, I've heard that SOGI is related? What's that? I want to support the rainbow community.

Pro tip: Terminology changes with new understanding and new ways of expression. It's important to keep up to date. Ask questions. Another approach is to do some light googling when we have doubts.

Happy **PRIDE** month, beautiful people!

We can't talk about Pride without talking about its origins, even if briefly. The first Pride march was in response to the state of things; at the Stonewall Inn, in New York City, USA. Picture it: it's the late 1960s, homophobic laws are in place prohibiting people from being openly gay. Violence. Public dissent. Riots. The gay community launched those riots to protest the violence they were experiencing at the hands of police. This is why we say that the first Pride was a riot. Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera were gay, trans activists involved, whose stories are worth delving into, if you want to attach a story to the bigger story.



Progressive Pride Flag

Note: there are more than 30 Pride flags.

So. After Stonewall, there was the GLB community. Then, the GLBT community. The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Trans community. What's in a name? Lots. Names are powerful. And now, the rainbow community had a name.

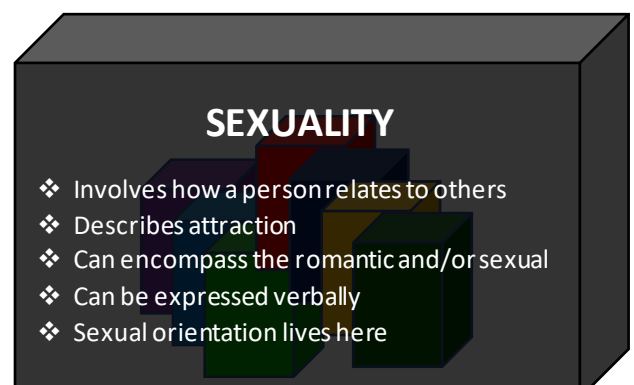
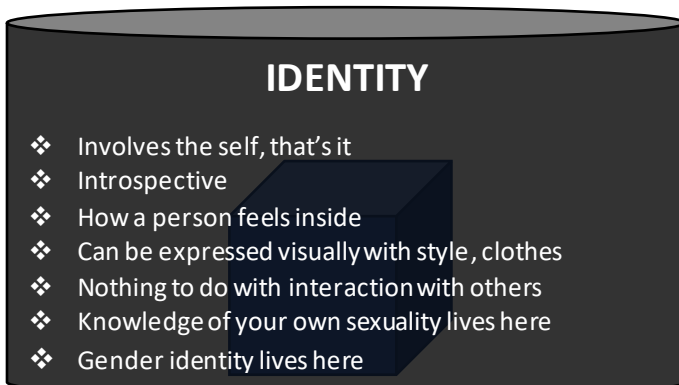
This then became the LGBT community. The letter shift happened in the aftermath of the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s, when gay men were barred from donating blood, and lesbians came to donate blood, and also stand by their side. The letter switch stood as a sign of respect and solidarity and acknowledgement of this beautiful collective effort. There's more to this story, of course, and this is the lovely side of this story.

Next, a Q. Some people have questions and are of the Questioning sort. Also: can't forget the queer humans! Taking back a formerly pejorative word and owning it; another step forward. So now, we had LGBTQ.

Not long after, LGBTQ became LGBTQ+. We realized we were missing something. But wait! There's more! This brings us to 2SLGBTQIA+. Suddenly, there's much more. Will it ever end? The letters! The rearranging! The humanity!

Well, we are indeed talking about the humanity. That's exactly the point. Our language evolves to express identity and gender and sexuality, and it may ever continue to evolve. Let's have a look at things as they are today though, so that we can add some context and get a bit more comfortable with our understanding. Also, this is where SOGI comes in.

Before that, though, it is important to recognize that there is a difference between identity and sexuality, because both of those things appear in the terminology for the rainbow community, they are both aspects of identity, and there can be some overlap. Here's a visual that may help further your understanding:



2S	Two Spirit Indigenous people. Reserved as a designation for Indigenous people. Encompasses cultural, spiritual, sexual and gender identity, and reflects Indigenous understandings of gender roles, spirituality. This has moved to the beginning of the 2SLGBTQIA+ initialism to highlight the importance of Indigenous identity, and as a form of acknowledgement and correction of the erasure of Indigenous-specific gender identity and sexuality.
L	Lesbian. Term used to denote same-sex attraction in women. Not often used in younger people, who tend to prefer “gay.” Cherished term in community of older people as this was a hard-earned designation for many, and has associations, among them correcting the erasure of their sexuality.
G	Gay. Currently the preferred terminology of many to denote same-sex attraction as sexual orientation.
B	Bisexual. Denotes a person who has attraction to more than one gender. Can either mean attracted to men and women or attracted to many genders. Some bisexual people are pansexual (people who can hold attraction to any gender, shortcut to understanding: “hearts not parts”) but refer to themselves as bisexual as this latter term is more commonly understood and recognized.
T	Transgender. Gender does not match that which was assigned at birth. (Previously <i>transsexual</i> , a term that has fallen out of common use, is now considered pejorative and may appear in older literature.)
Q	Queer or Questioning. Queer. This term was previously used pejoratively to denote an unusual person; either they dressed outside the norms of their perceived gender or were considered deviant in some way. Has been reclaimed by the rainbow community to denote anyone who likes this definition as a definition of unique. Any person in the rainbow community may refer to themselves as queer; it is a matter of personal preference. Note, this term is a self-identifier. Tread lightly when attributing to someone else without their first having identified as such, especially if you happen to be a cisgender heterosexual person, since this can read as a negative based on who is saying it. Questioning. A person’s identity is formed over time, and their understanding of their identity can change. This letter holds space for those who have not yet figured out where they fit into the rainbow community but know that they belong within it.
I	Intersex. Describes those who are born with sex characteristics, reproductive or sexual anatomy, that doesn’t fit the boxes of “female” or “male.” It is a naturally occurring variation in genetics and biology that exists in all species. This also describes a wide variety of differences, including chromosomal differences, and differences in internal organs. A person can be intersex and learn about this once puberty occurs, or never know it throughout their lifetime, depending on the nature of these variations.
A	Asexual, Aromantic, or Agender. Asexual people experience little or no sexual attraction to others. Aromantic people experience little to no interest in forming romantic attachments. Sometimes the abbreviations Ace/Aro are used. Ace/Aro spectrum describes a wide array of gender identities and sexual orientations. Agender people do not identify with a gender, may consider themselves genderless, or outside of the spectrum of gender. Some nonbinary people also consider themselves to be agender and use this as an umbrella term.
+	We cannot forget the plus. This plus is there to indicate that there are several other identities and sexual orientations wrapped up in the rainbow community that are not specifically mentioned in previous letters. Covered in this “plus” are pansexual, demisexual, sapiosexual, etc. Essentially, every gender identity and sexual orientation not previously mentioned. An acknowledgement of the fact that there are countless forms of expressing gender, of expressing sexual orientation, and ever will be.

Everything in this initialism falls under the umbrella of **SOGI**.

Sexual **O**rientation and **G**ender **I**ntity

Still with me? Excellent! Let's revisit those questions from the beginning and answer them explicitly.

That acronym is long. Yes.

What does 2SLGBTQIA+ mean? Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic/Agender, and more!

Can I just say LGBTQ? Sure. Tongue-in-cheek, "an LGBTQ-er like me". Oh, important to mention that it is important that you don't add "or whatever." That's a dismissive tone, and it's important not to include a dismissive tone. But yes, you can say LGBTQ. It's generally understood that you mean the entire community when you stop after the Q. It doesn't include everyone by name, but it's still understood.

Also, is the word "queer" an okay word to use? Depends. Are you queer? Then of course! Are you referring to someone who has self-identified as queer? This is also okay. Are you talking about a group of people in the rainbow community? This is a generally accepted term when used neutrally or positively, as in context of "the queer folks," or, "protect queer kids." It sounds vaguely pejorative to say, "the queers," and pluralize it that way, so don't do that please. Also, if you're not part of the rainbow community, be extra mindful of this word. It's a term that was taken back into the rainbow community. If you're vaguely uncomfortable using it, or it feels in any way like it doesn't belong to you, use another term, because it can sound pejorative and harken back to a time of judgement and othering, especially if the LGBTQers in question are in, hm, say, their 40s or older.

Also, I've heard that SOGI is related? What's that?

We've come to realize how massive the acronym has become. Like... we know. Trust me, we know. LGBTQ is still here to stay, but also, rather than add more letters yet again, we have **S**exual **O**rientation and **G**ender **I**ntity. Inclusive of everyone, and we are done adding letters. Things are moving in this direction, especially in policy terminology.

I want to support the rainbow community. Hooray! We want your support. Display Pride flags in your spaces. It matters to the queer kids in your classes, makes them feel safe and like you support their very existence. Talk about Pride month. Learn openly. It's now, and it's all of June. Learn more than you knew last year about the rainbow community and the people who populate it. To be an ally is to be a knowledgeable, ever-learning human. And if you are a queer person, hello. Your presence here in this world is crucial and **you are part of this community whether you're out or not.**

As ever and always, below are a few resources to give additional context, which you are welcome to explore further, either for your own learning, or to use in your lessons, as classroom materials.

Recommended Resources:

The Stonewall Riots Wikipedia Entry | [Stonewall](#)

Reader's Digest (May 2022) | [The Meaning Behind 32 LGBTQ Pride Flags](#)

The Oxford LGBTQ+ Society Website | [OULGBTQ+ Ace/Aro Glossary](#)

Planned Parenthood Website | [What's Intersex?](#)

New Brunswick Policy 713 (Implemented August 2020) | [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#)

Rainbows forever,

I mean that, I painted a large rainbow ribbon on a wall in my kitchen,

No one even tried to stop me,

It is amazing,

Representing,

Your friendly neighbourhood Anti-Racism & Equity Coach

Therese Trofimencoff (*she/they*)