



Beyond the Check-Boxes: Exploring Genderqueer Identity

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| <p>My rules for using labels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rule 1: labels work best when we determine them for ourselves • rule 2: labels are only good as long as they work for you • rule 3: labels can be used alone or in combination; combinations add complexity and depth | <p>Some labels I use in self-identification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genderqueer describes my gender identity • Butch describes my appearance • Queer describes my sexuality, not limited by gender |
| <p><i>Remember:</i> different people interpret different labels differently: to communicate better, go beyond the shorthand</p> | <p><i>Remember:</i> labels are words, words are approximations we use to communicate complex concepts, they are short-hand and don't tell the whole story</p> |

Why use Labels? In some very basic ways, we use labels to help us identify who is a friend/enemy, who might be attracted to us and who we might be attracted to. We also seek out people we think are like us, to form alliances and find common-ground, people who will support and understand us. Even though words are just approximations, we rely on words to communicate with others. For many of us, words also form the backbone of our thought processes, our inner dialogue, as we seek to explore and define ourselves. Unfortunately, labels can also be used against us, to limit us, box us in and as the basis for discrimination and bigotry.

Goals for the session: Each participant will leave with a better understanding of the terms used to describe gender identities which are outside of, between, or some combination of the genders.

Participants will have the opportunity to share their stories of gender discovery, and hear the stories of others, with the ultimate goal of equipping participants with the vocabulary to describe themselves and the confidence to use it. This, in turn, will support increased confidence in each individual with regard to their gender identity.

Some Gender Related Vocabulary

This is a starting point and not an exhaustive list by any means

Genderqueer (GQ): a catch-all term for gender identities other than man and woman (also intergender). People who identify as genderqueer may think of themselves as being both man and woman, as being neither man nor woman, or as falling completely outside the gender binary. They may express a combination of masculinity and femininity, one or the other, or neither. Androgynous is also used commonly to describe this same category. Since there is still relatively little agreed upon terminology, the distinction between the two categories are difficult to pull apart. Genderqueers may have any sexuality/sexual identity, any physical sex, and may or may not identify as transgender.

Some genderqueer people see their identity as one of many possible genders other than man or woman, while others see "genderqueer" as an umbrella term that encompasses all of those possible genders. Still others see "genderqueer" as a third gender to complement the traditional two, while others identify as genderless or agender. Genderqueer people, by definition, are united by their rejection of the notion that there are only two genders. The term "genderqueer" can also be used as an adjective to refer to any people who transgress gender, regardless of their self-defined gender identity.

Gender fluid: a gender identity best described as a dynamic mix of male and female. A person who is Gender Fluid may feel like a mix of the two traditional genders, but may feel more male some days, and more female other days. Being Gender Fluid has nothing to do with which set of genitalia one has, nor their sexual orientation.

Gender variance, gender non-conformity: behavior or gender expression that does not conform to dominant gender norms. People who exhibit gender variance may be called "gender variant", "gender non-conforming", or "gender atypical".

Bi-Gender: describes a tendency to move between feminine and masculine gender-typed behavior depending on context, expressing a distinctly "en femme" persona and a distinctly "en homme" persona, feminine and masculine respectively. While an androgynous person retains the same gender-typed behavior across situations, the bi-gendered person consciously or unconsciously changes their gender-role behavior from primarily masculine to primarily feminine, or vice versa.

Two-Spirit: an English term that emerged in 1990, out of the third annual inter-tribal Native American/First Nations gay and lesbian American conference, in Winnipeg, to describe Indigenous North Americans who fulfill one of many mixed gender roles found traditionally among many Native Americans and Canadian First Nations indigenous groups. The mixed gender roles encompassed by the term historically included wearing the clothing and performing the work associated with both men and women.

Third Gender: Third gender or third sex refer to a gender category of people who are considered neither completely male, nor completely female. It is a gender identity separate from 'men' and 'women,' of people considered to be the intermediate sex; in-betweens (like the androgynes) or neutrals (like the agendered).

Androgynous: An androgynous in terms of gender identity, is a person who does not fit cleanly into the typical masculine and feminine gender roles of their society. They may also use the term *ambigender* to describe themselves. Many androgynes identify as being mentally "between" woman and man, or as entirely genderless. They may identify as *non-gendered*, *genderneutral*, *agendered*, *between genders*, *intergendered*, *bi-gendered*, *pangender* or *gender fluid*. *Androgynous* was once used as a synonym for hermaphrodite, although the term intersex is now widely used.

Transmasculine: any person who was assigned female at birth but feels this is an incomplete or incorrect description of their gender.

Transgender: Transgender is an adjective, not a noun. Someone can be a transgender person, but no

one is “a transgender.” While some people use the term “transgendered,” others may find the term offensive. There are many variations on this particular term, such as:

1. Refers to a person whose gender identity and physical body (sex) are not in alignment or do not agree, either all or part of the time.
2. Refers to a person who transgresses the gender norms of Western culture’s binary gender system (two-gendered system), either all or part of the time and either intentionally or unintentionally. While everyone transgresses gender norms at some time or other, this definition generally encompasses those people who are viewed negatively or who are discriminated against because of their gender identity or gender presentation.
3. Encompasses both definitions above and also includes transsexual people, or those who have made changes to their physical body to bring the body into alignment with the gender identity.

Transsexual: generally used as an adjective (transsexual person), although some people use it as a noun (a transsexual). Definitions of this term also vary. Here are some:

1. Refers to a person who has made changes to the body through hormones and/or surgery to bring the body into alignment with the gender identity, or a person who lives full-time in the gender that matches his or her gender identity without hormones and/or surgery.
2. Refers to a person who is born with a medical condition that causes incongruity between the gender identity and the physical body. Using this definition, a person is born transsexual. In either of the two definitions above, there are some people who consider themselves to be transsexual even after bringing the body into alignment with the gender identity through hormones and/or surgery (transition). There are other people who do not consider themselves to be transsexual after transition, but are men or women after the corrections are made.

It should be noted that there are some people who consider themselves to be both transgender and transsexual, and there are some who separate these two concepts completely and do not see them as related.

Sex: refers to a person’s physical body, such as genitalia and secondary sex characteristics, and physical makeup, such as chromosomes. Because a person’s body is *usually* consistent with a person’s gender identity and chromosomal makeup, some people say that a person is “born male” or “born female”. Because a person’s body is *not always* consistent with a person’s gender identity, and because there can be variations in genitalia and chromosomal makeup, some people say that a person is “assigned male at birth” or “assigned female at birth.” This is accurate, because sometimes that assignation is incorrect.

Gender: refers to various aspects of a person and contains both biological and social components. While some people consider gender to be strictly a social construct, others maintain that there is a biological component, because if there were not, all people could be socialized into or “taught” the gender that matches the physical body. Gender involves identity, or how a person sees him- or herself; expression or presentation, which includes behaviors, mannerisms, appearance, clothing, and outward presentation; and expectations, which includes gender roles designated by a person’s culture.

A Few Resources:

- **List of blogs by Butch, Genderqueer and Trans-Masculine authors on Butchtastic:** http://www.butchtastic.net/?page_id=3671
- **Wikipedia:** informative and fairly non-judgmental articles on a wide variety of gender and identity topics: <http://en.wikipedia.org>. Source of some of the definitions above.
- **Transifesto,** Trans-lations page (<http://tranifesto.com/trans-lations/>): Matt Kailey’s list of terms used often on his blog, relating to sex and gender. Source of some of the definitions above.

- **Polygender.co.uk** (<http://www.polygender.co.uk/index.htm>): resource pages with information on genderqueer and transsexual related topics.
- **Gender Queer**. *Voices From Beyond the Sexual Binary*, Joan Nestle, Clare Howell, Riki Wilchins (2002) Alyson Books, New York.
- **Gender Outlaw**: *On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us* 1994, Kate Bornstein
- **My Gender Workbook**: *How to Become a Real Man, a Real Woman, the Real You, or Something Else Entirely* 1997, Kate Bornstein
- **Gender Outlaws**: *The Next Generation*, 2010, Edited by [Kate Bornstein](#) and [S. Bear Bergman](#)

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Kyle Jones is a parent, software developer and fiction writer. Transmasculine and genderqueer, Kyle embodies male and female identities. Living in their hometown of Olympia, Washington, Kyle looks for opportunities to open minds and start conversations on gender, identity and sexuality. They blog about their life, loves and kinks at [Butchtastic.net](#), offering up hot erotica and posts about gender, D/s, polyamorous relationships and parenting. Jones is a contributor on [ButchLab.com](#) and was a presenter and organizer at Butch Voices Portland in 2010, and will be a presenter and spoken word performer at the national Butch Voices conference in 2011. Their short story, *Asphalt*, was published in the Seattle Erotic Art Festival Anthology earlier this year. Another short erotic story, *Other Duties*, was included in *Salacious* magazine edition 2.