2SLGBTQI Terms and Concepts

This document is intended to provide readers with a common, foundational understanding of language, concepts and terminology related to topics around 2SLGBTQI identities and experiences. This includes understanding systems of oppression, and also a focus on gender diversity and trans equity and inclusion.

Though this is by no means an exhaustive list of relevant terms and concepts, it provides a basic introduction to support further learning on these topics.

Contents

Components of Human Identity

Assigned Sex

The biological classification of a person as female, male or intersex. It is usually assigned at birth based on a visual assessment of external anatomy.

Gender Identity

A person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is not necessarily visible to others and it may or may not align with what society expects based on assigned sex. A person's relationship to their own gender is not always fixed and can change over time.

Gender Expression

The way gender is presented and communicated to the world through clothing, speech, body language, hairstyle, voice and/or the emphasis or de-emphasis of body characteristics and behaviours.

Attraction

Often referred to as a sexual orientation, attraction describes a person's potential for emotional, spiritual, intellectual, intimate, romantic and/or sexual interest in other people and may form the basis for aspects of one's identity and/or behaviour.

[Click here for our resource on the Four Components of Human Identity.](#)

Identity Terms – Acronyms

2SLGBTQI

An acronym that stands for Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning, and Intersex. This acronym is often used as an umbrella term to encompass a much wider range of identities and experiences related to sex, gender, and attraction that fall outside the dominant norms of heterosexual and cisgender identities. It is often intended to capture terms beyond what the initials suggest. Many variations of this acronym exists. While there is not a single correct version, the choice of acronym should be used with intention depending on the context. Like all language, terms used to describe identities and experiences is constantly evolving and changes over time and across cultural contexts. With this consideration, it is a good practice to seek out and receive new and emerging language and ideas with openness and curiosity.

Identity language has the power to help people find themselves and one another. Our goal should be to ensure that those around us are able to access language that will help them to feel affirmed, while also combating language that may cause harm. It is important to keep in mind that no label or accompanying definition can suffice in capturing the complexities of identity, nor reflect the individual relationship any given person may have to any given label.

As a general rule, it is best to pay attention to the words that individuals use to refer to themselves by and when in doubt, to simply ask. Self-identification is key. This rule also applies to terms that someone may use for themselves even though it would otherwise be considered offensive. Be mindful in clarifying whether or not you yourself may use the same term in reference to this person.

SOGIESC

An acronym that stands for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, (Gender) Expression and Sex Characteristics. This acronym is a legalized term used in both Canadian and international human rights work. It is an encompassing acronym, meaning that although it is often used to refer to gender and sexual minorities, by definition it describes **all people** according to the dimensions of sexual attraction and gender.

Identity Terms Related to Assigned Sex

AFAB

An acronym that refers to someone who was assigned female sex at birth. This may also be expressed as Coercively Assigned Female at Birth (CAFAB).

AMAB

An acronym that refers to someone who was assigned male sex at birth. This may also be expressed as Coercively Assigned Male at Birth (CAMAB).

Dyadic

A person whose chromosomal, hormonal, or anatomical sex characteristics fall within the conventional classifications of male or female (Anti Oppression Network, 2013).

Intersex

A person whose chromosomal, hormonal or anatomical sex characteristics fall outside the conventional classifications of male or female. The designation of "intersex" can be experienced as stigmatizing given the history of medical practitioners imposing it as a diagnosis requiring correction, often through non-consensual surgical or pharmaceutical intervention on infants, children, and young adults. Some people do not become aware that they have an intersex variation until puberty or adulthood.

Identity Terms Related to Gender Identity

Agender

A person who identifies as either having no gender or a neutral gender identity.

Cisgender

A person whose gender identity corresponds with what is socially expected based on their sex assigned at birth (e.g., a person who was assigned male at birth and identifies as a man).

Gender Diverse/Gender Non-Conforming/Gender Variant

An umbrella term for gender identities and/or gender expressions that differ from dominant cultural or societal expectations based on assigned sex. Other common terms associated with gender diverse are gender non-conforming and gender variant. Someone who is gender diverse may or may not also identify as trans.

Genderqueer

A person whose gender identity exists outside of the gender binary. A person who identifies as genderqueer may identify as man, women, neither, both, or may reject gender entirely.

Genderfluid

A person whose gender identity is experienced as not being fixed and that shifts and varies over time and in relation to the context.

Nonbinary

An umbrella term to reflect a variety of gender identities that are not exclusively man or woman. Identity terms which may fall within this category include: genderqueer, agender, bigender, or pangender.

Transgender

A person who does not identify, either fully or in part with the gender associated with the sex assigned to them at birth. It is often used as an umbrella term to represent a wide range of gender identities and may be called simply 'trans' for short.

Transfeminine

An umbrella term for trans people who identify with or express femininity and may or may not also identify as a woman.

Transmasculine

An umbrella term for trans people who identify with or express masculinity and may or may not also identify as a man.

Identity Terms Related to Gender Expression

Androgynous

A word to describe a behaviour, trait, or style of expression that either blends both masculine and feminine forms of expression, or is culturally read as gender-neutral.

Feminine

A word to describe a behaviour, trait, or style of expression that has cultural associations with 'being a woman'. These associations change over time, between cultures, and from person to person.

Masculine

A word to describe a behaviour, trait, or style of expression that has cultural associations with 'being a man'. These associations change over time, between cultures, and from person to person.

Identity Terms Related to Attraction

Asexual

A person who does not experience sexual attraction, or who has little to no interest in sexual activity.

Bisexual

A person who experiences attraction to both people of their own gender and people of gender different from their own.

Demisexual

A person who experiences sexual attraction to someone only after having an emotional attraction to them.

Gay

A person who experiences attraction to people of the same gender as themselves. Gay may be used by individuals of a diversity of genders, or may refer specifically to men who are attracted to other men.

Heterosexual

A person who experiences attraction to people of a different gender. Also referred to as "straight".

Lesbian

A person who identifies as a woman and experiences attraction to people of the same gender.

Pansexual

A person who experiences attraction regardless of gender.

Identity Terms Related to Multiple Components of Identity

Queer

This term has been reclaimed by some 2SLGBTQI communities as a term of pride and affirmation of diversity. It can be used to encompass a broad spectrum of identities related to sex, gender, and attraction or by an individual to reflect the interrelatedness of these aspects of their identity.

Questioning

An umbrella term for the process of reconciling: 1) All the feelings you have within yourself about how you experience your attraction and/or gender, 2) The language you have available to you to describe those feelings, and 3) Your sense of how this will impact your interactions with others in your social context.

Two Spirit

An English umbrella term to reflect and restore Indigenous traditions forcefully suppressed by colonization, honouring the fluid and diverse nature of gender and attraction and its connection to community and spirituality. It is used by some Indigenous People rather than, or in addition to identifying as LGBTQI.

Concepts Related to Gender and Gender Diversity

Gender

A system that operates in a social context to classify people, often based on their assigned sex. In many contexts this takes the form of a binary classification of either 'man' or 'woman'; in other contexts, this includes a broader spectrum.

Gender Dysphoria

A term that has been used to describe the varying degrees of discomfort and/or distress that trans people experience when they are unable to live as and be affirmed in their true gender. It is a term that has been used in psychiatric contexts and has replaced the outdated term "gender identity disorder" in the DSM-5. It is important to note that not all trans people experience gender dysphoria in the same way, or at all (Serano, 2015).

Gender Euphoria

The internal sense of joy, satisfaction and comfort a person experiences when they feel affirmed in their true gender identity (LGBTQA Wiki, 2021).

Pronouns

Pronouns are words used to refer to a person other than their name. In English, conventional binary pronouns he/him/his, and she/her/hers imply information about the gender of the person being referred to and is a common way of communicating assumptions about a person's gender. These assumptions are not always correct. Some people go by the non-binary, gender neutral pronoun set; they/ them/theirs. Over time, we have also seen the addition of other non-binary, gender neutral options such as xe/xem/xyrs, ey/em/eirs, and ze/hir/hirs.

Using a person's self-determined pronouns at their request, rather than assuming their pronouns, is a way of validating that we all have the right to live our truth, to share our truth, and to be granted safety, respect and dignity in doing so. It is a respectful and inclusive practice to use neutral pronouns, they/them/theirs, when referring to any person whose pronouns you do not yet know, until you are able to find out.

Click here for our Pronoun Usage Resource.

Sex/Gender Binary

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

The Trans Umbrella

The term trans is frequently used as an umbrella term intended to capture a wide variety of different gender identities that share the common feature of experiencing one's own gender as not quite fitting, either fully or in part, with the sex label or expectations assigned to a person at birth.

The trans umbrella includes terms like transgender, transsexual, transfeminine, transmasculine and can also refer to terms like gender diverse, gender variant, gender creative, genderqueer, non-binary, agender, bigender, among many others. Some people may identify with these or other specific terms, but not with the term trans. Similarly, some people may identify as trans, but not with other terms under the trans umbrella. At their simplest, each of these terms has commonalities with

the term trans, and yet they are all unique in their specific reference to the context of, and specific relationships between conceptions of gender identity and assigned sex. Some identities under the trans umbrella may fit into a binary system of gender (woman, man), and others may not.

The existence of a diversity of terms is important when discussing trans identities simply because there is quite a lot of variation in the lived experience and identities of individuals who may identify, or be described as trans.

Transition

Transition refers to a variety of changes a person may pursue in order to affirm their gender identity. While many voices in popular culture may use the expression "sex change" to describe these processes, the term transition is much more appropriate, preferred and used by members of trans communities. For some trans individuals, pursuing some form of transition is essential to their overall health and well-being. For other trans individuals, transitioning may be less of a priority, unnecessary, unwanted, or simply inaccessible for a variety of reasons.

An individual's reasons for transitioning may vary from person to person and may include the desire to experience feelings of gender euphoria, the desire to alleviate feelings of gender dysphoria, to avoid being misgendered, to lower risk of becoming target of transphobic discrimination and violence, or to increase ease of accessing social acceptance.

The potential elements of transition can be broken down into three categories: social, legal and medical. It is important to note that none of these three categories are mandatory steps as part of a process of transition. The transition process is a very personal one. Each individual trans person will decide the ways in which they may choose to transition, or not, depending on what is comfortable and accessible to them.

No person should have to conform to cisnormative gender conventions and stereotypes in order to access validation, respect and safety. Supporting a person's transition as an individual and self-determined process rather than prescriptive, is an important part of adopting a gender affirming approach.

Legal Transition

For the most part, legal transition refers to the process of changing the ways in which official (provincial or federal) documentation refers to an individual's sex designation. This process differs substantially between regions and jurisdictions, but can include updates to documents such as birth certificates, passports, citizenship cards, driver's licenses and health cards.

The process of accessing gender-affirming identification can be time consuming and complex. Many countries, including Canada, have yet to create sex or gender categories for identification that are reflective of the actual diversity existent within their populations. Countries like Germany, Nepal and Australia have all acknowledged the need for such updates to state identification, and have created further designation options outside of the gender/sex binary which reflect a more diverse spectrum of identity.

Medical Transition

This term is often at the focus of discussion of trans identities, despite the fact that the term represents only one potential part of a transition process. As with social transition, medical transition can involve a variety of procedures and treatments. Potential elements of medical transition can include: counselling/support (from psychologists, vocal/ behavioural coaches, social workers, etc.), hormone therapy (e.g., administering testosterone, estrogen, hormone blockers), gender

affirming surgical procedures (e.g., hysterectomies, orchiectomies, oophorectomies, vaginoplasty, phalloplasty, mastectomy, tracheal shaving, facial feminization, etc.).

Medical insurance covering costs for transition related procedures varies by region. Given the limited number of medical professionals and facilities equipped to offer these services, even if provincial health care provides sufficient coverage, there are often challenges in access due to prolonged wait times and prohibitive travel costs for those living outside of major urban centres. Many trans people and their families are unable to access inclusive healthcare, and community advocacy for improvements to the healthcare system is ongoing.

As with any medical procedure, the details of medical transition are part of the private relationship between an individual and their health care providers. On a personal level, each individual who is interested in transitioning has the right to decide what processes they will undertake. There is no universal model for what medical transition looks like, and an individual's gender identity or sex cannot be assumed simply by knowing which procedures someone has or has not undergone.

Boundaries around discussions of bodies in transition and respecting a person's privacy (including recognizing inappropriate questions, such as whether a trans person has undergone gender-affirming 'bottom' surgery or not) can be part of broader discussions around creating respectful, safe and inclusive environments for trans people.

Social Transition

This term is used to describe the common ways in which individuals may choose to publicly affirm their gender identity in social environments. This may include changes to name(s), pronouns, gender expression (e.g., clothing, accessories, mannerisms, way of speaking, etc.), and access to gendered spaces (e.g., washrooms, change rooms, religious/community spaces).

Concepts Related to Systems of Oppression and Privilege

Systems of Oppression and Privilege

The historically rooted societal structures that govern the rules of social hierarchies (e.g. White supremacy, patriarchy, cisheteronormativity, etc.). They are the unjust and harmful exertions of power, authority, and control that construct some types of bodies, identities and experiences as more valuable or superior to others in order to justify forms of domination. These hierarchies are maintained by being built right into the structures, operations, institutions and discourses of a society (Anti Oppression Network, 2013).

Intersectionality

A concept coined by theorist, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), which recognizes how each person simultaneously exists within multiple and overlapping identity categories (including but not limited to: ability, attraction, body size, citizenship, class, creed, ethnicity, gender expression, gender identity, race, religion). An intersectional analysis recognizes that no individual's experience of identity based oppression or privilege can be viewed solely within the context of any one single element of their identity. The ways in which an individual experiences systems of privilege and oppression are often impacted by the interplay of their various identity categories.

Marginalization

Refers to a long-term, structural process of systemic discrimination that creates a class of disadvantaged minorities. A groups' status on the margins become continually reproduced because

of the various dimensions of exclusion particularly in the labour market, but also from full and meaningful participation in society (Anti Racism Directorate, 2019).

Privilege

The unfair and unearned advantages one is granted in society just from having, or being perceived to have, elements of identity that align with norms deemed to be culturally superior according to societal rules and systems that dictate social hierarchies (Anti Oppression Network, 2013).

Social Location

Wherever or however a person is "socially located" in relation to social systems of hierarchy, or supremacy. This may influence how they are perceived by others, their relative degree of access to resources, social acceptance, respectability, representation and visibility, authority and control, the power they have to shape their own past, present and future and ultimately, their overall experiences moving through the world.

Systems of Oppression and Privilege Related to Gender

Cisnormativity

A cultural and societal bias, often unconscious, that privileges cisgender identities and gender norms, and ignores or under-represents trans identities and/or gender diversity by assuming that all people are cisgender and will express their gender in a way that aligns with perceived gender norms.

Cissexism

Prejudice and discrimination against trans or gender diverse identities and/or expressions. This includes the presumption that being cisgender is the superior and more desirable gender identity.

Femmephobia

A term often used to describe dismissive or delegitimizing views of people who express femininity (Serano, 2015).

Misogyny

The hatred of, contempt for or prejudice against women, girls and the feminine, which may be exhibited in multiple ways including social and institutional exclusion and discrimination, as well as physical and sexual violence. Misogyny is maintained and perpetuated by a patriarchal system of oppression in which femininity and women are constructed to be inferior to masculinity and men (Anti Oppression Network, 2013).

Patriarchy

A sociopolitical and cultural system that values men and masculinity over women and femininity and perpetuates oppressive and limiting gender roles, the gender binary, transphobia and cissexism, sexual assault, the political and economic subordination of women (Watanabe, 2014).

Sexism

Prejudice and discrimination based on a person's sex and/or gender (Anti Oppression Network, 2013).

Transphobia

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

While transphobia speaks more directly to the discrimination and violence faced by trans and gender diverse people, or those perceived to be, cissexism is the overarching order of society that enables it. Like other forms of oppression, transphobia may show up in interactions between individuals or groups of people or it can be entrenched in an organization's culture, rules, policies and practices that may look harmless on the surface but in fact exclude and create barriers and an overall hostile climate for some individuals.

Responding to transphobia most effectively occurs when we understand the intersectionality of attitudes that contribute to different forms of transphobia – often transphobia is intrinsically linked with sexism, racism, misogyny and homophobia.

Transmisogyny

A term coined by writer and activist, Julia Serano (2015), to describe the specific intersection of transphobia with misogyny. Transmisogyny creates a specific and intensified form of oppression often characterized by hatred of and contempt for trans women and/or transfeminine people, not only for defying perceived gender norms, but for expressing femaleness or femininity. Because womanhood and femininity are of lesser value in a system governed by male supremacy, trans women and trans feminine people represent a particular threat. Examining the particular intersection of transphobia and misogyny allows us to recognize and address commonality as well as unique and particular differences across diverse experiences of gender based violence and discrimination.

Transmisogynoir

A term to describe experiences at the intersection of transphobia, misogyny and anti-Black racism faced by Black trans women living in a world shaped by cisnormativity, White supremacy and masculine dominance. Moya Bailey is a Black, queer author and activist who coined the term misogynoir to describe the intersection of anti-Black racism and misogyny that Black women face. When we connect this concept to transphobia we can name the conditions and structures that make life so violently precarious for Black trans women (Serano, 2015; Blackburn, 2020).

Systems of Oppression and Privilege Related to Race

Anti-Black Racism

Anti-Black racism is prejudice, attitudes, beliefs, stereotyping and discrimination that is directed at people of African descent and is rooted in their unique history and experience of enslavement. Anti-Black racism is deeply entrenched in institutions, policies and practices such that it is functionally normalized or rendered invisible to the larger white society. Anti-Black racism is manifested in the legacy of the current social, economic, and political marginalization of African Canadians in society such as the lack of opportunities, lower socio-economic status, higher unemployment, significant poverty rates and over-representation in the criminal justice system (Anti Racism Directorate, 2019).

Anti-Indigenous Racism

The ongoing race-based discrimination, negative stereotyping, and injustice experienced by Indigenous peoples within Canada. It includes ideas and practices that establish, maintain and

perpetuate power imbalances, systemic barriers, and inequitable outcomes that stem from the legacy of colonial policies and practices in Canada. Systemic anti-Indigenous racism is evident in discriminatory federal policies such as the Indian Act and the Residential School System. It is also manifest in the over-representation of Indigenous peoples in provincial criminal justice and child welfare systems, as well as inequitable outcomes in education, well-being, and health. Individual lived-experiences of anti-Indigenous racism can be seen in the rise in acts of hostility and violence directed at Indigenous people (Anti Racism Directorate, 2019).

Antisemitism

Latent or overt hostility or hatred directed towards, or discrimination against individual Jewish people or the Jewish people for reasons connected to their religion, ethnicity, and their cultural, historical, intellectual and religious heritage (Anti Racism Directorate, 2019; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2021).

Classism

A system of oppression that produces social and physical barriers based on one's real or perceived economic status or background. It is associated with but not mutually exclusive to capitalism. While we may describe classes as poor/low income/working class, middle class, and upper class, a binary also exists within classism. This binary exploits poor, low income, and working class people for the benefit of middle and upper class individuals (Anti Racism Directorate, 2019; Racial Equity Tools, 2020).

Colonialism

The historical practice of European expansion into territories already inhabited by Indigenous peoples for the purposes of acquiring new lands and resources. This expansion is rooted in the violent suppression of Indigenous peoples' governance, legal, social and cultural structures. Colonialism attempts to force Indigenous peoples to accept and integrate into institutions that are designed to force them to conform with the structures of the colonial state. "Colonialism remains an ongoing process, shaping both the structure and the quality of the relationship between settlers and Indigenous peoples." (Anti Racism Directorate, 2019).

Islamophobia

Includes racism, stereotypes, prejudice, fear or acts of hostility directed towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general. In addition to individual acts of intolerance and racial profiling, Islamophobia can lead to viewing and treating Muslims as a greater security threat on an institutional, systemic and societal level (Anti Racism Directorate, 2019).

Racism

Ideas or practices that establish, maintain or perpetuate the racial superiority or dominance of one group over another (Anti Racism Directorate, 2019).

White Supremacy

A system of oppression that maintains and perpetuates the socioeconomic, political, cultural, historical and institutional domination as well as structural advantage (privilege) of White people over other ethnic/racialized groups, both at the collective and individual level. White supremacy is a system of oppression that functions to preserve and sustain racism. The individuals, groups and institutions that maintain White supremacy, may or may not be conscious of it (Racial Equity Tools, 2020).

Systems of Oppression and Privilege Related to Ability

Ableism

A system that produces social and physical barriers based on one's abilities (mental, neurological, intellectual, emotional, and/or physical) and one's contributions to "productivity" within a capitalist and colonial framework. Dis/ableism depends on a binary, exploiting disabled individuals for the benefit of abled individuals. Disabled people are subject to social stigma, isolation, and systemic barriers to resources, and are targeted with violence and oppression (Anti Oppression Network, 2013).

Ageism

A system of oppression that produces social and physical barriers based on one's age, particularly those deemed especially young or especially old. Unlike many systems of oppression, ageism contains two binaries. One of them benefits adults at the expense of children, teenagers, and youth; while another binary benefits middle-aged individuals at the expense of elders and seniors (Anti Oppression Network, 2013.

Fatphobia

The fear and dislike of fat people and the stigmatization of individuals with bigger bodies. As with any system designed to exclude, shame or oppress people on the basis of shared characteristics or identities, it can be easy to assume that something like fatphobia only exists on an individual level. In reality, it is layers of complex beliefs and institutional systems that treat fat bodies in need of correction and discipline - sometimes through violent means. Fatphobia can end up shaming, silencing and "correcting" fat people simply for existing. It feeds the bias, discrimination, disregard and sometimes even hatred that all fat people have to contend with on a daily basis (Feder, 2019).

Saneism

Prejudice plus power; anyone of any neurological condition can have/exhibit neurocognitive-based prejudice, but in North America (and globally), neurotypical people have the institutional power, therefore Saneism is a systematized discrimination, antagonism, or exclusion directed against neurodivergent people, or people who have been given a mental health diagnosis or are presumed to have one based on the belief that neurotypical cognition is superior (Simmons University Library, 2020).

Serophobia

A manifestation of fear and aversion by certain people, towards people living with HIV. Like homophobia, it manifests itself through acts of exclusion or discrimination, whether implicit or explicit (COCQ-SIDA, 2009).

Systems of Oppression and Privilege Related to Attraction

Biphobia

Fear and/or hatred of bisexuality, often exhibited by name-calling, bullying, exclusion, prejudice, discrimination or acts of violence—anyone who is or is assumed to be bisexual or experiences attraction to multiple sexes and/or genders can be the target of biphobia. Discrimination, erasure, and prejudice against bisexuals are serious problems in straight and 2SLGBTQI communities alike.

Heteronormativity

A cultural and societal bias, often unconscious, that privileges heterosexuality, and ignores or under-represents diversity in attraction and behaviour by assuming all people are heterosexual.

Heterosexism

Prejudice and discrimination in favour of heterosexuality. This includes the presumption of heterosexuality as the superior and more desirable form of attraction.

Homophobia

Fear and/or hatred of homosexuality, often exhibited by name-calling, bullying, exclusion, prejudice, discrimination or acts of violence—anyone who is LGB (or assumed to be) can be the target of homophobia.

Concepts Related to Sexual Violence

Content warning: The following definitions include descriptions of sexual harassment and discussions of physical/sexual violence.

Rape Culture

The normalization, trivialization and tolerance of sexual violence that permeates society on an individual, interpersonal and institutional level. Rape culture is reinforced through the language and logic of misogyny and the objectification of women and femininity.

Because rape culture is rooted in interlocking systems of power, individuals who live at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities may be disproportionately impacted by it.

Rape culture includes jokes, TV, music, advertising, jargon, laws, words, imagery, common and socially sanctioned behaviours, and popular discourses that make sexual violence, coercion and rape seem normal and inevitable.

Anyone who is complicit in a climate that does not empower individuals to express their needs, wants or set boundaries without guilt or fear of backlash is a contributor to rape culture, even if they are not direct perpetrators of sexual violence themselves (WAVAW RCC, 2013; Ridgeway, 2014).

Victim Blaming

A common cultural response to violence that holds the victim/survivor responsible, either fully or in part, for the harm that was caused to them.

The response of victim blaming commonly occurs when the act the violence is linked to a system of oppression, such as patriarchy, misogyny or cissexism because it functions to both deny and also reinforce the established hierarchy of power. It does this by sending the message that the risk of harm is natural consequence to anyone who steps out of line with dominant expectations.

For example, within the cultural logic of misogyny and rape culture, sexual violence is a presumed risk and consequence for any women who defies the expectation of being sexually passive (ie –"she was asking for it by appearing promiscuous").

By the cultural logic of cissexism, trans people shouldn't exist, and therefore any trans person who openly asserts and affirms their trans identity risks becoming a target of transphobic violence. The burden of responsibility to not be harmed is often placed on the trans person themselves, rather than on the cissexist culture that produces the transphobic violence in the first place.

Concepts Related to Patterns of Transphobic Violence

Content warning: The following definitions include descriptions of transphobia, misgendering, transphobic sexual harassment, discussions of physical/sexual violence, and descriptions of transmisogynist language and imagery.

Clock/Clocked

A slang term for noticing or recognizing that a person is trans or, if you are the trans person in question, the experience of having others recognize you as such. Experiencing threat of being clocked in any given environment may reinforce the stressful feeling of lacking control over how one is perceived. This is often linked to the experience of feeling unsafe and at risk of further discrimination, harassment and violence (Serano, 2015).

Corrective Rape

A pattern of sexual violence that targets individuals because of their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. It is based in the homophobic and/or transphobic motives of turning the targeted person heterosexual or enforcing conformity with gender stereotypes.

Because this pattern of violence is based in the idea that queer, trans and gender non-conforming people can and should be "corrected", it principally functions to reinforce the cisheteropatriarchal gender order by punishing anyone who defies its prescribed expectations. For example, it punishes anyone assigned female at birth who fails to be sexually available to cis men, or anyone who "attempts" to access male/masculine privilege to which they are not innately entitled. For this reason, trans men and transmasculine people, lesbians, and gender non-conforming people assigned female at birth are disproportionately targets of this pattern of violence (Wikipedia, 2021).

Deadname

Refers to the name that a trans person was given at birth but is no longer actively using. "Deadnaming" describes the act of referring to a trans person with a name they no longer actively use. The heavy negative connotation of the word is intended to stress the inappropriateness of referencing a person's terminated name (which is typically associated with their birth-assigned gender) and therefore effectively misgenders them) (Serano, 2015).

Gender-Based Violence

Violence directed against a person on the basis of gender or sex. Gender-based violence can include sexual violence, domestic violence, psychological abuse, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, harmful traditional practices, and discriminatory practices based on gender. The term originally described violence against women but is now widely understood to include violence targeting women, trans, non-binary, gender non-conforming persons, and men because of how they experience and express their genders and sexualities (Status of Women Canada, 2020).

Gender Policing

Imposing rigid ideas about gender onto an individual by discouraging and punishing behaviours and expressions that fail to conform to dominant gender norms and by encouraging and rewarding those that do. Gender policing can also be an internalized and self-imposed pattern of thinking and behaviour. Examples may include phrases or ideas like, "suck it up, boys don't cry", "boys will be boys", "don't be such a p*s*y", "people will think you're a b*t*h if you don't keep your bossiness in check". Though gender policing may be experienced by anyone who disrupts gender norms,

be they cis or trans, patterns of gender policing may impact trans people in particular ways. This may involve the exclusion from or harassment of trans people in gendered spaces, (sports teams, washrooms, change rooms), or imposing unattainable expectations on trans people to perform their gender as a condition of their validation and respect.

Microaggression

Common, everyday examples of biased language or behaviours that exclude or discriminate against marginalized groups. Though microaggressions may be unintentional or seem subtle and harmless on the surface, they reveal how dominant biases linked to multiple systems of oppression and deeply entrenched in all aspects of culture and society.

For instance, non-binary persons, who are repetitively faced with multiple everyday reminders of how pervasive and ingrained the gender binary is, and their exclusion from society, may experience seemingly innocent phrases like, "ladies and gentlemen" as a microaggression.

Misgendering

To refer to a person as or consider them to be a gender that they do not identify with. Often misgendering is unintended although it can still be invalidating to the person who is subjected to it. People who harbour cissexist beliefs or attitudes will often engage in purposeful acts of misgendering trans people. Misgendering can include using incorrect pronouns, using incorrect gendered forms of address (e.g. sir, ma'am, guys, girls, ladies) or incorrect gendered titles (e.g. Mr., Miss or Mrs.). Organizations and administrative systems and processes can also misgender people, which is an example of institutional, or bureaucratic transphobia (Serano, 2015).

Passing

Refers to when a marginalized person is perceived to be, or blends in as a member of the dominant group. This could include a trans person who is perceived to be cisgender. For some, the idea of passing is an important part of accessing safety and acceptance and/or feeling affirmed in one's gender identity. Others may feel that passing is less important or negative overall because it comes at the expense of invisibility or erasure of one's trans identity.

A person's ability to pass says more about the dominant gender norms in the given context and about the interpretive lens of the onlooker than it does about the person in question. Attacking a person's inability to pass (ex., "You're too pretty to be a boy") or fixating on a person's ability to pass, (ex., "Wow, I wouldn't have guessed you were trans") is a common pattern of transphobia and cissexism (Serano, 2015).

Reading Gender

Refers to when we make assumption about someone else's gender based on markers that we have been culturally trained to interpret through a gendered lens. Reading gender may also be referred to as "gendering" and often operates on an unconscious level, which can feel instinctual because it is such a deeply ingrained social practice. Reading gender as opposed to saying someone passes is better practice because it puts the onus of gender-based assumptions back onto the person observing (e.g. when you says someone passes as a man, you are saying that you are picking up certain gender markers salient to you that allow you to read them as a man).

Since gender is actually more connected to a person's internal and deeply felt sense of self, reading gender onto others can be exclusionary and harmful. It is therefore important to recognize, interrupt and makes changes to language, behaviours, and patterns of thinking that make assumptions about the genders of others.

Examples of this may include adjusting our language to say things like,

- "menstrual products" instead of "feminine hygiene products"

- "pregnant person" instead of "pregnant woman"

- "there's a visitor here to see you" instead of "there's a man here to see you", and

- "hey y'all" or "hi everyone" or "Hi friends" instead of "hey ladies" or "hey guys"

Click here to see our [Inclusive and Affirming Language Tip sheet.](#)

Trans Chaser

A term sometimes used by trans people to describe a cisgender person who expresses sexual interest in them in a way that excessively emphasizes their transness as the singular focal point of their desire. It is typically used as a pejorative, in contrast to other labels (eg. admirer), that have a more positive or neutral connotation. The trend of trans chasing can be linked to the hypersexualization, fetishization and objectification of trans bodies (and disproportionately trans women's bodies), in a way that denies trans people of being valued and respected for the fullness of their humanity. Forms of objectification can have a dehumanizing effect in a way that forms the basis and justification for mistreatment, harm, exploitation and violence (including sexual violence) as well as an overall lack of empathy and compassion (Serano, 2015).

(Entitlement to) Trans Disclosure

An implicit cissexist cultural expectation that trans people have a responsibility to tell cisgender people about their trans status otherwise they will be regarded as being deceptive. This false sense of entitlement is rooted in the cissexist assumption that the cisgender person may take issue with the trans person's identity and that their feelings are more important than the trans person's feelings in this context. Cis entitlement to trans disclosure may lead to inappropriate and invasive questions about a trans person's body, gender history, medical status or transition plans. Cis entitlement to trans disclosure may also be linked to patterns of physical or sexual assault faced by trans people. This may involve a cis person groping to assess the presence of 'real' breasts, flipping a skirt or 'pantsing' to assess the presence of certain body parts, checking for Adam's apple, etc. (Scholder & Feder, 2020).

Trans Invisibility

A term that is also sometimes also referred to as "trans erasure", describes negative consequences resulting from trans and non-binary people not being recognized, acknowledged or accounted for by cissexist society. The hurt of not being made known to an intimate partner's friends and family, is just one example of a consequence of trans and non-binary invisibility. Though increased cultural visibility of trans and non-binary people may alleviate some of these negative consequences, sometimes increased visibility comes with a heightened risk of being targeted for harassment, discrimination and violence. Having to constantly weigh and balance the risks and benefits visibility and safety across many different social environments is an exhausting burden many trans and non-binary people have to navigate daily (Serano, 2015).

Trans Panic Defense

A legal strategy and social response to transphobic violence in which the perpetrator/defendant claims their act of assault (or in some cases murder), was a justified reaction to feeling deceived by a person, with whom they have just engaged in sexual relations, they didn't know was trans.

This response is often rooted in the perpetrator's own internalized homophobia (fear that they will be perceived as gay) as well as the transmisogynist stereotype that trans women are sexually predatory, deceptive and really just "men in disguise" (Scholder & Feder, 2020).

Terms Related to Equity and Inclusion Practice

Active Bystander

A person who intervenes in situations of bullying, harassment, or any social interaction that reinforces harmful and discriminatory norms by speaking up and taking action rather than remaining silent. An active bystander is sometimes referred to as an "upstander".

Ally

An ally is someone who believes in the dignity and respect of all people and takes action by supporting and/or advocating with groups experiencing social injustice. An ally does not identify as a member of the group they are supporting (e.g., a heterosexual person can act as an ally for gay people and communities; a cisgender lesbian can act as an ally for trans people and communities).

Culture of Consent

Refers to individual and collective practices that help establish group norms grounded in the values of safety, respect, personal autonomy and self-determination. In cultures where consent is the norm, every person is given the information they need to make decisions that directly impact them, feels empowered to express their needs, wants and boundaries without guilt or fear, and responds respectfully to the boundaries that others set (Maymay, 2013).

Cultures of consent can apply to sexual contexts but also apply to other everyday interactions. Here are some examples of phrases that embody cultures of consent:

- Is it okay if I share your post?

- I just want to make sure I know who I can use these pronouns in front of in reference to you

- I have some questions about that. Is this something you'd feel comfortable talking about?

- This video contains discussion of topics on [...] that some might find triggering.

- Actually, I'd prefer if you kept this within the group.

- I'm not interested but thanks for the suggestion.

- I think I'm going to sit this one out. I appreciate being given the option.

Diversity

The presence of difference among individuals in a group in terms of various identity aspects (e.g. gender, attraction, race, class, ability, etc.) that may create advantages or barriers to opportunities and resources because of historical and ongoing systems of oppression. It is important to remember that only groups and not individuals should be described as diverse, and that the existence of diversity in any given environment does not necessarily signal that it is an inclusive or equitable environment.

Equity

A process that acknowledges and actively works to challenge and address systemic barriers to opportunities and resources faced by individuals with marginalized identities because of historical and ongoing imbalances of power. This process is different to "equality" where the principle is to provide the exact same treatment to everyone. Equity practices are considered safer because the aim is to address unique needs rather than assuming everyone has the same needs.

Gender Affirming

An approach to equity, inclusion and advocacy of trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming people that is rooted in the principle that their identities, experiences and perspectives are authentic, ought to be validated, and that their right to safety, respect and recognition is never contingent on their ability to conform to cissexist gender conventions, norms and stereotypes.

Inclusion

Fostering conditions in which all individuals in a given environment are valued, welcomed, respected and represented and can participate fully and equally regardless of aspects of their identities that differ from the dominant norm. The work of creating inclusive environments must be an active and continuous process with recognition and consideration of historical and ongoing systems of oppression.

Microaffirmation

Small actions that contribute to an overall environment that is equitable and inclusive. Using gender inclusive language or affirming someone's identity by using their correct name and pronouns are both examples of microaffirmations that contribute to an overall climate that is affirming of gender diversity.

Tokenism

The practice of making only a symbolic gesture in order to outwardly signal an effort toward diversity and inclusion without genuine commitment to empower historically marginalized groups and individuals. Tokenism ultimately holds the systems and structures that maintain power imbalances intact and effectively unchallenged.

Trans Allyship

The responsibilities of trans allyship are reserved for those who do not identify as trans (most commonly cisgender people). The specifics of trans allyship vary depending on the circumstance, but can be summed up through acts of supporting and including trans identities within all aspects of community. Equally important is the recognition that allyship is an ongoing process of support, as opposed to a singular goal or achievement which can be attained and then forgotten. Acting as an ally to trans communities means constant reassessment of one's surroundings in terms of their inclusion of, and accessibility to, trans community members.

Acknowledging and incorporating the voices of trans community members, as well as their needs and wishes, is an essential part of allyship. Otherwise, allies risk alienating and further sidelining the communities they intend to support. Allyship is a never-ending process of education, as allies learn more about the social systems and institutions that continue to isolate, stigmatize and discriminate against trans and gender variant people. Through education, can allies gain the skills and language to recognize and help to disrupt the workings of these systems, which are otherwise invisible to many cisgender individuals.

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