

gender

sexuality

sense

Consciously Speaking

A SHORT TERMINOLOGY BOOK ON
GENDER, SEX AND SEXUALITY

Consciously Speaking

January 2021

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First published in print and digital versions in New Delhi, India, in 2021 by Avian WE.

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Dedicated to people of all
genders and sexualities

Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
APA	American Psychological Association
CDC	Centre for Disease Control and Prevention
DB	Difference Between
DSG	Diverse Genders and Sexualities
FtM/F2M	Female-to-Male
GCS	Gender Confirmation Surgery
GP	General Population
GSM	Gender and Sexual Minorities
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRC	Human Right Commission
HRGs	High Risk Groups
ICMR	Indian Council of Medical Research
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
ISEAN	Islands of Southeast Asia Network
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer
LSDA	Learning and Skills Development Agency
MAP	Movement Advancement Project
MSM	Men who Have Sex With Men
MtF/M2F	Male-to-Female
MWCD	Ministry of Women & Child Development
NACO	National AIDS Control Organization
ONS	Office for National Statistic
OSF	Open Society Foundation
QUT	Queensland University of Technology

SBC	Social & Behavior Change Communication
SCCADVASA	South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
SOGIE	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TGNC	Transgender Nonconforming
TOI	Times of India
UCDAVIS	University of California, Davis
UCSB	University of California, Santa Barbara
UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UQ	University of Queensland
USCIS	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization

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Acknowledgments

“Consciously Speaking” is a result of the efforts of many individuals and organisations who are striving to create a fair and equitable world. Avian WE is grateful to:

Rehan Mohammad who put his heart and soul into conducting an in-depth research on the usage of terminologies and authored the first draft of this book;

Shaonli Chakraborty, director, Swasti, for lending her expertise in aligning the book to modern-day sensitivities;

Maisnam Arnapal, assistant professor, University of Delhi, for spending days assessing and adding dimension to the contents of the book from a literature and queerness perspective;

Diya Sengupta for illustrating the book with artwork that speaks volumes and aids in effective portrayal of our purpose;

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) for lending its time and unconditional support to the book, aligning it with their larger purpose of workplace inclusion;

The Rainbow Lit Fest – Queer and Inclusive for being our trusted partner through this book’s journey, guiding us and helping identify individuals to assist in the final e-book, and members of the Social Impact team at Avian WE for driving this initiative with zeal and intent.



Dilip Chenoy

Secretary General, FICCI

Foreword

We live in a world where communication is of critical importance in our efforts to respect, protect and implement the rights. The words that we use, if inclusive, connect people. On the contrary, if they are partial, unfair and stereotyped, they create a rift among people within family, society and nation at large.

Various economies across globe are moving towards inclusion. For an economic development to be truly inclusive, it is critical that all sections of the society become a part of the overall growth trajectory. Correct and effective communication is imperative in this process. By ensuring the use of effective and right terminology in our language without use of any discriminatory words, we can ensure an acceptable and inclusive environment to live and work. It has the ability to enhance productivity of a person, reduce mental health issues, and see a higher contribution to the GDP of the country.

Thus, it is imperative to make people aware of the right usage of words in their verbal and written communication.

Hence, when the concept of this book was shared with me, I found it extremely relevant and significant.

I strongly feel that by focusing on this issue we can bring real change—as an ally. FICCI is always supportive to the cause of diversity and inclusion, including LGBTQ+ inclusion and encouraging Corporate India to encourage meritocracy in a person more than the sexual identity so that each employee feels respected, valued and involved; irrespective of the caste, gender, or religion.

FICCI is the first apex Industry association of India to set up a dedicated Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion with focused groups on Gender parity, Empowering Persons with Disabilities and LGBTQ+ inclusion. Being the voice of the Indian Industry, the chamber has been instrumental in bringing about many policy changes through several active sectoral committees and we stand committed towards building an inclusive nation by stimulating a robust D&I agenda across India Inc.

Through FICCI D&I task force, we want to champion a no-fear work culture and encourage empathetic communication so that everybody can feel included. In fact, FICCI has recently launched a one-of-its-kind D&I Certification programme where besides contextual understanding of various D&I segments, importance of appropriate communication is also instilled.

This book is really amazing and gives guidance on how to refer to people with diverse gender identities. It can act as a great tool for connecting deeply with persons from the vulnerable communities and address their apprehensions. I must say, the book is structured in a way that prudently guides people to use terminologies without drawing a bracket of "right" and "wrong". Rather the book focuses on building people's understanding about each terminology and leave it on their wisdom, how they want to use it. I think, this is the best way!!

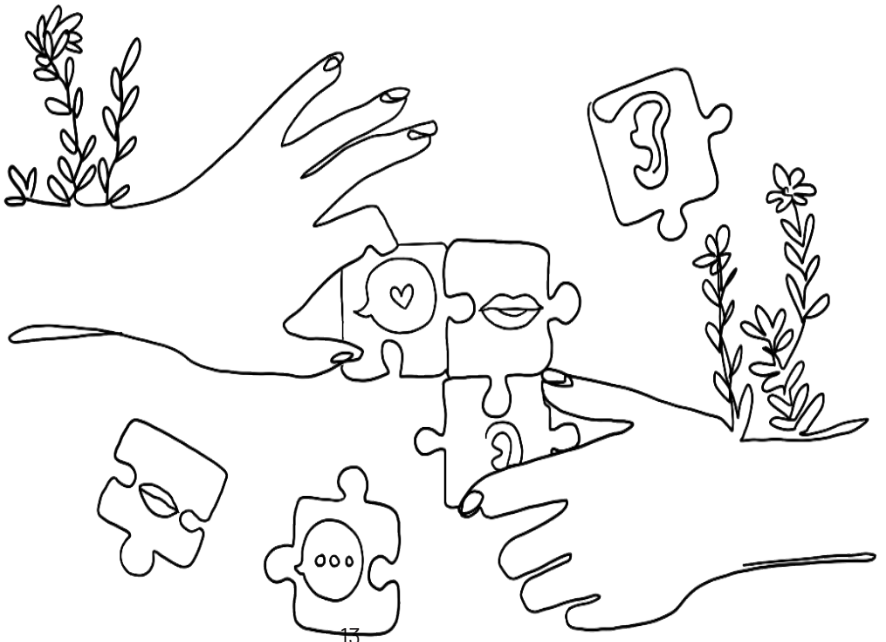
The Journey of ‘Consciously Speaking’

In 2008, we began our journey of building communications and engagement strategies for social development programmes, involving development agencies, non-governmental organisations, brands, and platforms that focus on diversity and inclusion. This put us in a place where we learnt how diverse life can be, and also what identity is, its personal significance and what it means to be “othered.”

As we engaged with this outside world for clients, we were aware that change on the outside has to come from within – this meant we had to address the “self” within the organization, our people across offices. This led us to run a series of sensitization sessions with support from the LGBTQIA+ community including Simran Shaikh, trans activist; Mona Balani, HIV/AIDS activist; Sharif D Rangnekar, activist and singer; Gautam Yadav, Indian youth icon for the young LGBTQI community and a member of UNAIDS Youth Advisory Forum; and Rudrani Chettri, transgender activist and founder of MITR Trust. We had the opportunity to support the launch of Gaylaxy Magazine’s first Queer Calendar, and later the Rainbow Lit Fest - Queer and Inclusive in its physical and digital form, adding dimensions to our learning process.

While engaging with these leaders and combatting issues concerning gender, public health and rights of marginalized communities, a consciousness arose within Avian WE – we realised that incorrect usage of terminologies can have marring impacts. These impacts, as we learnt, are a result of years of social conditioning and unconscious biases that obstruct social harmony.

We asked ourselves: What steps can we take to counter these biases? As a communications consultancy engaging with different cultures, regions, and languages, we know the importance of communications and language, and their impacts on mindsets, ecosystems and the individual. It was this thought – the power of communications – that led us to create “Consciously Speaking,” an effort that hopefully adds a drop in the ocean of changing currents, aimed at bettering how we engage with each other.



Introduction

Words matter. They reflect the values and knowledge of people using them, and can reinforce negative and positive perceptions about others. Language is not neutral. Inclusive language acknowledges the unique values, skills, viewpoints, experiences, culture, abilities, and experiences of individuals or groups. Derogatory or discriminatory language undervalues individuals or groups, denigrates, humiliates, and perpetuates stereotypes and inequality in society. At its worst, discriminatory language incites hatred or vilification. Discriminatory language and visual representations ignore, exclude, marginalize or under- represent people, rendering them invisible (Griffith University, 2017).



Why this book?

The terminologies we use in our day-to-day conversation, in our writings for publications, and as part of legislative purposes matter because they affect how we conceptualize problems, prioritize issues and forge responses. Inconsistent use of language and terms can lead to inconsistent laws and policy responses on the same issue. We see that there is considerable confusion surrounding the use of different terminologies. Even where the same terms are used, there is quite often disagreement concerning their actual meaning, leading to use of the same words to refer to different actions or situations.

This has created significant challenges for policy development and programming, development of legislation, and data collection, leading to flawed responses and limited or ineffective methods of measuring impact or setting targets.

Besides, confusion in the use of language and terms can impair and undermine advocacy work, along with intergovernmental and interagency cooperation. Translating terms into different languages introduces further challenges. Without clear conceptual understanding of (and agreement on) their meaning, translating terms accurately across multiple languages becomes an onerous and resource-intensive task. (Greijer and Doek, 2016).

Discriminatory language and presentation devalue or demean individuals or groups of people by harassing them, highlighting individual characteristics in an offensive or prejudicial manner, and can result in harassment or exclusion (QUT, 2010). This calls for common understanding to use terminologies in different settings, addressing different people in the most inclusive and non-discriminatory way.

About the book

This book was written in pursuit of achieving the ambitious goal of placing common understanding across domains and professions where usage of terminology matters. This book encompasses the most frequently used terminologies across themes including:

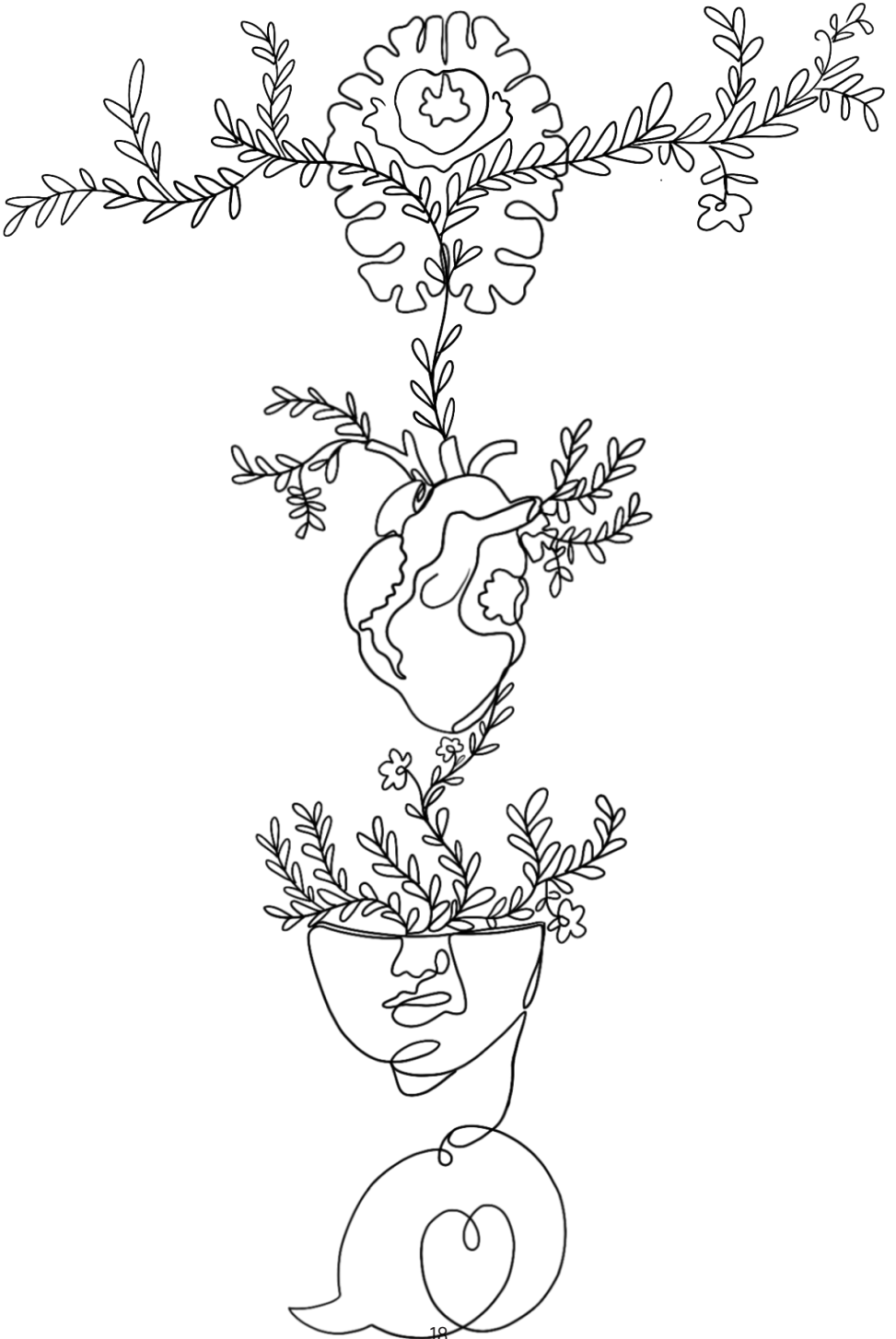
- Gender
- Sex
- Sexuality



Structure of the book

- The book lays down some basic principles for using terminology in different milieu.
- The book attempts to define each theme adequately to set the backdrop for the usage of terminologies covered under each theme.
- The book aims to provide a list of inclusive terminology used across the selected themes supported by comprehensive research.
- The book also indicates cautions for the usage of the given terminology.





Principles for using terminology

Don't make assumptions

When appropriate, ask about the language people prefer and respect their wishes. Don't make assumptions about people or their characteristics based on stereotypes or limited information.

Be conscious of the implications of your language

Avoid excluding others or making people invisible by your choice of language. Avoid language and expressions that disparage or trivialize others.

Empower people to speak for themselves

When possible, empower people to speak for themselves. If you do need to speak on behalf of a group of people, it is very important that you consult widely to ensure that the language you use is reflective of the group.

Address and remove stereotypes and myths

If someone uses inappropriate language in your presence, speak out against it and correct the inappropriate language used, if safe (UQ, n.d.).

Keep an open mind

Be open to changing what you have always thought is “normal,” respectful and appropriate to say. You don’t have to be perfect, just be willing to learn.

If in doubt, ask

If you’re not sure what terminology someone prefers, ask them! Ask the person or contact organizations that make up and represent given diversity groups (RMIT, n.d.).

How to use this book



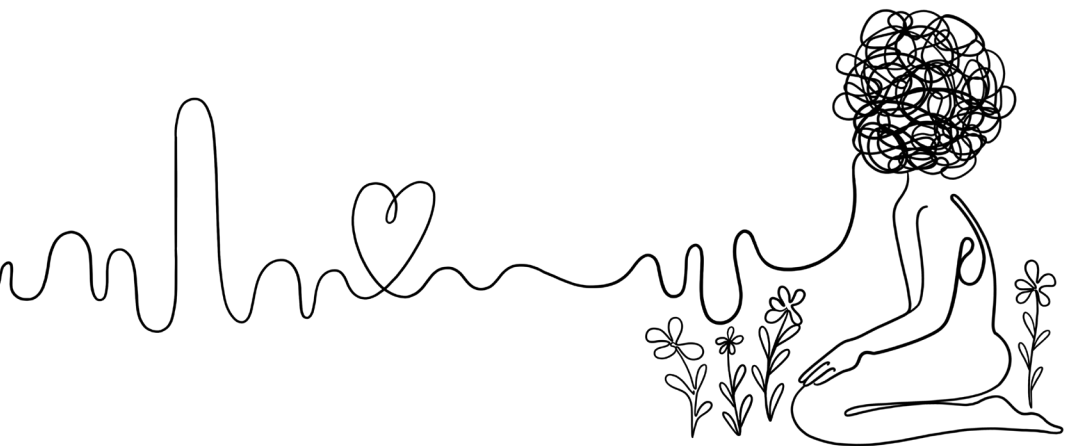
This book contains a set of terms that professionals and international agencies commonly apply in their work across themes and topics. The meaning and concept or context of each term is defined to develop the common ground for understanding each term and its usage. Where there is need for caution in the use of a certain term, this is indicated. For each term that has been defined in international and/or regional legal instruments, such definitions are included.

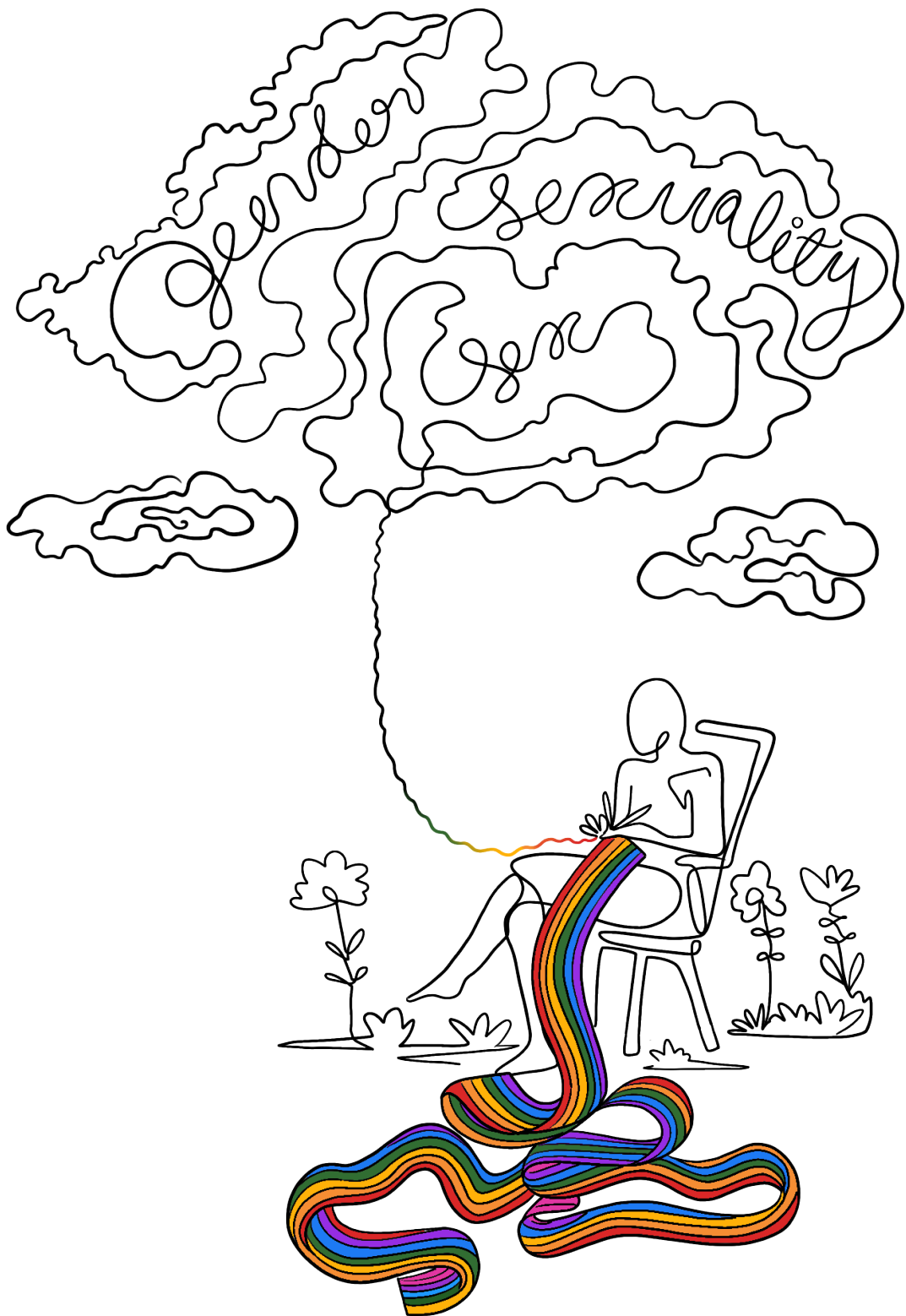
To use any term correctly, it is imperative to acquire thorough understanding of its context, concept, usages and cautions. This book therefore does not attempt to suggest “right” and “wrong” terminology. Rather, the book builds up understanding about a term’s usages, concepts, context and cautions, and leaves it to the discretion of the readers to decide how it is to be used.



We hope this book will serve as a valuable tool for you. However, we suggest you use it as a general guide, rather than strictly adhere to it. Be careful not to make assumptions. The best advice is to listen to your people – what terms do they use to describe themselves and their lives, what pronouns do they use, what words do they use to explain their needs? If you are not sure what terms to use, be forthright and ask them what terms they prefer. Always remember that, by asking questions and carefully listening, you will convey a welcoming attitude, thereby helping people feel accepted and comfortable.

Given the ever-changing nature of language, perceptions and social mores, terminologies covered in this book may need to be reviewed on a regular basis.





Gender, Sex and Sexuality

In many instances, articles and pictures found in public domain reflect the ways sexuality, sex and gender roles are perceived by a community or culture. For example, advertisements from some communities or regions typically show a woman as the “good housewife,” or a man as strong and stable, to sell a product or support a family.

Images represent values or moral standpoints. For example, articles or images that advise women on “how to catch a man” imply that all women want to be with men, do not want to be alone or with other women, and must conform to a particular standard to meet a man. Such images can be interpreted and judged in many ways depending on people’s perspectives and attitudes. For example, a photograph of a “scantily-clad” woman in an advertisement may seem inappropriate or crude to some, but artistic or erotic to others.

Gender

“Gender refers to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male/masculine or female/feminine in a particular social setting at a particular point in time” (NACO, 2014).

“As per WHO, gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed.

The concept of gender includes five important elements: relational, hierarchical, historical, contextual and institutional. While most people are born either male or female, they are taught appropriate norms and behaviors – including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and workplaces. When individuals or groups do not ‘fit’ established gender norms, they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion – all of which adversely affect health” (WHO, 2011).

In common usage, the word gender often refers to the sexual distinction between male and female.

Gender is the set of relations between and among men and women in different societies based on socially constructed roles – behaviors considered appropriate for men and women. Simply, gender refers to the set of relationships between men and women at a particular point of time in society.

“Gender is also defined as the economic, political, and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female. The social definitions of what it means to be male or female vary among cultures and change over time. Gender refers to the array of socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviors, values, and relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Gender is an acquired identity that is learned, changes over time, and varies widely within and across cultures. Gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men, but to the relationship between them” (USAID, 2007).

Sex


“Sex is defined as the biological difference between females and males present at birth. These include anatomical differences such as presence of vagina or penis, genetic differences present in a person’s chromosomal makeup, or physiological differences such as menstruation and sperm production. Sex can also be used to describe physical acts of sex that include, but are not limited to, penetrative penile vaginal intercourse, oral sex, anal sex, masturbation and kissing, among others acts” (TARSHI, 2006).

“The term ‘gender’ is often confused with ‘sex.’ However, ‘sex’ generally refers to male and female biology and anatomy, whereas ‘gender’ refers to a set of qualities and behaviors expected from men and women by society.”

Sexuality

“Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitude, values, behaviors practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality includes all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, and religious and spiritual factors” (WHO, 2016).

The terms listed below are commonly used while addressing, pointing, explaining, and speaking for and about gender, sex, and sexuality. This is not exhaustive. These terms are constantly being discussed and examined; they influence the way people are seen and for whom they are used. Some people may decide not to use any of the given terms or may choose to move from one identity to another, as signified by the term. Eventually, it is important to understand and recognize the vastness and diversity of usage of such terminology.



PRONOUNS ARE
NOT FOR
ASSUMING



Terminology

1 Male/man/boy/he/him/his Female/woman/girl/she/her/hers /They/ them/theirs

“Traditionally man, mankind, spokesman, chairman, workmanship, man the desk or phones, manpower, husband or wife, and professions like nurses, mid-wife, etc., carry feminine connotations which have been replaced by gender neutral terms (see examples later).”

Similarly, terms like policeman, postman, chairman, salesman, cameraman, waiter or waitress, ladies and gentlemen, **reinforce gender division and invisibilize others.**

Definition/Concept/Context

In the English language, the word “**he**” is used to refer to males and “**she**” to refer to females. But some people identify as neither of the genders, or both – which is why it is important to use non-binary pronouns like “**they**,” “**them**,” “**their**,” etc. (BBC, 2015 a).

Some transgender and gender-nonconforming people may prefer gender-neutral or gender-inclusive pronouns when talking to or about them. “**They**” and “**their**” are sometimes used as gender-neutral singular pronouns (APA, n.d.).

Usage Examples

The terms “male” and “female” should be used when describing the sex of human participants or other sex-related biological or physiological factors. Descriptions of differences between males and females should

carefully refer to “sex differences” rather than “gender differences” (Clayton and Tannenbaum, 2016).

Humans, humankind, spokesperson, chairperson and workforce are preferred terminologies. Likewise, instead of husband or wife, it is preferred to use term “**partner**” or “**spouse**” (Griffith University, 2017).

Designating males and females, or men and women, depend on whether biological or psychosocial factors are under study (Clayton and Tannenbaum, 2016).

While defining profession and position, it is preferred to use language that uses gender neutral words. For example, we may use “police officer” instead of “Policeman,” “chairperson” instead of “chairman,” “server” instead of “waiter” or “waitress,” “audience” instead of “ladies and gentleman.” Here, we apply the principle of identity-first language.

Cautions for Usage

It has been commonly accepted for many years that the use of “**man**” as a generic term excludes women and non-binary individuals. Words like “**mankind**” and “**chairman**” make people think “**male**” rather than “**female**,” rendering other genders invisible. The use of “man” or “men” and “**woman**” or “**women**” is an expression of binary language – it doesn’t allow for people who don’t identify as male or female (Griffith University, 2017).

Using the appropriate pronouns when talking to someone who is transgender shows respect for the individual. Generally, the name the person chooses to use indicates their gender preference. So, a transgender person called Steve may be referred to as “he,” while another called Rachel may be “she.” However, if you are unsure, it’s best to ask the person politely how they wish to be known.

This is especially so if you suspect someone identifies as **non-binary**, in which case a neutral term like “they” may be more appropriate (BBC, 2015 b).

The use of words like “person,” “individual,” “humans,” etc. are more appropriate and gender neutral. It is also important to use language that is inclusive of gender diversity. For example, always use someone’s preferred name and ask what pronouns they use if you are unsure (Flinders University, n.d.).

While defining profession and position it may be inappropriate to use language that indicates the biological sex of a person.

Although predominantly binary in nature, the concept of gender is plural, complex and varies across languages. A cross-cultural understanding is highly useful.

2 Femininity and Masculinity

Definition/Concept/Context

“Masculinity and femininity refer to an individual’s gender in terms of maleness and femaleness, respectively” (Dixson, 2017).

“Femininity and masculinity are rooted in the social (one’s gender) rather than the biological (one’s sex). Societal members decide what being male or female means (e.g., dominant or passive, brave or emotional), and males will generally respond by defining themselves as masculine, while females will generally define themselves as feminine. Because these are social definitions, however, it is possible for one to be female and see herself as masculine, or male and see himself as feminine” (Stets and Burke, 2012).

“Cultural notions of ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ behavior are shaped in part by observations about what women and men do. This kind of ‘gender marking’ tends to discourage women or men from entering ‘gender-inauthentic’ occupations” (Faulkner, 2009).

Usage Examples

In everyday language, femininities and masculinities do not map biological sex. In any one culture, certain behaviors or practices may be widely recognized as “feminine” or “masculine,” irrespective of whether they are adopted by women or by men. Femininities and masculinities are not descriptors of sexual orientation (Gendered Innovations, n.d.).

Although the terms “feminine” and “masculine” are gender terms (socio-cultural categories) in everyday usage, they carry different meanings in biology. “**Masculinization**” refers to the development of male-specific morphology, such as the Wolffian ducts and male reproductive structures. “**Feminization**” refers to the development of female-specific morphology, such as the Mullerian ducts and female reproductive structures. To become a reproductively functioning female, for example, both feminization and de-masculinization are required, and vice-versa for males (Uhlenhaut et.al., 2009).

Cautions for Usage

Femininities and masculinities are plural – there are many forms of femininity and many forms of masculinity. What gets defined as feminine or masculine differs by region, religion, class, national culture and other social factors. How femininities and masculinities are valued differs culturally.

Any one person – woman or man – engages in many forms of femininity and masculinity, which she or he adopts (consciously or unconsciously) depending on context, the expectations of others, the life stage and so forth. A man can engage in what are often stereotyped as “feminine” activities in some cultures, such as caring for a sick person.

It is important to note that oftentimes a particular form of masculinity is idealized because of a complex interaction between patriarchy and other social forces related to class, caste, ethnicity, etc. This is known as “**hegemonic masculinity.**”

“**A popular definition** of the concept has been ‘an idealised, dominant, heterosexual masculinity, constructed in relation to women and to subordinated masculinities, and closely connected to the institution of marriage.’ Any man that aspires to embody this masculinity must display aggressive and violent behaviour whilst restraining the flow of

vulnerable emotions. He should also exhibit strength and toughness, and be competitive and successful. Finally, and most notably, the dominant man should be heterosexual" (Morettini, 2016).

Toxic masculinity, commonly used in ordinary parlance, is an example of how hegemonic masculinity operates.

3 Sex, Assigned Sex, Natal Sex, Birth Sex and Assigned Gender

Definition/Concept/Context

“Sex is defined as the biological difference between females and males present at birth. These include anatomical differences.”

“The term ‘sex’ can also be used to describe physical act of sex that include, but not limited to, penetrative penile vaginal intercourse, oral sex, anal sex, masturbation, and kissing, among others acts.”

“Sex, sexual intercourse, making love, fucking, bonking and screwing are some acts which define sex as act” (TARSHI, 2006).

“Assigned gender refers to a person’s initial assignment as male or female at birth. It is based on the child’s genitalia and other visible physical sex characteristics” (Sawant, 2017).

Usage Examples

Sex and gender are not mutually exclusive. They are integrally related and influence health in different ways. When referring to distinction based on biological make up it is appropriate to use “sex.”

For example: A doctor diagnosing the patient would address the disease as per the biological makeup of the patient only.

Cautions for Usage

Natal sex refers to the sex that a person was assigned at birth. This may or may not accord with the individual's own sense of gender identity while growing up. Transgender people, generally speaking, do not identify with the sex assigned to them at birth (WHO, 2015).

When defining the gender of an individual, as may be needed in the process for population count or defining political sentiment, it is not appropriate to define the gender of a person as per anatomical difference. Rather gender should be defined as per the gender identity of the person.

What do we mean by “assigned sex”? Think about one of the first things the doctor (or midwife) says when someone is born, “it’s a girl” or “it’s a boy.” This is gender assignment and it assumes that someone’s genitals match their gender. However, we know this isn’t always the case and that each of us decides what gender we know ourselves to be. It may not align with the genitals we are born with or be part of the gender binary (male or female).

For example, someone may be born with a vagina but identify themselves as a male.

What do we mean by “assigned sex”? Think about one of the first things the doctor (or midwife) says when someone is born, “it’s a girl” or “it’s a boy.” This is gender assignment and it assumes that someone’s genitals match their gender. However, we know this isn’t always the case and that each of us decides what gender we know ourselves to be. It may not align with the genitals we are born with or be part of the gender binary (male or female).

For example, someone may be born with a vagina but identify themselves as a male.

4

Cisgender, Cis and Cissexual

Definition/Concept/Context

“An adjective used to describe a person whose gender identity and gender expression align with sex assigned at birth” (APA, 2015).

“Cisgender means having a gender identity that matches one’s assigned sex” (WHO, 2016).

“The word ‘cisgender’ comes from Volkmar Sigusch, a German sexologist who coined the term ‘cissexual’ in the 1990s for his work on transgender experiences. The word later transformed from ‘cissexual’ to ‘cisgender’” (Valens, 2018).

Usage Examples

The term is used to describe individuals whose gender identity or expression aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth (Sawant, 2017). For example, a person born with male genitals who identifies as a man is cisgender (Griffith University, 2017).

“Cis-’ is a Latin prefix meaning ‘on the same side as,’ and is therefore an antonym of ‘trans.’ A more widely understood way to describe people who are not transgender is simply to say non-transgender people (GLAAD, n.d.).

The term “Cis” is used as short form of cisgender, or a person whose gender matches the gender assigned to them at birth (Thomas, 2018).

Cautions for Usage

All sorts of arguments are flung back and forth about usage of the term "cisgender." The bulk of the resistance is from the cisgender community, which feels the usage of the term is oppressive, "reverse transphobic" or a war against cis people. It is used as a polite way to say "cis" instead of "not trans."

So, why do we say "cisgender" instead of "non-transgender"? Because, referring to cisgender people as "non-trans" implies that cisgender people are the default and being trans is abnormal.

Many people have said "transgender people" and "normal people," but when we say "cisgender" and "transgender," neither is implied as more normal than the other (James, 2015). This creates a gender bias and a rift between "cis" and "trans."

5

Asexual and Asexuality

Definition/Concept/Context

“A person who generally does not feel sexual attraction or desire toward any group of people” (SCCADVASA, 2015).

“It is an emerging sexual orientation. Some people who identify as asexual do not experience sexual attraction to other people, while others experience sexual attraction but no desire to act genitally on these attractions” (Pölm-Faudré, 2016).

Usage Examples

The term is used to define and explain sexual orientation. It is generally used in psychological writings. It is used to explain other terminologies like “gender expression,” “sexual orientation,” “celibacy,” etc.

Cautions for Usage

Asexuality is not the same as **celibacy** (SCCADVASA, 2015). Thus, it is not appropriate to use it interchangeably.

Asexuality and celibacy are not the same. Many people who are asexual live a celibate life, meaning that they do not engage in sex with others. But while celibacy is a choice (often motivated by religion and other life circumstances), asexuality is not (Pölm-Faudré, 2016).

In conversational or day-to-day interaction, calling people “asexual” may be a derogatory label and could lead to discrimination.

6 Aromanticism

Definition/Concept/Context

“People who do not feel romantic desire are considered aromantic” (Killermann, 2013).

Usage Examples

Aromanticism and asexuality are not mutually exclusive identities – an individual can possess both. Aromantic, asexual people are not interested in pursuing either sexual or romantic relationships with others. (Killermann, 2013)

Cautions for Usage

Being aromantic is not the same as being asexual, as an asexual identity does not rule out the possibility of romantic relationships. Like asexuality, romanticism can often be misconstrued as “not having found the right person” (Killermann, 2013).

7

Heterosexism, Heteronormativity, Gender Binary and Heterosexual

Definition/Concept/Context

“The viewpoint that all people should be heterosexual and the assumption that this is the ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ sexual identity people should have. This viewpoint results in bias against other sexual identities” (TARSHI, 2006).

“A heterosexual is an individual who is sexually attracted to people of a gender other than their own and/or who identifies as being heterosexual” (TARSHI, 2006).

Usage Examples

Although this term is not preferred to be used, it is used in literature to create contrast for the better understanding of gender identities and gender orientations. It is also used to understand the level of discrimination surrounding other gender identities. In counselling for health care services, domestic violence, masculinity issues, crime against women, etc., it is imperative to understand the concepts of H=heterosexism and heteronormativity.

Cautions for Usage

The term assumes that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is the norm. Among individuals and institutions, this can lead to invisibility and stigmatization of other sexualities and gender identities (WHO, 2016).

8

Sexual Orientation

Definition/Concept/Context

Sexual orientation “refers to a person’s physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction towards other people. Sexual orientation is comprised of three elements: **sexual attraction, sexual behavior and sexual identity**. Sexual orientation is most often defined in terms of heterosexuality to identify those who are attracted to individuals of a different sex from themselves, and homosexuality to identify those who are attracted to individuals of the same sex as themselves” (WHO, 2016).

Human sexuality is broadly divided into three sexual orientations: heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality. A person may strictly experience one of them, or for someone else, it may be fluid and changing over time. Sexual orientation can be described as a spectrum known as the ‘Kinsey Scale’ (Kinsey, 1948).

Usage Examples

It is commonly used when defining a psychological concept or making a distinction between different sexual orientations, such as heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual, to understand the related behavior, and thereby understand causative factors for some health problems. However, some people may still use these terms to define their sexual orientation or identity in general.

Cautions for Usage

Sexual orientation is distinct from gender identity (WHO, 2016). It is inappropriate to use this term to define the gender identity of a person. It is also inappropriate to use it as synonym for sexual preference, which is defined as the types of sexual intercourse, stimulation, and gratification one likes to receive and participate in. Generally, when this term is used, it is mistakenly interchanged with “sexual orientation,” creating an illusion that one has a choice (or “preference”) in who they are attracted to (Killermann, 2013).

Sexual orientation remains a taboo subject and is one of the major reasons for discrimination. In the past, other forms of sexual orientation, apart from heterosexuality, have been labelled as aberration.

9

Sexual Attraction

Definition/Concept/Context

“This refers to a sexual interest in another person based on a combination of factors including a person’s looks, movement, voice, smell, etc., that are appealing to the person attracted. Sexual attraction can also be defined as having sexual feelings towards someone” (ONS, 2009).

Sexual attraction “refers to a person’s physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction towards other people. Most people have a sexual orientation, which forms an integral part of their identity. Homosexual people are attracted to individuals of the same sex as themselves. Heterosexual people are attracted to individuals of a different sex from themselves. Bisexual people may be attracted to individuals of the same or different sex. Sexual orientation is not related to gender identity” (UNICEF, 2014).

Usage Examples

The term “sexual attraction” is used to describe a statement of attraction one may feel towards the opposite sex (heterosexual), the same sex (homosexual), or both (bisexual)(ISEAN, 2015).

Cautions for Usage

It is seen that the term sexual attraction is confused with terms like **“lust,” “romantic attraction,” “aesthetic attraction,” “emotional attraction,” “intellectual attraction,”** and **“sensual attraction.”** All these terms are entirely different from the term “sexual attraction.”

It is possible to be sexually attracted to a woman without lusting after her. Lust may be distinguished by complete selfishness. Lust involves looking at a woman as simply an object of sexual desire, while disregarding the fact that she is a human being with emotions and needs. Sexual attraction, on the other hand, is possible along with selflessness and respect for a woman, even if the man is not committed to her in marriage. In other words, sexual attraction can exist without lust (Wagner, 2013).

Sexual attraction and romantic attraction often seem so closely intertwined that it becomes difficult to see the difference between the two. **Sexual attraction** may involve the desire for sexual contact with someone, while **romantic attraction** focuses more on the desire for a romantic relationship with someone, not purely related to sex (Luce, 2017).

“Aesthetic attraction” is defined as something that is associated strictly with an appreciation for one’s appearance. For example, the thought of, “Wow, that person has a great butt, and that’s aesthetically appealing to me,” is aesthetic attraction. It’s not, “Wow, that person is so hot, I want to jump in bed with them.” The latter is what we would refer to as “sexual attraction.” To be clear, non-physical features can also entice sexual attraction (Lovitz, 2016).

Emotional attraction: Attraction that is predicated on personality rather than the physical appearance of another person(s). Emotional attraction often includes or represents the desire to be in non-tactile contact with another person for the purposes of forming, fostering, or maintaining an emotional and personal bond with them. You may feel fascinated or drawn to a person(s) based on their personality or aura, which may result in you wanting to be around them increasingly, without involving anything sexual, romantic, aesthetic, sensual or physical (Paramo, 2018).

Intellectual attraction: Attraction that involves a desire to form, foster, or maintain an intellectual or mental connection or engagement with another person(s). Intellectual attraction may involve a connection to someone mentally that is separated from the rest of their bodies. It grapples with what the person(s) in question is thinking, and potentially includes a desire to interact or engage with that person(s) further in intellectual or mental respects, without necessarily involving any other form of attraction (Paramo, 2018).

Sensual attraction: Attraction predicated on an inclination or passion to engage with another person(s) in a manner that could be described as physical or tactile, as well as intersecting with any of the senses. Sensual attraction may include the desire to hug, kiss, cuddle, hold another's hand, etc., while not including the desire for sexual activity or engagement. It may also include gaining gratification or being aroused by another person(s) through other sensory experiences such as smell (Paramo, 2018).

10 Sexual Behaviour

Definition/Concept/Context

“Refers to how people behave sexually. That is, whether they have sexual partners of the same sex or not” (ONS, 2009).

“Sexual behaviour is used to describe the way in which an individual sexually engages with others” (WHO, 2016).

Usage Examples

Sexual behaviour in humans is varied and is heavily influenced by socio-cultural conditioning. Although there are a range of documented sexual behaviours, people often normalize sexual behaviour on the basis of procreation.

In the past, the West started criminalizing and stigmatizing non-procreative sexual behaviour. However, the Eastern civilization – particularly the Indian civilization – has a long history of accommodating and embracing different forms of sexual behaviour as seen in history, literature, mythology, architecture, etc. (Menon, 2018).

Cautions for Usage

Sexual behavior does not necessarily form a basis for a person's sexual identity (ONS, 2009).

Sexual behavior is not always determined by an individual's sexual orientation. For instance, an individual can be identified as a man who has sex with other men (MSM), regardless of whether they have sex with women or have a personal or social gay or bisexual identity. This concept is useful because it also includes men who self-identify as heterosexual but have sex with other men and would not otherwise be reached through public health interventions (WHO, 2016).

Societies often create norms and hierarchies among different forms of sexual behavior as "good, normal, or natural," and "bad, abnormal, or unnatural," leading to further stigma and discrimination. What is normal and what is aberration are also determined by the legal and moral contingency of a provisional society. (Rubin, 1984).

11

Sexual Identity

Definition/Concept/Context

Sexual identity is the identity adopted by those individuals based on their sexuality, sexual orientation or behavior.

Although not as prominent as other identity markers such as race, caste, religion, and even gender, adopting a particular sexual identity is a way of personal and political assertion, especially for the sexual minorities in their struggles for equal rights and justice.

Usage Examples

The most common sexual identity markers are straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual and asexual, most of which are English words. It is possible that a person may not identify with any one of these terms, as they are delimiting, or simply because one chooses not to.

Adopting an alternate sexual identity requires certain amount of political consciousness and personal comfort.

Cautions for Usage

We cannot assume one's sexual identity based on appearance, behavior or any other factor, as it is to be solely determined by the individuals themselves. Likewise, we should not assume everyone to be straight or heterosexual unless the person self-identifies as such. Assumed heterosexuality can lead to invisibilization of sexual minorities. Rather, a safe and open space for self-identification should be created, even for those who choose not to identify.

12 Gender Identity

Definition/Concept/Context

“A person’s innate, deeply-felt psychological identification as a man, woman, or something else, which may or may not correspond to the person’s external body or assigned sex at birth (i.e., the sex listed on the birth certificate)” (FenwayHealth, 2010).

“Gender identity exists on a spectrum. This means that an individual’s gender identity is not necessarily confined to an identity that is completely male or completely female. When an individual’s gender identity differs from their assigned sex, they are commonly considered to be transgender, gender fluid and/or gender queer. Whereas when an individual’s gender identity aligns with their assigned sex, they are commonly considered cisgender.

While these terms are increasing in familiarity in some countries, in a number of cultures, other terms may be used to describe people who form same-sex relationships and those who exhibit non-binary gender identities. In some of these countries, “third gender” is recognized both in law and cultural traditions, and may have legal protections due to cultural, traditional, or religious significance” (WHO, 2016).

Usage Examples

Gender identities could be cisgender, transgender, genderqueer, non-binary, etc. It must be noted that gender norms across cultures are highly varied and extremely fluid, hence “sexual identity” and “gender identity” too, should be self-determined.

Gender identities are culture-specific, too. Hence, using an English word may lead to misrepresentation or homogenizing of the range of gender identities and expressions in a particular culture.

For example, Hijra, Kinnar, Nupi Maanbi, Aravani, etc., are some of the diverse gender minority communities in India.

Cautions for Usage

“Sexual identity” should not be used as a synonym for, or as inclusive of, **“gender identity.”**

We need to be very clear that a person’s gender identity may or may not correspond with their sex (HRC, 2007). For example, a transgender may or may not be attracted to the same sex, opposite or both. Similarly, a heterosexual person may either be cis or trans gender. Sexual and gender identities are altogether distinct, although the two share common grounds in the discourse of diversity and inclusion.

13 Gender Expression

Definition/Concept/Context

“Refers to the ways in which people externally communicate their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, haircut, voice, and emphasizing, de-emphasizing or changing their bodies’ characteristics. Gender expression is not an indicator of sexual orientation” (ADL, 2017).

“Refers to the way in which an individual outwardly presents their gender. These expressions of gender are typically through the way one chooses to dress, speak, or generally conduct themselves socially. Our perceptions of gender typically align with the socially constructed binary of masculine and feminine forms of expression” (WHO, n.d.).

Usage Examples

The term is used to explain how someone expresses or presents elements of masculinity and/or femininity externally. This includes clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, voice and other behaviors (Statistics New Zealand, 2015).

Cautions for Usage

The way an individual expresses their gender is not always indicative of their gender identity (WHO, n.d.). Thus, it is not appropriate to use it when gender identity is to be highlighted.

It is inappropriate, rather a big “NO,” to understand someone’s gender expression as a reflection of their gender identity (Statistics New Zealand, 2015).

14 Agendered

Definition/Concept/Context

“Without gender,” or individuals identifying as having no gender identity (Sawant, 2017). Some individuals may not identify with any of the existing gender categories. Often, society tries to fit us into the gender categories of man, woman or the “third.” Many find these official categories to be delimiting or reductive. A person may choose not to adopt any of these legal or cultural gender markers.

Usage Examples

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “agender” refers to people who don’t identify as any particular gender. This can mean being genderless, lacking gender, or having a null gender. However, people also use “agender” to mean identifying as gender-neutral or having an undefinable gender (Them, 2018).

Cautions for Usage

Agender individuals do not identify as male or female exclusively. This is not to be confused with **gender fluid**, another identity that also falls under the transgender, nonbinary and multigender umbrella. People who are agender do not have a specific gender identity, and people who are gender fluid may identify as more feminine or masculine, a mixture, or something else entirely, over a period of time.

We also need to be very clear that people who are agender might be asexual. Do not assume that agender people do not desire sex or participate in romantic relationships. Just like people of any gender identity, people who are agender can have all manners of desires and attractions.

If you are unsure what pronoun someone (of any gender or presentation) uses, the best thing to do first is listen to learn what pronouns others use when referring to that person. If you must ask which pronoun someone prefers, do so in a private way. If you mess up their pronouns, apologize sincerely and then move on (Sojwal, 2015).

15

Gender Dysphoria

Definition/Concept/Context

“According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, people who experience intense, persistent gender incongruence can be given the diagnosis of gender dysphoria” (APA, 2014).

“People with gender dysphoria may be very uncomfortable with the gender they were assigned, sometimes described as being uncomfortable with their body (particularly developments during puberty) or being uncomfortable with the expected roles of their assigned gender. People with gender dysphoria may often experience significant distress and/or problems functioning associated with this conflict between the way they feel and think of themselves (referred to as experienced or expressed gender) and their physical or assigned gender” (APA, n.d.).

Gender dysphoria diagnosis, often used by psychologists and doctors, describes the distress, unhappiness, and anxiety that transgender people may feel about the mismatch between their bodies and their gender identity.

A person may be formally diagnosed with gender dysphoria to receive medical treatment to help them transition (Planned Parenthood, n.d.).

Usage Examples

The term is used to define a diagnostic label, describing the distress and discomfort experienced by some trans people as a result of an incongruence between their gender identity and their assigned sex (OSF, 2013).

First, let's look at the word "dysphoria." According to Merriam-Webster, dysphoria is "a state of feeling very unhappy, uneasy or dissatisfied." So, in the broadest sense, gender dysphoria is when someone feels very unhappy, uneasy or dissatisfied in relation to their gender. This is something many people experience, including feeling tension about how someone feels about their body compared to how society genders their body, or a conflict between how someone sees themselves in contrast with expected gender roles or expectations (Genderspectrum, n.d.).

Cautions for Usage

Psychologists used to call this "gender identity disorder." However, the mismatch between a person's body and gender identity isn't, in itself, a mental illness (but it can cause emotional distress), so the term was changed to **gender dysphoria** (Planned Parenthood, 2018).

Medical practitioners and others cite "gender dysphoria" as the sole reason for sex reassignment surgery, hormone therapy, laser therapy, etc., to create an "appropriate transgender subject." Such narratives subsume and homogenize the vast range of gender identities and expressions across cultures and regions under the medical and legal definition of "transgender" (Dutta, 2014, Sahai, 2020). The medical and legal categories of gender can be highly delimiting and homogenizing, even if the intent is to empower and protect them (Jain and DasGupta, 2021).

16

Homosexual and Homo

Definition/Concept/Context

"An individual who is sexually attracted to people of the same gender as their own, and/or who identifies as being homosexual" (TARSHI, 2006).

Usage Examples

The word homosexuality was used by psychologists in the 19th and 20th century. Homosexuality was treated as a disorder, but decades later was de-pathologized and decriminalized in many countries (Encyclopedia Britannica).

It is preferred to use more specific terms like gay or lesbian to describe gender expression, sexual behavior, or sexual orientation instead of homosexuality or homo.

The term "gay" is used to describe a man who is sexually attracted to other men and/or identifies as gay. This term can also be used to describe any person (man or woman) who experiences sexual attraction to people of the same gender (TARSHI, 2006).

Cautions for Usage

It may be derogatory to call a person "homo," "fag," "faggot," "dyke," "sodomite," "deviant," "disordered," "dysfunctional," "diseased," "perverted" or "destructive."

It is appropriate to use gay or lesbian to describe people attracted to members of the same sex. Historically, the word "homosexual" is aggressively used by anti-gay extremists to suggest that gay people are somehow diseased, or **psychologically and emotionally disordered**.

This notion was discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s. Thus, it is inappropriate to use the term "homosexual" except in direct quotes. Please also avoid using "homosexual" as a style variation simply to avoid repeated use of the word "gay." The Associated Press, The New York Times and The Washington Post restrict use of the term "homosexual" (GLAAD, n.d.).

17

Homophobia, homophobe and homophobic

Definition/Concept/Context

“An intolerance or irrational fear of homosexual people that can manifest itself in discrimination, prejudice or contempt of homosexual people.” (TARSHI, 2006).

“Homophobia is also defined as prejudice and hatred directed at someone because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation” (OSF, 2013).

Usage Examples

George Weinberg’s introduction of the term homophobia in the late 1960s challenged traditional thinking about homosexuality, helping to focus society’s attention on the problem of antigay prejudice and stigma (Herek, 2004).

The term is often used to describe discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity and may include verbal and physical abuse. However, some use the more inclusive term, heterosexism, to describe all forms of discrimination against people who encompass lesbian, gay or bisexual sexual orientations (WHO, 2016).

Cautions for Usage

The use of homophobic language has a negative impact on young gay people, making them feel less happy at school and less likely to reach their full potential. In the worst cases, homophobic language impacts young people's mental health and well-being.

Homophobic language also refers to terms of abuse specifically directed at gay people. This includes words such as "queer," "poof," "fag," "faggot," "dyke" and "lezza."

Homophobic language is often dismissed as "harmless banter" that isn't intentionally hurtful. However, when homophobic language goes unchallenged, this has a clear negative impact on young people's sense of belonging, self-esteem and attainment at school (Kibirige and Tryl, n.d.).

18 Bisexual Person

Definition/Concept/Context

“An individual who is sexually attracted to people of the same gender and to people of a gender other than their own” (TARSHI, 2006).

“Refers to a person’s attraction to both men and women, or other genders” (Griffith University, 2017).

Usage Examples

People who are attracted to both genders may call themselves bisexual. The degree of attraction to both genders may or may not be the same. This also applies to the nature of attraction. For example, a bisexual person may be more sexually attracted to the same gender, but romantically more into the opposite gender.

Cautions for Usage

Tagging or calling people bisexual may create “**biphobia**” which is defined as fear, hatred and stigma towards bisexual people. It’s typically rooted in inaccurate stereotypes, like an assumption that bisexual people can’t be monogamous, that they further perpetuate the gender binary by only dating cis people, or that bisexuality is just a steppingstone away from gay or straight, rather than a legitimate sexual orientation (Thomas, 2018).

19

Pansexuality and Pansexual

Definition/Concept/Context

“Pansexuality” is the sexual, romantic, emotional, physical, or spiritual attraction to people, regardless of their specific gender identity or sexual expression.”

In other words, pansexuality means that you believe that “gender is a social construct, and the way in which we move through the sexuality spectrum is a fluid experience. Identifying as pansexual means that you don’t focus on gender in your romantic attraction to other people and can be attracted to all possible identities.

The main distinction between pansexuality and bisexuality is that pansexuality rejects the gender binary to begin with. Though bisexual individuals may feel this way too, pansexual people often express that they may be attracted to genderqueer people, gender-nonconforming individuals, trans people, as well as cisgender men and women” (Pugachevsky, 2018).

“Pansexuality is referred to as a sexual orientation in which a person feels attracted to someone irrespective of his/her sex or gender identity” (DoctorNDTV, 2018).

Usage Examples

In the past few years, pansexuality has evolved as a greater term, helping people identify their sexuality in a better way. Derived from Greek prefix “pan,” which means “all,” pansexual refers to people who can spiritually, sexually and emotionally fall in love with people of all genders. They are open to male, female, transgender, intersex or gender queer people. (DoctorNDTV, 2018)

Cautions for Usage

As it indicates sexual acts with multiple partners, pansexual may be labelled as adultery and polyamory, which may create stigma and discrimination. It may also lead to blame in cases of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Studies reveal that people with different sexual identities, behaviors, and relationships experience various forms of stigma, making them victims of verbal harassment, ridicule, or being treated as different or lesser in social relationships. (Altman et. al., 2012; Herek, 2007).

Such sexual stigmatization, discrimination and marginalization in society render sexual minorities vulnerable to mental health problems (Frisell et.al., 2010; Frost & Meyer, 2009).

20

Intersexed and Androgyny

Definition/Concept/Context

“An individual born with the physical characteristics of both males and females. These individuals may or may not identify as men or women” (TARSHI, 2006).

“People are born with physical or biological sex characteristics (including sexual anatomy, reproductive organs and/or chromosomal patterns) that do not fit the traditional definitions of male or female. These characteristics may be apparent at birth or emerge later in life, often at puberty” (WHO, 2016).

Usage Examples

The term “intersex” is specifically used in the context of people born with ambiguous sexual organs and are of different types. Around 0.05% to 1.7% of humans are born with intersex traits (UNHR). Androgyny, on the other hand, broadly covers sexual and gender expressions. Transgender may include transsexuals (people whose physical sex and gender identity as a man or a woman conflict); transvestites (people who cross-dress for performances but do not wish to be a person of the other sex); and intersex persons (people whose sexual anatomy is neither exclusively male nor female)(Studylib. net, n.d.).

The United Nations Human Rights Commission has raised concerns over subjecting children to unnecessary surgical procedures to correct their genitalia. "Given their irreversible nature and impact on physical integrity and autonomy, such medically unnecessary, unsolicited surgery or treatment should be prohibited. Intersex children and their families should receive adequate counselling and support, including from peers" (UNHR).

Cautions for Usage

Intersex is a biological variant and not a sexual orientation, it does not refer to sexual behavior, sexual expression, gender orientation, etc. (Pact Inc. and ICRW, 2010).

21

Third Gender, Genderqueer and Gender Fluid

Definition/Concept/Context

“A person who does not identify with either man or woman but identifies with another gender” (Killermann, 2013).

“Genderqueer/Third Gender/Gender Fluid: These terms are used by people who identify as being between and/or other than male or female. They may feel they are neither, a little bit of both or they may simply feel restricted by gender labels” (CHP, n.d.).

“**Gender fluid** is a person who is able to manifest and adapt to various genders” (UCSB, 2016).

“Transgendered people in India have been in the limelight ever since the Supreme Court officially granted them the ‘third gender’ category on April 15, 2014” (TOI, 2015; Johari, 2014).

Usage Examples

This gender category is used by societies that recognize three or more genders, both contemporary and historic, and is also a conceptual term meaning different things to different people who use it, as a way to move beyond the gender binary (Killermann, 2013).

Cautions for Usage

To some, these terms are offensive, while other groups and communities have used them as a form of empowerment to assert that they are not heterosexual, are non-conformist, against a dominant heterosexual framework and dissatisfied with the "labels" used on people who do identify as heterosexual.

It is therefore pertinent to understand the context before using these terms OR apply the "if in doubt, ask" principle.

22

Transgender, Transsexuals, Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming (TGNC), and Shiv-shakthis

Definition/Concept/Context

“Transgender refers collectively to people who challenge strict gender norms by behaving as effeminate men or masculine women, adapting ‘third gender’ roles, or embarking on hormonal and surgical treatment to adjust their bodies to the form of the desired sex. Transgender persons often find that the sex assigned to them at birth does not correspond with the innate sense of gender identity they experience in life.

“An individual who does not identify with the gender assigned to them. They may or may not consider themselves as a ‘third sex.’ Transgender people can be men who dress, act or behave like women, or women who dress, act or behave like men. They do not, however, necessarily identify as **homosexual**” (TARSHI, 2006).

“Transgender and gender-nonconforming (TGNC) people are those who have a gender identity that is not fully aligned with their sex assigned at birth” (APA, 2015).

For example: ‘**Genderqueer**’ is a Western term for people who identify as a gender other than male or female” (OSF, 2013).

“**Shiv-shakthis**: Typically referring to a community of transgenders in Andhra Pradesh, Shiv-shakthis are males who are considered ‘possessed by’ or ‘married to’ the gods, particularly Lord Shiva. They have a feminine gender expression and cross-dress as women during religious rituals and festivals. They work typically as astrologers or spiritual healers. The community is guarded by gurus who induct disciples and train them for the work” (Johari, 2014).

Usage Examples

The term “transgender” is used in the legal and medical lexicon, and by activists and individuals to define a broad range of gender non-conformism. A person may or may not use the term transgender and rather identify with a culture-specific marker, such as Hijra, Kinnar, Nupi Maanbi, etc.

Transgender people, the globally recognized umbrella term, was recently defined as “individuals whose gender identity and/or expression of their gender differ from social norms related to their gender of birth. The term ‘transgender people’ describes a wide range of identities, roles and experiences, which can vary considerably from one culture to another” (UNAIDS, 2010).

Cautions for Usage

It is important to understand that transgender and transsexuals may or may not identify themselves as homosexual, bisexual or heterosexual. They may be female to male transsexual, male to female transsexual or choose not to be identified as either (TARSHI, 2006).

By talking to people within the community, it is clear that broad brushstrokes do not sit well with a plethora of individuals who self-identify as **transsexuals, transvestites, transwomen, transgender people, transpeople, travestis, hijra or intersex** people, with some terms preferred over others in different countries and continents. Considering a transgender person may be gay, straight or bisexual, it can be complicated, for example, to talk about a male- to-female transgender person who is attracted to women (UNAIDS, 2010).

Medical procedures such as surgery or hormone therapy may or may not be required by the transgender persons. A legal and medical definition of “transgender” is often reductive and may lead to misrecognition of gender. Hence, self-identification is the key here (Jain & Debanuj, 2021).

Many people view “coming out” as an affirmation of the gender identity they have always had, rather than a transition from one gender identity to another. They may prefer to call themselves **“affirmed females”** (or just “females”) or **“affirmed males”** (or just “males”), rather than **“transgender”** or **“transsexuals,”** because the “trans” prefix suggests they have changed, rather than accepted, their true gender identity. This is consistent with the concept that people do not need to have surgery to affirm their gender (FenwayHealth, 2010).

Thus, it is always appropriate to follow the principle of “if you don’t know, ask” before using these terminologies.

23

Hijra, Kinnar, Arvani and Jogti Hijras

Definition/Concept/Context

These are gender minorities rooted in the multiple cultures and traditions of the Indian subcontinent.

“Refers to those who aspire to and/or undergo castration, as well as those who are intersexed. Although some hijras refer to themselves in the feminine, others say they belong to a third gender and are neither men nor women” (TARSHI, 2006).

Usage Examples

In India, **hijras** tend to identify as a community with its own initiation rituals and professions (like begging, dancing at weddings or blessing babies). They even have their own secret code language, known as Hijra Farsi, which is derived from Persian and Hindustani (Johari, 2014).

The term “**kinnar**” is used for hijras in North India. In other parts of India, such as Maharashtra, the term kinnar is being used by the better-educated hijras to refer to themselves (Johari, 2014).

The term “**aravani**” is used for hijras in Tamil Nadu. They identify as women trapped in male bodies, although many **aravanis** would prefer to be called “**thirunangi**” (Johari, 2014).

Jogti hijras: In Maharashtra and Karnataka, jogtas and jogtis refer to male and female servants who dedicate (or are made to dedicate) their lives to gods in different temples. Jogti hijras refer to male-to-female transgenders who devote themselves to the service of a particular god (Johari, 2014).

Cautions for Usage

By talking to people within the community, it is clear that broad brushstrokes do not sit well with a plethora of individuals who self-identify as **transsexuals, transvestites, transwomen, transgender people, transpeople, travestis, hijra or intersex** people, with some terms preferred over others in different countries and continents. Considering a transgender person may be gay, straight or bisexual, it can be complicated, for example, to talk about a male-to-female transgender person who is attracted to women (UNAIDS, 2010).

The Persian word is loosely translated as “**eunuch**” in English, but unlike eunuchs, not all **hijras** are necessarily castrated. According to the Supreme Court judgement, hijras are biological males who reject their masculine identity and identify either as women, “not-men,” “in between man and woman,” or “neither man nor woman.”

Eunuch refers to a person who is born male but is emasculated or castrated. A eunuch can also refer to an intersex person whose genitals are ambiguously male-like at birth (Johari, 2014).

24 Nupi Maanbi and Pheida

Definition/Concept/Context

The term “nupi maanbi” is used for the transwomen community in the Indigenous Meitei community of Manipur. Historically, there were transgender people who served the ancient kings of Manipur, known as Pheida, as recorded in the royal chronicle, the Cheitharon Kumpapa (Pheida, 2020).

Although the term “transgender” is also widely used in Manipur, the identity “nupi maanbi” has been adopted by the transwomen of Manipur to assert their specific cultural and ethnic gender identity (Pheida, 2020).

Usage Examples

The All Manipur Nupi Maanbi Association (AMANA) is an apex body of all the nupi maanbis of Manipur. Most of the transwomen of Manipur, nowadays, self-identify as nupi maanbi. It is a term used in all forms of public discourse alongside the word “transgender” in Manipur.

This term is not used by other sexual and gender minorities of Manipur who may identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Cautions for Usage

The term “nupi maanbi” is exclusively used for the transwomen of the Meitei community of Manipur. Hence, one should not use it as a generic term for transwomen or transgenders of other communities in Manipur, or in Northeast India in general, which is home to more than 200 ethnic communities.

25

Kothi

Definition/Concept/Context

“A feminized male identity, which is adopted by some people in the Indian subcontinent and marked by gender non-conformity. A kothi, though biologically male, adopts feminine modes of dressing, speech and behavior, and looks for a male partner who has a masculine mode of behavior, speech and attire. Some believe that this is not an identity but a behavior.

Kothis are more recognizable among “men who have sex with men” (MSM) communities because many have rather visible feminine mannerisms.

They may or may not adopt feminine clothing. They are generally receptive partners in sexual encounters. Their partners appear to be more masculine and kothis usually address them as panthis. Kothi-identifying MSM tend to not engage in sex with one another” (NACO, 2014).

Cautions for Usage

Due to the passive role they play in sexual acts, coupled with other forms of gender-based discrimination, the word “kothi” is often used in a pejorative sense – unless otherwise used by some for self-identification.

Usage Examples

Findings from various studies revealed intersecting social and institutional contexts and experiences of stigmatization, discrimination, and violence across police, community, family, and health care systems, along with illuminating consequences for MSM or Kothi. Multisystemic structural violence places kothis at extreme vulnerability for HIV infection and AIDS (Chakrapani et. al., 2007). A study found that stigma was prevalent among Indian MSM and was more pronounced among MSM who identified as Kothi (Thomas et. al., 2012).

As the term is used to define an act of sex, role during sex, or an intimate relationship between partners, it is thus inappropriate to use it as conversational language while talking to these populations. Use may lead to stigmatization within the group and also outside of the group.

26

Sex Reassignment, Gender Reassignment, Gender Confirmation Surgery (GCS), and FtM/F2M or MtF/M2F

Definition/Concept/Context

“A complex range of procedures that people undergo to transform from one sex to another. These include hormone therapy, hair transplant or removal, speech therapy, and surgeries to change one’s sexual and sometimes reproductive organs” (TARSHI, 2006).

“Gender reassignment usually consists of a diagnostic phase (mostly supported by a mental health professional), followed by hormonal therapy (through an endocrinologist), a real-life experience, and at the end, the gender reassignment surgery itself” (Monstrey et. al., 2011).

“The term ‘coming out’ is used to describe the stage when a person opens up and shares their sexual orientation and/or gender identity with people in their life” (UCDAVIS, n.d.).

Some abbreviations like “FtM/F2M” or “MtF/M2F” are used to describe the transition, including a female-to-male transgender or transsexual person, or male-to-female transgender or transsexual person” (Killermann and Bolger, 2015).

Usage Examples

The term is majorly used by medical practitioners to explain the treatment for gender reassignment to those who wish to opt for such procedures. The term is also used in literature to describe the concept of transsexuals' wish for aligning gender with their mind.

One must note that opting for medical procedures is a personal choice and should involve free, informed and prior consent. In fact, humans of all genders and sexualities undergo multiple transformations – cosmetic, surgical, etc., thereby restructuring the body and redefining gender all the time.

Cautions for Usage

Studies show that when individuals modify their bodies outside of their assigned gender, it is viewed as a form of deviance and socially unacceptable – thus, it becomes stigmatized.

The stigma attached to this perceived deviance can become part of individual's identity, subjecting them to stereotypes, such as being viewed as less than human and being denied human rights. (Mayeux, 2009)

Therefore, it is appropriate to apply the principle of "context" and "if you don't know, ask," before using this term.

Altering one's birth sex is not a one-step procedure, it is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time. "Transition" can include some or all the following personal, medical, and legal steps, including telling one's family, friends, and co-workers, using a different name and new pronouns, dressing differently, changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents, hormone therapy, and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgery. The exact steps involved in transition vary from person to person.

Avoid the phrases “sex change,” “preoperative,” “postoperative” when referring to a “sex change operation.” Terms such as “preoperative” or “postoperative” inaccurately suggest that a person must have surgery in order to transition. Avoid overemphasizing surgery when discussing transgender people or the process of transition (GLAAD, n.d.).

27

Transvestite and Cross-dresser

Definition/Concept/Context

“Individuals who regularly or occasionally wear the clothing socially assigned to a gender not their own, but are usually comfortable with their anatomy and do not wish to change it (i.e., they are not transsexuals)” (Holmes, 2003).

“An individual who dresses in the clothing that is typically worn by people of another gender for purposes of sexual arousal or gratification. Transvestites are often men who dress in the clothing typically worn by women. They are also known as cross-dressers” (TARSHI, 2006).

Usage Examples

Cross-dresser is the preferred term for men who enjoy or prefer women’s clothing and social roles. Contrary to popular belief, the overwhelming majority of male cross-dressers identify as straight and often are married. Very few women call themselves cross-dressers (Holmes, 2003).

India has rich multiple theatrical traditions with transvestite actors – male actors in female roles. For example, the Jatra of Bengal, the Nupi Shabi of Manipuri, Shumaang Leela, etc. One can also find ample examples from Indian epics and mythologies such as Vrihalana and Mohihi, the female forms adopted by Arjun and Vishnu respectively.

Cautions for Usage

By talking to people within the community, it is clear that the broad brush strokes do not sit well with a plethora of individuals who self-identify as **transsexuals ,transvestites, transwomen, transgender people, transpeople, travestis, hijra or intersex** people, with some terms preferred over others in different countries and continents. Considering a transgender person may be gay, straight or bisexual, it can be complicated, for example, to talk about a male-to-female transgender person who is attracted to women (UNAIDS, 2010).

Thus, it is always appropriate to follow the principle of “if you don’t know, ask” before using these terminologies.

28

Drag King and Drag Queen

Definition/Concept/Context

'**Drag queen**' refers to women who dress as men for the purpose of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events" (SCCADVASA, 2015). "A man who wears women's clothes in a satirical and extravagant manner to perform professionally in shows and other events. A drag queen can be considered to be a kind of 'female impersonator, as the use of women's clothes is related to artistic issues – but the difference is that their use necessarily focuses on humour and exaggeration" (ABGLT, 2010).

Usage Examples

The term "**drag king**" is used to refer to women who dress as men for the purpose of entertaining others at bars, clubs or other events (SCCADVASA, 2015). The term "drag queen" refers to men who dress in female clothing or men who are female impersonators. They are typically not transgender (Pact Inc. and ICRW, 2010).

The term "**drag**" is also used to describe straight men donning women's clothing for the sake of comedy (McIntyre, 2018).

Cautions for Usage

It is important one should not assume that they are lesbians, transgender or people from other gender groups. It is better to understand the context and apply the principle of "if you don't know, ask." Thus, we need to avoid using this word for lesbians, transgender, etc. (SCCADVASA, 2015).

Put simply, "transgender" refers to a personal gender identity and an authentic, lasting sense of self. In contrast, "drag" is a temporary and deliberate performance of gender (McIntyre, 2018).

Drag king and drag queen fall under the concept of "transvestite" rather than "transgender." It is specifically a sub-culture of Western origin; it should not conflate with other non-Western transvestite performances.

29

LGBTQIA+, GSM, DSG and Quiltbag

Definition/Concept/Context

“LGBTQ is an acronym for the broader queer community. It stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer. Sometimes the ‘Q’ also represents ‘question’ (those questioning their sexuality), or is written out as ‘LGBTQQ’ or ‘LGBTQ+.’ Originally GLBT, the letters may also appear as LGBT or LGBTQI (adding an ‘I’ for **intersex**) and ‘A’ (**asexual**) or sometimes ‘allies’” (Thomas, 2018; Holmes, 2003; Hamilton, n.d.; FenwayHealth, 2010).

“LGBTQ is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer and/or questioning (sometimes with a ‘+’ at the end in an effort to be more inclusive); **GSM** is gender and sexual minorities; **DSG** is diverse genders and sexualities. **Quiltbag** is **queer** (or questioning), **undecided**, **intersex**, **lesbian**, **trans**, **bisexual**, **asexual** (or allied), and **gay** (or genderqueer)” (Killermann and Bolger, 2015).

Usage Examples

LGBTQIA+ term is sometimes used to define sexual and gender **minorities**—an inclusive umbrella term used to describe any person who does not identify as heterosexual or does not fit into what one’s culture defines as their appropriate “gender box.” This group can include lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people, intersex people, men who have sex with men who do not identify as gay, women who have sex with women who do not identify as lesbian, and others who consider themselves a sexual minority (Pact Inc. and ICRW, 2010).

The acronym can change and be extended depending on the purpose for which it is used, as well as the organization that employs it. This abbreviation is often used in relation to discriminations and inequalities that individuals endure because of their sexual preference and/or gender identity, against the backdrop of prevalent heteronormativity (Lebanon Support, 2017).

Cautions for Usage

The notion that being gay, lesbian or bisexual is a psychological disorder was discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s. Today, words such as "deviant," "diseased," and "disordered" often are used to portray LGBT people as less than human, mentally ill or as a danger to society. Words such as these should be avoided in stories about the gay community (GLAAD, n.d.).

Although overlapping, sexual and gender minorities have distinct forms of struggle and one should be careful not to conflate the two. The lived experience and struggles of a transgender person may be markedly different from that of a cis-gay person.

30 Lesbian

Definition/Concept/Context

“The term lesbian is used to mean women who are attracted to women, although homosexual women also sometimes use the term gay to describe themselves” (USCIS, 2011).

Usage Examples

A term used to describe identified women who are attracted emotionally, physically and sexually to other identified women (UCSB, 2016).

Lesbian women and gay men were once commonly grouped as homosexual, but this term is no longer used as it has a history in the wrongful pathologization of people with non-heterosexual orientations as a mental health disorder (WHO, 2016).

Cautions for Usage

Studies show that prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory experiences within the healthcare system negatively impact patterns of health-seeking behavior and health-risk factors.

The assumption of heterosexuality by health care workers, and in some cases the outright denial of health care to lesbians, are also factors that undermine health rights. These systemic discriminations compromise the sexual rights and choices of lesbian women (Judge and Dyk, 2008).

In consideration of the negative implication the casual usage of the term may bring in, it is appropriate to apply the principles of “context” and “if in doubt, ask.”

31

Gay

Definition/Concept/Context

“The adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex. Sometimes lesbian is the preferred term for women” (TheCenter, n.d.).

“The people who are attracted to the same sex. Mainly used for males but includes females as well” (DB, n.d.).

Usage Examples

The term is often used to refer to sexual orientation – in other words, who you are attracted to (Kaplan, 2012).

The term used in some cultural settings to represent males who are attracted to males in a romantic, erotic and/or emotional sense. Not all men who engage in “homosexual behavior” identify as gay, and as such, this label should be used with caution. The term is used to generally refer to the LGBTQI community, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual (Green and Peterson, 2015).

Cautions for Usage

The term is usually confused with “transgender.” The basic difference between the two is that the term “**gay**” is used to describe sexual orientation (who you are attracted to sexually), and the term “**transgender**” has to do with gender identity (who you feel yourself to be) (Kaplan, 2012).

The act of two people of the same sex having sexual relations does not make them gay. Being gay is a sexual orientation and can be a gender identity. Many men who have sex with men, and women who have sex with women, do not self-identify as being gay and may also have a spouse or partner of the opposite sex. These men and women may not self-identify as bisexual either. It is clearer to refer to the behavior rather than an imposed identity (IPPF, 2011).

Many lesbians feel that the term “gay” refers more to men and overlooks the sexual identity and realities of lesbian women (IPPF, 2011).

It may be derogatory to a person to be called “homo,” “fag,” “faggot,” “dyke,” “sodomite,” “deviant,” “disordered,” “dysfunctional,” “diseased,” “perverted” or “destructive.”

It is appropriate to use gay or lesbian to describe people attracted to members of the same sex. Historically, the word “homosexual,” is aggressively used by anti-gay extremists to suggest that gay people are somehow diseased, or psychologically or emotionally disordered. This notion was discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s.

Thus, it is inappropriate to use the term “homosexual” except in direct quotes. Please also avoid using “homosexual” as a style variation simply to avoid repeated use of the word “gay.” The Associated Press, The New York Times and The Washington Post restrict use of the term “homosexual” (GLAAD, n.d.).

Opponents of LGBT equality often use words like “homosexual” to stigmatize gay people by reducing their lives to purely sexual terms (MAP, 2017).

32 Queer

Definition/Concept/Context

The term “queer” means sexual and gender expressions and identities that do not conform to the heteronormative convention. It was coined to expand the limits of LGBTQIA+.

Contrary to LGBTQIA+, the term “queer” moves beyond sexuality and gender, incorporating their intersection with caste, race, religion and other identity markers (Narain and Bhan 2005).

Usage Examples

The word “queer” is used in academic and research, along with advocacy and activism. The word is loaded with political meanings to subvert our dominant and normative ideas and thoughts. Sometimes it is used interchangeably with LGBTQIA+, but “queer” proscribes any universalizing tendencies and emphasizes intersections of identities (Narain and Bhan 2005).

For example, queer feminism: A study of feminism that questions and expands on the limits of mainstream feminist ideas that had previously focused on heterosexual woman from a majority community.

Cautions for Usage

Etymologically, the word “queer” means “odd,” “peculiar,” or “strange.” Although widely used in academia and activism, the word may still carry negative connotation if used in an inappropriate context. Hence, apply the principle of “context” and “if in doubt, ask.”

33

Closeted

Definition/Concept/Context

“Closeted: An individual who is not open to themselves or others about their (queer) sexuality or gender identity. This may be by choice and/or for other reasons, such as fear for one’s safety, peer or family rejection, disapproval and/or loss of housing or job, etc. Also known as being ‘in the closet.’ When someone chooses to break this silence, they ‘come out’ of the closet” (Killermann, 2013).

Usage Examples

The term is used to refer to a homosexual, bisexual, transperson, or intersex person who will not or cannot disclose their sex, sexuality, sexual orientation, or gender identity to their friends, family, co-workers or society. An intersex person may be closeted due to ignorance about their status since standard medical practice is to “correct,” whenever possible, intersex conditions early in childhood and to hide the medical history from the patient. There are varying degrees of being “in the closet.” For example, a person can be “out” in their social life, but “in the closet” at work or with their family. This is also known as “down-low” or “D/L” (Green and Peterson, 2015). It may also be used to describe an LGBTQ person who has not disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity (Sawant, 2017).

Cautions for Usage

Studies show that being closeted is associated with lower odds of depression than being out, while being recently out is associated with higher odds of experiencing generalized anxiety disorder than being closeted. Men's odds of major depressive disorder are highest when they are recently out. Among women, being closeted is associated with higher odds of depression than being recently out (Pachankis et.al., 2015).

This suggests that people who are either in the closet, or out, are under stress and experience greater mental health issues. Calling people "closeted" can therefore be threatening and derogatory to people.

34

Virginity and Virgin

Definition/Concept/Context

There is no universal definition for the term “virginity” – its meaning varies by era, region, culture and religion. The word “virgin” comes from the Latin root “Virgo,” literally meaning “maiden,” interpreted as a young woman who has not had vaginal intercourse. The concept of virginity is not a medical or scientific term; rather, it is a social, cultural and religious construct.

The disproportionate social expectation that girls and women should remain “virgins” (i.e. refraining from sexual intercourse) until marriage is rooted in stereotyped notions of female sexuality that have been harmful to women and girls globally (WHO, 2018).

“The definition of virginity is highly contextual and rooted in various social factors, e.g. culture, sexual orientation, gender, religion, race, class, upbringing and age. The common thread across diverse definitions is that ‘virginity is invariably defined in terms of what it is not...virginity is because it ends.’ Thus, virginity is a perplexing concept to grasp because it is essentially defined and understood by its absence. In other words, when we speak of virginity, we are speaking of virginity loss” (Corliss, 2017).

Usage Examples

The term is used while explaining the concept, process and need for virginity testing.

Traditionally, the virginity examination is performed on unmarried women and girls, often under force, threat, or coercion, to assess their virtue, honor or social value. In numerous countries, it is also included as part of the medical assessment of rape (WHO, 2018).

In many communities, the term is used to show or explain an idealized form of purity as hegemony persists, which carry a belief in the importance of virginity as a social control over women (Addison, 2010).

Cautions for Usage

The usage of the term “virginity” to label women in terms of chastity is inappropriate. Asking about virginity may put tremendous pressure on persons and their families.

The concept and inappropriate usage of the term “virginity” continues to play the role of a major determinant in the future sexual lives of women (Nagpal and Rao, 2016).

As per research, virginity has a double standard that praises men for losing their virginity, and women ridiculed and humiliated for being “easy” or “slutty.” She might be bullied, catcalled or even assaulted (Thomson, 2016).

Social meaning ascribed to virginity is associated with traditional gender roles and varies by sex. For example, virginity is still viewed as a crucial indicator of purity and chastity (Parla, 2001).

The researchers also indicate that rates of masturbation and premarital sexual intercourse is much higher among men compared to women. This finding has been shown in many studies involving various cultures. This may be due to the double standard of prohibiting women from having premarital sexual intercourse (Eşsizoğlu et.al., 2011).

As reported by the Quint, on the night of her wedding, a 20-year-old woman in Ahmednagar was put through a “virginity test.” Members of the caste panchayat stood outside the room while her and her new husband had intercourse on a white bedsheet – a common practice for her community Kanajarbhat, in Maharashtra.

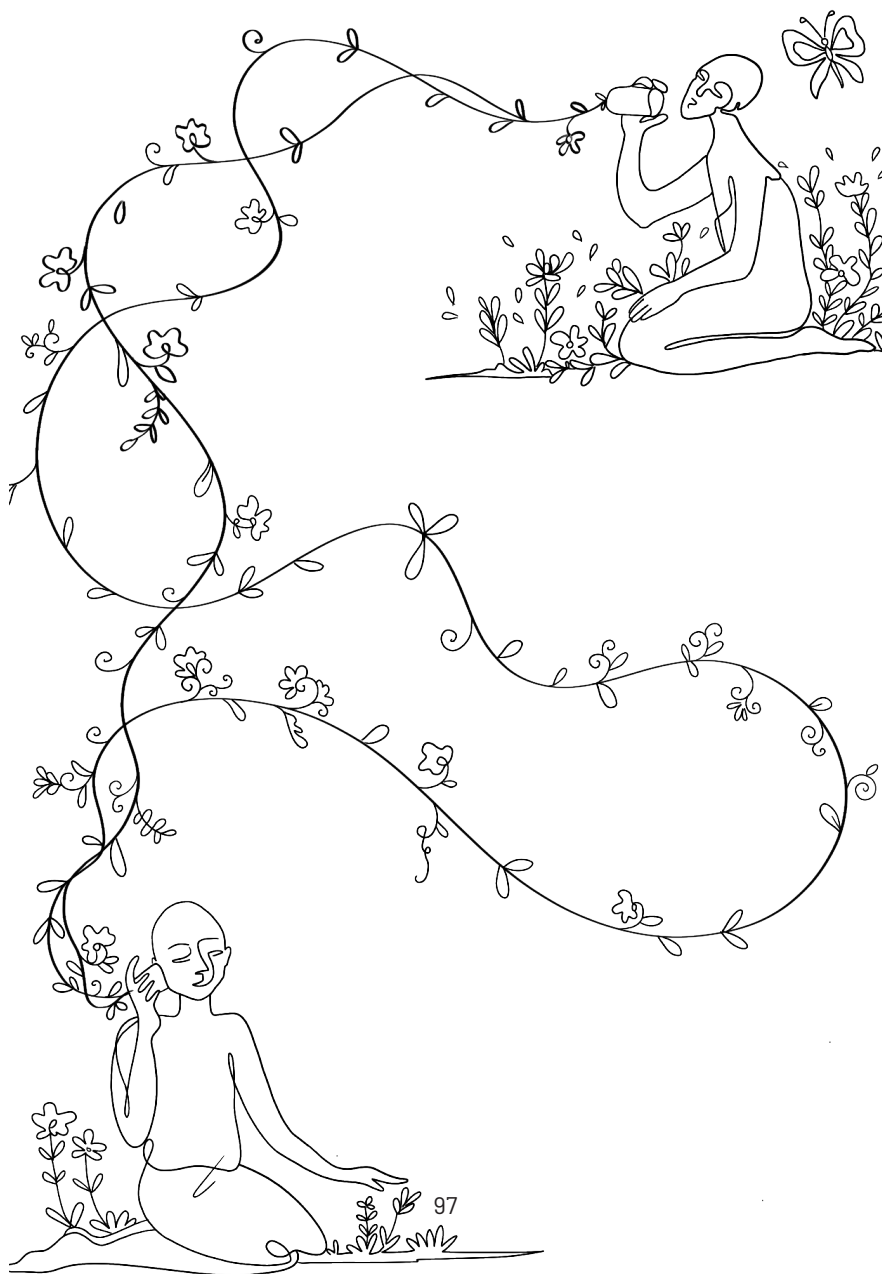
The bedsheet is inspected by the family and panchayat for blood stains. When she didn’t bleed, it was assumed she wasn’t a virgin and therefore “damaged goods.” The panchayat subsequently ordered the man to end the marriage.

As reported in Quint, “virginity restoration” is a booming industry, as thousands of panic-stricken women flock to clinics around the world to have their hymen sown back.

In many cultures, including India, the Middle East and even the West, premarital sex is not simply looked down upon, but is a matter of family honor. If found out, the women could pay with their lives (Krishnan, 2016).

The above studies and research suggest the consequences of using the term “virgin” or “virginity” loosely, and the deadly outcomes that it may bring to the surface.

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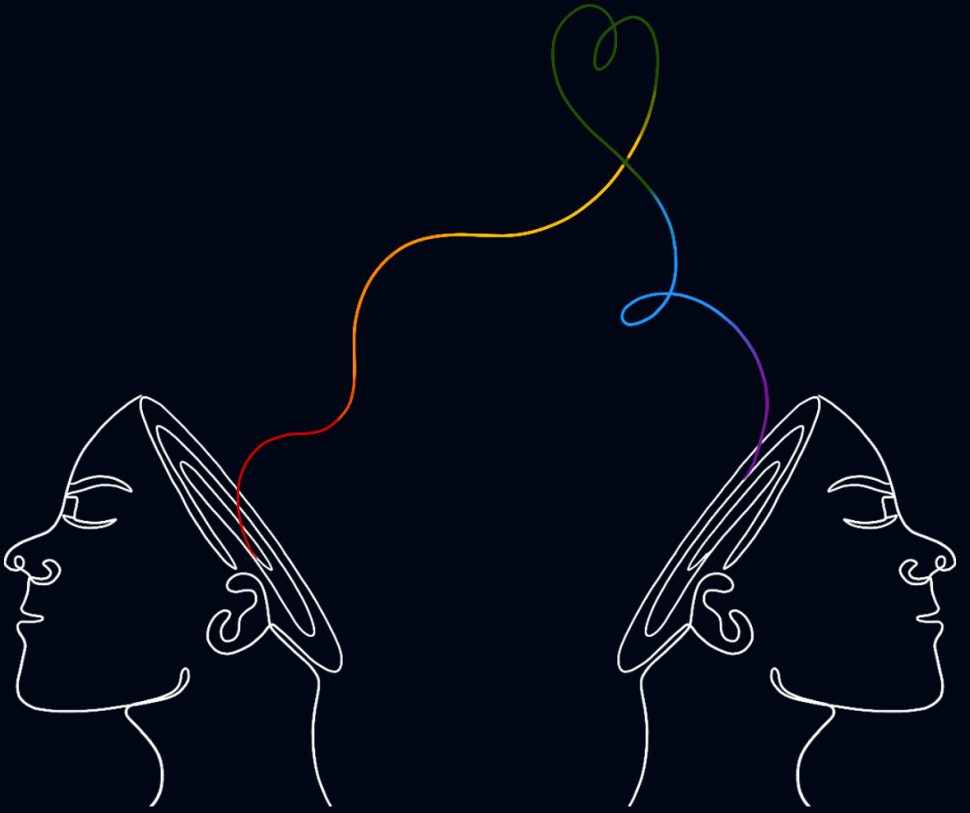
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