

I am... Sticks and Stones LGBTQA 101



GOOD ENOUGH NOW

Jessica Pettitt


@jesspettitt

Jess@GoodEnoughNow.com

(202) 670-4262 text



Learning Objectives:

- To identify stereotypes, derogatory terms, and other assumptions for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and heterosexual people
 - To recognize the U.S. cultural need for binaries when examining sexual identities and gender identities
 - Improve current workplace conditions to be inclusive and mindful of diverse members, volunteers, participants, and employees
- 

Supplies needed:

There are a number of ways to take this course.
Here is what you will need in advance.

Alone: One sheet of paper

Small Group: Five sheets of paper to pass
around the table

Large Group: Five flip chart papers around the
space and divide participants into 5 groups.

Here by yourself?

Grab a sheet of paper
and divide it into 5
columns.

In a group of 10 or
fewer people?

Grab 5 sheets of paper
to pass around the table
or small group.

In a large group?

Grab 5 flip chart papers,
place them around the room,
and divide the group into
5 groups to rotate.*

* You may not rotate all
around the room to all lists
and that is ok.

Come on... play along
with me...

5 columns*

*or pieces of paper small or large
depending on group size

Label each column:

Heterosexual

Lesbian

Gay

Bisexual

Transgender

You are going to spend a
minute writing down
ANYTHING and
EVERYTHING that comes
to mind when you see
the word.

Don't jump around...

write down nouns,

adjectives, people, places, good,

bad... ANYTHING



**Heterosexual
one minute**

The background of the image consists of six vertical stripes of equal width, each a different color: purple, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red. The colors are arranged in a rainbow-like sequence from left to right.

**Gay
one minute**

The background of the image consists of seven vertical stripes of equal width, each a different color. From left to right, the colors are: purple, blue, green, yellow, orange, light orange, and red. The text is centered over these stripes.

**Lesbian
one minute**



**Bisexual
one minute**



**Transgender
one minute**

See that wasn't
that hard...

Now we are going to pay
attention to each community —
one at a time.



HETEROSEXUAL

Usually, this list mentions children, family, religion, politics, and normal. “Breeder” may show up as a negative term.

*Terms that often show up on these lists:
Straight, Marriage, Christian, Republican, Normal,
Accepted, Allies, Homophobic*

Other negatives may be geared towards the hateful ideals of the religious, but this isn’t about a person.



Limiting Heterosexual Assumptions

White. Middle to upper class, men and women who are married or will someday be married, have children, live in a home, and hold a job.

In their 30's, speak English, go to a Christian based church.

Rarely are specific people listed.



The Platinum Rule

We have a need for a binary system that is about our comfort and not about their identities – and how people would like to be treated.

We can write more accurate stories with their information than limiting ourselves by what makes us comfortable and familiar.

When working with a Heterosexual person or family, listen to the language being used that reflects the complications in this person's life. Listen for step-children, adoption, marriage, guardian, custody, etc.



GAY

*This list is usually very sexual and feminine.
Jack from Will & Grace usually gets on the list.
Note – not Will, but Jack.*

*Terms that show up on these lists: sexual acts,
STIs, HIV/AIDS, one or two specific people that
“represent” the image of Gay.*

*Gay list may also have words that use “gay” as
an umbrella term for all things not
Heterosexual, but the term may not represent
people of color, women, or those with less
financial means.*



Limiting Gay Assumptions

*An umbrella term that represents everyone not straight as one community. OR
White men who are middle to upper class that are attracted to other men.*

Employed in creative jobs and are rarely thought of as having children, families, and the like.



When working with a Gay person or family, it is important to listen to the language being used that reflects the complications in this person's life or that make up this family. Listen for step-children, adoption, marriage, guardian, custody, etc.

We also don't often think about religious beliefs or political affiliations like we may with Heterosexuals.



LESBIAN

This list is usually more masculine, committed relationships, less sexual, unless talking about straight male fantasies, and less fashion focused.

Other terms include derogatory terms, masculine in nature, commitment/relationship based, sexual acts, one or two specific people that “represent” the image of Lesbian.



Limiting Lesbian Assumptions

White women who are middle to upper class that are attracted to other women. Usually assumed to be more masculine in their dress or mannerisms.

Employed in service orientated jobs and are often assumed to have settled down very quickly with one partner.



When working with a Lesbian person or family, listen to the language being used that reflects the complications in this person's life or that make up this family. Listen for step-children, adoption, marriage, guardian, custody, etc.

We also don't often think about religious beliefs or political affiliations like we may with Heterosexuals.



*Do you notice any themes or contrasts
between the Gay and Lesbian lists?*





Revisiting the Platinum Rule

Remember that it is highly likely that a Lesbian or Gay person/family have experienced discrimination or bias. Recognition of this reality can lead you to be a better ally, but listening, asking better questions, and sticking to what is relevant for your service, interaction, relationship.





The more we can listen, the less we need to rely on someone else to have to teach us or repeat themselves.



These experiences for marginalized community members can be stressful before walking in the door. If we know what our preconceived notions or assumptions are about the community as a whole, we can leave room to write a more accurate story about the individual.

Anything is possible and one's lived experience is what really matters.



What do you notice about the Heterosexual, Lesbian, and Gay columns all together?

Keep these discussions in mind as we look at other lists.



Bisexual and Transgender are here together to help explain Fluidity. Where Gay, Lesbian, and Heterosexual lists are coming from that “one option” similarity, Bisexual and Transgender listings come from many options.



In this context, I am using the term Bisexual to describe self-identified men and women that are romantically or sexually attracted to either men or women.

Pansexual, Omnisexual, and/or Fluid are more inclusive terms than Bisexual, and less often understood by Heterosexual, Gay, or Lesbians.

BISEXUAL

Significantly less words than Gay or Lesbian, and is usually more confused, meaning the Bisexual is rejected from the Heterosexual norm for being greedy and from the Gay and Lesbian communities for being confused or just a stepping stone to being Gay or Lesbian (Bi now Gay later).



Limiting Bisexual Assumptions



Bisexuals are judged as being confused and not an identity on its own, that they are deciding between being straight or gay/lesbian. It is assumed that a Bisexual “leans” in one direction or the other.

Often a Lesbian or Gay person “tested the waters” while coming out and assume that someone that identifies as Bisexual is doing the same.

When working with a Bisexual person or family, it is important to listen to the language being used that reflects the complications in this person's life or that make up this family. Listen for step-children, adoption, marriage, guardian, custody, etc. We also don't often think about religious beliefs or political affiliations like we may with Heterosexuals.



TRANSGENDER

I use the term Transgender as both an umbrella term and an individual identity representing those individuals that are fluid in the sense of their own self-identified gender.

A trans person may not identify with the gender they were given at birth. When we talk about Heterosexual, Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual, these communities are labeled based on their gender identity and the gender identity of the folks they are romantically or sexually attracted to.

A trans person can identify can have any sexual orientation as well.



We also assume that all of the members of these communities are cisgender, meaning that how they identify their gender is congruent with their physical bodies (sex) and how they were labeled at birth.

To have cisgender privilege is to not identify under the Transgender umbrella.

Trans folks may identify as any of these sexual identities, and are the “T” in LGBT because of the role gender plays in labeling these communities. A trans person has “fluidity” in their own gender expression.



Limiting Transgender Assumptions



Confusion shows up with this list, not just on the part of the Transgender community, but also for the person writing the list.

Concern over documentation (“tricking” the system) opens up inappropriate and irrelevant interviews to prove one’s gender expression.

Difficulty with pronoun usage or preferred names when a person doesn’t perceive the trans person as they identify.

Concern over appropriate bathrooms is about the trans person using facilitates, but also about the other people that would be sharing these spaces with a trans or gender non-conforming person.



It isn't ever appropriate to ask invasive or socially inappropriate questions.

Trans people may not identify within a binary gender system, may have birth/fathered children before or after the transition process.

Not every Trans person goes through a transition process whether by choice/preference, or lack of access, funds, etc.



When looking at ALL of the lists, what patterns do you see?



Gay and Lesbian lists are much more about the individuals while Bisexual and Transgender are larger, macro institutionalized terminology – not personal or even seen as “real” individuals.



Terms like Pansexual and Omnisexual are being used to describe folks that have romantic or sexual attractions to others regardless of gender identity to be more inclusive than the binary implied in Bisexual. Both of these lists are negatively judged by Gay, Lesbian, and Heterosexuals.



Themes of what is normal, less normal, and abnormal are defined on the lists. Also, when someone is coming out, they are countering expectations that were placed on them by others instead of others being more careful when placing expectations or judgments on others. It is important to note that usually the lists are very western, American, white, upper-class, privileged lists and would vary from culture to culture. This is important to understand when the word “normal” is used or implied as this is our/your normal – not a unilateral normal.





*Being aware and fully conscious is hard work.
There is a reason people aren't just automatically
considered an ally.*

This takes work – self work and care about others.

***The two biggest barriers to ally work are
heteronormativity and the binary.***

The goal of being an ally to all is to create and foster an environment where both the employee and those served by a company or organization can have the most successful interactions as possible.

We want people to be able to fully show up and return.

Members, Volunteers, Participants, Employees, Vendors, Speakers, Performers, etc., functioning to their full potential!

Discrimination is bad for business.

You can't fully participate if you don't feel included.



Heteronormativity = norming of privilege within the LGBT communities.



When something is referred to as “normal,” typically it is referencing a position of privilege. This position has been socially constructed as the dominant group with the most privilege.

It is also normed, that individuals agree or align their self identity with how they were labeled at birth. Therefore, the default assumption of cisgender privilege benefits those that do not identify as transgender or gender non-conforming.

Heteronormativity is why heterosexuals do not have to come out as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. This is also why cisgender individuals do not have to come out as transgender.

Binary or a Binary System = *norming of only two options*

We often default to one of two options or only provide two options in our language.

This holds true even if we intellectually understand the fluidity of identities, know of a wide range of personal expressions, and exposure to assorted relationships with all different kinds of variables; we inevitably reduce these complications down to a binary.

This is why we ask single Bisexuals which way they lean – are they really more Straight or Gay/Lesbian?



Return to Your Lists

Notice how **Heteronormativity** and **Binary Systems** show up.

Sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, and what makes up a relationship are vital to an individual.

We also need to take a moment to understand how Privilege and Power serve as a reference point for those identities and lived experiences that aren't normed by our culture.



*The self work needed to be an ally **starts with a firm understanding of who you are and what privileged identities you are perceived to hold.***

Much like Heterosexuals and Cisgender privilege, groups that are extended power are the norm and held as a point of reference.

A gay person is not heterosexual.

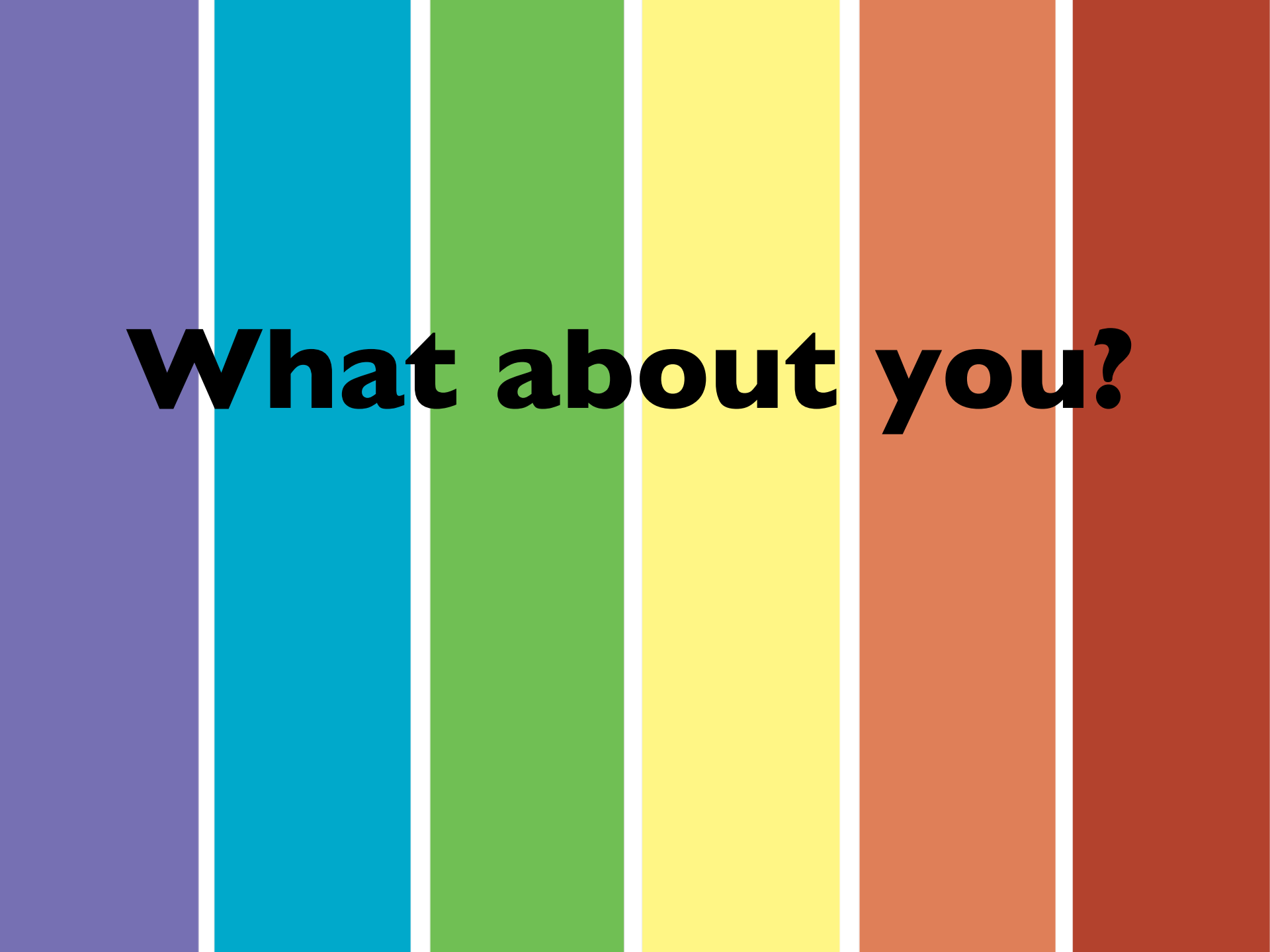
A transgender person is not cisgender.

A person of color is not white.

A gender non-conforming person or a woman is not a man.

Being a point of reference allows for this identity to dominate over other identities of similarity silencing and marginalizing these community members.

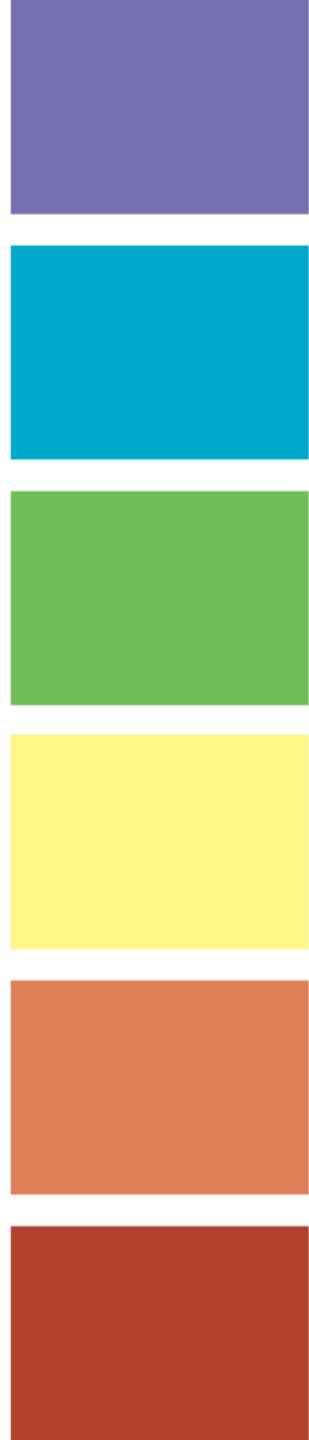




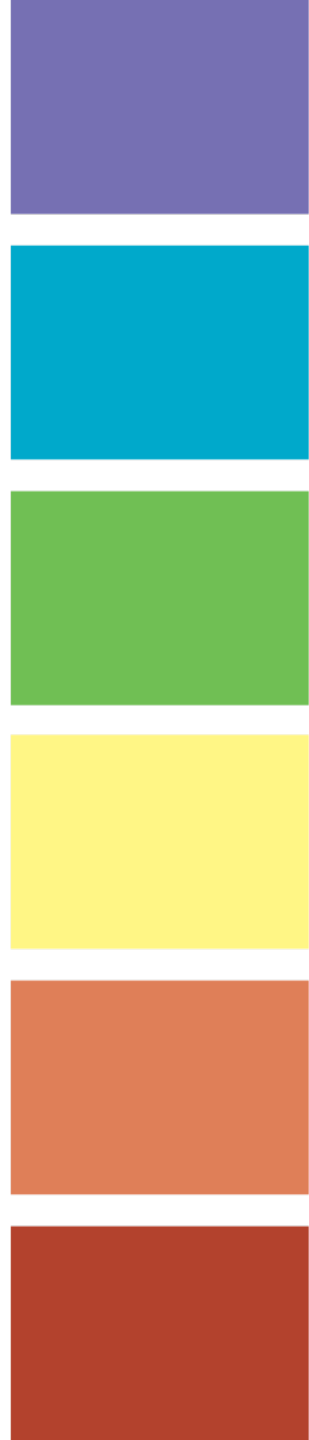
What about you?

To be an ally to all, we must leave some editing room in our stories to be the most accurate we can be when working with and building relationships with others.

Just when things may seem simple, we get complicated – remember, being an ally is work.



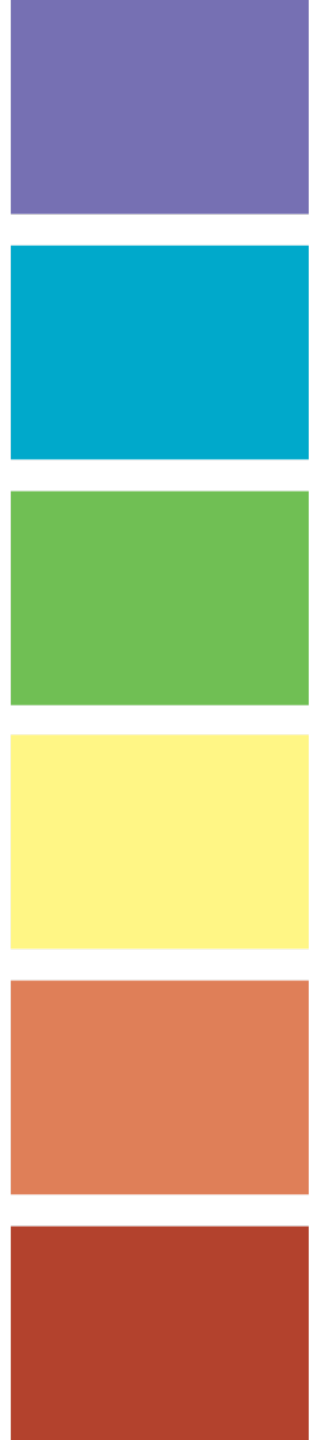
What are some inclusive meeting and event design elements that you are using currently to be more inclusive for all members, volunteers, participants, employees, vendors, speakers, and/or performers?



Share some practices you are using to have inclusive programming language, signage, movement or flow, housing, etc.



How have your organization and/or programming requirements become more inclusive?



**Don't forget to
download the bonus
handout –
Reversal
Questionnaire
to keep conversations
stirring!**

Jessica Pettitt
@jesspettitt
Jess@GoodEnoughNow.com

(202) 670-4262 text



GOOD ENOUGH NOW