

TERMINOLOGY: THE IMPACT OF LANGUAGE

Purpose: Define basic terms related to gender and sexuality to center students, equity and relationships in the classroom.

- **Intersectionality (n.)** - a framework for understanding the way that the multiple aspects of identity intersect, influence one another, and compound to create unique experiences (coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw—check out this [video](#) to learn more)
- **Intersex (adj.)** - a general term (**not** a gender identity) used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male
- **Endosex (adj.)** - the opposite of intersex, or when a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that seems to fit the typical definitions of female or male

GENDER TERMINOLOGY

Note: Some people use slightly different definitions for themselves. These are not universal, just a starting place to get comfortable with terminology.

- **Sex (n.)** - an assigned category of male, female, or intersex, based on genitals, gonads, chromosomes, etc.
- **Gender (n.)** – one's internal sense of being a man, woman, non-binary, both, neither, or another gender.
 - Sometimes “**gender identity**”
- **Gender expression (n.)** - the way a person acts, dresses, speaks, behaves, and expresses themselves according to the culture they are in—feminine, masculine, a combination of the two, or neither.
 - **Note:** Gender identity and gender expression do not have to match. Do not assume someone's gender identity based on their gender expression.
- **Transgender (adj.)** – umbrella term referring to anyone whose gender identity (man, woman, non-binary, etc.) does not match the sex they were assigned at birth (female, male, intersex).
- **Cisgender (adj.)** – refers to someone whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.

SEXUALITY TERMINOLOGY

Note: Some people use slightly different definitions for themselves. These are not universal, just a starting place to get comfortable with terminology.

- **Gay (adj.)** – often used as an umbrella term for anyone who is LGB, can also refer specifically to men and man-aligned people who are solely attracted to other men/man-aligned people.
- **Lesbian (n./adj.)** – referring specifically to women and women-aligned people who are solely attracted to other women/women-aligned people.
- **Bisexual (adj.)** – referring to a person who is attracted to two or more genders, sometimes defined as attracted to their own gender + others.
- **Pansexual (adj.)** – referring to a person who is attracted to others regardless of gender.
- **Queer (adj.)** – a reclaimed slur often used as an umbrella term for anyone who is LGBT, or as a more vague personal identity label.
- **Asexual/Ace (adj.)** – experiencing no or little sexual attraction to any gender.
- **Heteronormativity** – the belief that heterosexuality is the norm or the assumption that all people are heterosexual.

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(Gender terminology continued)

- **Non-binary (adj.)** – refers to a person who is neither a man nor a woman.
 - Some non-binary people are aligned with manhood, some are aligned with womanhood, and some are neither.
 - Some non-binary people have a more specific gender identity, like “agender.”
 - In some cultures, there are other “norm” gender options besides men and women, like the Fa’afafine in Samoa.
- **Cisnormativity (n.)** – the belief that being cisgender is the norm or the assumption that all people are cisgender.
- **Deadname (n.)** – a transgender or non-binary person’s old name; often a name given at birth, which is NOT their actual name anymore.
- **Misgendering (v.)** – using the wrong pronouns for someone or using gendered language that does not align with their gender
 - **e.g.** using “she” to describe someone who has stated that their pronouns are they/them
- **Gender-neutral language (n.)** – language such as “menstrual products” instead of “feminine hygiene products”

