

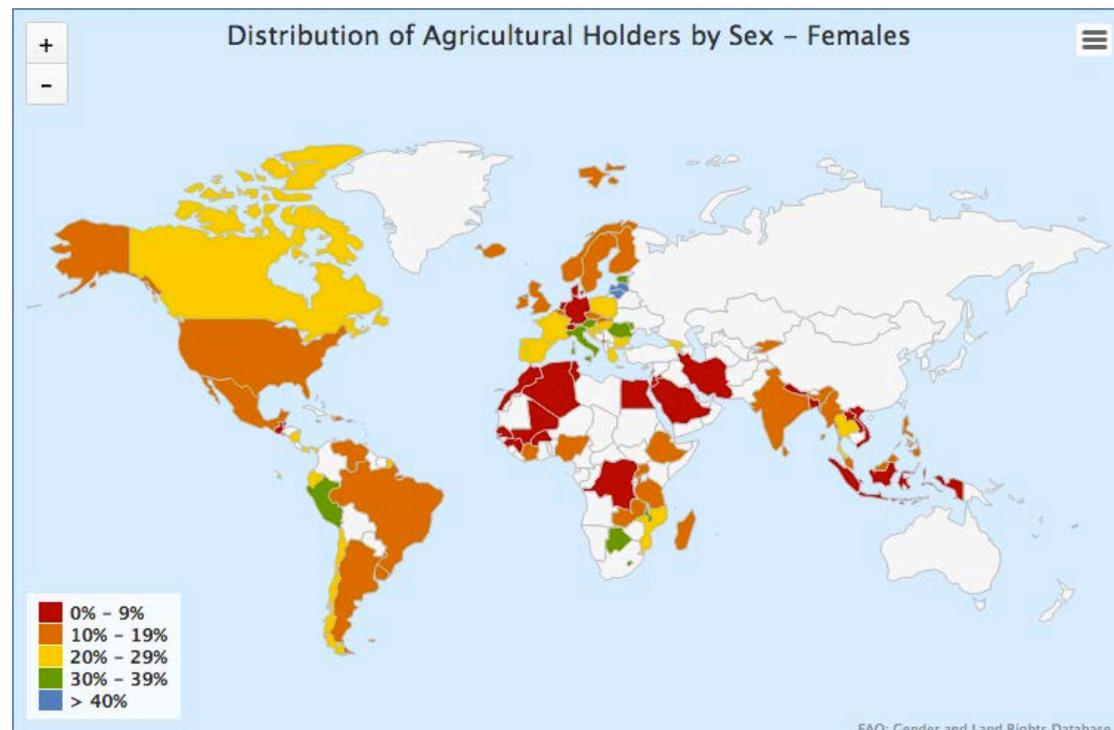
Gender, Sexuality & Race



Jaime Black (Métis), 2014-,
The Red Dress Project, commemorating
missing and murdered indigenous women

in Geography

Gender and Geography



“There is a strong correlation in many societies between the decision-making powers that a person enjoys and the quantity and quality of land rights held by that person.”

(Image and quote from “Gender and Access To Land”, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), 2002, p. 3)

Geography and gender are closely intertwined on both the material and representational level. Whether we are talking city planning, water pollution or imagined ‘virgin’ landscapes, gendered geographies are noticeable. In her book *Space, Place and Gender*, the British geographer Doreen Massey takes this further by proposing that ‘geography matters to the construction of gender, and the fact of geographical variation in gender relations, for instance, is a significant element in the production and reproduction of both imaginative geographies and uneven development’ (1994, p. 2).

An example of how gender and geography relations work in both directions is land rights. Land reforms - such as changes in land inheritance, access, management or use - often entail changes in what kind of gender and sexual relations are being sanctioned. Likewise, changes in gender and sexual relations can lead to changes in land and property law. This is the case across the so-called ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ world. Changes include the way a society values and treats widows, virgins or unmarried women; who gets selected as partner(s) to gain/reduce resources or property; alternative gender performances (such as the ‘sworn virgins’ in Eastern Europe), the status of ‘illegitimate’ children; what gender can marry how many people (e.g. polygamy vs monogamy, polyandry vs polygyny) and the persecution of homosexuals. Immigration and citizenship law is also often strongly gendered for reasons of land/property control.

Europe – a few hundred years of land and cis-gendered relations

During the late Middle Ages, the plague killed off almost two thirds of the population of Europe. Due to the resulting labour shortage, people from the 'lower classes', including women, gained more bargaining power. Women also benefitted from increasing urbanization, which allowed them greater independence. Authors such as Silvia Federici, Carolyn Merchant and David Graeber argue that elites (e.g. nobility, church) saw this a threat and began a 'war' on lower class power and women's emancipation. Laws, supported by defamatory campaigns, were gradually put in place to erode women's growing empowerment - and solidarity between men, women and people from different ethnicities - so that populations could more easily be exploited for labour. Laws prevented women (and often non 'white' people) from owning property, making legal contracts, working in higher professions (including health) and living independently. Women thus became equated with lower status and/or supernatural status ('closer to nature') and had to endure persecution, for instance, through witch trials (this was also the case in the colonies).

Image: Haki, 'Sworn Virgin', Albania. Photographed by Jill Peters. Slate Magazine, 2012



Women were able to gradually challenge this status, although this was not a linear process. Doreen Massey argues that female mobility – leaving the home or land – helped disturb entrenched gender relations. This included building alternative identities and gender relations. Differences in women's economic power and social status determined how publicly alternative gender identities could be performed. Examples of alternative gender performances include 'radical femininity' (positively reappropriating 'female' characteristics); experimenting with male, female or non-European elements; exploring a multiplicity of gender identities (e.g. 'female masculinity') or adopting a non-binary identity (as a challenge to the naturalised gender binary). This experimentation was not just taking place in Europe or among White people, and there was also recognition for other genders and gender roles in many non-European societies (see p. 5).

Image: "Queer women of the Harlem Renaissance": Ada 'Bricktop' Smith, Gladys Bentley, Valaida Snow, Bessie Smith

In some cases, women and gender-queer persons were supported by allies. The geographer Elisée Reclus (1930-1905) was one such ally who was a supporter of early anarcho-feminism, which also included an opposition to marriage as part of women's empowerment.



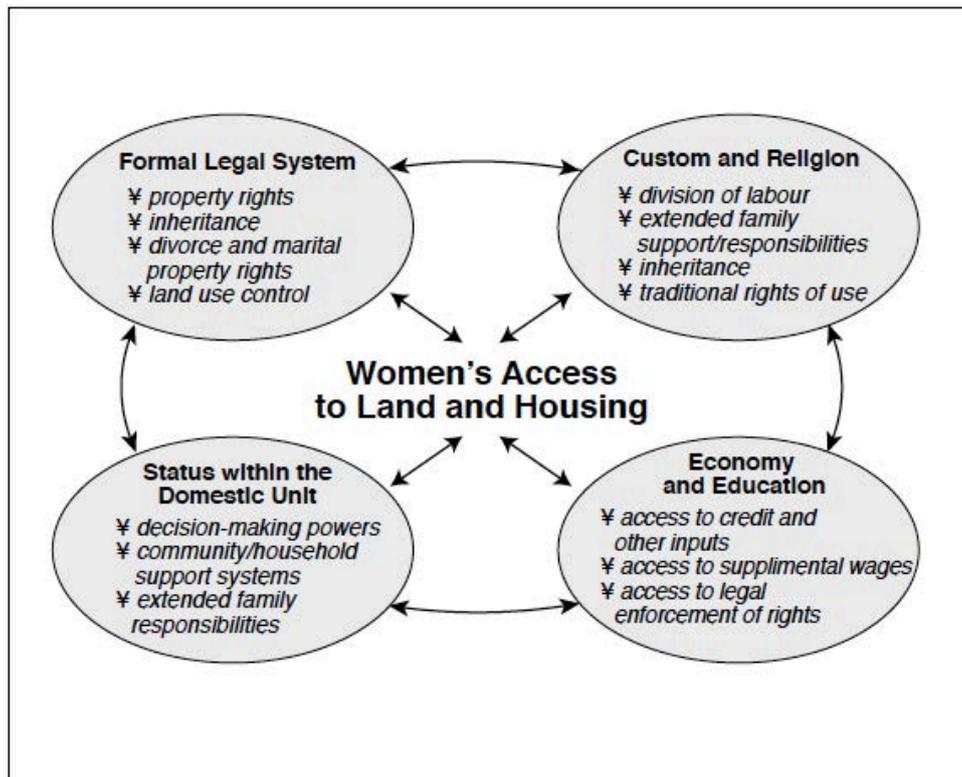
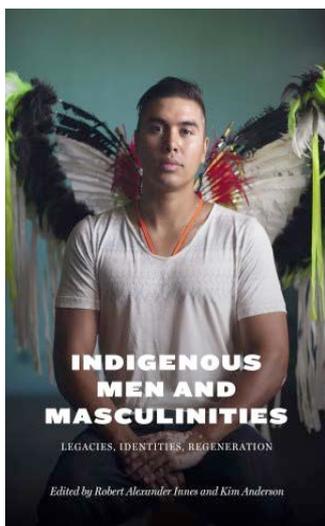


Image: Diagram from the United Nations Report (Food and Agriculture Organisation), "Gender and Access To Land", 2002, p.10

This diagram should technically also include other gender roles to be geographically accurate for a global organisation.

Gender and colonialism



In the West, biological explanations appear to be especially privileged over other ways of explaining difference of gender, race or class.'... 'Consequently, those in power find it imperative to establish their superior biology as a way of affirming their privilege and dominance over 'Others' (Oyèrónkè Oyèwùmí, The Invention of Women, 1997, p. 1).

For most geographers, colonialism delivers key examples of gendered geographies, especially how the imperialist 'male gaze' was employed to 'feminise' indigenous landscapes and celebrated 'risky' male endeavour in 'savage' lands. However, gender issues go deeper than that. Under colonialism, European ideas about gender and race were imposed on colonized societies. Gender and race were key categories that served in the devaluation of land claims of indigenous populations. Europeans often would not accept land claims by women or non-white people. During that time, many matriarchal indigenous populations changed to patriarchal social structures in order to maintain at least some of their lands (e.g. Audra Simpson, 2014).

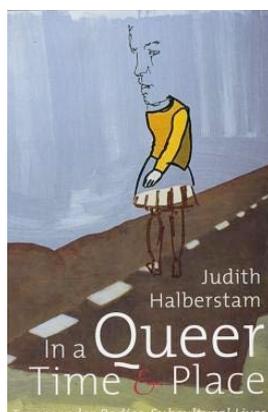
Further, colonial authorities outlawed gender identities and sexual practice that did not conform to the ideals of European heteropatriarchy. This also served to alter indigenous cosmologies and self-perceptions. Academics call this the 'coloniality of gender'. If you come across books, articles or tweets on 'Decolonising Gender' or 'Decolonising Sexualities' - this is what it refers to. Decolonial activists also point to the importance of language in expressing gender concepts and oppression – some cultures/ languages operate with very different understandings of gender, and may not use gender as an important social organizing category (e.g. age may be more important, as pointed out by Oyèwùmí, 1997).



Some of you may have clashed with gender and sexuality policies during processes such as migration and obtaining citizenship. As the International Organisation for Migration acknowledges: "It is recognized that a person's sex, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation shape every stage of the migration experience" (2018). Migration laws often very gendered around work, reproduction and sexual behavior. Each country or culture polices the sexual relationships of different genders differently. Often these laws are extremely racialized and also tied to past racial and

geopolitical conflicts (e.g. preventing the acknowledgments of children fathered by male enemy/racialised soldiers). This determines if you can get citizenship of your mother or father, whether they need to be married or unmarried, or whether they need to be from a particular geographical region. Such regulations also affect egg and sperm donation. As an example, my British neighbour who grew up in Germany and has an Austrian mother cannot get citizenship in Austria, because her mother is married to her English father. If they had been unmarried, she would have been able to obtain citizenship as a 'half orphan'. As you may have heard during the Brexit, Windrush and asylum debates, these issues can affect anyone, but particularly affect people from the 'Global South'.

What is feminist/queer theory?



The question should really be: what does it do? People often associate feminist and queer theory with gender, sexuality, reproduction, equal rights etc. Yet another way of looking at these theories is to think of them as being concerned more generally with norms and power (this lecture could equally have been called 'Gender and Power'). In short, these theories look at how people participate in processes of oppression and exclusion, but also how norms can change. In fact, both understandings have an impact on geography and, with that, on how space is produced. Geographers had to think about the relationship between sex and gender *especially* because it is often mapped onto the nature-culture binary (is sex all natural and gender all cultural, or is this not so simple?). Another reason is the gendered public-private dimension that has been examined by geographers:

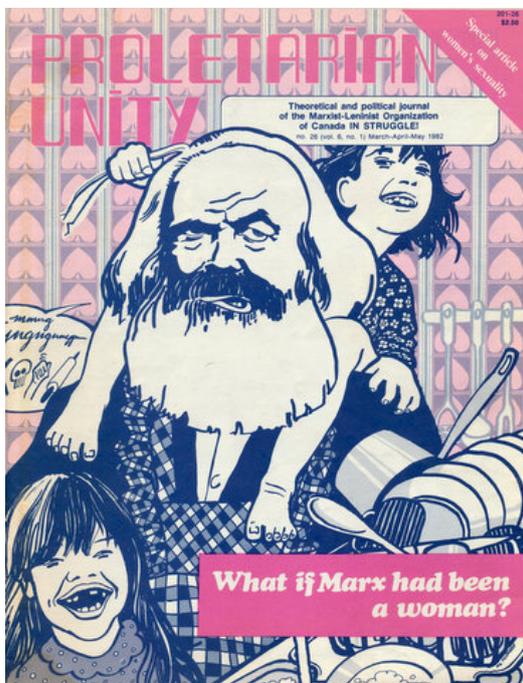
women have for a long time been relegated to the private sphere, as only men could properly inhabit the public sphere.



The public-private concern is mirrored in the feminist slogan 'the personal is political'. Think of the ironically named pubs ('public houses') as an example: they were more or less the exclusive territory of White cis-men until around the 1970s (check out the BBC Wales programme on this). Today, cis-women, trans and gender non-conforming people (including 'intersex' people) are still struggling for their acceptance in public spaces and public offices. The situation is worse for people who are considered to be 'minorities' or 'marginal' in terms of ethnicity, religion, disability or class. The

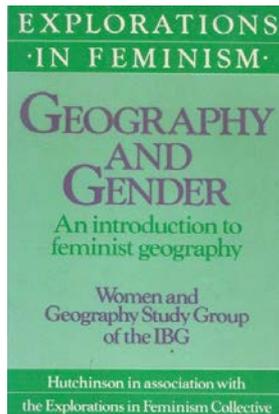
interlocking effects of marginalisation are called 'intersectionality' (after the legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, *pictured left*).

Finally, geographers had to think about their bodies and identities because of their effects of gender (and racial) dynamics on fieldwork, analysis, outputs etc - and also because women and gender variant people were entering the discipline. Still today, gender performance remains an issue in geography, whether it is hiring committees being concerned about student reception of a gender non-conforming staff member, female academics receiving lower ratings or pay, or fieldwork taking place in very heteronormative contexts (similar problems persist with racialised, disabled, working class geographers).



These issues have led to a variety of different theoretical - and practical! - trajectories in geography. On the theoretical side, a concern for 'gender' can technically be added to almost any topic or theoretical direction, whether it is post-colonialism or Marxism. You will have learned about some of this work in geography on gender or sexuality in other modules. The trouble is that different feminist Marxists, for instance, can have very different ideas about gender. Some will see male and female as natural categories that don't need further questioning (Marx has been accused of this himself), or, conversely, they may see gender as being the outcome of various political, economic, resistance processes. This can have very

different impacts on a geographical analysis. So, in order to make sense of where a person is coming from, it helps to look at key debates in feminist and queer theory that may help you think about these impacts.



The most significant debate perhaps (at least for geographers, as it strongly relates to the nature-culture debate) is that between theorists who essentially defend the gender binary and argue for a feminism that privileges the physical and mental experiences of cis-women, and theorists who are much less hung up on genitals and other supposedly essential characteristics – for them, gender is performed in accordance with (or against) social gender norms. Appropriately, academics call these positions ‘essentialist’ and ‘performative’. At the extreme ends, essentialists are frequently accused of continuing environmental determinism (birth sex determines gender), whereas adherents of performativity are criticised for ignoring the material dimensions (and limitations) of gender and gender oppression.

In between, there are a variety of ideas about gender. Take, for example, the debate around the renaming of the Institute of British Geographers’ *Women and Geography Study Group* (WGSG). When the new title of *Gender and Feminist Geographies Research Group* was proposed, opinions on the change were invited. While most geographers appreciated the shift from ‘women’ to ‘gender and feminism’, as it seemed to do away with the essentialism of ‘woman’, some also argued that the all-inclusive (and also inherently unstable) category of gender might not be useful in the on-going fight for gender equality (see Hopkins and Jackson, 2013).

This argument also hints at the connection between feminist theory and activism: as a researcher, you have to make a decision about how you tackle whatever problem you have diagnosed. For example, is sexism something that needs to be challenged at the individual level (e.g. “women, don’t dress provocatively!”) or something that needs to be implemented at a structural level (e.g. legal introduction of quota)? These two criteria - 1) how do I view gender across the essentialist-performative boundary and 2) at what level do I want to see intervention? – provide a useful starting point for applying feminist theory within geography (there will be a related exercise at the end of the zine). They also provide a good starting point for research practice (what can I do? what does my institution need to do?) and life outside the university.



A similar case of theory-practice relation can be made for geographical applications of ‘queer theory’, which looks at normativity. As a theoretical direction, it literally started off as a joke (by Italian theorist Teresa de Lauretis, *pictured left*) and was then developed as a provocation to normative positions within gender and sexualities discourse (e.g. by Judith Butler in her 1990 book ‘Gender Trouble’). As a result, it draws on both senses of the term ‘queer’: 1) ‘non-normative’ sexualities and desires, and 2) challenge to social norms in general. Some academics also call ‘queer theory’ postfeminism, as it questions the category of ‘woman’. Queer theory usually argues that both sex and gender are socially constructed and can therefore be challenged.

The Dictionary of Human Geography offers the following helpful definition: “Queer theorists demand that geographers recognize – and attend to – their own heteronormativity, but it also introduces the problematic of homonormativity” (Brown, 2009: 613). At the same time, some geographers have accused queer theorists of having a shockingly normative geographical imagination due to their suspicion of empirics, materiality etc. This argument highlights two things really well: 1) how our received and rather problematic ideas about nature and culture continue to trip us up when we least expect it, and 2) how we all participate in the reproduction of norms and exclusions from norm, be they gender related or not (this is also the reason for the constantly changing vocabulary in relation to gender and sexuality). However, queer theory is also a somewhat hopeful project that points out that we can help create new norms (for better or worse).

How has feminist and queer theory been taken up in critical race studies?



Image from Vanessa Agard-Jones' presentation on Chlordécone (2015)

Actually in a variety of ways. One interesting example comes from the anthropologist Vanessa Agard-Jones who works on the intersection of environmental and gender studies. Her work focuses on challenging assumptions around nature, gender and sexuality. In her project on the pesticide Chlordécone, she does exactly that. Using the example of Martinican carnival, she shows how two issues that trouble people on the island are conflated into a problematic performance. These issues are the legacies of environmental racism by the French government, which forced its 'DOMS' (overseas territories) to use agricultural toxins 20 years after they were

banned in mainland France; and the legalization of gay marriage and adoption, famously defended by French Guyanese politician Christiane Taubira.

Since the pesticide was associated not just with causing cancer, but also with mimicking estrogen, public discourse has blamed it for male feminization, lesbianism and sterility. While this could be seen as unfounded hysteria, there is also an echo of the practice of mass sterilization and medical experimentation on racialised populations under colonialism and segregation. Racialised bodies keep on being subject of colonial violence, even as colonialism has supposedly ended. However, Agard-Jones refuses to just read these homophobic imaginaries negatively, and points to an increasing awareness of bodies 'porosities' to their environment: as humans, we are also made up of all sorts of other materials and organisms, including toxins ('body burdens'), but not just of toxins. You can watch her talk about her project here (she is a great speaker):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvqVkr4luqs&t=704s>



Image: Vida TV show

This is but one example. Geographers have worked on topics such as Black feminism (Katherine McKittrick, Gil Valentine), race and sexual identities (e.g. the work of Jason Lim, Alexandra Fanghanel, Jin Haritaworn), gender and migration (Parvati Raghuram, Margaret Byron, and lots of other geographers), queer/feminist urban studies (Anindita Datta, Dhiren Borisa), race and gay/straight sex tourism (e.g. Patricia Noxolo, Jacqueline Sanchez Taylor), Black masculinity (e.g. Peter Jackson), geopolitics and sexualities (e.g. Gavin Brown, Jasbir Puar), queer exploration narratives (e.g. Patricia Noxolo on Jules Verne), LGBTIQ asylum seekers, and many other areas.



Image: queer theorist Jasbir Puar who is known for her work on 'homonationalism'

You may also want to check out some first hand, fictionalized or popular accounts by queer and feminist writers of colour from around the world, such as the *Queer African Reader* by Sokari Ekine and Hakima Abbas (2013), *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* by Gloria Anzaldúa (2012), *Funny Boy* by Shyam Selvadurai (1994), *Feminism is for Everybody* by bell hooks (2000), *When Chickenheads come to roost* by Joan

Morgan (1999), *Vida* (TV series on gentrification with focus on LatinX gender/sexuality) or the poems of Audre Lorde and Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan. Geography journals to check out include: *Space, Place and Gender*; *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*; *ACME*; *Race, Gender & Class*; *GLQ*; *Environment and Planning D: Society & Space*; *Antipode*.

How on earth am I supposed to handle this in my studies/assignments?

- Be aware that this is an debate that geographers are having and that it also shapes our practices and working conditions
- Don't worry about understanding all of feminist and queer theory – many geographers are struggling to keep up
- Do look where an author is coming from: how do they understand gender and norms? How are both produced?
- Try to enjoy experimentation!

Here are some helpful questions for determining an author's position: How much do they treat gender as essentialist (fixed, natural) or performative (flexible, socially constructed)? How much do they treat gender oppression as individual ('women need to change') or systematic ('the system needs to change')?

A note on the word 'they': this is not only used for inclusivity reasons, but it is also the official pronoun to use in academic work whenever you don't know the pronoun of an author – often you don't know if an author is male, female, non-binary, or if a piece has multiple authorship, for example in blind peer review (academic articles, like your exam papers and coursework, are assessed after anonymization).

Four main points to remember:

- Space is gendered and racialised, even when it does not seem to contain people
- Feminist and queer theory still struggle with the essentialism inherited from environmental determinism and the nature-culture binary
- Issues of gender and sexuality are frequently portrayed as White, but are actually global issue with global authorship – colonialism and racialisation plays a huge role in current inequalities and misconceptions.
- We all participate in (re)producing norms (and theory!), but we can also participate in changing them

Exercise 1

How do the authors of these quotes view gender and who is responsible for gender oppression? How are some of these statements racialised? How would they play out in a different geographical context/region?

- "Women are afraid to walk through the city at night."
- "Public space is subject to gender policing."
- "Women and gay men need to dress less conspicuously."
- "Cities need to adapt gender mainstreaming."
- "Homeless people and immigrants are making women uncomfortable."
- "Economic inequality in cities affects women's safety."
- "Young men who grew up with single mothers are causing trouble in inner cities"



Exercise 2

Discuss, and, if possible, take at the National Geographic Gender Revolution magazine and its teaching supplement.

“The first step in understanding gender is to assess your current understanding of the term. What have you learned from your experiences, from the people you have interacted with, from what you have read, from the culture that surrounds and influences you?”

From: National Geographic “Gender Revolution” (2017) teaching supplement

Exercise 3

Follow a twitter/instagram hashtag around a gender, sexuality and race based controversy/campaign (note: only work with what you are comfortable with – online spaces can be extremely triggering):

e.g. blackfeminism, muslimfeminism, transrightsarehumanrights, mensrights, nbit (nonbinary in tech), WomenInSTEM/BlackinSTEM, MMIW, thisiswhata scientistlookslike, redefinemasculinity, GamerGate, metoo/ricebunny, wontbeerausd, gendermainstreaming, ImWithHer, whydidntireport, mindthepaygap

What are the ideas behind the hashtag? What are people arguing? How is gender being discussed and performed? How are norms being enforced? How are spaces being policed or opened up? How are people making intersectional arguments?

Exercise 4

Think about ways in which this zine can be improved in terms of representation or terminology. Most of your lecturer are a different generation from you, and ideas and terminology are constantly changing. Keep your teachers on their toes!

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Evolving glossary

As hopefully evident from the above discussion, the definitions are not fixed and subject to contestation, change and individual constructions. Please respect how people identify - check with the person to whom you are referring where possible, especially about pronouns (e.g. they, she, he).

Agender – ‘no gender’

Cisgender – gender identity matches birth sex (and maps onto male/female gender binary)

Drag King/Queen – person who overemphasise characteristics of male/female gender as part of a performance

Gender dysphoria – medical term for experiencing mismatch between birth sex and gender identity

Gender nonconforming – not matching male or female gender expectations

Genderfluid – identifying as not having a fixed gender

Genderqueer – not supporting existing gender distinctions and expectations

Heteroflexible – people who are mostly heterosexual, but occasionally have homosexual experiences or relationships. Sometimes used as a joke or slur by members of the queer community.

Homonationalism – alignment of LGBTIQ+ rights and nationalist goals

Intersectionality – interlocking effects of marginalisation (people affected by combinations of e.g. racism, sexism, ableism, classism, homophobia etc)

Intersex – People born with a combination of female and male sex characteristics

LGBTIQ+ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Questioning and related identities

Nonbinary – an identity outside/in contestation of the restrictions of the female/male gender binary

Pinkwashing – presenting something as LGBTIQ+ friendly, while maintaining structural issues that perpetuate problems for this community

Queer – reclaimed homophobic slur to mean ‘non-conforming’ and/or pointing to the instability of gender and sexual norms; some LGBTIQ+ people still experience it as a slur, while others use have embraced it.

TERF – Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists argue that transwomen are not women and should be excluded from cis-women spaces and activism.

Third Gender/Third Sex – term used to denote gender identity that is neither male nor female or a particular version of masculinity or femininity. Often used in the context of non-European cultures.

Transgender – a person whose birth or assigned sex does not match gender identity. Some trans people refuse the word ‘transgender’, ‘transsexual’ and prefer other terms, including ‘gender reassigned’ or ‘gender confirmed’.

Two Spirit – term used by some Indigenous peoples (especially North American), to denote having both a masculine and feminine spirit. It can refer to spiritual, gender or sexual identity

Whitewashing – the removal of contributions (for example, historical contributions) of people designated by White people as racialised