Language and Concepts about Gender, Sex, and Sexuality

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What is gender diversity?
What is sex?

- Biology
- Inborn
- Chromosomes
- Hormones
- Genitals
- Secondary sex characteristics
Spectra of Biological Sex

Sex Chromosomes

- XY
- XXXY
- XXXX
- XXX
- XX
- XO

- Klinefelter Syndrome
- Turner Syndrome

Sex Determining Genes

- DNA sequence deletions, mutations, chromosomal fragment deletions / translocations
- No genetic abnormalities
- DNA sequence repeats, insertions, chromosomal fragment duplications / translocations

Gonads

- Testicular Dysgenesis
- Testes
- Ovotestes and/or presence of both testis and ovary
- Ovaries
- Ovarian Dysgenesis

External Genitalia

- Male (penis, scrotum)
- Ambiguous genitalia
- Female (clitoris, labia, lower 1/3 of vagina)

Internal Sex Organs

- Male (prostate, seminal vesicles, vas deferens, efferent ducts, epididymides)
- Combination of Wolfian, Mullerian, Mesonephric and Urogenital Sinus derivatives
- Female (upper vagina, cervix, uterus, oviducts)

Sex Steroid Hormones

- Male (androgens)
- Combination
- Female (estrogens, progestins)

Secondary Sex Characteristics

- Male (no breast development, deeper voice, more course body hair, receded hair line)
- Combination
- Female (breast development, higher voice, less course body hair, lower hair line)
Female  Intersex  Male
Intersex people are born with a sex that does not fit the typical definitions for male or female bodies due to genetic, hormonal or anatomical differences.
What is gender?

- Feelings
- Cultural
- Social
- Identity
- Sense of self

Illustration by Olof Højek
**Assigned Gender**

The gender a baby is given at birth, usually based on the baby’s assigned sex.

**Gender Identity**

How we feel about our gender in our hearts and minds.

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When referring to a person, you always reference their gender identity NOT their assigned gender/sex.

Talking to a human being will be easier if you understand that they know themselves better than you know them. (also better than the doctors who saw them at birth and better than the pieces of paper that may still record the assigned gender/sex.)
Outside the gender binary (used as an umbrella term, or as its own identity)
Pronouns!

When you refer to a person with gendered pronouns (he/she/they) it is important you use the pronouns that person identifies with.

It’s okay to ask about what pronouns a person wants you to use - for example, when you write notes about them.

You may get it wrong if you guess without asking, so best to check in with everyone.

(You can also just use people’s names.)

E.g: “Kia ora, I’m Joey and I use they/them pronouns. What pronouns do you use?”

Or: “So when I’m taking notes would you prefer he/she/they or just your name?” (And same question for how to be referred to in person.)

Or: “I see we have you down here as male. Is that accurate? Do you have any more info for me about that?”
We are all whole and complex beings.

Be careful about imposing your view on other people when it comes to sex/gender/sexuality - you will have your own perspective and your own baggage. Self-awareness is crucial for this work. How have you been hurt by gender and sexuality norms? Which norms would you struggle to even notice because they don’t impact you negatively?

No one can extricate their sexuality or gender from the other aspects of who they are - we are all intricate bundles of race/class/gender/sexuality/age/ability/etc… There is no universally truthful way of understanding personhood or identity.
"Takatāpui is a traditional Māori term meaning ‘intimate companion of the same sex.’ It has been reclaimed to embrace all Māori who identify with diverse sexes, genders and sexualities such as whakawāhine (trans women), tangata ira tāne (trans men), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer. These are often grouped under the term ‘Rainbow communities’.

Being takatāpui is about whakapapa (descent from ancestors with sexual and gender fluidity); mana (authority and power to be who we are); identity (claiming all of who we are – culture, gender, sexuality and ability); and inclusion (unity across all iwi, sexes, genders and sexualities).

Pasifika perspectives: MVPFAFF

Pasifika families have long included mahu, vakasalewa, palopa, fa'afafine, akava'ine, fakaleiti (leiti), fakafifine.

The terms MVPFAFF was coined by Phylesha Acton-Brown.


These terms will not translate to english concepts. Remember the importance of collective identity not just pākehā notions of individual identity.
Interconnectedness and social recognition.

We all need some amount of social belonging.

Most of us don’t expect to tell everyone everything.

Health workers need to be able to ask inclusively about gender and sexuality as part of getting to know a whole person. Reflect back the language we use about ourselves.

Sometimes it is background info, sometimes it is central to our current struggles or goals.
THANKS FOR LISTENING

Remember: You don’t have to learn a dictionary of terms if you’re willing to listen and be alongside the person in front of you.

You do need to demonstrate that you are a safe person to talk to so that we are more likely to share relevant information with you.

Please think of one thing that you will do differently and tell one of your colleagues what that is, at the end of this day.

Any questions about my presentation, get in touch: joey.macdonald@kahuitukaha.co.nz