

Why are Pronouns Important?

Transgender 101 Topic

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Introduction

- What are pronouns?
 - They are words we use to signify a person or item instead of having to name the person or item outright.
- Why do they matter?
 - We'll take a look at research.
 - How people identify and definitions of trans-related words
 - Statistics on discrimination against trans people
 - How to normalize pronouns, especially nonbinary ones.

Pronouns 101

- Everyone has pronouns. Most folks may not realize that they do, as they are so used to the pronouns used for them that it feel second-nature.
- Pronouns aren't set in stone. There are lots of different types of pronouns, and what one person may use as pronouns may be very different from what another person uses. That's okay!
- There's no set-rule that all folks of this identity must use x pronoun. Use the pronoun that is best for you.

How to use pronouns

- A pronoun can act as a subject, an object, a possessive determiner (or possessive), or reflexive.
- They are often used to replace someone's name or an item within a sentence.
- This may seem confusing, so let's tackle each type of pronoun in use within the English Language. (Other languages handle pronouns differently.)

- See also: Pronoun etiquette guide:
<https://reshapingreality.org/2018/07/30/pronoun-etiquette-guide/>

Subject and Object

- **Subject** is what controls the verb, as in the person or entity or item that does the action, and often comes at the start of a sentence.
- **Object** is the entity or person or item that is acted upon by the subject. This may come in the middle or end of a sentence.
 - For example: *They visited the Rocky Mountain National Park.*
 - “They” would be the subject of this sentence.
 - “Visited” would be the verb, and “Rocky Mountain National Park” is the object.

Possessive

- **Possessive determiner** is a word that is placed in front of a noun to attribute possession of that noun by some entity or person.
 - For example, *Her* handbag was brown. “Her” is the possessive determiner that attributes the handbag to the person with she/her pronouns.
- **Possessive** pronouns appear at the end of a sentence or after the verb that is in agreement with the subject. In this case, the pronoun is spelled different based on the verb-subject agreement.
 - For example, The brown handbag is *hers*.

Reflexive

- **Reflexive** pronouns refer to the person or entity who is the subject of the verb and is also the same person or entity who receives the action.
 - For example, *I* drove *myself* to the store. “I” is the subject that realizes the action of driving, while ‘myself,’ who receives the action, is the same person as “I.”
- Think of Reflexive as reflecting on the self.
 - For another example: Aidan drove *themself* to the store.
 - Here, Aidan is the subject, while ‘themself’ is the reflexive pronoun.

Research

- Research shows that having a non-gendered set of pronouns:
 - Gives people new, more inclusive ways of seeing the world.
 - “The work we have here suggests that it’s more likely that matters in subtle ways,” Efrén Pérez says (co-author of studies on non-binary pronouns). “You perceive not different realities, but you place more or less emphasis on different things.”
 - “New language, then, can become a useful tool for changing how people deal with each other.”
 - Is inclusive of nonbinary people.
 - Non-gendered words are also crucial to changing language to be more accepting of all genders.

What are all these words?

- Before we define nonbinary, let's talk about gender.
- What is gender?
 - Gender is defined by one's culture. There are expectations about the way a person looks (expression), their behaviors and interests (roles), and what body they may have (sex).

Gender differs across cultures. Some cultures had anywhere from two to five genders! Below is a image of just a handful of Gender-diverse cultures across the world: (screenshot of: http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/content/two-spirits_map-html/)



Transgender 101 Review

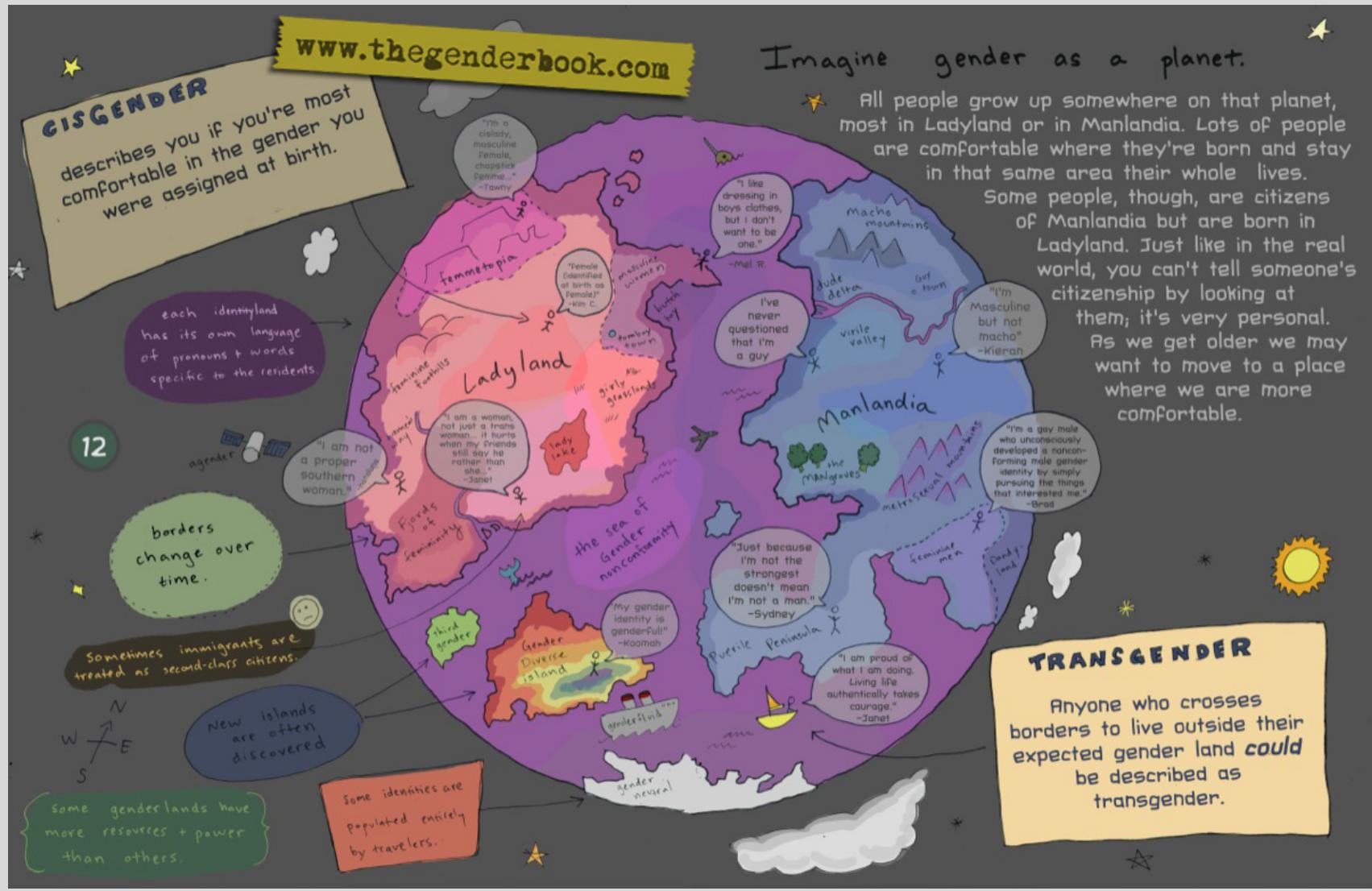
- Gender vs. Sex
 - Gender refers to one's identity and is tied up in the brain. The brain's gender will influence how one experiences the sex of one's body.
 - Sex refers to the primary and secondary sexual characteristics of one's body such as chromosomes, reproductive organs, hormone-dependent characteristics, hormones.
- Everyone is assigned a sex at birth by a doctor that examines a baby's genitals. In America it is rare for any other test to be performed to determine a person's gender.
- Intersex refers to people whose primary and/or secondary sex characteristics do not fall into society's male or female categories.
 - Up to six sex chromosome combinations exist.
 - There are multiple ways for a body to mix and match sexual characteristics!
- Evolution's Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People by Joan Roughgarden is a great primer on this!

Definitions

- **Cisgender:** Someone whose gender matches the gender they were assigned at birth. Someone who is not transgender. It is often shortened to cis, the Latin prefix meaning “on the same side of.”
 - Cisgender or AFAB/AMAB should be used instead of misleading terms like “biological,” “genetic,” “real,” or “born” when referring to people’s gender.
- **Transgender:** An umbrella term for people whose gender and/or expression does not match their birth assignment. How people identify with this term depends on the individual and their relationship with their gender.
- **Nonbinary (NB):** Nonbinary is an umbrella term for people who identify as a gender other than wo/man and/or who are not wo/men exclusively. Nonbinary people may or may not transition physically, legally, or socially. This is based on their understanding of their relationship with gender and the process of transitioning within their part of the world. Generally, nonbinary people are considered under the transgender umbrella but may or may not identify as transgender specifically. Nonbinary can also be used as an identity term by people who know they are not wo/men, but may be currently unable to find a term that fits their gender experience.
- **See Transgender Language Primer** for definitions of all the terms one may encounter when discussing transgender topics
 - (created by Greyson Simon, edited by members of community including Aidan Zingler)
- Translanguageprimer.com

Model 1: Gender Planet

(Allowed to use for educational purposes. From the Gender Book)



Model 2: Gender Galaxy**

This is a model of gender to assist in visualizing the diversity of gender identities and expression within humanity.

A galaxy is a three dimensional object in space that consists of billions of star systems, nebulae, dark matter, and other space objects, all interconnected by the force of gravity. Similarly, gender is an overarching term that consists of incredibly diverse identities that can be expressed in infinite ways.

Like a galaxy, gender is an interconnected web between the relation of people's internal gender, which is unique to them, the expression of their gender, and its relation to the socialization and expectations both within their own societies and elsewhere.



***Greyson Simon, created of trans language primer first devised this Model.*



Pronouns and Basic Etiquette

- Always ask a person's pronouns rather than assuming based on their gender presentation (as in how they look).
- How to ask:
 - "What pronouns do you use?"
 - "What pronouns should I use when talking about you? I like to make sure I ask rather than assuming based on how someone looks."
- Offer your own pronouns when you introduce yourself.
- Ask how trans people would like to be identified in specific situations.
- Do not ever deadname a trans individual, even if talking about their past before they came out. Always use their chosen name and their correct pronouns.
- He/him/his is often used for people who identify as a man.
- She/her/hers is often used for people who identify as a woman.
- See next slide for nonbinary pronouns.

Commonly used non-gendered Pronouns

(subject)	(object)	(Possessive determiner)	(possessive)	(reflexive)
e/ey	em	eir	eirs	eirself
(f)ae	(f)aer	(f)aer	(f)aers	(f)aerself
he	him	his	his	himself
hy	hym	hys	hys	hymself
kie	kir	kir	kirs	kirself
mer/ze	mer	mer	mers	merself
ne/nee	nir/ner	nir/ner	nirs/ners	nyself/nerself
one	one	one's	one's	oneself
per	per	pers	pers	perself
she	her	her	hers	herself
sie/ze	sier/hir	sier/hir	siers/hirs	sierself/hirself
they	them	their	theirs	themself
thon	thon	thons	thons	thonself
ve	ver/vir	vis	vis	verself/virself
xie	xem	xyr/xer	xyrs/xers	xemself/xerself
ze	zir/zem	zir/zes	zirs/zes	zirself/zemself

Examples of how to use non-gendered pronouns and non-gendered

- Ne drove ner car to the store to buy nerself some fruit.
- Ve danced with vis partner in the moonlight.
- Ze decided to open an etsy shop to sell the figurines ze made. Zir figurines were made of clay.
- Kir friend worked hard to remember kir pronouns when referring to kir.
- Xyr friend remembered xyr pronouns when referring to xem.
- Non-gendered words: firefighter instead of fireman; humanity instead of mankind; pilot instead of aviator/aviatrix; ‘staff all stations’ instead of ‘man all stations;’ etc...

Unconscious Bias

- Often when folks feel uncomfortable at the topic of non-gendered pronouns or trans people in general, this is unconscious bias at work.
- We were all socialized from a young age by society to view gender as a binary. By normalizing non-gendered words and pronouns, we combat this socialization and promote a healthier view of humanity (and future generations are socialized to be more accepting).
- Questions to ask oneself in order to combat unconscious bias:
 - Have you promoted a trans-made resource recently? If not, what is stopping you?
 - Do you show appreciation in the form of monetary donations, amplifying their voice through your own media, and other appreciative gestures? If you don't, what is stopping you?
 - Is your job or organization or group inclusive of trans people? Does it include clauses that support trans people or allow those who are nonbinary to exist as themselves? If not, what is stopping you from confronting that and changing those clauses and/or atmosphere?
 - Do you allow debates about trans people's validity to happen within our groups, social circles, etc? Why? What is stopping you from saying, 'discussing someone's body like that isn't okay. Stop?'
 - Do you use non-gendered words and pronouns? What is stopping you from doing this if you don't?



Why this is Important

- Trans people experience a lot of discrimination in our current society.
- See The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey:
<http://www.ustranssurvey.org/report>
- 68% of Trans individuals reported that none of their IDs had the name and gender they preferred.
- Many experience harassment, violence, job discrimination, housing discrimination, healthcare discrimination
 - 30% experienced mistreatment in their job due to their gender identity or expression.
 - 77% took steps to avoid this mistreatment by hiding or delaying their gender identity or quitting their job.
- Several states across the US have introduced legislation to make using a public restroom near impossible for a trans person.
 - Public restrooms are often places where trans people experience violence against them.
- Misgendering trans people is a form of violence by denying their identity and their personhood. It can also put them in danger and/or deny them the same consideration/access as a cisgender person due to bias.

Questions?

- Sgt. Quark Amaya McFluffers stands ready to take questions.

