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NCC Conversations: LGBTQIA+ definitions around the world

In August, we introduced NCC Conversations, a series to help us to drive dialogue around a number of important topics that our colleagues care about.

So far, we've designated a month each to three of our four focus areas, Neurodiversity, Race and Ethnicity and Gender.

This month, we're focusing on LGBTQIA+ and inclusion, and have put together a series of activity and content to cover a range of topics, including; an explanation of some of the terminology used within the LGBTQIA+

(Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Agender, Aromantic/Asexual) community, a Q&A discussion on transvestism, a guide to the basics on respectful communication and offered colleagues the opportunity to reflect upon some situations and scenarios that have been put forward by the LGBTQIA+ community.

In this blog post, we explore and challenge the common “too many letters” narrative by discussing the rationale behind some common and not so common acronyms and labels.

LGBTQIA+ terminology is going through something of a renaissance with a lot of the more recent changes emerging from within communities themselves. A common frustration is that the language can seem to change regularly, or become suddenly controversial even among different groups within the LGBTQIA+ community. The truth is that we as a community, are still figuring things out, and how people experience their own identity can and will differ from person to person. Indeed society as a whole has only just started to acknowledge the many ways that we may differ from what has long been seen as ‘the norm’.

One of the more obvious ways this can be seen, is how the acronym LGBTQIA+ has gotten both longer and more representative of the specific cultural region over time [Source: [SLATE](#), [Stonewall](#)]. An example of this can be seen in the acronym occasionally being used in Canada, LGBTQ2S+/LGBTQQIP2SAA, while some of the letters seem familiar, the specific inclusion of those who identify as Two-Spirit (2S) is very much derived from the specific cultural situation in the country. 2S refers to a person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit and is used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity.

Discovering one’s identity is a journey of self-discovery, and it is common for people to create new words and language to describe their experience. When these words and concepts resonate with others then the communities own language toolbox improves, helping others during their journey. In some cases, this has led to more sexual and gender identities becoming acknowledged.

It is wrong to assume that these identities are new/fashionable, when instead they enter the public consciousness because it has resonated with enough

people. Where these words/labels get a particularly large following, it can be spun out into a new letter in the acronym or explicitly integrated into an existing term because we realised that it has an evolving definition.

One of the big benefits of actively reviewing what the community wants to be included in the acronym is that increased visibility can lead to increased support which in turn allows more people to be out and open about their identity. We as a community recognise that our definitions are often incomplete or evolving and as such it is commonplace to include a plus sign, +, at the end of the acronym to reflect this.

Within our global community, it is commonplace for the social and cultural disparities to lead to confusion in language or for the legislative frameworks to be using older language. This can be seen in UK legislation, the phrase transsexual is used, while it covers discrimination against all transgender people many within the community have dropped this term preferring transgender.

The term Queer is another useful example. In Britain this term was regularly used as a slur against anyone who did not conform to gender or sexual norms. In recent years there has been a concerted effort to reclaim the word for use within the community [Source: [NPR](#), [Gay Times](#)], this has been significantly more successful within North American communities which occasionally leads to miscommunication or misunderstandings. The reclamation movement seeks to shift the negative societal bias of around words like queer in order for the community to have control over their use.

About NCC Group

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As global experts in cyber security and risk mitigation, NCC Group is trusted by over 15,000 clients worldwide to protect their most critical assets from the ever-changing threat landscape.

With the company's knowledge, experience and global footprint, it is best placed to help businesses identify, assess, mitigate and respond to the evolving cyber risks they face.

To support its mission, NCC Group continually invests in research and innovation, and is passionate about developing the next generation of cyber scientists.

With over 1,800 colleagues in 12 countries, NCC Group has a significant market presence in North America, continental Europe and the UK, and a rapidly growing footprint in Asia Pacific with offices in Australia and Singapore.

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