



Definitions for Inclusivity

This quick reference guide, *though far from complete*, reflects the efforts of the Women's & Gender Studies Center's dedication to promote equality and social justice in all forms. We support an end to all discrimination based on gender, disability, ethnicity, sexuality, and socioeconomic class. Education, understanding, and encouraging empathic responses to social change is a crucial step towards fostering a unified and safe campus atmosphere at Montana State University Billings.

Terms Related to Sex and Gender

Sex refers to a person's biological status and is typically categorized as male, female, or intersex (i.e., atypical combinations of features that usually distinguish male from female). There are a number of indicators of biological sex, including sex chromosomes, gonads, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia.

Gender refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex. Behavior that is compatible with cultural expectations is referred to as gender-normative; behaviors that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitute gender non-conformity.

Gender identity refers to one's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

Gender expression refers to the external appearance of one's gender identity, usually

expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut, and/or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Gender transition is the process by which some people strive to more closely align their internal knowledge of gender with its outward appearance. Some people socially transition, whereby they might begin dressing, using names and pronouns and/or be socially recognized as another gender. Others undergo physical transitions in which they modify their bodies through medical interventions.

Cisgender is a term used to denote a person who by nature or by choice conforms to gender/sex based expectations of society.

MTF/FTM are abbreviations for male-to-female and female-to-male, and is a simple way to tell others that an individual is currently transitioning genders.

Gender dysphoria is clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify. According to the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), the term – which replaces Gender Identity Disorder – "is intended to better characterize the experiences of affected children, adolescents, and adults."

Genderqueer is a person whose gender identity is neither man nor woman, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders. This identity is usually related to or in reaction to the social constructions of gender, gender stereotypes, and the gender binary system. Some genderqueer people identify under the transgender umbrella while others do not.

Intersex is a set of medical conditions that feature congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system. That is, intersex people are born with “sex chromosomes,” external genitalia, or internal reproductive systems that are not considered “standard” for either male or female. The existence of intersexuals shows that there are not just two sexes and that our ways of thinking about sex (trying to force everyone to fit into either the male box or the female box) is socially constructed.

Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. *Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation.* Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Transsexual refers to a person who experiences a mismatch of the sex they were born as and the sex they identify with. A transsexual sometimes undergoes medical treatment to change his/her physical sex to match his/her sex identity through hormone treatments and/or surgically. Not all transsexuals can have or desire surgery.

Two-spirit is a term used by Native American persons who have attributes of both men and women, have distinct gender and social roles in their tribes, and are often involved with mystical rituals. Their dress is usually a mixture of men’s and women’s articles and they are seen as separate or *third gender*. The term “two-spirit” is usually considered to be specific to certain tribes. Similar identity labels vary, including “one-spirit,” “wintke,” and “third gender.”

Terms Related to Sexuality

Sexual orientation refers to an immutable, enduring, emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to other people, either of the same sex or gender, or the opposite sex or gender. While these categories continue to be widely used, research suggests that sexual orientation does not always appear in such definable categories and instead occurs on a continuum in constant flux, i.e. no individual is 100% homosexual or 100% heterosexual.

Heterosexuality refers to a person whose sexual interest rests in members of the opposite sex or gender.

Homosexuality refers to a person whose sexual interest rests in members of the same sex or gender.

Asexual is a person who is not sexually attracted to any sex or gender.

Gay is a term used for persons who are men/male and are attracted to other men/males.

Lesbian is a term used for persons who are women/female and are attracted to other women/females.

Bisexual is a person who is attracted to two sexes or two genders, but not necessarily simultaneously or equally.

Pansexual is a person who is fluid in sexual orientation and/or gender or sex identity.

LGBTIQ+ is an acronym that attempts to include all communities of gender and sexual minorities. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, etc.

Queer is recently used as an umbrella term to refer to all LGBTIQ+ people. It is used as a political statement, as well as a sexual orientation, which advocates breaking binary thinking and seeing both sexual orientation and gender identity as potentially fluid. A simple label to explain a complex set of sexual behaviors and desires, e.g. a person who is attracted to multiple genders may identify as queer. Many older LGBTIQ+ people feel the word has been hatefully used against them for too long and are reluctant to embrace it, though younger generations find empowerment in a formally negative identifier.

MSM, or men who have sex with men, are men who engage in same-sex sexual behaviors, but who may not necessarily identify as gay or bisexual.