

Eleven Overlapping, Complex Aspects of Sexuality

- 1. Biological Sex = your chromosomal, hormonal, and/or anatomical sex:** you might be male; intersex; transitioning; female
- 2. Gender Identity = your emotional, spiritual sex:** you might be a boy, a man; two-spirit, third gender, transsexual, bi-gendered, multi-gendered; a girl, a woman; trans
- 3. Gender Expression = your gender presentation, chosen or not** (your walk, way of sitting, speaking, hobbies, haircut, clothes, body art, etc.): you might be masculine, butch; transgender (gender-queer, gender-variant, cross-dresser, drag king/queen); androgynous; feminine, femme; genderqueer
- 4. Sexual Orientation = who you get aroused by, who you are able to fall in love with:** you might be heterosexual; bisexual or bi; asexual; lesbian; gay; queer
- 5. Sexual Behavior = what you do, erotically:** you might masturbate, kiss, make out, be sexually inexperienced or same-sex experienced or multiple-sex experienced or other-sex experienced; be monogamous or non-monogamous, be abstinent or sexually active with men, women or both
- 6. Social Behavior = how you fit in to a family and a community:** you might be single, dating, cohabitating, civilly united, or married; someone's child, parent, partner, friend, sibling, co-worker or classmate
- 7. Physical Appearance = the whole "package" you are in:** your height, abilities & disabilities & glasses & braces, skin, hair; blemishes; the shape and condition of your body: you might be short, brunette, and a wheel-chair user and competitive swimmer, for example
- 8. Body Image = your attitude, feelings, beliefs about your gender expression and physical appearance:** you might be confident, self-conscious, ambivalent, self-loathing
- 9. Reproductive System = the organs and processes that have to do with making babies:** you might be pre-pubertal, fertile, infertile, post-menopausal
- 10. Sexual Response System = the organs and processes that have to do with sexual feelings** (desire, sensation, arousal, physical pleasure, and orgasm); you might find touch pleasurable and comforting or painful or not have sensation at all; you might be easily aroused and orgasmic or you might lack desire, have difficulty getting or keeping erections or reaching orgasm
- 11. Sexual Value System = your core beliefs about the ethics of romantic and sexual behavior** and your identity relative to that: you might believe in waiting to kiss until marriage, you might be pro-life or pro-choice, you might follow a particular religious doctrine; you might feel casual sex is acceptable or believe in commitment, you may believe in the importance of using contraception or that contraception is wrong

Glossary of Terms

Androgynous:

"**1** : having the characteristics or nature of both male and female **2 a** : neither specifically feminine nor masculine <the *androgynous* pronoun *them*> **b** : suitable to or for either sex <*androgynous* clothing> **3** : having traditional male and female roles obscured or reversed <an *androgynous* marriage>"

-- *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*

Bisexual:

"Bisexual men and women have sexual and romantic attractions to both men and women. Depending upon the person, his or her attraction may be stronger to women or to men, or they may be approximately equal."

-- *Public Health – Seattle & King County*

Cross Dresser:

“One (regardless of the motivation) who wears clothes, makeup, etc. which are considered (by the culture) appropriate for the other sex but not one's own.”

-- ***Society for Human Sexuality @ sexuality.org***

Drag King/Queen:

“[Drag Queen or King] refers to those who crossdress in a showy or campy way, often for theatrical purposes and often to caricature famous men or women ... While some drag kings and queens may self-identify as transgendered, many do not, as their own sense of gender identity is not affected by their performance.”

-- ***Transcend Transgender Support & Education Society***

Gay:

“A gay man is a man whose primary sexual and romantic attraction is to other men.”

-- ***Public Health – Seattle & King County***

Gender Non-conforming or Gender Variant:

“Refers to individuals whose behaviors and/or interests fall outside what is considered typical for their assigned sex at birth. Someone who identifies as ‘gender nonconforming’ is not necessarily transgender. While their expression of gender may fall outside of those considered typical for their assigned birth gender, they nonetheless may identify as that gender nonetheless.”

-- ***GenderSpectrum.org***

Gender Normative/Cisgender:

“Refers to people whose sex assignment at birth corresponds to their gender identity and expression.”

-- ***GenderSpectrum.org***

Hermaphrodite:

“The word ‘hermaphrodite’ is a stigmatizing and misleading word. There is growing momentum to eliminate the word ‘hermaphrodite’ from medical literature and to use the word ‘intersex’ in its place. While some intersex people do reclaim the word ‘hermaphrodite’ with pride to reference themselves (like words such as ‘dyke’ and ‘queer’ have been reclaimed by [some] LGBT people), it should be generally avoided except under specific circumstances.”

-- ***Intersex Society of North America***

Heterosexism:

“The assumption that identifying as heterosexual and having sexual and romantic attractions only to members of the other sex (than oneself) is good and acceptable, and that other sexual identities and attractions are bad and unacceptable. The assumption that anyone is straight whose sexual orientation is not known, usually coupled with a “blindness” to the existence and concerns of [LGBT people].“

-- ***Society for Human Sexuality @ sexuality.org***

Heterosexual: (90-94% of high school students)¹

“A heterosexual man or woman's primary sexual and romantic attraction is to people of the other sex.”

-- ***Public Health – Seattle & King County***

Homophobia:

“Originally coined to mean ... irrational fear of homosexuality. Now refers usually to bias against or dislike of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people or of stereotypically gay/lesbian behavior, or discomfort with one's own same-sex attractions, or of being perceived as gay or lesbian. A less inflammatory term is *anti-gay* (as in *anti-gay harassment*).”

-- ***Safe Schools Coalition***

Homosexual:

“Dated clinical term for individuals who are attracted physically, emotionally and/or spiritually to members of their own gender. Inappropriate and possibly offensive to many gay men and lesbians. Preferred terms are ‘lesbian’ and ‘gay.’”

-- **GLAAD, *The Gay Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation***

Intersex: (between 1/100 and 1/2,000 of newborns, depending what conditions are counted)^{2,3}

“A person...born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, or an internal reproductive system that is not considered ‘standard’ for either male or female.” Another term for an intersex condition, one which medical professionals increasingly use, is a DSD or Disorder of Sex Development.

-- ***Intersex Society of North America***

Lesbian:

“A lesbian is a woman whose primary sexual and romantic attractions are to other women.”

-- ***Public Health – Seattle & King County***

LGB: (4%-8% of teens, including 1-3% who are lesbian or gay and 3-5%, bisexual)⁴

Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual

Pansexual:

“[P]ansexual has come to mean that a person is capable of falling in love with and/or having a sexual attraction to a person regardless of where they stand on the gender/sexuality spectrum. This is different from bisexuality, because “bi” implies only two genders (men and women). Pansexuals can be attracted to cismen, ciswomen, transmen, transwomen, intersex people, androgynous people [etc.]. It is generally considered a more inclusive term than bisexual.”

-- ***Go Ask Alice, the Columbia University Health Website***

Polysexual:

“incorporating many different kinds of sexuality; pansexual”

-- ***Oxford Dictionary online***

Queer:

“Traditionally a pejorative term for non-heterosexuals, this has been appropriated by some lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people [particularly young Caucasian people living in the coastal US] to describe themselves. Some value the term for its defiance and because it is inclusive - not only of lesbians and gay men but also of bisexuals and transgender people as well. Nevertheless, it is not universally accepted within our community, and if used by a non-LGBT person, it is still considered derogatory.”

-- **GLAAD, *The Gay Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation***

Questioning:

“In an attempt to broaden inclusive language, this term has become popularized to recognize that identity formation is a developmental process. During this process individuals may struggle to find a label that signifies that they are not heterosexual, and that they also do not necessarily identify with the larger LGBTQ community. While the term questioning is usually treated as an intermediate label in the process of coming out, the length of time that an individual remains at this stage is highly variable, from a couple of days to several years. People who identify as questioning may ‘tryout’ several other labels before settling on one that seems to fit. The use of the term questioning also reserves the right to return to identifying as straight.”

-- ***LGBTQ at Georgian College***

Transgender: (1.3-3% of teens)^{5,6}

“The term transgender (sometimes abbreviated to **trans**) refers to a person with a gender identity that is different from their [assigned] birth sex or who expresses their gender in ways that contravene societal expectations of the range of possibilities for men and women. This umbrella term may include crossdressers, drag kings/queens, transsexuals, people who are androgynous,

Two-Spirit people, and people who are bi-gendered or multi-gendered, as well as people who do not identify with any labels.”

-- **Transgender Health Program, Vancouver, BC**

NOTE ON PRONOUNS: All transgender folks should be referred to by their preferred name and with pronouns of the gender they see themselves as being. If in doubt, ask the individual.

Transition:

The process by which a transgender individual strives to have physical presentation more closely align with identity. Transition can occur in three ways: social transition through nonpermanent changes in clothing, hairstyle, name and/or pronouns; medical transition through the use of medicines such as hormone “blockers” or cross hormones to promote gender-based body changes; and/or surgical transition in which an individual’s body is modified through the addition or removal of gender-related physical traits.”

-- **GenderSpectrum.org**

Transsexuals:

“Individuals who do not identify with their birth-assigned genders and physically alter their bodies surgically and/or hormonally. This physical transition is a complicated, multi-step process that may take years and may include, but is not limited to, sex reassignment surgery.”

-- **GenderSpectrum.org**

Two-Spirit:

“...a label that many First Nations lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are using to identify themselves. Indigenous Nations across North America have their own names for their lesbian, gay and transgender Two-Spirit relatives. Aki-skassi is the Blackfeet term for the male Two-Spirit, whereas, the female Two-Spirit is called Aki-Gwan. Each Nation has its own term and as there was not a suitable English name for this group by the mid 1980s, a term was coined in the 1990 that best exemplifies this Native concept: ‘Two-Spirit’. First Nation lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are slowly identifying themselves as being Two-Spirit. The terms lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender...are felt to be culturally biased in favor of non-Native concepts, which focus more on sexual orientation. Two-Spirit is a term that can encompass alternative sexuality, alternative gender and an integration of Native Spirituality’ (1996)...Two-Spirits would also include...transgender persons: not only those who are surgically changed to fit their inward gender, but those who live their everyday lives as members of the sex that they were not born to.”

-- **Northwest Two-Spirit Society**

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – CDC (June 10, 2011) *Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Risk Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9--12 --- Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance, Selected Sites, United States, 2001—2009*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6007a1.htm>

² Accord Alliance. Retrieved September 27, 2012 from <http://www.accordalliance.org/learn-about-dsd/faq.html>

³ Blackless et al. (2000). How sexually dimorphic are we? Review and synthesis. *American Journal of Human Biology*. 12:151-166, 2000. <http://bms.brown.edu/faculty/f/afs/dimorphic.pdf>

⁴ CDC (June 10, 2011)

⁵ Bartlett N, Vasey P, Bukowski W. (December, 2000). Is Gender Identity Disorder in Children a Mental Disorder? *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, v43 n11-12 p753-85

⁶ Shields J, Cohen R et al. Estimating Population Size and Demographic Characteristics of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth in Middle School. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. In Press, Corrected Proof, Available online 15 August 2012.