



SPECIAL SINGLE-TOPIC ISSUE

FEATURING

I Am Nine Years Old

by Eve Conant

Children across the world tell us how gender affects their lives.

Rethinking Gender

by Robin Marantz Henig

Freed from the binary of boy and girl, gender identity is a shifting landscape. Can science help us navigate?



GENDER REVOLUTION

A JOURNEY WITH KATIE COURIC

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We Are in the Midst of a Gender Revolution

By *National Geographic* magazine Editor in Chief
Susan Goldberg

Gender is making headlines around the world.



In October, the U.S. Supreme Court told a 17-year-old transgender student that it will decide whether he has the right to use the boys' restroom at his Virginia high school. In November, the popular dating app Tinder announced it was expanding its options for

gender identification to nearly 40 choices, following in the footsteps of Facebook, which now has **more than 50 gender options to choose among**. Pew Research reports five federal agencies are collecting data about about **gender identity**. And just last week the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) released the results of a new survey that paints a disheartening picture of the treatment of transgender people: One in 10 trans individuals experienced physical violence at the hands of a family member; even higher numbers left school to avoid mistreatment.

At *National Geographic*, we have a nearly 130-year history of bringing stories about cultures and science to the forefront. The evolution of our societal thinking about gender—as well as newly revealed complexities about the science of gender—is no exception.

The story of gender plays out all around us. More and more, celebrities are shining a spotlight on the subject. But more quietly, our children, parents, teachers, medical professionals, and officials every day confront an array of issues with gender at the center. Everywhere we looked, in

the U.S. and around the globe, individuals and organizations are fighting to redefine traditional gender roles, whether it is girls in war-torn Sierra Leone rejecting the cultural norm of female genital mutilation and child marriage, men in Sweden making use of extended paternal leave after having a child, or people who reject binary, boy–girl labels and find their true identity elsewhere on a gender spectrum.

This is why we're devoting the January issue of *National Geographic* magazine entirely to an exploration of gender issues—in science, social systems, and civilizations—and why we decided to feature a transgender person for the first time on the cover of our magazine: nine-year-old Avery Jackson.

We know our choice to do this may be criticized in some quarters as sensational, or worse. And some of the experiences we document in the magazine and in our online content are hard to write about; the pictures can be hard to look at. This is especially true in the stories about the lives of girls in the developing world, and the revelations of brutal discrimination and ostracism faced by transgender people.

But something profound is happening around gender, whether we choose to see it or not. We thought these stories needed to be illuminated. These are not the stories of celebrities in evening dresses on magazine covers, but those of regular people around the world whose choices are changing our societies. I commend them for their bravery in letting us see into the good, and bad, of their lives.

Not surprisingly, the 80 children we talked to in eight countries from the Americas to the Middle East, Africa to China, were the most candid in reflecting our world back at us. “The worst thing about being a girl is that you just can't do things that boys can do,” says Tomee War Bonnett, a

nine-year-old living on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. This sentiment was expressed by girls worldwide—using different words and in different languages, but bound by the same constraints. It breaks your heart, and it makes you mad to hear the voices of these plain-spoken children, who doubt their ability and their potential to a degree that should have ended long, long ago.

As the first female editor in chief of *National Geographic* since its founding in 1888, I am proud of our role in bringing a discussion about gender to the forefront. You'll find it across all of our media platforms—print, digital, and in our original documentary, *Gender Revolution: A Journey With Katie Couric*. Our award-winning news team will expand on the coverage with videos, interactives, a glossary, and maps—including a first-of-its-kind map that takes a look at the legality of gender change around the globe. And I hope our footprint as the number one non-celebrity brand on social media will spark thoughtful conversations around the world.

Now that we know XX and XY, and blue and pink, don't tell the full story, it is time to write a new chapter to ensure that we all can thrive in this world no matter what our gender—or decision to not identify a gender. That is why *National Geographic* has set out to tell the story of the gender revolution.

Susan Goldberg is a recipient of the Exceptional Women in Publishing Award. A passionate advocate for the advancement of women, Goldberg served as the first female managing editor and executive editor of the San Jose Mercury News, the first female editor of the Cleveland Plain Dealer, the first female reporter to cover the State Capitol for the Detroit Free Press, and, in 2014, was named the first woman to run National Geographic magazine. Today, she serves in an expanded role as Editorial Director of National Geographic Partners, overseeing all of the company's print and digital content globally. Goldberg conceived of and oversaw the development of "The Gender Revolution," a comprehensive, cross-cultural, multiplatform compendium of individual stories and analyses about everyday life and challenges on the ever widening gender spectrum. The January "Gender Revolution" issue of National Geographic magazine is on newsstands and online at www.natgeo.com/genderrevolution. You can follow Susan on Twitter.

Introduction

In 2017, *National Geographic* magazine and the National Geographic Channel are joining forces to help us all understand more about the meaning of gender. In both daily life and political discourse, gender has become an increasingly frequent topic. The special edition of *National Geographic* magazine, *Gender Revolution*, and the documentary film of the same name are efforts to allay confusion and misinformation; they provide a wealth of facts, images, and ideas about gender and how it is expressed in our contemporary world.

According to the World Health Organization,

Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men—such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed. While most people are born either male or female, they are taught appropriate norms and behaviours—including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and work places. When individuals or groups do not “fit” established gender norms they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion—all of which adversely affect health. It is important to be sensitive to different identities that do not necessarily fit into binary male or female sex categories.¹

This discussion guide for teachers and parents is not a discussion guide on sex or sexual orientation. Rather, used in conjunction with the magazine and film, it is a tool to help you understand the nature of gender and its ramifications as we work together toward a more inclusive and tolerant world.

¹ <http://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/understanding/gender-definition/en/>

Understanding Yourself to Understand Gender

The first step in understanding gender is to assess your current understanding of the term. What have you learned from your experiences, from the people you have interacted with, from what you have read, from the culture that surrounds and influences you? Take some time to consider these questions:

- What prompted you to choose and read this magazine or see this documentary? What did you hope to learn?
- What are your earliest memories related to gender? When was the first time you understood how your gender would affect your life?
- How did your understanding of gender develop as you grew older, and as the world changed around you? Were your own experiences relating to your gender positive or negative, or both?
- Consider the question that was put to both Gloria Steinem and Sheryl Sandberg in the “3 Questions” pages in the magazine: “What was a defining moment in your life, related to gender?”
- How have Gloria Steinem and Sheryl Sandberg contributed to our understanding of gender by the lives they have lived and the positions they have taken?
- What other women come to mind when discussing gender and particularly the status of women? Did these women gain status by exemplifying expected gender roles, by expanding them, or by defying them?
- What are your society’s traditional expectations for men? How much pressure do these expectations impose?
- Gender is a social construct, and Western culture starts to impose its values before we are born, even in the way we decorate nurseries for babies. What has been your own experience? Do you generally choose gifts for children based on their gender? What impact might this have on the child? In particular, since children recognize their gender as early as two or three years of age, how does it affect a child who does not self-identify within the male–female concept of gender?
- In some cultures, gender is seen as completely binary, a dichotomy. If your culture tends to view gender as binary, is one gender dominant, or are the genders of equal value, as in the yin-yang symbol in Chinese culture?
- In other cultures, gender is seen as more of a continuum, a spectrum of positions. What is your view now as you begin this discussion?
- Think back to your study of United States history in high school or college. How fully integrated into the curriculum was women’s or LGBT history? Judging from your own reading or experience, has the curriculum in a typical high school history course broadened since then?

Gender Identity and Gender Expression: A Primer

Before we can talk about gender, it's important to have the words to use. That's not always easy.

We adopt words from other languages when our own language is not sufficient; for example, we use the German words *Weltanschauung*¹ and *Schadenfreude*² for certain concepts for which there are no equivalent English words. Similarly, English words for computer terms find their way into other languages. Having the vocabulary is the first step to understanding; it embodies concepts we can't discuss or even think about otherwise.

The vocabulary of gender is constantly evolving. Note that it can sometimes seem regional as well; "genderqueer" appears to be more popularized in the South than in the North. Be open to this changing linguistic landscape. What it so often means is simply, "You can't put me in a box."

- After reading "A Portrait of Gender Today," can you define these terms in your own words? Why is it important to have words to describe the variety of gender expressions and identities?

Agender	Gender identity	Pronouns
Androgynous	Gender marker	Puberty suppression
Cisgender	Gender nonconforming	Queer
Gender binary	Genderfluid	Sexual orientation
Gender conforming	Genderqueer	Transsexual
Gender dysphoria	Intersex	
Gender expression	Nonbinary	

- Why is it important to recognize nonbinary categories for gender? What are the gender categories that are leading us away from a binary interpretation or understanding of gender?
- Why is it important to have the most accurate possible words to describe the variety of gender expressions and identities?
- For most of us, at least some of these gender terms will be unfamiliar. Has your understanding of gender altered after you have familiarized yourself with these terms?

Resources:

National Geographic video of *Gender Revolution: A Journey With Katie Couric*

"A Portrait of Gender Today," in the front section of *National Geographic* Special Issue *Gender Revolution*

¹ Literally, "world-view," a comprehensive image of the universe and humankind's place in it.

² Literally, "harm-joy," pleasure felt at the misfortune of someone else.

What Science Tells Us About Gender

- What explanations does the science of biology offer for the birth of children who are biologically neither exclusively male nor exclusively female? What roles are played by genes and hormones?
- How has brain research added to our understanding of gender? Are the male and female brains significantly different from each other, or do you think the research is inadequate to say? What does research say about the brains of gender nonconforming individuals?
- Why is the information from science and particularly brain research important? How could scientific information like this affect prevailing attitudes toward gender and gender identity?
- Puberty blockers are currently being given to transgender or questioning children to delay the onset of physical traits that don't match with their gender identity. What are the effects of this policy? Would you consider choosing this for your own child?
- Most LGBTQ children today are raised by parents who identify as heterosexuals and also as cisgender individuals. While the parents ordinarily might seek advice from their own parents, little guidance is available because the grandparents are likely similar to their children; neither generation self-identifies as LGBTQ. Who can best advise the parents of an LGBTQ child?
- Since the time of Plato, a tendency toward dualism has dominated Western thinking, from philosophy to politics, and certainly to the binary understanding of gender. To what extent has the binary concept of gender shaped the broader culture of your country?
- Other cultures have not shared this binary mindset, but seem more open to a broader spectrum of possibilities. Research a little about the third-gender groups mentioned in the article “Rethinking Gender.” How does each of these groups illuminate the continuum of gender experience? How is each integrated into the larger society?
- What additional questions about gender do you think scientists should study?
- How can we as a society expand our understanding of gender to become more inclusive of those who do not fall within the binary?



Resources:

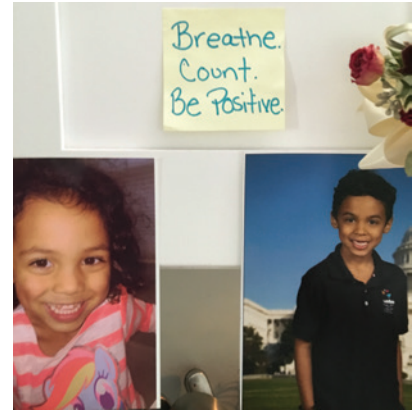
National Geographic video of *Gender Revolution: A Journey With Katie Couric*

“Rethinking Gender,” in the *National Geographic* Special Issue *Gender Revolution* (pp. 48–73)



Shaping Gender in Childhood

Research tells us that neither gender identity nor sexual orientation can change, yet some people continue to hope that it can, whether through shaming, legislation, or “conversion therapy.” As you consider the questions below, keep in mind how attitudes about gender have shifted over recent decades and how they may continue to develop.



- How and why does our culture pre-condition children to certain gender roles? Are there historical reasons why these habits have evolved? If so, are these historical conditions still valid today, or has this gender conditioning outlived its rationale?
- Think about the children you know personally. How do they react to such gender conditioning?
- How are schools handling the evolution of thinking about gender and about gender expression? Should the same rules be applicable to students attending both elementary schools and high schools?
- Schools frequently assign different colors of caps and gowns for graduation to males and females, even though the students receive the same diploma and have done the same work. Why do schools do this? What message is being sent?
- If a student confides to a teacher and raises personal matters about gender identity, does the teacher have a responsibility to inform the parents? What guidelines would you suggest for teachers?
- The state of North Carolina recently passed a so-called “bathroom bill” that mandated that schoolchildren (and others) use only the bathroom designated for their sex shown by their birth documents; the Justice Department and others have sued and currently a temporary

injunction prevents enforcement of the law. Large business conferences, national sports tournaments, and entertainment organizations have boycotted the state. How do you think the case ultimately will be resolved?

- There have been conscious attempts to offer alternatives to traditional stories for children. For example, Canadian Jeremy Whitley’s *Princess* comic books feature a strong, smart princess who loves adventure. What other materials do you know that provide gender-neutral alternatives?
- Consider the question that was put to Gloria Steinem and Sheryl Sandberg at the beginning of the *National Geographic* Special Issue *Gender Revolution*: “What advice would you give to boys and girls today?”

Resources:

National Geographic video of *Gender Revolution: A Journey With Katie Couric*

The *National Geographic* Special Issue *Gender Revolution* magazine:

“Girls, Boys, and Gendered Toys”

“Color Code”

“Who’s the Fairest?”

“I Am Nine Years Old” (pp. 30–47)

Talking With Your Children About Gender

For many possible reasons, American parents have often experienced self-consciousness and hesitation in talking to their children about sex; many oppose sex education classes in schools, as well. As previous discussions have pointed out, the Gender Revolution has made gender identity and gender expression even more fluid than in previous eras and the “birds and the bees” discussion is now even more complex.



Resource:

“Helping Families Talk About Gender,” on the next page.

- How can parents best prepare themselves for a discussion of gender with their children?
- How do children show that they are aware of gender around age two? How do they express their early sense of gender identity?
- How can parents encourage healthy gender development? How can they create an environment that reflects a diversity of gender roles? What should they avoid doing or saying?
- If a child is gender nonconforming or gender creative, what are the best ways for parents and other relatives to be supportive?
- Is it important for parents to share their own values regarding gender identity (as well as sexual orientation) with their children? Why, or why not?
- How can parents help ensure that their children will respect the gender identities of others in their peer group?
- What should parents do if their children are being bullied because of their gender identity, their expression, or nonconformity? What resources are available?
- What is the best way to ensure that parents and schools provide children with consistency in values?

Helping Families Talk About Gender

By Patricia Edmonds

When addressing gender and sexuality matters, where should families begin? This guidance is drawn from *HealthyChildren.org*, the American Academy of Pediatrics' parenting website.

Gender identity: Once young children learn to talk, most will declare a gender identity, boy or girl, that aligns with their biological sex. However, as some children grow, identity is not so clear-cut. Around two years old, children become conscious of the physical differences between boys and girls. By age four, most children have a stable sense of their gender identity. During this same time of life, children learn gender-role behavior—that is, doing stereotypical “things that boys do” or “things that girls do” when they choose toys, clothes, activities, friends.

What parents can do: All children need the opportunity to explore different gender roles and styles of play. Ensure your young child's environment reflects diversity in gender roles and opportunities for everyone.

When children's interests and abilities are different from what society expects, they're often subjected to discrimination and bullying. It is natural for parents to want their children to be accepted socially. But if children's strengths don't always conform to society's or your own expectations, it's important to help them fulfill their own unique potential rather than force them into the mold of current or traditional gender behavior.

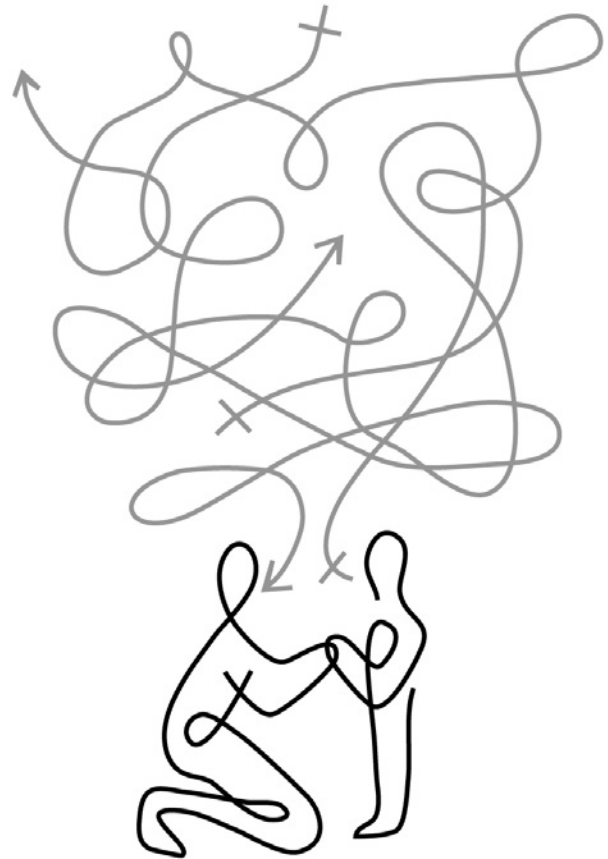


Illustration by Felix Sockwell

For some young children, identifying as another gender may be temporary; for others it isn't. Some children who are gender nonconforming in early childhood grow up to become transgender adults (persistently identifying with a gender different from their assigned sex at birth), and others don't. The causes for this are likely both biological and social; there is no evidence of a link to parenting or experiencing childhood trauma.

There is no way to predict how children will identify later in life. This uncertainty is one of the hardest things about parenting a gender-nonconforming child. It is important for parents to make their home a place where their child feels safe, loved unconditionally, and accepted for who they are. Research suggests that gender is something we are born with; it can't be changed by any interventions.

Sexual orientation: While gender identity typically becomes clear in early childhood, sexual orientation—which refers to the person one falls in love with or is attracted to—becomes evident later. Research suggests that like gender identity, sexual orientation cannot be changed.

Parent and child alike experience anxieties as an adolescent enters and moves through puberty. Many parents feel that by talking to their children about sex, they are sanctioning it, but the opposite is true: Adolescents who are the best informed about sexuality are the most likely to postpone sex. When talking about sexuality, parents should not shy away from discussing their values. They should openly explain their beliefs and their reasons for them to their child.

Many gender-nonconforming children grow up to identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual; all are at risk for bullying and mental health problems. Gender and sexuality concerns spur a large share of teen suicide attempts.

What parents can do: Your most important role as a parent is to offer understanding, respect, and support to your child. A nonjudgmental approach will gain your child's trust and put you in a better position to help your child through difficult times.

When your child discloses an identity to you, respond in an affirming, supportive way. Understand that gender identity and sexual orientation cannot be changed, but the way people identify their gender identity or sexual orientation may change over time as they discover more about themselves.

Be on the lookout for signs of anxiety, insecurity, depression, and low self-esteem. Stand up for your child when your child is mistreated. Do not minimize the social pressure or bullying your child may be facing. Make it clear that slurs or jokes based on gender identity or sexual orientation are not tolerated.

Having a gender-nonconforming child can be stressful for parents and caregivers as they deal with uncertainty and navigate schools, extended families, sibling relationships, and the world around them. Among the organizations that support parents and families with gender-nonconforming children are: the Family Acceptance Project, familyproject.sfsu.edu; Gender Spectrum, genderspectrum.org; and PFLAG, pflag.org.

Gender and the Larger Culture

- As you look at the photographs that accompany the article “Making a Man,” cultural differences are apparent. What photographs did you find particularly effective? Why? Do you see any universal themes underlying this collection of photos?
- How important is parental leave for fathers? To the child? To the parents? How do parental leave policies in the United States compare with those of other Western nations?
- What kinds of pressures do contemporary young women face compared with young women in past decades? How does society impose its vision of ideal body image and what effect does that have on young women? Do young men, including trans men, face similar expectations?
- Economists have noted what they call a “pink tax”—that is, similar products marketed to men and women often cost more for women. For example, dry-cleaning a woman’s blouse is usually more expensive than dry-cleaning a man’s shirt; women’s deodorant is more expensive than a similarly sized men’s deodorant. What causes this differential? What can be done to bring about reasonable parity in this area?
- Skim through the pages of two magazines, one aimed at male readers and one at female readers. What are the values to which the advertising in each magazine appeals? How much do they have in common? How are the values different? How does marketing reflect cultural understandings of gender? Or does it serve to influence or exaggerate them?
- What is the legal status of transgender individuals in your own geographical area? (The American Civil Liberties Union webpage at <https://www.aclu.org/map/non-discrimination-laws-state-state-information-map> and the Transgender Law Center webpage at <http://transgenderlawcenter.org/equalitymap> provide a starting place if you are not sure.) Are you satisfied with existing laws or would you like to see those laws reformed? Why? What is the status of federal law with respect to this area?
- Title IX, part of U.S. civil rights law, declares that “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” Does Title IX protect trans students?
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the suicide rate among LGBTQ youth is twice the rate of that of non-LGBTQ young people.³ In fact, for transgender youths of color, the suicide rate is far higher.⁴ Hotlines that serve the LGBTQ community report increased use of those lines. How can the larger society act to improve this situation?

Resources:

National Geographic video of *Gender Revolution: A Journey With Katie Couric*

The *National Geographic* Special Issue *Gender Revolution* magazine:

“Making a Man” (pp. 74–103)

“Parental Leave on Dads’ Terms” (pp. 104–109)

“American Girl” (pp. 110–127)

³ <http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth.htm>

⁴ <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/AFSP-Williams-Suicide-Report-Final.pdf>

Danger and Discrimination for Girls Around the World

- How does each of these factors make progress so difficult for girls in West Africa?
 - Terror groups
 - Poverty
 - Diseases, including Ebola
 - Genital mutilation
 - Early marriage and pregnancy
 - Other social customs
- What efforts are currently being made to improve conditions for these girls?
- What is Boko Haram in Nigeria? What is the current status of girls who were kidnapped by Boko Haram? Has the reaction of the Nigerian government and the world at large made a difference?
- What limitations have been placed on the freedom and achievements of girls in other areas of the world?
- Read over the following United Nations documents:
 - Declaration of the Rights of the Child
<http://www.un-documents.net/a14r1386.htm>
 - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>
 To what extent are these rights respected today?
- Who is Malala Yousafzai? Describe her work to improve the educational opportunities open to girls and women.
- In your own country, are educational opportunities for women on a par with those for men?
- The Human Rights Campaign has documented workplace discrimination against trans individuals. See <http://www.hrc.org/resources/discrimination-against-transgender-workers>. What actions should be taken to eliminate such discrimination? Are current laws adequate? What should legislators do to strengthen them? How can employers improve hiring and human resources practices? What other steps could be taken to improve the situation for trans individuals?
- Evidence of violence against trans individuals is also readily available. See, for example, the Human Rights Campaign report at <http://hrc-assets.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com//files/assets/resources/HRC-AntiTransgenderViolence-0519.pdf>. Because of discriminatory hiring and firing, some trans individuals have turned to supporting themselves as sex workers, where the rate of violence is high. Again, for trans individuals of color, violence can play an even uglier role. What else can be done to protect these individuals and help them lead more productive lives?

Resources:

“The Dangerous Lives of Girls” in the *National Geographic* Special Issue *Gender Revolution* (pp. 130–151)

Next Steps

- Consider the question that was put to Gloria Steinem and Sheryl Sandberg at the beginning of the *National Geographic* Special Issue *Gender Revolution*: “What do you consider the most pressing gender issue today?” Here are some possibilities to consider, or suggest your own:
 - Discrimination in the school or workplace
 - “Rape culture”
 - Discrimination in housing and civil liberties for transgender individuals
 - Limited access to education in many countries
- Study the graphics on the pages titled “Where in the World Are Women and Men Most—and Least—Equal?” at the beginning of the *National Geographic* Special Issue *Gender Revolution*. What information on these graphics surprised you? What conclusions can you come to? If you were to graph gender inequality in your own country over time, what might that graph look like? Would the inequality gap be closing or widening?
- The Oxford Dictionary defines *intersectionality* as the “interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.”⁵ In your own words, what does this mean? Have you witnessed examples of discrimination that could be described as examples of intersectionality?



And finally...

- Have your own ideas about gender changed from using this guide? If so, how?
- What is the first step you will take in creating equity, inclusion, and a better understanding of gender in today’s world?
- How do other identifiers such as race, socio-economic status, religion, family structure, age, ability, and sexual orientation play into the role of gender? How do these identifiers affect our personal view of gender and how we express or identify our gender?

Resources:

National Geographic video of *Gender Revolution: A Journey With Katie Couric*

The *National Geographic* Special Issue *Gender Revolution*:

“Where in the World Are Women and Men Most—and Least—Equal?” (front pages)

“Our Evolving Sense of Self” (pp. 153–154)

⁵ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/intersectionality>

Additional Resources

Organization websites:

Gender and Family Project, Ackerman Institute for the Family	www.ackerman.org/gfp
interACT Advocates for Intersex Youth	http://interactadvocates.org/
Rainbow Youth Alliance	www.rainbowyouthalliancemd.org
Philadelphia Trans Health Conference	https://www.mazzonicenter.org/trans-health
Gender Odyssey	http://www.genderodyssey.org
GLSEN	http://www.glsen.org/
Trevor Project	http://www.thetrevorproject.org
Trans Lifeline	http://www.translifeline.org
Gender Spectrum	https://www.genderspectrum.org
Schools in Transition (Human Rights Campaign)	http://www.hrc.org/resources/schools-in-transition-a-guide-for-supporting-transgender-students-in-k-12-s
PFLAG	https://www.pflag.org
Harbor Camps	www.campanantiq.org
Hollaback (Street harassment)	http://bmore.ihollaback.org/
Human Rights Campaign	http://www.hrc.org/campaigns/trans-toolkit
Transgender Law Center	http://transgenderlawcenter.org/
National Center for Transgender Equality	http://www.transequality.org/
Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund	http://www.transgenderlegal.org/

Blogs:

www.blackgirldangerous.org
<https://raisingmyrainbow.com/>
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/Amelia/no-my-10-year-old-son-isnt-looking-for-a-girlfriend-he-likes-boys_b_6297180.html

Books:

Brill, Stephanie A. *The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals*
 Eaklor, Vicki L., *Queer America: A People's GLBT History of the United States (New Press People's History)*
 Feinberg, Leslie. *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman*
 Green, Eli R. and Luca Maurer. *The Teaching Transgender Toolkit* (Available through <http://www.teachingtransgender.org/>)
 Stryker, Susan. *Transgender History*

Film credits:

KATIE COURIC MEDIA

Executive Producers: Katie Couric and Mitch Semel

WORLD OF WONDER PRODUCTIONS

Executive Producers: Fenton Bailey, Randy Barbato,
and Jeremy Simmons

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL

CEO: Courteney Monroe

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EDITOR IN CHIEF: Susan Goldberg

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Lindsey, Jamie Shreeve, Emmet Smith

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p. 8: National Geographic/Chris Wroblewski

p. 9: National Geographic/Jeremy Simmons

p. 10: Wikimedia Commons/Linda Bartlett

p. 11: National Geographic/Felix Sockwell

p. 15: National Geographic/Chris Wroblewski

This discussion guide was written by Eileen Mattingly, Director of Education at Journeys in Film, and Lorraine Martinez Hanley, Director of Equity and Inclusion at Indian Creek School, Crownsville, Maryland, and founding faculty member of the National Diversity Practitioners Institute.

For additional free materials to bring the world to your classroom and to explore significant world issues through film, see the website <http://journeysinfilm.org>.

Copies of this guide and additional resources may also be found at the following websites:

National Geographic Kids

kids.nationalgeographic.com

National Geographic Kids teaches kids about the world and how it works, empowering them to succeed and make it a better place. National Geographic Kids inspires young adventurers through award-winning magazines, books, apps, games, toys, videos, events and a **website**, and is the only kids brand with a world-class scientific organization at its core.

National Geographic Education

natgeoed.org

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ACCEPTANCE IS PROTECTION

Why Family Matters?

We first learn about gender through our family's gender roles and expectations. Research indicates that children identify their own gender expansiveness as young as three years old.¹ Family acceptance is the single most predictive factor when we consider safety, self-acceptance, and optimal wellbeing of transgender or gender expansive children.^{2,3,4,5}

Tips for parents:

- *You can't make or break a child's gender identity*
- *Gender diversity is not contagious*
- *Listen to your child's self-affirmed gender identity*
- *Allow for questions and exploration*
- *Remember that you are your child's most important ally*

Why Community Matters?

When a child transitions, the entire community transitions along with them. Everyone needs a new understanding of gender, including the complexities of gender development and the best way to show acceptance and respect.^{6,7}

Tips for community leaders:

- *Include gender diverse material, programs and resources*
- *Lead by example and have a gender diverse leadership*
- *Enlist partnerships and education on gender diversity*
- *Promote transgender rights as human rights*
- *Take responsibility for your own education*

Why School Matters?

Messaging from teachers and peers play an important role in developing our gender identity. Ensuring a gender inclusive place of learning is particularly critical for transgender and gender expansive youth. More than half of transgender students reported being physically assaulted at school and skipping class as a result of bullying.^{8,9,10}

Tips for schools:

- *Have gender neutral bathrooms and changing facilities*
- *Have a GSA or gender-inclusive student alliance*
- *Include preferred name and gender pronouns in admission forms*
- *Have a zero tolerance policy on gender based discrimination*
- *Include gender diversity in curricula and class options*

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the ACKERMAN INSTITUTE'S Gender & Family Project

The Gender & Family Project (GFP) empowers youth, families and communities by providing gender affirmative services, training and research.

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GENDER INCLUSIVITY QUIZ

After watching *GENDER REVOLUTION: A JOURNEY WITH KATIE COURIC*, please take this short Gender Inclusive Quiz. Whenever you respond “Not Yet” or “Not Fully,” it indicates a next step on your journey to gender inclusivity. For more information, education material and support, please visit: Ackerman.org/GFP

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS: Yes! Not Yet Not Fully	NEXT STEPS? Please identify at least one next step.	ACTION PLAN: Who will be taking the next step? What is your time frame?
As a person, I can:			
Define “transgender”			
Define “cisgender”			
Define “intersex”			
Define “non-binary”			
Define “gender-neutral bathroom”			
Differentiate between “assigned sex” and “gender identity”			
Differentiate between “gender identity” and “sexual orientation”			
Name one gender-neutral pronoun			
As an institution, we:			
Have gender inclusive restrooms/lockers			
Have gender inclusive forms			
Use gender inclusive language on all communications			
Have gender inclusive and transition guidelines			
Have a student group that includes transgender and intersex members			
Received gender inclusivity training			
Can provide resources and referrals for parents and students with questions about gender			
Can support students who identify as gender non-binary or fluid			

“Intersex” refers to people who are born with any of a range of characteristics that may not fit traditional conceptions about male or female bodies.

The term **intersex** is an umbrella term that refers to people who have one or more of a range of variations in sex characteristics that fall outside of traditional conceptions of male or female bodies. For example, intersex people may have variations in their chromosomes, genitals, or internal organs like testes or ovaries. Some intersex characteristics are identified at birth, while other people may not discover they have intersex traits until puberty or later in life. People with intersex traits have always existed, but there is more awareness now about the diversity of human bodies. People with intersex bodies, like anyone who may be seen as different, sometimes face discrimination, including in healthcare settings (as early as infancy).

People who are intersex are more common than you think! Experts estimate that as many as 1.7% of people are born with intersex traits – that’s about the same number of people who are born with red hair. People with intersex traits aren’t all the same, and some people may not even know they are intersex unless they receive genetic testing (this may happen, for example, with athletes). Intersex people are not that uncommon — they just have been mostly invisible. But that is changing.

Many intersex children undergo unnecessary and irreversible surgeries — without consent.

For many years, the medical establishment has viewed babies born with atypical sex characteristics as having bodies that need to be “fixed.” As many as 1/2000 are faced with unnecessary medical intervention at an early age. Some intersex babies and older youth have undergone extensive, involuntary surgeries for no other reason than to make their bodies conform to traditional notions of what it means to be male or female. The vast majority of these surgeries are not medically necessary when performed on young children and could instead be delayed until the intersex individual can decide whether surgery is right for them. In some instances, intersex individuals grow up without ever having known about the medical procedures they underwent as children. Others report being told that surgery was necessary only to find out later that this was not the case.

Evidence is increasingly showing the harms of these surgeries when performed without informed consent, which can include physical pain, loss of genital sensitivity, scarring, and even sterilization, as well as significant psychological consequences and the risk that the sex assigned will not match the individual’s gender identity. Because of these risks, intersex genital surgeries are now considered human rights abuses by groups like the [United Nations](#), the [World Health Organization](#), and the [Gay and Lesbian Medical Association](#), the world’s largest and oldest association of LGBT healthcare professionals. While this has led some countries, such as Malta, to outlaw non-consensual medical interventions to modify sex anatomy, such procedures are not directly addressed by any law in the United States and are still performed by a small group of specialists across the country.

Intersex people should enjoy autonomy over their bodies. Unfortunately, parents may feel pressured into making irreversible decisions about their children’s bodies before the child can meaningfully participate and choose what, if any, medical procedures they desire.

Most intersex people experience many different harms. Many intersex youth and adults today talk about the consequences suffered as a result of unwanted surgeries, including poor self-esteem,

depression, anxiety, and issues with trust and intimacy in relationships. While parents and doctors may act with the best intentions, rushing to "fix" a child's bodily difference most often does much more harm than good.

Most people think biological sex is either "male" or "female," but it can actually be more complicated. This misunderstanding makes intersex people feel alone and unnecessarily ashamed of their bodies.

Don't make assumptions and let people share their own stories.

If you meet someone who you think may be intersex or who has shared they are intersex, let them share the information they wish to share. Don't ask about their bodies or what procedures they've undergone. Respect their privacy!

Intersex people may identify as men, women, genderfluid, no gender, multiple genders, and many more—and they may outwardly express their gender in different ways. Similarly, intersex people, like all people, may be straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, or identify in another way.

Some (but not all) intersex people may choose to use gender pronouns other than "he" or "she," like "they" or "zie." Always allow intersex people to identify what pronouns they'd like you to use.

Being intersex is not the same as being transgender.

A person who is intersex was born with a variation in their internal or external sex characteristics; a person who is transgender identifies with a different gender than they were assumed to be at birth. Intersex people and transgender people may face similar barriers to accessing appropriate medical care and may experience similar discrimination based on their gender identity and expression. Both communities have a shared interest in autonomy and grapple with the loss of decision-making authority over their own bodies.

While intersex individuals are frequently forced to undergo unwanted and unnecessary surgeries during infancy, transgender individuals are often denied necessary medical treatment in adolescence and beyond. Transgender people may also be required to undergo surgery they *don't* want in order to update the gender marker on their identity documents.

By better understanding the similarities and differences between these communities, we can be better allies to both!

There are many ways to be an ally.

- Helping educate friends and family about intersex people through social media. [Follow us on facebook for some shareable posts!](#)
- Opposing unnecessary and non-consensual surgeries on intersex babies and children.
- Supporting nondiscrimination protections that include intersex people.
- Opposing laws that make it illegal for people to use restrooms that don't match the gender marker on their birth certificate, which can create serious issues for intersex as well as transgender people.
- Supporting changing regulations and laws around identification so that not every adult intersex person has to choose a male or female gender marker.
- Treating intersex people with respect by not asking invasive questions and using their preferred pronouns.
- [Donating to interAct today!](#)

Gender Revolution: A Journey With Katie Couric Intersex Viewing Guide

1. Brian, an adult intersex person, spoke about his experience as a young child and how his parents' decisions continue to affect his life today. What about Brian's story stood out to you? **Is there anything you think his parents or doctors should have done differently?**
2. The practice of imposing genital surgery on intersex children used to be incredibly widespread. Today it still occurs, but more and more parents are declining surgery for their children when there is no threat to the child's physical health. For example, the Lohmans decided to defer surgery for their daughter so that she can make the choice herself when she is older. Do the family and daughter seem happy to you? **How do you expect that her experience will differ from Brian's as she grows into an adult?**
3. During the film, you heard the perspectives of some intersex adults, parents of intersex children, and doctors who treat intersex children. **What do you think about if you put yourself in each of those positions?** For example, you might think about how we react or adjust to things that are unexpected or different; consider your thoughts on autonomy and which decisions you would be comfortable making for others; and how your body would feel if intimate aspects like your reproductive or sexual anatomy had been changed or removed.
4. **Imagine you are the parent of an intersex child.** What information would you want to know in order to make decisions about their medical treatment, including whether or not to perform genital surgery? What questions would you ask your child's doctors, and which factors do you think would be the most important to you?
5. Being intersex is not the same thing as being transgender, but both communities share some common needs and concerns. After hearing the stories of both intersex and transgender individuals, **what struggles can you identify that are the same or different between the two groups?** You may want to think about medical treatment, family and social relationships, legal protections, and cultural awareness as you answer.
6. If this was the first time you learned the term "intersex," did it change how you think about sex and gender? How so?
7. Intersex people represent nearly two percent of the population and approximately 1 in 2000 are born with visible intersex traits at birth. What would you do if you found out that you are intersex? How would you feel? **What would your advice to young intersex people be?**