



What is the difference between *gender* and *sex*?

Although our society often uses the two interchangeably, “gender” and “sex” are not the same.

What is *sex*?

A person’s sex refers to one’s biology - specifically, one’s chromosomes, external genitalia, secondary sexual characteristics (development of breasts, pubic hair, etc.), and internal reproductive system. Sex is a term used historically and within the medical field to identify genetic/hormonal and physical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female, male, or intersex (See GenEq’s *Intersex Info Sheet*). Sex is a legal assignment at birth. How sex is determined is socially constructed and historically and culturally variable.

What is *gender*?

Gender is a set of socially constructed, assigned behaviors and identity patterns which are often perceived to be intertwined with and/or equivalent to one’s sexual biology. In fact, gender is constructed and fluid, having multiple meanings across cultures, geographies, communities, and individuals. Although society promotes the dualistic concept that people are either a woman or a man, there are more than two genders (See GenEq’s *Transgender Info Sheet*).

Gender can be understood as having several components, including “Assigned Gender,” “Gender Expression,” “Gender Identity,” and “Gender Role.”

What is assigned gender?

Assigned gender is the declaration at birth that a person is a certain gender based upon what that person’s sexual biology appears to be. One is then expected to grow up and exist within a certain set of gender roles “appropriate” to one’s assigned gender. An example is a physician declaring “it’s a girl!” after the birth of a baby.

What is gender expression or gender presentation?

Gender expression, also called gender presentation, is the conscious or unconscious choices a person makes to match what society has determined to be “feminine” or “masculine.” Our society traditionally recognizes only feminine and masculine gender expressions. Actually, the wide range of gender expressions include combinations of masculine and/or feminine qualities, as well as androgynous (neither masculine nor feminine) qualities.

What is gender identity?

Gender identity is one’s sense of one’s own gender. It is the felt sense that one is a man, woman, both, neither, two-spirit, multi-gender, bi-gender or another configuration of gender (See GenEq’s *Transgender Info Sheet*).

What is gender role?

Gender role is the social expectation of how an individual should act, think, and feel based upon one's assigned gender. A gender role is a social prescription that an individual must be defined as a man or a woman. Gender role includes expectations about behavior characterized as feminine or masculine according to cultural standards of a particular group.

What is gender oppression?

Gender oppression is verbal, physical, legal, emotional, and sexual violence and legal discrimination against people who do not conform to socially acceptable gender roles. Gender oppression oppresses all people, regardless of whether or not they are gender-conforming, because the threat of it intimidates everyone into maintaining a gender binary system and prevents people from exploring other forms of gender expression and identification.

What is Gender Identity Dysphoria (GID)?

GID is a term in the American Psychiatric Association's DSM IV and is used to describe the condition of discomfort when one's sex is incongruent with one's gender. GID is a clinical psychological diagnosis, and a term that many in transgender communities are offended by. However, accepting this medical label is often required in order to receive medical services such as hormones and surgery.

What are gender stereotypes?

Gender stereotypes are assumptions made about gender. Gender stereotypes are limiting - often people who do not relate to traditional categories such as woman or man are left without language to describe themselves, or are forced to identify with one or the other in an "either/or" sense.

Where can I find more information on gender and sex?

Gender Equity Resource Center

<http://geneq.berkeley.edu>
202 Cesar Chavez

Gender Public Advocacy Coalition (GenderPAC)

A national organization working to end gender discrimination through lobbying and education.

www.gpac.org

Gender Talk

www.gendertalk.com

Gender Education and Advocacy

www.gender.org

My Gender Workbook

By Kate Bornstein

Gender Trouble

By Judith Butler

Trans Liberation: Beyond Pink or Blue

By Leslie Feinberg

Sexing the Body

By Anne Fausto-Sterling