

PRESENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY AT HOME AND ABROAD: A CRASH COURSE IN "DOING" GENDER

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THE BASICS OF GENDER TERMINOLOGY

Gender identity: the gender you align with or label yourself as

Gender presentation: physical choices to assert your gender identity (like clothes, hair, or makeup)

Gender performance: social choices to assert your gender identity (like your pronouns, the name you go by, or the honorifics you use)

Transition: the term used for moving towards a new gender identity, presentation, or performance. Transition does **not** only have to mean surgical or medical transition--it signifies any change in gender.

Cisgender: having a gender that aligns with your sex assigned at birth

Transgender: having a gender that differs from your sex assigned at birth

Non-binary: having a gender that exists outside the structures of “man” and “woman”

Two-Spirit: an indigenous Native American gender identity that blends both the masculine and feminine, and should not be appropriated by non-Native people. Other indigenous genders exist specific to different nations, but they are not as often appropriated as this term.

INTERSECTIONS OF IDENTITY IN RELATION TO GENDER

Gender provides individuals the capacity to align themselves in a way that makes them feel seen, represented, and valid. Gender relates to other intersections of identity in regards to how we present and perform, and whether spaces accommodate that practice. For example, some hindrances based on other intersections of identity include:

- **Sexuality:** For some people, their gender is tied directly to other aspects of their queer identity and shape the way they present themselves--sometimes individuals will opt to align with a particular sexuality over their gender identity to protect themselves.
- **Race/ethnicity:** Often times, certain ethnic elements or cultural backgrounds will shape how one presents their gender while they are still expected to uphold Western gender or beauty ideals. Non-white people also face racial discrimination which may make them feel more unsafe to assert their true gender.
- **Class:** The ability to present or perform gender in a particular way may be out of the question for those who cannot afford it, and they may choose to present as a gender that they don't identify with simply because they cannot afford to present differently.
- **Disability:** For those with medical challenges, their idea of medical transition may not even be an option due to certain hindrances like physical reactions to hormones, the inability to take anesthesia to undergo surgery, or certain physical issues that would make healing more difficult than necessary.

THE CULTURE OF GENDER PRESENTATION AND IDENTITY

Gender plays a large role in the opportunities that we are allotted as individuals, and there are many sociocultural elements that are directly impacted by gender. Even in “inclusive” spaces, the inclusion of cisgender women is favored over transgender people.

- Issues of “passing”
- Pay gap and wage discrepancies
- Lack of opportunity and legal barriers
- Gatekeeping inclusive spaces

These examples prove that there is still work to be done in creating a truly gender-expansive culture.



DIFFERENCES OF GENDER APPLICATION AT HOME AND ABROAD

American Gender Ideals

- Highly binaristic language with rigid rules in the English language
 - The use of the singular “they” as a personal pronoun
 - Gendered language threaded through everyday conversation (“sir” or “ma’am” in formal settings)
- Binary culture that enforces cultural and social rules that do not promote gender creativity
- Poor healthcare options for those who want to transition and unequal job opportunity
- Some strides are being made in gender inclusivity but many spaces are still not accommodating of those whose gender identities, presentations, and performances exist outside the binary

Multicultural and Indigenous Gender Ideals

- Cultures may have more flexible rules about gender in their language, or may have different inclusive terms
- Indigenous cultures having gender diversity
 - Two-spirit people of Native American cultures
 - *Hijra* of India
 - *Fa’afafine* of American Samoa
 - *Bacha posh* of Afghanistan
- Gender may be intrinsically linked to important culture of the nation and may reject Western ideals, creating a clash against American perceptions of gender
- Some countries, though, are unfortunately more strict in their rules around binary gender and may treat gender minorities in a harmful way, like sterilization or institutionalization

CONFRONTING AND DISMANTLING GENDER BIASES



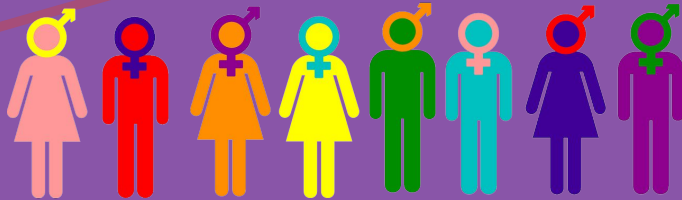
**CAREERS
HAVE NO
GENDER.**



HOW CAN WE CREATE A MORE WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT FOR GENDER MINORITIES?

In your community, you can:

- Organize fundraisers to support trans people in your area
- Evaluate the current policies in place where you live to see if they are trans-inclusive
- Create formal calls-to-action at your workplace or school to assure that policies better accommodates gender minorities
- Attend protests, conferences, and other engaging events that elevate the voices of trans people



As an individual, you can:

- Include your pronouns in your email signature and introduce yourself with your pronouns in professional settings
- Advocate for the rights of trans people on social media, at school, or at work
- Donate to charities that work to support gender minorities
- Think critically about your own gender bias and how to dismantle your own preconceived ideas about gender
- Consume media by trans people and gender minorities
- Choose businesses owned by trans people or allies when shopping or requesting services
- Talk with people in your life about gender identity, presentation, and performance and the importance of knowing the difference