

Employment – how to achieve an inclusive work environment and support good practices

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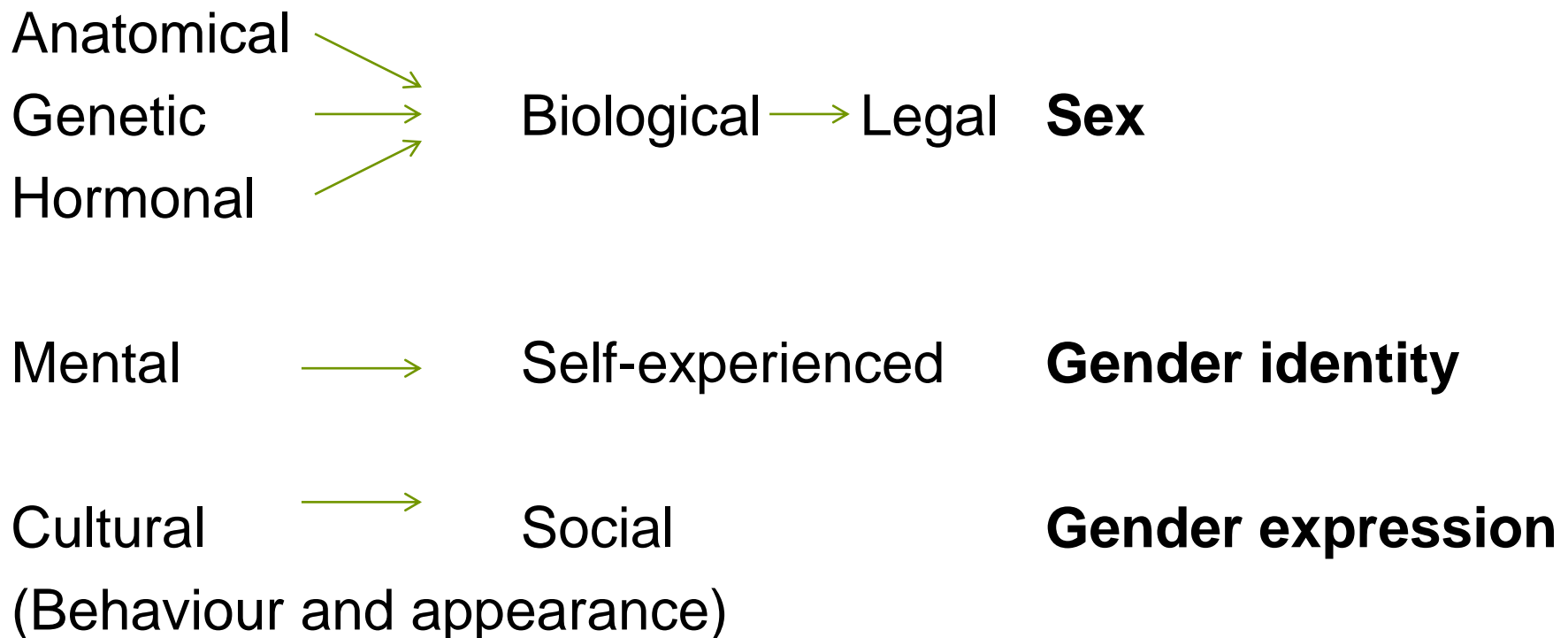
What is the problem at hand?

- The social sciences in Sweden suggest that heteronormativity is the problem that needs to be addressed in order to achieve an inclusive work environment
- Heteronormativity is a problem in working life. LGBTI people and other individuals who fall outside of the heteronorm are at risk of being marginalized, made invisible and discriminated against or harassed
- Everybody is, to some extent, a carrier of *heteronormativities*. It is heteronormativity and its excluding effects that is the problem, not individuals. Heterosexual cis-persons are not the problem, heteronormativity is

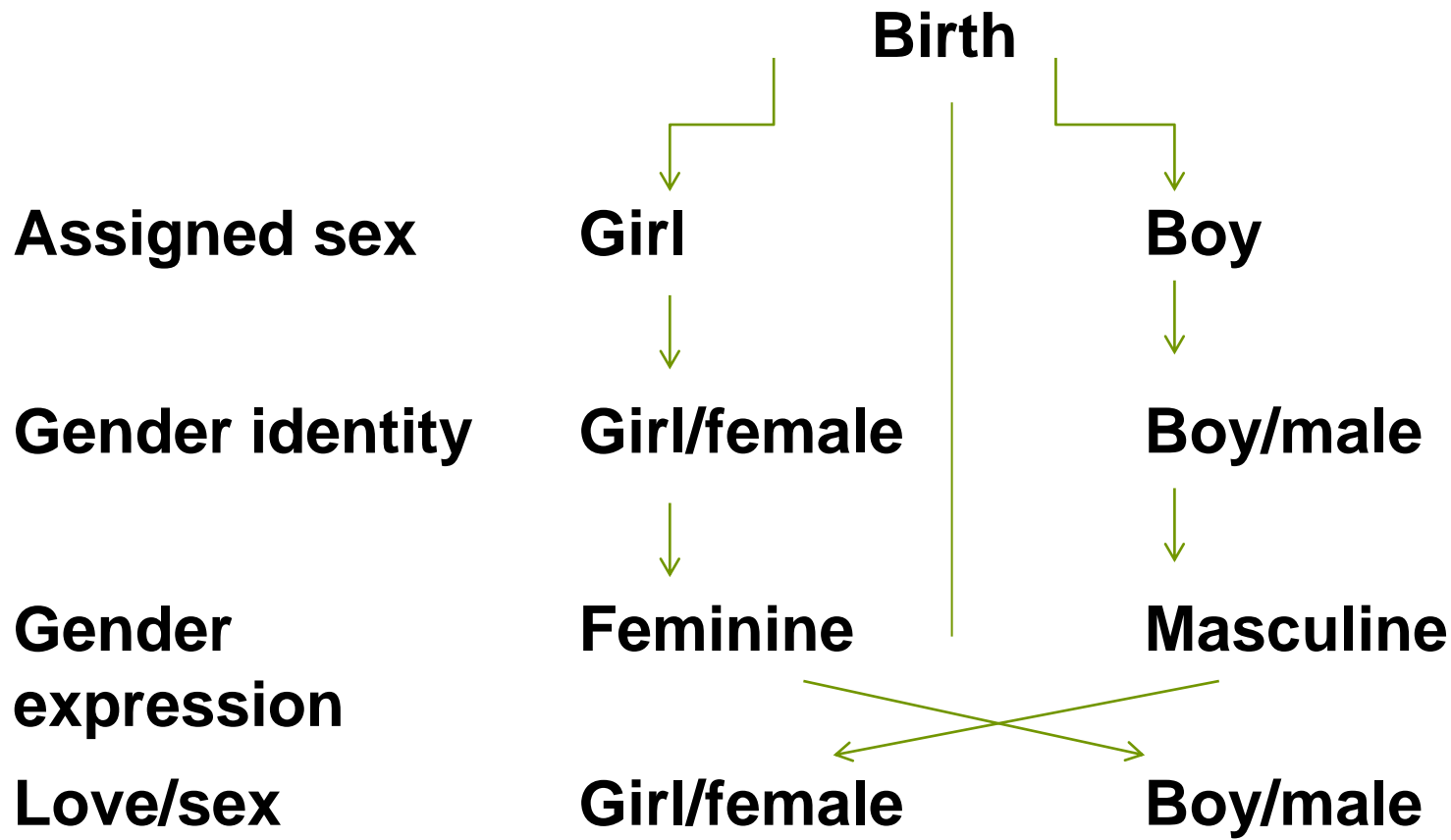
Definition of heteronormativity

The notion that all human beings are *either male or female* both in sex and in gender, and that *sexual and romantic thoughts and relations are normal only when between individuals of different sexes*.

Sex, gender identity and gender expressions



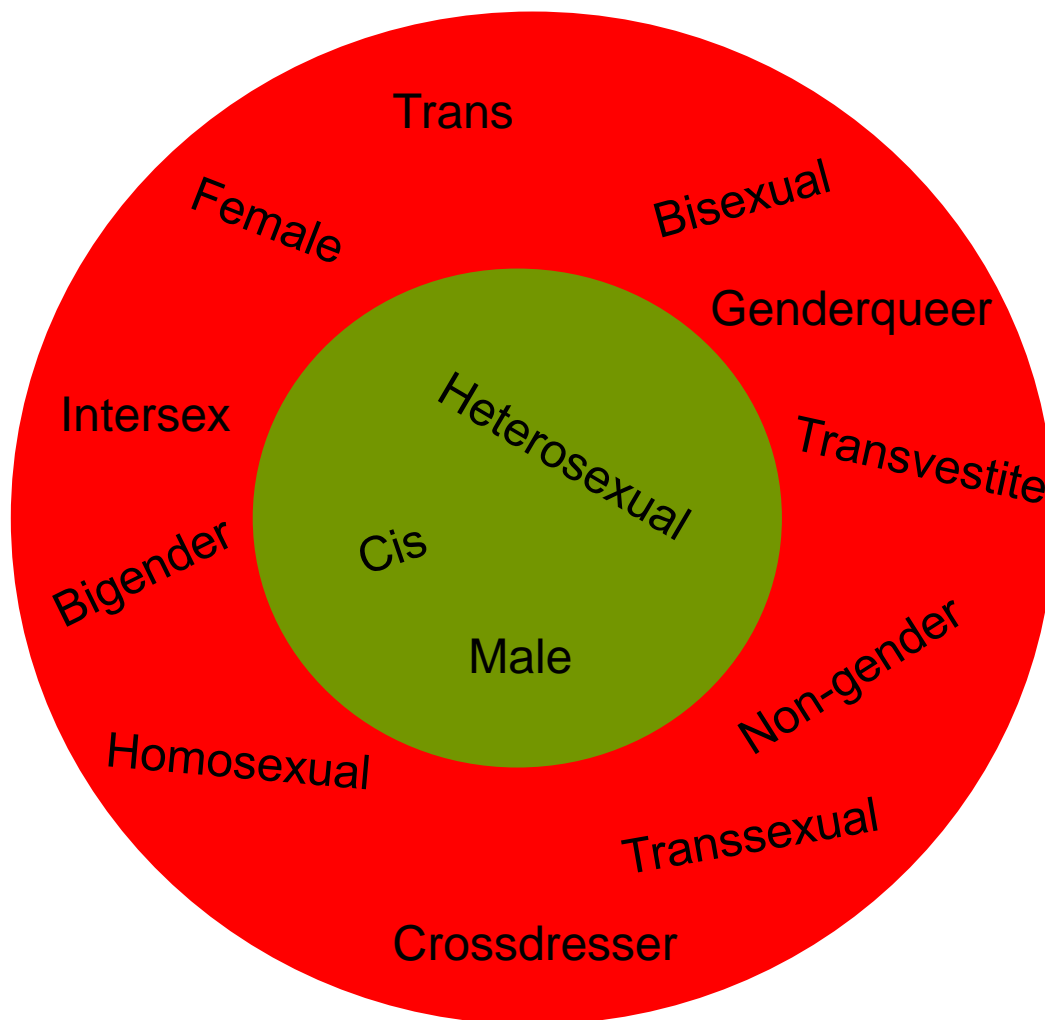
The gender binary and the heteronorm





Norm

The constitutive outside



What needs to be done?

- We do not need to learn more about LGBTI-people per se, instead we need to learn more about heteronormativity and its consequences
- The willingness to equate non-heterosexuality with heterosexuality can never fundamentally challenge heteronormativity and is therefore fruitless or even counterproductive
- A social change towards a society free from discrimination requires that the structures and norms which lead to exclusion, subordination and human rights violations are named, challenged and, in the long run, dismantled

Consequences of the heterosexual norm in working life

The heteronormative distribution of power and privileges leaves LGBTI-people at a disadvantage.

- Lack of perceived possibilities for openness about one's gender identity or expression and/or sexual orientation which can lead to greater risks for impaired health and reduced workplace satisfaction
- Negative or hostile attitudes which can lead to harassment on grounds of gender identity or expression and sexual orientation
- Stereotyping with regard to gender, gender identity and sexual orientation can negatively affect who are seen as the most competent candidates for a job or as high performance employees

Strategies to achieve an inclusive work environment

Clear strategies, well-known routines and policies as well as systematic work are key to successfully promoting an inclusive work environment

- Develop defined strategies to acknowledge, make visible and include
- Actively promote a leadership, an organizational culture and a work environment that recognizes and respects everyone regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression

Activities – working conditions

- For strategies to get the desired effect they can be combined with awareness and knowledge raising seminars to meet preconceived stereotypes regarding the heteronorm and thereby enhancing the possibility to be one self at work
- All members of staff should be aware that the current personnel policy emphasizes the importance of the possibility for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans* employees to relate to their sexual orientation, gender identity and expressions at work in the same open manner as is taken for granted by heterosexual members of staff. Such an openness should be expressly welcomed as an asset. The policy needs to be evaluated and adjusted as necessary.

Activities – working conditions

- Establish a policy and contingency plan with regards to harassment on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression in combination with measures to promote equal rights and opportunities and prevent the breeding of resentment on grounds of sexual orientation, gender, gender identities or expression
- Introduction of the possibility for gender neutral pronouns and respect for the name with an employee wants to be addressed

Activities - leadership

- Management courses should include the topics of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression such as how to detect, counteract and prevent heteronormativity, harassment and discrimination
- Revise employment conditions, contracts, forms, policy documents, guidelines, information, websites etc. to make sure they are not heteronormative

Activities – recruitment and pay

- Seminars and group discussions involving the staff involved in recruitment processes and salary reviews in order to raise awareness about implicit or explicit preconceived stereotypes that could affect the assessment of the applicants and employees from an LGBTI-perspective
- Revise recruitment requirement specifications to make sure that they are not directly or indirectly heteronormative
- Job advertisements should clearly emphasize that the employer welcomes applicants regardless of sex, gender identity or expression or sexual orientation
- Targeted advertising in LGBTI media to underline the employer's inclusive attitude

Respect rather than tolerance

Not to be subjected to harassment and discrimination is an important and basic human right and the issue at stake is not the right to be *different* (from the norm) but the right to be *yourself*.