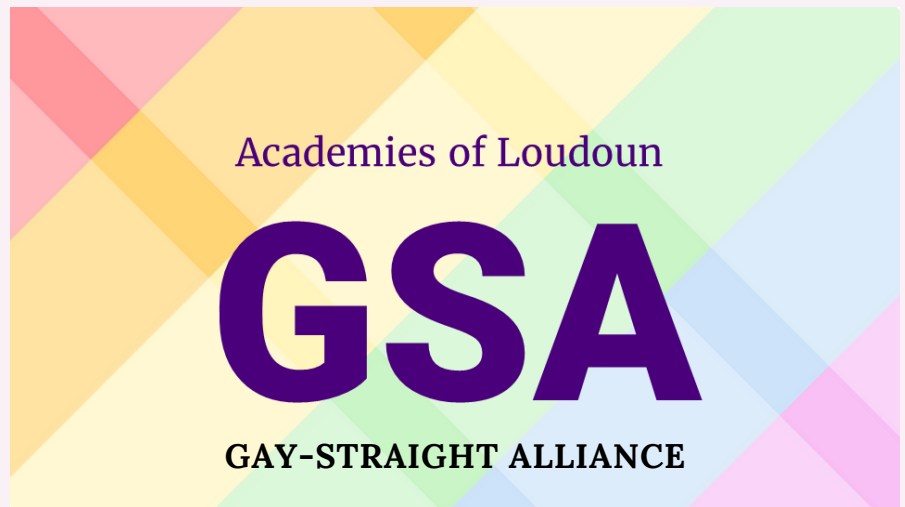


ACADEMIES GSA NEWSLETTER

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What Does it Mean to be LGBTQIA?

You may have seen people use the acronym LGBTQ (or sometimes a longer version, LGBTQIA) in a variety of contexts, and wondered what it means. You might also wonder what it means for someone to be transgender, or bisexual, or what any other identity means. I don't blame you, it's not self-explanatory. LGBTQ is a common acronym used to describe multiple communities of people who don't fit the heterosexual, cisgender norm (don't worry, I'll explain what all this means further down.) There are a lot of misconceptions about the different people who identify as LGBTQIA+, but that's not the focus of this article. Instead I'll just be sticking to brief overviews of the different groups.

The most important thing to know when talking about other people is that being different is okay. If you're a guy, it might seem weird to imagine being attracted to another guy. If you're a girl, it might seem weird to imagine being attracted to another girl. That's okay! Nobody is trying to "convert" you to be gay, or trans, or anything other than what you are - my intent is just to provide information for educational purposes. It is important to realize that there's a difference between "I'm straight, and that's okay" and "I'm straight, and everybody should be straight". Though you may not be one of the people described in this article, it's important to recognize that someone being different from yourself doesn't make them wrong, delusional, or a bad person. With that in mind, let's start talking about some identities in the LGBTQ umbrella.

I'll begin by talking about the terms for people not under the LGBTQ umbrella. Heterosexuality is when one is only attracted to people of the opposite gender. This is also known as being straight. It's difficult to find exact numbers on sexuality demographics, but a good estimate would be that around 95% of people are straight. Cisgender means that your gender identity matches what you were assigned at birth. This is the case for greater than 99% of the population.

Now, let's talk about the full LGBTQIA acronym. In its entirety, it stands for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, aromantic/asexual". **Lesbian** is the term for women that are only attracted to other women. Around 1-2% of the population is lesbian. (Keep in mind that lesbianism only applies to women, so it's something like 1 in 50 women.) Notable lesbians include Ruby Rose, Kate McKinnon, girl in red, and Megan Rapione. **Gay** is a blanket term for people attracted exclusively to their own gender. (Also known as homosexuality) This encompasses both men and women, though many women prefer the term lesbian. Around 3-4% of the population is gay, including lesbians. Notable gays include Tim Cook, Lil Nas X, and Elton John. **Bisexual** is the term used to denote people attracted to all genders. Around 3-4% of the population is bisexual. To debunk a couple common misconceptions: Bisexual people don't have to feel *equal* attraction to all genders. If you mainly like girls, but also really like a guy, that doesn't make you any less bisexual. Some people initially think they're bisexual, and end up being straight or gay; some people initially think they're straight or gay, and end up being bisexual. That doesn't mean all bisexuals will eventually become straight or gay. Some notable bisexuals include Halsey, Brendon Urie (the frontman of Panic! At the Disco), Daya, and Lili Reinhart.

Transgender people are those whose gender identity doesn't match their body. In a nutshell: trans people were born with a female brain in a male body, or vice versa. This results in **gender dysphoria**, which is distress as a result of that mismatch. Gender dysphoria is harmful and typically results in stress or depression-based disorders, which can lead to suicide. The leading cause of death in trans teens is suicide. The main treatment is transitional therapy; typically, taking hormones to transition one's body to the correct sex, and transitioning socially to start presenting as female, male, or neither (**non-binary/genderqueer**, which deserve their own article) depending on the situation. That's what the fuss over pronouns is about. Transgender people are in significant distress until they transition, yet some people choose to purposefully refer to them as the incorrect gender. Don't do this. Around 0.5% of people are transgender, with Elliot Page and Laverne Cox being two of the most popular transgender celebs.

Queer is another blanket term used for people who don't fit the heterosexual/cisgender norm. **Questioning** refers to those who are still figuring out their sexuality or gender identity; it's *really freaking hard* to wrestle with that stuff, which is why the LGBTQ community is typically very accepting of questioning folk. **Intersex** (not to be confused with intersectionality) describes individuals who are born with or develop a biological mix of sex characteristics between "male" and "female". Somewhere between 0.02-1.7% of people are intersex, depending on how it is defined.

People who are Asexual don't feel sexual attraction, or alternatively are characterized by a lack of interest in sexual activity. Aromanticism is similar, but involves a lack of romantic interest instead. (These are not the same as things like abstinence or celibacy.)

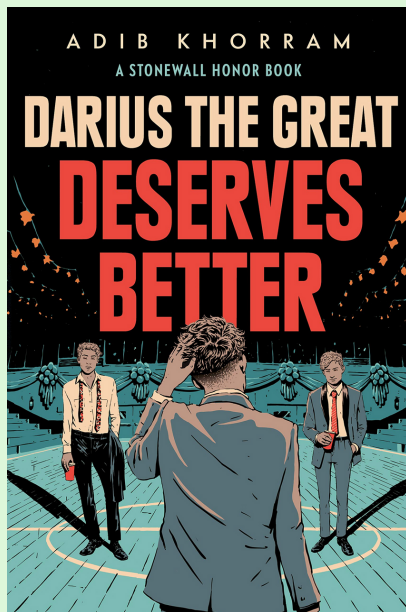
Hopefully this has helped you understand the many different peoples under the LGBTQ label. There's a lot of disinformation around these topics, so if you want to do more research on your own, a good starting point would be the CDC's collection of [LGBT Youth Resources](#). If you're interested in joining the ACL GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance), the schoology group code is 49C2-ZRWW-GF486. You are also welcome to reach our club at: academies.gsa@gmail.com or @academies.gsa on Instagram.

Have a great day!

Written by Samuel Cottrell

Darius the Great Deserves Better by Adib Khorram Book Review

Written by Mrs. Hiltner



In this companion book to Darius the Great is Not Okay, Darius Kellner is in a much better place. He has a fantastic boyfriend, his dream internship, and a spot on the varsity soccer team. He's even getting a handle on his depression and his relationships with his family and friends is better than ever. However, things soon take a turn.

His best friend Sohrab isn't joining him on Skype as much, his grandfather is deathly ill, and his family's financial problems are forcing his dad to take long business trips. Darius starts to doubt how okay he is with things. And while things are great, maybe that's not good enough - maybe he deserves better?

I loved this book for so many reasons, the first being that Darius has really grown as a protagonist and is starting to come into himself and figure out his relationships. He's still his quirky, aloof self, but he's starting to be comfortable feeling vulnerable and standing up for what he believes is right. It's normal to feel proud of a fictional character, right?

While it's a companion novel, the book holds its own (it helps to have read the first book, but if you didn't, things will still make sense). Khorram expertly navigates many challenging topics, and I hope we see more of Darius in the future.

Khorram, A. (2020). Darius the great deserves better. Dial Books.

Fun events for LGBTQ+ Youth in Northern Virginia

Due to COVID - 19, most events for LGBTQ+ people have been cancelled or moved virtual. However, there are still ways to connect with people like you. Most high schools and middle schools have GSA (Gay - Straight Alliance) Clubs. Here's some helpful information about GSAs as well as some answers to some common questions.

What is the GSA about?

The GSA was created to provide a safe space for LGBTQ+ students to interact with other peers who are like them. The GSA enables LGBTQ+ high schoolers to talk about the issues they face and advocate for themselves. The GSA also educates students about different identities and ways to be a better ally.

Do you have to be LGBTQ+ to join the GSA?

Nope! The GSA welcomes anyone. If you're questioning or if you just want to be a good ally, feel free to drop in. We make it a point to promote inclusivity no matter your identity.

What do we do in the GSA?

The GSA is as much about education as it is about giving LGBTQ+ students a chance to hang out with their peers. On some days we discuss issues that affect the LGBTQ+ community (different identities, history, etc.). Other times we discuss ways to make the world a better place for our community. We're not always so serious though! We also have fun by getting to know each other and playing fun games.

Pride Prom:

Another event that is special to many LGBTQ+ youth is Pride Prom. NOVA Pride, an LGBTQ+ nonprofit organization, hosts a yearly pride prom. The point of a pride prom is to let LGBTQ+ high schoolers have a prom without needing to be worried about possible homophobia and transphobia from others. The prom is open to any high school student and a guest under 21 (such as a date, SO, or friend). There is catered food as well as drinks (non-alcoholic). The prom lasts from around 7:00 pm to 11:00 pm. Since the noise, the lights, and the people can be overwhelming (especially for people with anxiety or PTSD), NOVA Pride Prom makes sure to have mental health professionals to help make the experience easier.

Link for info about NOVA Pride Prom: novapride.org/pride-prom