Transgender and Nongender Identity

LGBTQI2-S Learning Community Call / Webinar

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CARING FOR EVERY CHILD'S MENTAL HEALTH
Systems of Care

Introductions

- ❖ ***Name:*** Jean-Michel
  Gender: male
  Trans: female-to-male
  Pronouns/gender words: he, him, his, that guy, dude

- ❖ ***Name:*** endever*
  Gender: nongender
  Trans: transmasculine spectrum
  Pronouns/gender words: no pronouns; endever*, ever*, ender*, they, that kid

- ❖ ***Name:*** Jeff
  Gender: male
  Pronouns/gender words: he, him, his, that guy

Learning Objectives

❖ Discuss the difference between sex, gender, and sexual orientation.

❖ Identify challenges experienced by transgender or nongender children and youth when accessing mental health or other services and supports, including issues related to language, communication, education, treatment access, and treatment services.

❖ Discuss specific culturally appropriate approaches and strategies to providing services and supports to transgender or nongender children and youth.

❖ Provide information that communities can use to reduce/eliminate stigma and experience of discrimination, and improve mental health and other outcomes, among transgender and nongender children and youth.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: My organization/ agency provides a safe, welcoming environment for transgender or nongender youth and adults.

answer options
• strongly agree
• agree
• neither agree nor disagree
• disagree
• strongly disagree

Sex, Gender, and Sexual Orientation

Biological

Psycho-Social

SEX

- CHROMOSOMES
- GENITALIA
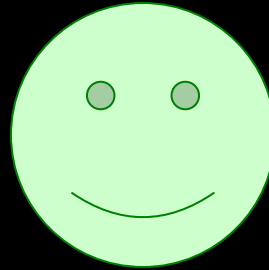- REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS
- SECONDARY SEX CHARACTERISTICS

GENDER

-IDENTITY: SELF-CONCEPT AS MALE / FEMALE / OTHER
- EXPRESSION: COMMUNICATING YOUR GENDER TO OTHERS
- ATTRIBUTION: WHAT OTHERS SEE AND RESPOND TO

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Biological and EROTIC & EMOTIONAL ATTRACTION TO OTHERS **Psycho-Social**

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Traditional Binary Gender Model

Biological Sex:
hormones, genitalia, secondary sex characteristics

Gender:
identity, expression, attribution

Sexual Orientation:
erotic, emotional attraction to others

Male Female

↓   ↓

Masculine Feminine

↓   ↓

Women Men

Revolutionary Gender Model

Biological Sex:
hormones, genitalia,
secondary sex
characteristics

Male   Intersex   Female

⟵⟶

Gender:
identity, expression,
attribution

Masculine   Androgynous   Neutral   Feminine

⟵⟶

Sexual Orientation: women   both   neither   other   men
erotic, emotional
attraction to others

⟵⟶

Revolutionary Gender Model
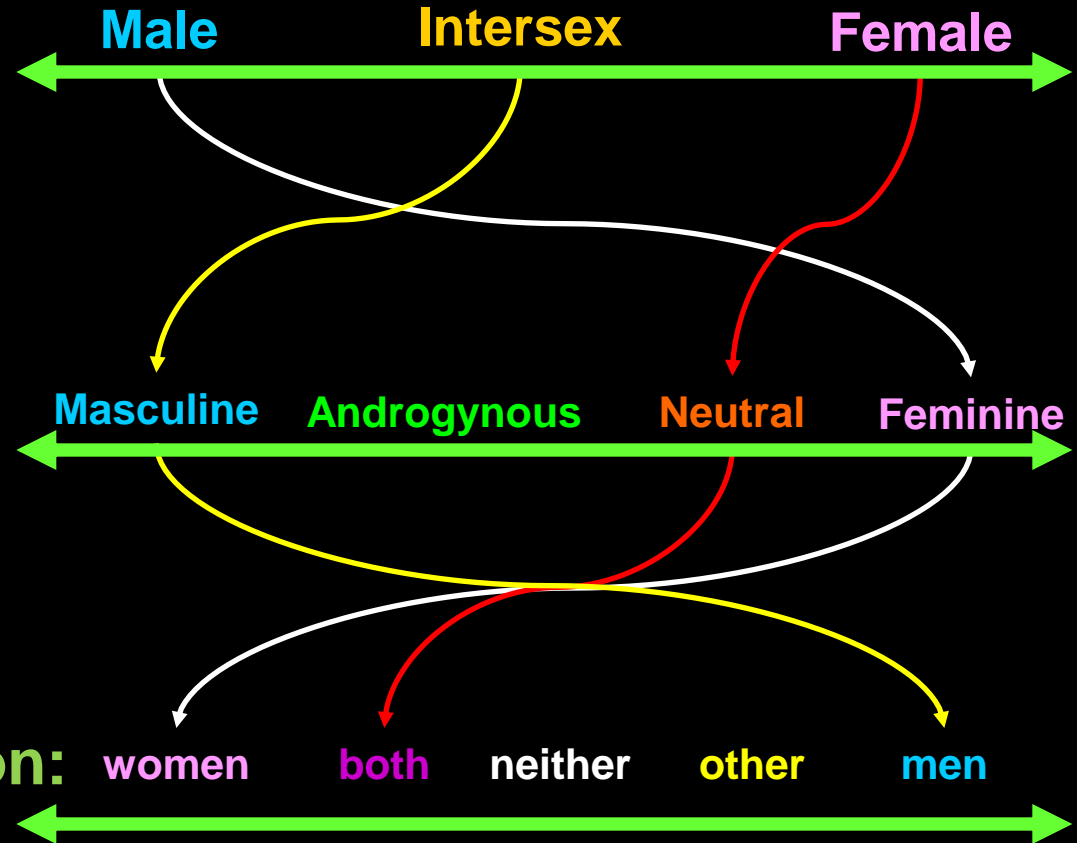
Many configurations are possible

Biological Sex:
hormones, genitalia, secondary sex characteristics

Male   **Intersex**   **Female**

Gender:
identity, expression, attribution

Masculine   **Androgynous**   **Neutral**   **Feminine**

Sexual Orientation:
erotic, emotional attraction to others

women   **both**   **neither**   **other**   **men**

Revolutionary Gender Model
Many configurations are possible

Biological Sex:
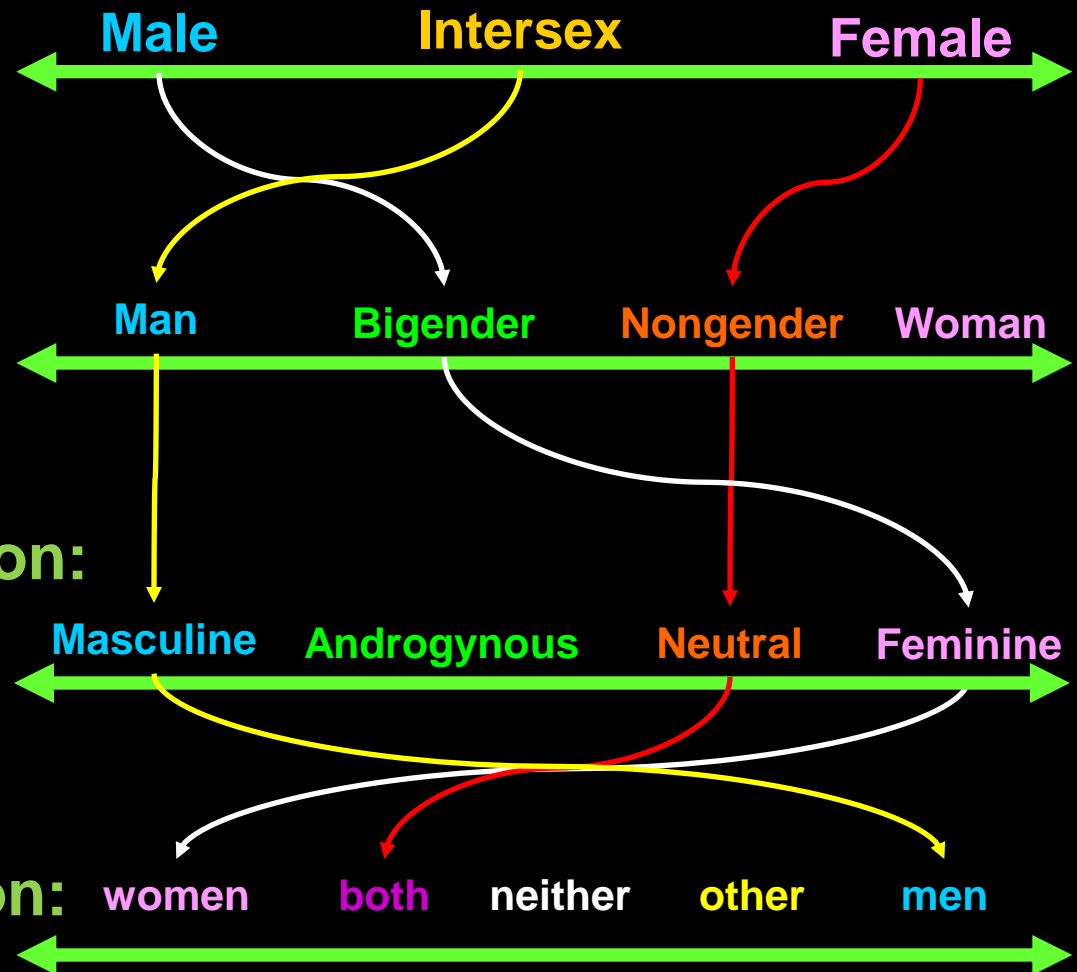hormones, genitalia, secondary sex characteristics

Male — Intersex — Female

Gender Identity:
"I am …"

Man — Bigender — Nongender — Woman

Gender Expression:
mannerisms, role, social context

Masculine — Androgynous — Neutral — Feminine

Sexual Orientation:
erotic, emotional attraction to others

women — both — neither — other — men

Gender Theories

❖ Biological Theory

❖ Psychodynamic Theories
  ✓ Psychoanalytic
  ✓ Cognitive-Developmental

❖ External Theories
  ✓ Socialization or Social-Learning Theory
  ✓ Gender-Schema Theory
  ✓ Social-Structural or Situational Theories

❖ Identity-Construction Theory

❖ Enculturated-Lens Theory

Gender Development

❖ Biological Contribution

  ✓ Human brains are dimorphic - there are observed structural differences between "male" and "female" brains. The degree to which these structural differences inform gender identity remains an open question.

  ✓ Humans show many psychological and behavioral sex differences. Some are learned and obviously cultural. Others appear across cultures and may have been both biological and learned determinants.

  ✓ We cannot explore hormonal influences on human behavior experimentally, and because potential political implications are so unwelcome to many factions of society, the relative contributions of biological factors and learning to human psychological and behavioral sex differences (especially gender identity, role, and orientation) remain unsettled and controversial.

Gender Development

❖ Social/cultural contributions

✓ Gender roles are typically assigned based on an infant's sex as determined by their genitals.

✓ As children, we are socialized to the gender roles we are assigned at birth.

✓ Gender roles are sensitive and relative to culture.

✓ Gender roles can also be shaped by other factors, like social class, religion, environmental pressures, etc.

✓ Gender roles are not static: they change over time and with distance from culture of origin.

Gender Development

❖ 7 months

✓ Infants can begin to tell the difference between male and female voices.

✓ Infants can tell the difference between their mother's and their father's voices. They will often turn their head toward their mother or father when she or he is talking.

Gender Development

❖ 12 months

  ✓ Infants begin to tell the difference between male and female faces. Infants will also spend more time looking at their mother and/or father than at other less familiar people.

  ✓ At this age, infants will turn to a woman's face if they hear a woman speaking; they will look at a man's face if they hear a man speaking.

Gender Development

❖ 2 years

- ✓ Toddlers begin to use *gender stereotypes* in their play. Young girls begin to play with "female toys," and young boys play with "male toys."

- ✓ Parents also may treat their children differently. Many young girls are dressed in "pretty" clothing and treated very delicately. Young boys are often dressed in "cute" clothes that are easy to move around in. Boys are often encouraged to be active and strong.

Gender Development

❖ 2 – 3 years

  ✓ At this age, young children are developing *gender identity.* This means that they begin to label themselves and others as male or female.

  ✓ They can use words to label friends, family, and themselves as a boy or a girl.

Gender Development

❖ 3 – 4 years

  ✓ Children at this age begin to use **_gender typing._**

  ✓ They like putting things in categories, and gender is one way to do that. For example, a three-year-old child may think that trucks are male toys because boys usually play with trucks.

Gender Development

❖ 4 – 6 years

✓ Children at this age begin to understand and use *gender scripts.* This is another way to put things into categories.

✓ Instead of grouping things, they put events or activities in groups related to gender. For example, a five-year-old child may think that a person putting on make-up has to be female. That child may also think that only males lift weights, so everyone lifting weights must be male.

Gender Development

❖ 6 – 7 years

✓ Before this age, boys might think that they will grow up to be women; girls might think that they will be daddies when they are older.

✓ By age 6 or 7, though, most children understand and believe that a person's gender is constant. They know it will not change throughout life.

✓ Most children at this age also know that a man is still a man, even if he dresses like a woman.

Gender Identity Disorder

❖ The differential diagnosis for children (Gender Identity Disorder in Children - GIDC) was formalized in the third revision of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of mental Disorders (DSM-III) in 1980.

❖ Children assigned as males at birth are diagnosed with GIDC 5 to 30 times more often than children assigned as females. The majority of children diagnosed with GID in childhood cease to desire to be the other sex by puberty and instead grow up to identify as homosexual with our without therapeutic intervention.

Gender Identity Disorder

❖ Controversy surrounding pathologization and treatment of cross-gender identity and behaviors, particularly in children, has been evident in the literature since the 1980s.

✓ Proponents argue that therapeutic intervention helps children be more comfortable in their bodies and can prevent adult gender identity disorder.

✓ Critics of treatment cite limited outcome data and questionable efficacy, and some liken it to conversion therapy.

Sex, Gender, and Sexual Orientation Summary

❖ There are more possibilities of biological sex than our assumed models of male and female.

❖ Gender is fluid and not dictated solely by biological sex.

❖ Gender develops over a prolonged period of time, beginning in the womb and continuing for the first 4 – 7 years of life.

❖ Responding to transgender, nongender, or other gender diverse identities as "pathological" creates a hostile environment in which youth are unlikely to thrive.

❖ Sexual orientation is not determined by sex or gender. Labels like *gay, straight, bisexual,* etc., minimize and confuse rather than clarify the complex layers of human sexual identity.

How do you typically respond if you do not know the pronoun a person prefers to be called?

answer options
• randomly pick a pronoun and try it
• use the pronoun that you think corresponds to the person's birth sex
• ask the person what pronoun they prefer
• ask senior staff members
• something else

What is a Pronoun?

i am a human being – i am not defined by what's in my pants, what's in your charts, or what your brain makes of my clothes or my voice.

❖ ask for preferred pronouns!

❖ introduce yourself with your preferred pronoun

❖ when in doubt, use gender-neutral language (they, them, theirs, that person, (first name), y'all, partner/s, parent, etc.)

❖ *Note: lower-case pronouns on this and subsequent slides are intentional*

Does your organization/agency use forms that provide a variety of ways for people to identify their gender? (i.e., more than just *male* or *female*?)

answer options
• yes
• no
• unsure

Sensitive Questions

One of the last things i am capable of dealing with when i'm in crisis is forms asking me my "sex" or my birth name.

❖ Many questions common to intake forms and other paperwork can be problematic.

❖ Ask yourself, do we even need this information at all? Why?

❖ Actively seek youth input on the impact of these forms.

Does your organization/agency have at least one gender neutral bathroom that is clearly marked and accessible to *both* staff and clients?

answer options
- yes
- no
- unsure

The Daily Necessities

It's scary for me to use most bathrooms.

❖ Having to choose between gender-designated restrooms is hard.

❖ Fear of harassment, assault, hysteria, security officers.

❖ Ideal solution = single-stall, accessible restrooms marked *gender neutral* or *all genders.*

Are there currently any "out" transgender or visibly gender diverse *staff* in your organization/agency?

answer options
- yes
- no
- unsure

Are there currently any transgender or gender diverse *youth* involved with child-serving agencies in your community?

answer options
• yes, quite a few
• yes, 1 or 2
• no
• unsure

Not my job…

i don't want to have to educate the people working with me.

❖ Treatment ≠ miniature diversity training.

❖ Familiarize yourself with gender theory and the trans community before your client walks in the door.

❖ There are a multitude of resources for learning without having to question the youth themselves.

❖ Require gender diversity training for all staff who come into contact with clients and their family members.

But I Am the Expert

…but i *will* educate you.

❖ Youth may use their ability to train you on gender diversity as the only tool they have to access respectful treatment.

❖ Once in "teacher" mode, it can be a lot more difficult to return to "client" mode.

❖ There are a multitude of resources for learning without having to question the youth themselves.

Maybe i *can't* trust you **because** you're a counselor /doctor /professional.

❖ It is hard to find the inclination to seek treatment when it has been used against gender diverse individuals in the past.

❖ Even after deciding to access services, some youth may remain guarded.

❖ Answers to questions/disclosure of information to providers may not denote trust.
  ✔ Youth may not want everyone to know them in the same way. These choices often indicate caution and concern for personal safety.

Services are for Service Users

i hate feeling like i'm on display as a curiosity.

❖ Strive both to remain honest in your reactions and also to put in some effort of your own to further normalize for yourself things that your client experiences as normal.

❖ Feel free to throw out what you think of as "normal" and "usual" and even "likely."

❖ Though many youth take pride in otherness, once in a while they may want to be accepted without even a blink.

Does your organization/agency currently provide identity-appropriate and affirming services for youth who are transgender or nongender?

answer options
• yes
• no
• unsure
• I don't work with youth

Joe's Big Adventure – Scene 1:1

Economic and Legal Barriers

i don't have money, so i don't always expect to be treated.

❖ Gender diverse youth can experience discrimination in the job market.

❖ Some youth are kicked out of their family's homes because of their gender diversity.

❖ Limited financial resources can compound feelings of embarrassment and hopelessness regarding access to treatment.

my peers don't talk about this stuff.

❖ It may be challenging for a gender diverse youth to find people in their natural support system who they can speak easily with about treatment.

❖ Some maladaptive responses/symptomatology may be normalized within a gender diverse youth's circle, but this does not necessarily lead to communication about intense experiences of crisis or advanced stages of treatment.

Assumptions Create Barriers

Please don't over estimate or underestimate how much my being queer has an effect on my mental health.

- ❖ Trans identities do not inherently imply dysphoria or dysfunction.

- ❖ Body dysphoria varies widely among gender diverse youth.

- ❖ Listen carefully to each individual's experiences and accept their narrative over one's preconceived assumptions.

- ❖ Respect the youth's stated gender identity.

Barriers to Strengths

i am not your average 20-year-old kid, and that has a certain usefulness to it.

❖ Adversity breeds adaptation.

❖ Utilize each youth's strengths.

❖ Share power with youth as partners in creating a healthy, supportive, and nurturing environment.

❖ Involve youth in planning their treatment/service plan. The end result will more accurately reflect their truth, and it will be more likely to work.

❖ Respect confidentiality, personal choices, and fluidity.

Does your organization/agency include gender identity and expression in its non-discrimination policies?

answer options
- yes
- no
- unsure

Towards Equality in the Service Setting

❖ Learn to recognize and challenge cisgender and heteronormative bias and privilege in the service setting.

✓ Adopt clear and inclusive nondiscrimination workplace and service delivery policies. To cover gender diverse youth and their families, policies should explicitly protect gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation.

✓ Educate staff **and clients** about your organization's policies, how they are enforced, and how to request assistance or file a grievance if the policies are not being enforced.

When I tell people that I'm 5% male, 5% female, and 90% genderless, they suddenly seem to forget one very important thing: I'm also 100% human.

— Anonymous post on a trans youth website