

Gender and Sexuality Terminology

U.S. Political Thought and Radicalism

Name:

Period:

Sexual Orientation: A person's physical, romantic, emotional, aesthetic, and/or other form of attraction to others.

Sex Assigned At Birth: The assignment and classification of people as male, female, or intersex based on physical anatomy at birth.

The Gender Binary: A system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two, opposite categories, termed "male and female", in which no other possibilities for gender or anatomy are believed to exist. Some feel that because the binary genders are the only ones recognized by general society as being legitimate, they enjoy an (unfairly) privileged status. This system is thus seen as oppressive to anyone who defies their sex assigned at birth, but particularly those who are gender-variant or do not fit neatly into one of the two standard categories.

Gender Identity: One's internal sense of being male, female, neither of these, both, or other gender(s).

Gender Expression/Presentation: The physical manifestation of one's gender identity through clothing, hairstyle, voice, body shape, etc. (typically referred to as masculine or feminine).

LGBTQ+: An umbrella term designating the community of those identifying as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning.

Nonbinary: One whose gender identity does not fit the strict man/woman dichotomy. Some non-binary people feel that their gender identity is between man and woman, is simultaneously fully man and fully woman, changes from man to woman and back, is a separate entity without connection to man or woman, is similar to either man or woman but is not quite either, is entirely neutral, or does not exist at all.

Queer: An identity commonly used by people who do not identify or express their gender within the gender binary. Those who identify as queer may identify as neither male nor female, may see themselves as outside of or in between the binary gender boxes, or may simply feel restricted by gender labels. Not everyone who identifies as queer identifies as trans or nonbinary; many queer people are cisgender and chose to utilize the term.

Cis(gender): Adjective that means "identifies as their sex assigned at birth" derived from the Latin word meaning "on the same side." A cisgender/cis person is not transgender.

Transgender/Trans: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Many transgender people seek to make their gender expression (how they look) match their gender identity (who they are), rather than their sex assigned at birth. (*Trans people can be straight, bisexual, lesbian, gay, asexual, pansexual, queer, etc. For example, a trans woman who is exclusively attracted to other women would often identify as lesbian.*)

Transition: A person's process of developing and assuming a gender expression to match their gender identity. Transition can include: coming out to one's family, friends, and/or co-workers; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) some form of surgery. It's best not to assume how one transitions as it is different for everyone.

Two Perspectives on Understanding Gender and Sexuality:

1. Fixed Categories

The gender binary (male and female) is fixed due to the distinct physical and psychological natures of men and women. While there is some fluidity in gender expression, one's essential gender identity is determined at birth through one's anatomy. Heterosexuality is seen as the normative sexual attraction. Tolerance of homosexuality can vary according to cultural contexts.

2. Fluid Categories

The gender binary (male and female) is a social construction which has created a false dichotomy which has allowed one group status and power (male, heterosexual) at the expense of others (female, non-binary, non-heterosexual). The gender binary is inadequate to address the full scope of gender identity and human sexuality.

While anatomy may be easily classified as male or female, the gender binary fails to understand that there is a range of self-awareness that transcends the two categories. Gender is internally driven by an individual (not externally imposed) and can be expressed by that individual in self-fulfilling ways that do not adhere to social norms. Sexual attraction and expression can also be understood as being on a continuum and not limited to a rigid dichotomy.

The extent of tolerance and accommodation given to non-binary people is an ongoing issue.