

Sex By The Book: Defining Sex & The Sexes Dictionary



"Either of the two main categories (male and female) into which humans and many other living things are divided on the basis of their reproductive functions; (hence) the members of these categories viewed as a group; the males or females of a particular species, esp. the human race, considered collectively."
(Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2012).

Societal



Based on the assumptions of those around us, requests to classify ones sex as male or female abound in all areas of life, from surveys and restrooms to government forms and classrooms.

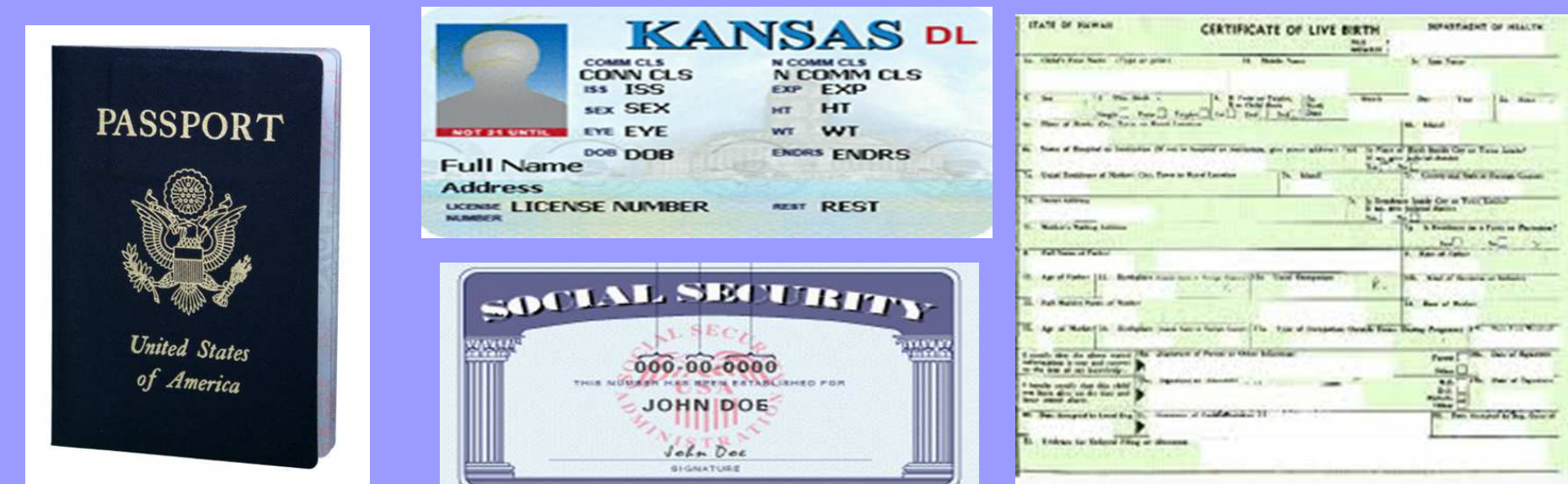
Medical

The distinction between male and female, found in most species of animals and plants, based on the type of gametes produced by the individual or the category into which the individual fits on the basis of that criterion. Ova are produced by the female and spermatozoa by the male; the union of these distinctive germ cells being the prerequisite for the production of a new individual in sexual reproduction.



(Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary, 2007)

Legal



Breaking the Binary:

Sex Beyond ♂ & ♀

Intersex



"Intersex' is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male"

Not XX and not XY	one in 1,666 births
Klinefelter (XXY)	one in 1,000 births
Androgen insensitivity syndrome	one in 13,000 births
Partial androgen insensitivity syndrome	one in 130,000 births
Classical congenital adrenal hyperplasia	one in 13,000 births
Late onset adrenal hyperplasia	one in 66 individuals
Vaginal agenesis	one in 6,000 births
Ovotestes	one in 83,000 births
Ideopathic (no discernable medical cause)	one in 110,000 births
Iatrogenic (caused by medical treatment, for instance progestin administered to pregnant mother)	no estimate
5 alpha reductase deficiency	no estimate
Mixed gonadal dysgenesis	no estimate
Complete gonadal dysgenesis	one in 150,000 births
Hypospadias (urethral opening in perineum or along penile shaft)	one in 2,000 births
Hypospadias (urethral opening between corona and tip of glans penis)	one in 770 births
Total number of people whose bodies differ from standard male or female	one in 100 births
Total number of people receiving surgery to "normalize" genital appearance	one or two in 1,000 births

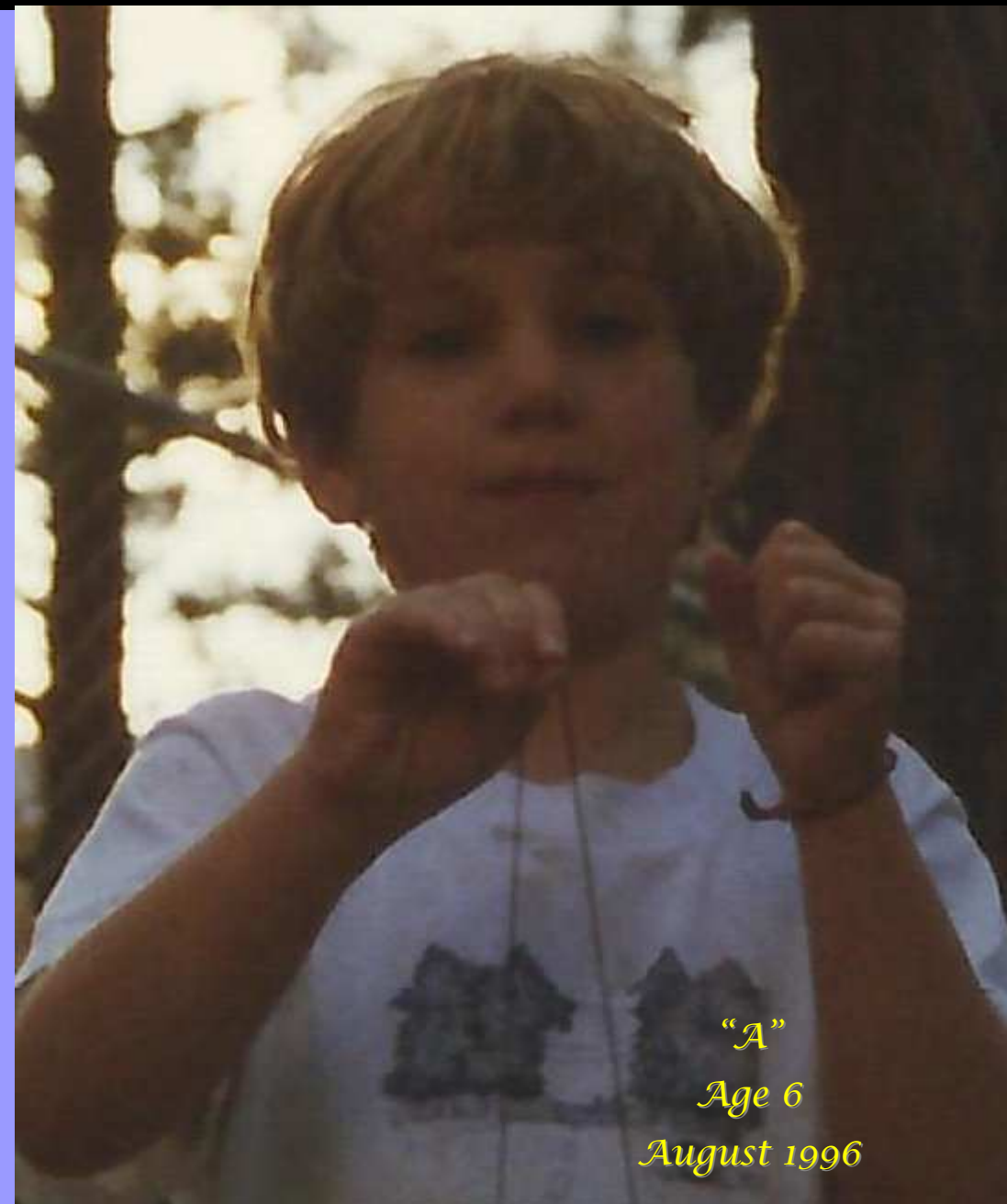
Transsexual

"An individual who identifies as any sex other than the one they were assigned at birth."

(Wolford & Leigh-Bullard, 2012)



Defining transsexual, as both an identity and a term is difficult due to the fact that early definitions perpetuated bias against transsexual individuals and reinforced a binary approach to sex. Even today, many definitions confuse gender and sex, reinforce a sex binary stating a transsexual must identify as the "opposite" sex and/or require that the individual seek treatment for sex affirmation, also called sex reassignment (National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association, 2010) (Green, Peterson, 2004). These definitions are flawed because they operate under the assumption that there are only two sexes, they fail to account for the differences between sex and gender and/or they assume that all individuals who identify as transsexual will request treatment. The unifying trait for the transsexual experience is the sense that one's identity, one's proper sex, does not match the one they were assigned at birth. The varying degrees to which this occurs, are just now beginning to be explored.



"A"
Age 6
August 1996

"Sex Please": Examining the Division of Sexes in Western Society

By: Andrew Leigh-Bullard
Emporia State University



"A"
Age 4
October 1993

Redefining Sex: Core Principles of Sex Classification

- Sex is the assignment or classification of people based on physical characteristics.
- Accurate assignment of an individual to a sex must be based on several overlapping continuums rather than binary categories. Ex:
 - Chromosomal
 - Endocrinological
 - Gonadal
 - Morphological
 - Phenotypic
 - Legal
 - Societal
- An individual's location on these continuums may not be constant, thus one person may have multiple sexes. Ex:
 - Assigned Sex
 - Current Sex
 - Sex Identity

Principle II: Sex Continuums

This section is to provide a demonstration of an individual who cannot be defined using the current binary classification scheme. The following markers are based on "A" who identifies as a Transsexual Male Gynandromorph who was diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder during March 2011 and transitioned from female to his current sex during the summer of 2011.

There may be more than one arrow of a certain color. This is due to the fact that many of the continuums are precise in nature and "A" was unable to state with certainty what his sex was on them was. Thus an arrow was provided at each possible location.

↑ Represents his assigned sex. ↑ Represents his current sex. ↑ Represents his sex identity.

*Final Note: The sample ranges provided below are not comprehensive and are meant only to provide a suggestion of one criteria that a continuum might be based on.



"A"
Age 14
April 2004

Assigned Sex

The classification of someone based on their physical characteristics at birth, usually into male or female. This assignment, conducted by a doctor, determines what is recorded on the birth certificate and is based on genitalia & external appearance.

Current Sex

The classification of someone based on their current physical characteristics, legal status and societal perceptions. This may be different from one's Assigned Sex and/or Sex Identity as the medical transition process takes years and may be unaffordable, unsafe or unavailable to many individuals.

Sex Identity

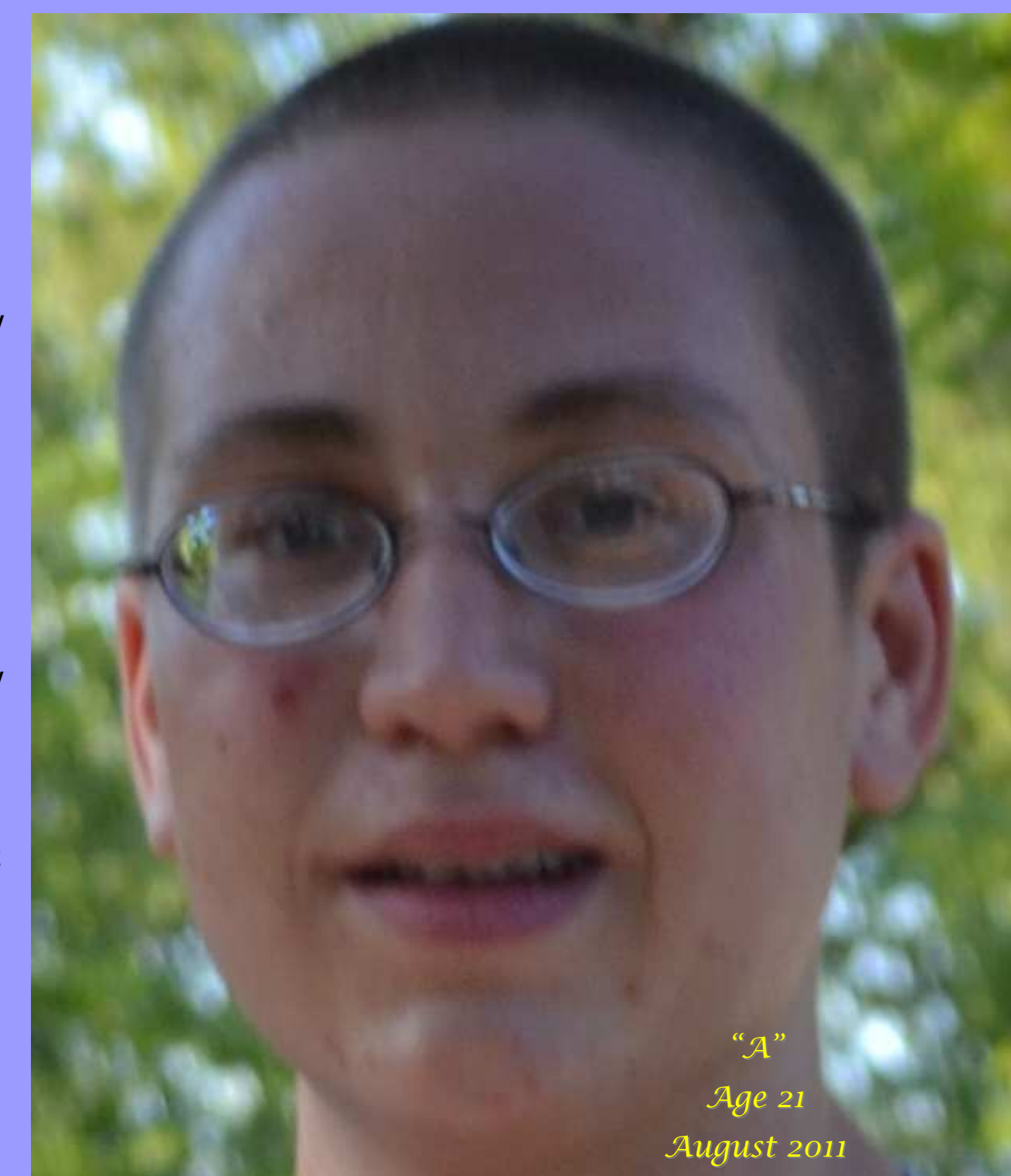
This is the form of the body that someone is best suited for. Occasionally, for reasons that are presently unknown this sex is different from the one a person was assigned at birth, which may require treatment to help a person reach a point where they are comfortable in their body.

The Body As A Vehicle: The Need For Change

A simple way to look at this is to imagine a truck, designed to run on diesel that is only being fueled with unleaded. This causes severe engine problems, and the truck can't run efficiently. Likewise a car, designed for unleaded fuel cannot handle diesel. Having a Sex Identity that isn't your Assigned or Current Sex is like being trapped in a vehicle with wrong fuel acting as a toxin, causes changes that make it increasingly difficult to be yourself and to live in your body. Like with the vehicles the only "cure", for lack of a better term, is to change the fuel. In people this may involve hormone replacement therapy, top surgery and genital reconstructive surgery to bring a person's body in line with who they were naturally meant to be.

It is important to keep in mind that though this analogy only used two options for fuel, diesel and unleaded being stand-ins for male and female, this is not to exclude other non-binary individuals, but rather to provide a simple outline for how this disconnect could be perceived.

Thus a person's Sex Identity is the optimal form for their body, be that male, female, both, neither or something else entirely.



"A"
Age 21
August 2011

Sex in the Stacks: Non-Binary in the Library Practical Applications

A Welcoming Environment For All

Inclusive Language:

The Pronoun Problem: He/She/Ze/They/Ve & More:

Pronouns are often a cause of concern for non-binary sexed individuals, especially when those around them intentionally use the wrong one. This often causes discomfort, unrest and sends a message that the setting is unwelcoming and potentially dangerous.

The safest solution if you are unsure what pronouns someone uses is to ask them. If you make a mistake, or are corrected, admit the error, apologize and reinforce your acceptance of the patron by using their preferred pronoun.



Further Examples of Inclusive/Non-Sexed Language

Male Term	Female Term	Sex Neutral/Inclusive Term
Male	Female	Person/Individual
Man	Woman	Adult
Boy	Girl	Child
Husband	Wife	Spouse/Partner
Brother	Sister	Sibling
Father	Mother	Parent
Son	Daughter	Child
Boyfriend	Girlfriend	Lover

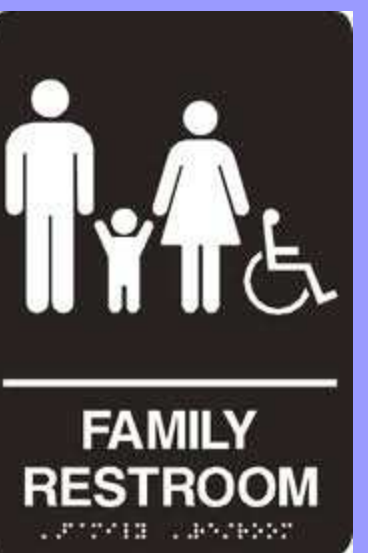


Patron Surveys & Content Validity

When writing a survey or other information gathering tool be sure to include at least one option for non-binary sexed individuals. This will provide a better awareness of your community and send a message that your institution welcomes everyone.

Gender Neutral Restrooms

Nothing is more disruptive to a person's life than to have to leave to locate a safe restroom, or worse being told to leave a location because they are in the "wrong" one. Gender Neutral, or Family Restrooms can go a long way toward welcoming patrons who might not otherwise be able to stay in the library. Single stall restrooms are easily adapted with a change in signage. If providing gender neutral bathrooms isn't feasible for your library consider adopting a policy that states your library will respect an individuals right to use the restroom consistent with their sex identity.



Coming Out, Outing & Information Needs:

Non-binary sexed individuals have a wide variety of information needs ranging from medical and legal information on transitioning to resources on how to cope with their families reactions to their identity. In trying to find the answers to these needs non-binary individuals may come out to you, perhaps voicing their identity for the first time. Your reaction to their coming out and questions may determine how successful their reconciliation of the their identity may be. Below are simple tips to keep in mind when someone comes out to you (Wolford, 2011).

Acknowledge their courage and trust

Thank them for bringing this to your attention. As librarians we value all of our patrons and understand that asking for help can be difficult. Let them know that you appreciate their questions & honesty.

Be accepting of the person, and supportive to their needs

Treat the individual as the sex they identify as, use the pronouns they request and let them know that you will do what you can to help them locate the information they need. Your acceptance will go a long way toward making them feel comfortable, both with your library and themselves.

Assure your confidentiality and their privacy

The ALA Code of Ethics States that "We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted" (ALA, 2008). While this is second nature to us, it may be foreign to the patron, who will need reassurance that your help is confidential. This is particularly important with non-binary sexed individuals who may face an immediate threat to their safety if their identity is shared.

Be prepared to give a referral

No one has all the answers on how sex works. If a patrons question is beyond the scope of your libraries resources don't hesitate to send them to other sources. A referral to an Gender and Sexual Minority Resource Center, Support Group, or Community may be able to place the patron in a better situation to fulfill their long-term information needs.

Above all, listen

By paying attention to their questions and statements you affirm your respect for them as a person. Keep in mind that no matter what they disclose, they are still an individual first and their sex is only one part of who they are.