

Gender Terminology

Gender Derivatives

Gender: A social construct based on a group of emotional, behavioral and cultural characteristics attached to a person's assigned sex. The gender construct then classifies an individual as feminine, masculine, androgynous or other. Gender can be understood to have several components, including gender identity, gender expression and gender role.

Gender role: The social expectation of how an individual should act, think and/or feel based upon one's assigned sex based on the current binary gender system.

Gender identity: An individual's self-perception or inner sense of being a man, a male, a woman, a female, butch, femme, two-spirit, genderqueer, bigender or another configuration of gender. Gender identity may or may not match with one's physical anatomy.

Gender expression: Any combination of how someone outwardly presents external gender characteristics and behaviors that are socially defined as masculine or feminine, including dress, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions.

Genderqueer: A term used by some people who identify their gender to be somewhere on the continuum in between or outside the binary gender system altogether.

Genderism: Related to sexism, but is the systematic belief that people need to conform to the gender role assigned to them based on a gender binary system which includes only female and male. This is a form of institutionalized discrimination as well as individually demonstrated prejudice.

Gender Expression

Androgynous: Used to describe a person whose gender expression and/or identity may be neither distinctly female or male, usually based on appearance.

Butch: Used to describe people of all genders and sexes who act and dress in stereotypically masculine ways.

Femme: Used to describe people of all genders and sexes who act or dress in stereotypically feminine ways.

Drag king/Drag queen: Wearing the clothing of a gender that one may not often present as, often involving the presentation of exaggerated, stereotypical gender characteristics. Individuals may identify as drag kings (in drag presenting as male) or drag queens (in drag presenting as female) when performing gender as parody, art or entertainment.



Gender Terminology continued

Trans Derivatives

Transgender (or trans): a term used to describe people who transgress social gender norms; often used as an umbrella term to include transsexual, genderqueer, gender non-conforming or cross-dressers. People must self-identify as transgender in order for the term to be appropriately used to describe them.

Transsexual: Someone who experiences intense, persistent, long-term discomfort with their body and self-image due to the belief that their assigned gender is inappropriate. Transsexuals may be pre-op, post-op or non-op (op=operative, referring to top and/or bottom surgery) depending on medical and financial circumstances. People must self-identify as transsexual in order for the term to be appropriately used to describe them.

Transition: The period during which a transgender person begins to live more fully as their true gender, which may include any combination of the following: alterations to dress, name changes, changing preferred pronouns, hormone therapy or sex reassignment surgery. After transitioning and surgery, some transgender people identify only as a man or as a woman. Not all trans people want nor have access to hormone therapy or sex reassignment surgery.

FTM (female to male): Used to identify a person who was assigned a female sex at birth, and who identifies as male, lives as a man or identifies as masculine.

MTF (male to female): Used to identify a person assigned a male sex at birth and who identifies as a female, lives as a woman or identifies as feminine.

Transphobia: The irrational fear of those who are perceived to break or blur stereotypical gender roles, often expressed as stereotyping, discrimination, harassment and violence. Frequently directed at those perceived as expressing their gender in a transgressive way, those who defy stereotypical gender norms or those who are perceived to exhibit non-heterosexual characteristics regardless of their actual gender identity or sexual orientation.

Two-Spirit: Native Americans who fulfill one of many mixed gender roles found traditionally among many Native Americans and Canadian First Nations indigenous groups. Traditionally the roles included wearing the clothing and performing the work of both male and female genders. The term usually implies a masculine spirit and a feminine spirit living in the same body and was coined by contemporary gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Native Americans to describe themselves and the traditional roles they are reclaiming.

Medical Terms

Biological Sex or Sex: A medical term referring to genetic, biological, hormonal and/or physical characteristics (including genitalia), which are used to classify an individual as female, male or intersex at birth. Biological sex is the basis from which gender and gender role concepts are formed.

Intersex: A person born with an anatomy or a physiology that differs from societal ideals of female or male. Intersex people may be born with "ambiguous genitalia" and/or experience hormone production levels that vary from those of societal "ideal" females and males. While there is some overlap between transgender and intersex communities, intersex is not the same as transgender.

Gender Identity Disorder (GID) or Gender Dysphoria (GD): A clinical psychological diagnosis, that offends many in transgender communities and is often required to receive medical supervision of treatments relating to transition like hormones or surgery.

General Terms

Sexual orientation: One's mental, physical and emotional attraction to people of one or more genders, and subsequent interest in physical relationships and/or establishing long-term relationships with select people of that/those gender(s).

Zie & hir: The most common spelling for fairly common gender-neutral pronouns. The first is subjective, replacing she or he, and the second possessive and objective, replacing her or his.

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