

Defining Terms & Expanding Our Understanding

Working Toward Gender Inclusive Spaces

The following terms and definitions are compiled from various sources and lived experiences to support the learning and understanding of complex ideas. These terms, like all language, have and will continue to change and evolve over time. It is important that we collectively respect and adhere to terms and labels that people choose to self-identify with.

The following definitions were borrowed and adapted from the EGALE Human Rights Trust Ambassador Workbook for its LGBTQ student leader training.

GENERAL TERMS

SEX/ASSIGNED SEX

The biological classification of a person as male, female or intersex. Most often, sex is assigned by a medical professional at birth and is based on visual assessment of external anatomy.

GENDER

The social classification of people as masculine and/or feminine. Whereas sex is an externally assigned classification, gender is something that becomes evident in a social context.

GENDER IDENTITY

A person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of being man, woman or another gender entirely. A person's gender may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

GENDER EXPRESSION

The way a person presents and communicates gender identity to society, through clothing, speech, body language, hairstyle, voice, and/or the emphasis or de-

emphasis of bodily characteristics or behaviours and traits used publicly to express one's gender as masculine or feminine or something else. The traits and behaviours associated with masculinity and femininity are culturally specific and change over time. Gender expression is not an indication of sexual orientation. Also called gender presentation.

GENDER FLUIDITY

The recognition that social constructions of gender identity and gender expressions lie along a spectrum and cannot be limited to two genders; a feeling that one's gender varies from societal notions of two genders.

Possible adaptation:

The recognition that social constructions of gender identity and gender expressions lie along a spectrum, cannot be limited to two genders and shift and change over time. Gender fluidity can also describe a feeling that one's gender shifts and is different from societal notions of two, static genders.

GENDER PRONOUN

**resources at end of this document*

Pronouns are a part of language that is used to refer to someone or something without using proper nouns (e. g. names). The most common use of pronouns in the singular of the English language for people is gendered – such as he/him/his for men and she/her/her for women. There is a growing list of singular gender neutral pronouns, both traditional and invented.

SEX & GENDER BINARY

The notion that there are only two possible sexes (male/female) and genders (man/woman), that they are opposite, discrete and uniform categories, and that gender is determined by sex.

LGBTQ

An acronym for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Two-Spirit, Queer and Questioning” people.

SEX

INTERSEX (*adj.*)

Refers to when chromosomal, hormonal or anatomical sex characteristics fall outside the conventional classifications of male or female. Many people experience the designation of “intersex” as stigmatising given the history of medical practitioners imposing the diagnosis on infants, children and young adults (some people may not be identified as “intersex” until puberty). As with all humans, gender identity for intersex individuals is often complex.

FAAB

An acronym that refers to someone who was assigned female sex at birth. It stands for Female-Assigned at Birth.

MAAB

An acronym that refers to someone who was assigned male sex at birth. It stands for Male-Assigned at Birth.

GENDER IDENTITIES

CISGENDER (*adj.*)

Refers to someone whose gender identity corresponds with their birth-assigned sex. For example, a cisgender male is someone whose gender identity is man and was assigned male sex at birth.

FTM/F2M OR TRANS MAN

A person whose sex is assigned female at birth, but who identifies as a man and/or male. Often will simply identify as a man without the prefix ‘trans’.

GENDERQUEER (*adj.*)

Refers to when gender identity may not correspond with social and societal gender expectations. Individuals who identify as genderqueer may identify with both male and female genders, move between genders, or may reject the gender binary or gender altogether. Those who identify as genderqueer may or may not also identify as trans.

GENDER DIVERSE (*adj.*)

A term used to refer to a broad spectrum of gender identities other than cisgender.

MTF/M2F OR TRANS WOMAN

A person who is assigned male at birth, but who identifies as a woman and/or female. Often will simply identify as a woman without the prefix ‘trans’.

TRANSGENDER (*adj.*)

A person who does not identify either fully or in part with the gender associated with their birth-assigned sex – often used as an umbrella term to represent a wide range of gender identities and expressions. Transgender people (just like cisgender people) may identify as straight, gay, etc.

TRANSSEXUAL (*adj.*)

A person whose sex assigned at birth does not correspond with their gender identity. A transsexual woman needs to live and experience life as a woman and a transsexual man needs to live and experience life as a man. Many people identify as transgender, rather than transsexual, because they are uncomfortable with the psychiatric origins of the term ‘transsexual’. Some transsexual people may physically alter their body (e.g., sex reassignment surgery and/or hormone therapy) and gender expression to correspond with their gender identity.

TRANS* (*adj.*)

A term commonly used to refer to transgender, transsexual and/or gender variant identities and experiences. While it is often used as an umbrella term, some people identify just as trans*.

TERMS ASSOCIATED WITH BOTH SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

QUEER (*adj.*)

Historically, a derogatory term for homosexuality, used to insult LGBT people. Although still used as a slur by some, the term has been reclaimed by some members of LGBT communities, particularly youth. In its reclaimed form it can be used as a symbol of pride and affirmation of difference and diversity, or as a means of challenging rigid identity categories.

QUESTIONING (*adj. or v.*)

A person who is unsure of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

TWO-SPIRIT (OR 2-SPIRIT) (adj.)

Some aboriginal people choose to identify as Two-Spirit rather than, or in addition to, identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer. Prior to European colonisation, Two-Spirit people were respected members of their communities and were often accorded special status based upon their unique abilities to understand both male and female perspectives. Two-Spirit persons were often the visionaries, healers and medicine people in their communities. The term Two-Spirit affirms the interrelatedness of all aspects of identity – including gender, sexuality, community, culture and spirituality. It is an English term used to stand in for the many Aboriginal language words for Two-Spirit.

DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF GENDER IDENTITY

CISNORMATIVITY

A cultural/social bias, often implicit, that assumes all people are cisgender and so privileges cisgender identities and ignores or underrepresents gender variance. For examples of cisnormativity check out the questionnaire part of this collection of resources.

As gender expression and identity are concepts that continue to be explored and defined, there are several resources and communities where pronouns are being discussed and shared. Some of those are provided below.

<http://genderneutralpronoun.wordpress.com/>

http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:List_of_protologisms_by_topic/third_person_singular_gender_neutral_pronouns

<http://www.pronouns.failedslacker.com/>

CISSEXISM

Prejudice and discrimination in favour of cisgender gender identities and expressions. This includes the presumption that being cisgender is the superior and more desirable gender identity.

PERCEIVED GENDER IDENTITY

The assumption that a person is trans, cisgender or genderqueer without knowing what their gender identity actually is. Perceptions about gender identity are often predicated on stereotypes relating to gender expression (e.g. what a trans man “should” look like).

TRANSPHOBIA

Fear and/or hatred of any perceived transgression of gender norms, often exhibited by name-calling, bullying, exclusion, prejudice, discrimination or acts of violence – anyone who is trans (or assumed to be) can be the target of transphobia.