

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
- 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
- 4. Sexual Orientation = who you get aroused by, who you are able to fall in love with:** you might be heterosexual; bisexual; asexual; lesbian; gay
- 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. ‘Drag’ is a term that is often associated with gay or lesbian communities; some people who perform professionally outside gay/lesbian communities prefer the term ‘female/male impersonator’. 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 Variant:

“Those who cannot or choose not to conform to societal gender norms associated with their physical sex.”

– **Gender.org, The Gender Education & Advocacy Website**

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:

“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, in classic psychological terms, 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:

“A person ... born with sex chromosomes, external genitalia, or an internal reproductive system that is not considered ‘standard’ for either male or female.” – **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**

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:

“The term transgender (sometimes abbreviated to **trans**) refers to a person with a gender identity that is different from their 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**

Transitioning:

The process of shifting your body and gender expression to make them more congruent with your gender identity (female-to-male or FTM; male-to-female or MTF). Transitioning may be accomplished through modification of clothes, hair, etc. and/or hormonally and/or surgically.

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.

Transsexual:

“A person who wishes and seriously acts upon the sense of having the wrong ... body, often-- though not always--culminating in sexual reassignment surgery. Pre-operative transsexuals include those not yet undergoing surgery; post-operative transsexuals are those who have received surgery; non-operative transsexuals are those who, for whatever reason, cannot [for financial or other reasons] or choose not to have surgery. – **Society for Human Sexuality @ Sexuality.org**

Two-Spirit:

“According to Wesley Thomas, a Ph.D. in Anthropology, the term ‘Two-Spirit’ is a label that many First Nations lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are using to identify themselves (Jacobs, Thomas & Lang, 1997). 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 1980 s, 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, Dr. Terry Tafoya says, ‘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). Jacobs et al., (1997), Wilson (1996) and Edwards (1996) concur with the usage. Two-Spirits would also include what Leslie Feinberg (1996) describes as 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. Historically, in Native America, persons who were Two-Spirit were transgender, but today they include categories mainstream America calls gay, lesbian and bisexual.”

– **Northwest Two-Spirit Society**

Eleven Aspects of Sexuality

Beth Reis, 2004

aspect	definition	how it manifests
1. Biological Sex	The anatomy and physiology of your genitalia and a whole constellation of secondary sex characteristics	Whether your body (chromosomes, genitals, gonads, breast tissue, jaw shape, body/facial hair and endocrine system) is male, intersex, transitioning or female
2. Gender Identity	Who you consider yourself to be, emotionally and spiritually, with respect to your gender	Whether you feel like a boy or a man or bigendered or neither gender or a girl or a woman -- if it doesn't match your biological sex, you may identify as transsexual or simply as your most comfortable gender
3. Gender Expression	The ways in which your behavior reflects your brain, sex and gender	Whether you walk, dress, talk, sit, play, think, and relate to others in more masculine/butch, androgynous, fluid or feminine/femme ways -- if it doesn't match your culture's expectations for people of your biological sex, you may identify as transgender
4. Sexual Orientation	Who you feel romantically and sexually attracted to; who you may fall in love with	Whether your erotic and emotional inclinations are towards men women or both -- if you are attracted mostly to others of your own gender you may identify as gay or lesbian ; to both genders, bisexual ; to neither gender, asexual ; to the other gender, heterosexual
5. Sexual Behavior	The ways in which you act on erotic feelings and/or fulfill your need for intimacy	Whether you masturbate or don't; are celibate for life, abstinent for now, sexually experienced with men, women or both and/or sexually active with men, women or both
6. Social Behavior	Who your meaningful relationships are with	Whether you are single, dating, cohabitating, civilly united or married; if you are someone's child, parent, step-parent, sibling, partner or friend you may identify in those ways
7. Physical Appearance	How your face, hair and body look	Your height; your abilities and disabilities; your skin and hair color and texture and blemishes; the shape and condition of your body
8. Body Image	How you feel about how your face, hair and body look; your self-talk	What you like or don't like about your face, hair, body; whether you notice and appreciate your skills and abilities; if you are sufficiently dissatisfied you may become anorexic or bulimic or obese
9. Reproductive System	The organs and structures and functions of your body that relate to making babies	Whether you are pre-pubertal, fertile, infertile, or postmenopausal
10. Sexual Response System	The organs and structures and functions of your body that relate to pleasure	Your ability to experience touch as a pleasurable or painful sensation or neither; your ability to experience arousal, orgasm
11. Sexual Value System	The belief structures and identities that comprise your world view about the ethics of romantic and sexual behavior	Your perspective on dating, divorce, fidelity, communication, virginity, contraception, and countless other sexual issues and whether you identify as Christian, conservative, liberal, progressive, etc.