



Building Professional Excellence- Part 3
Session 7: Counseling LGBTQQ+ Partners: Supporting Resilience and Empowerment

Webinar Follow-up Question and Answer Session with Dr. Anneliese A. Singh

1. Question from Peter Chirinos

Please comment on the Florida massacre and if the shooter was bisexual and if you feel this is another instance of bi-invisibility? How does this impact counseling clients who are bisexual?

Answer

For many reasons, I am not aware of the sexual/affectional orientation of the person who murdered LGBTQQ+ people attending the Pulse Club in Orlando, so it is difficult to comment on this question. I do believe that bi-invisibility is a challenge and an opportunity to talk about as counselors. Bi is a common identity that counselors will work with, and if we assume everyone is gay or lesbian we are erasing their identities and importantly, missing an opportunity to most effectively serve our clients. At the same time, many bi-identified people have gone to using the word "queer" to describe themselves to denote a lack of belief in the gender binary (i.e., attractions to cis women or cis men). Simultaneously, bi activists may feel the word "bisexual" or "bi" is important to keep to denote the history of the bisexual rights movement. The key for counselors is to be aware of these concerns and know what words are important to clients.

2. Question from Johnny Linn

Queer is a political word in the community. I find it difficult to use it, because as a gay, middle-aged male, it was used in a derogatory way in my youth. Can you speak to intergenerational issues in the community as well? Any pointers would be appreciated.

Answer

Yes- it is! And it is important to understand and respect your experience – while also being responsive to a new generation. The key is to be able to use the word with clients who identify with the word because it is meaningful to them. You don't have to use the words to describe yourself, and you can share why – there certainly has been a lot of trauma associated with the word, which is why many reclaimed and politicized it. I had a mentor who said, "Anneliese, I call people what they want to be called." So, I check in with folks. "Queer is a term I use to identify myself – what words are important to you (give them a sample list)?" Or keep it more general, "I know there are many words people use to describe their identities, such as race/ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, etc. What words do you use to describe yourself?"

3. Question from Megan O'Neill

You mentioned something about a common misconception that an asexual person isn't interested in sex at all. Isn't the whole point of an asexual orientation is that they are not interested in sexual intercourse, hence the term asexual?

Answer

I maybe should have said the "ACE umbrella." At the same time, we need to know the words, but because identities are not translated always to behavior, we cannot assume people, for instance, a "lesbian" only has sex with women. Sexual/affectional orientation and attraction and identities do not always link back to actual behaviors.



4. Question from Jacquelynn Russo-Bouidnot

What is a Latin X client? I've not heard that term.

Answer

Latin(x) is a gender-expansive term used to get out of the gender binary of Latina/o. It is new, exciting, and I now say all of them together – Latina/o/x – until I know the gender identity of the person I am working with at hand.

5. Question from Michael Villarreal

What additional support, trainings or certifications are available for clinicians working with client's with sexual behaviors that may be problematic. e.g., engaging in at-risk sexual behaviors, SMBD - and the dynamics affects the relationships, polyamorous relationships, etc. I realize the behaviors above are not specific to the LGBTQ community, just wanted to see if you have suggestions..

Answer

Big and important question! ASECT is the most well-known. <http://www.asect.net>

6. Question from Rachel Taylor

Do you encourage clients to bring family members to discuss sexuality/"coming out" etc.?

Answer

It depends on safety – emotionally and physically and sometimes spiritually. I carefully assess what is best for each individual client. Families have a coming out process as well in terms of understanding they have a LGBTQ+ family member. At the same time, family acceptance has been suggested to be an important resilience and protective factor for discrimination. Sometimes I work with the families separately so the LGBTQ+ person does not have to hear the brunt of the LGBTQ+ education, myths, worries, etc. and then I bring folks back together. PFLAG is a great resource in this area – as family members have their support space for their process.

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Answer

See #6 above.

8. Question from Kimberly Brown

I am from the Southeast Corner of Kentucky and need an avenue for bringing resources for the LGBTQ Community. Where is a place to start?



Answer

Which type of resources? If online, I would look at webinars offered by LGBTQQ+ organizations (do a quick google search), and if in-person – I like to bring in panels not of LGBTQQ+ people only, but of people who are LGBTQQ+ allies to help people get a sense of how to do ally work well.

9. Question from Tamekia Young

Please speak more about being an ally without making such a big deal about sexual orientation?

Answer

Similar to #8 above, I think of Edwards (2006) article on ally identity development. We can be an ally for self-interest (I have a lesbian friend), an ally for altruism (I want to make the world better for trans people), or an ally for social justice (I want to make social justice change to reduce and address heterosexism in the world and other oppressions). So, you can have your identified pronouns listed under your email signature to be a good cisgender ally, you can have a rainbow and trans flag on the door to your office, as well as books. You can talk about your own identity as an ally and give specific examples of what you do to invite trust.

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