

Core Knowledge Content

Stereotypes and Assumptions – Gender and Sexual Diversity

In the past, society had created gender roles and expectations. This is how people have been expected to act, speak, dress, and conduct themselves, specifically based on their assigned sex. These stereotypes and assumptions have been created by society, ethnic groups, and/or based on cultural values or beliefs. These traditional gender roles for people have impacted the way people view others and have not been inclusive or an accurate representation of gender. Due to these traditional stereotypes that had once been considered the standard, people may end up making assumptions about others without getting to know them. Some individuals continue to make assumptions based on previous cultural or societal beliefs.

For example, people who were assigned as males at birth were expected to be strong and athletic, or not cry or show any emotion. People who were assigned as female at birth were expected to be good cooks and clean, look nice, be polite and have proper etiquette. Males have often been told they should look and act “masculine”, while females have been told they should look and act “feminine”. These are examples of gender stereotypes.

For gender and sexually diverse individuals, many experience stereotypes regarding their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.

(Amaze – Gender Identity: Gender Roles and Stereotypes <https://amaze.org/video/gender-identity-gender-roles-stereotypes/>)

LGBTQ+ and Sexual Orientation

As part of a broadly based sexual health curriculum, it is important to speak openly about sex, gender expression, and sexual orientation. Sexual orientation and gender expression are an important part of each student developing a positive self-concept. During childhood, it is quite common for children to have many different kinds of sexual feelings and experiences. During adolescence and into adulthood, people are compelled to define themselves through their sexuality. Though academics generally agree that sexuality includes a spectrum of feelings and actions, adolescents report enormous pressure to characterize themselves as ‘straight’. According to [Statistics Canada](#), Canada is home to approximately one million people who are LGBTQ2S+, accounting for 4% of the total

population aged 15 and older in 2018. These students deserve a safe and inclusive environment in which to learn about sexuality.

Students who identify as LGBTQ2S+ or transgender have a disproportionately high rate of suicide attempts and self-reported suicidal ideation when compared to their straight and cisgender counterparts. The good news is that research also shows that connectedness to a school community is a protective factor for LGBTQ2S+ students. When gender and sexual diversity issues are taught within the curriculum in a positive way that respects the diversities of others, reports of school connectedness increase within the population of all students.

Supplemental Knowledge

Myths About Gender

- Children are too young to know their gender
- We shouldn't talk to young children about gender diversity
- A person is only transgender if they declare it at a very young age
- There are only two genders
- Many transgender children "change their mind" about their gender
- Being transgender or nonbinary is a sign of mental illness
- Transgender and nonbinary people are doomed to live unhappy

(*Gender Spectrum*. <https://genderspectrum.org/articles/myths>)

LGBTQ2S+ and Gender-Based Violence

As of the data collected in and around 2018 for [Statistics Canada](#), transgender Canadians are more likely to experience violence from the age of 15 and experience inappropriate behaviours compared to cisgender Canadians.

Within the 12 months prior to the survey taking place, 11% of sexual minority Canadians reported that they had experienced violent victimization, which was more than doubled the prevalence among heterosexual Canadians (4%). Also, more than triple the proportion of sexual minority Canadians (7%) reported that they had been sexually assaulted compared to heterosexual Canadians (2%) ([Table 2](#)).

It is important to recognize that LGBTQ+ youth are at-risk for gender-based violence, discrimination, victimization, sexual assault and/harassment. As an educator you need to be aware of these possibilities and take action immediately. Every school board has anti-discrimination and harassment policies and procedures. For board-specific, check out Gegi.ca with policies and resources for teachers, administrators and staff.

Glossary of Terms

Stereotype. A false or generalized, and usually negative, conception of a group of people that results in the unconscious or conscious categorization of each member of that group, without regard for individual differences. Stereotyping may be based on race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, fam status, or disability, as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code, or on the basis of other factors (Ontario Ministry of Education – Health and Physical Education Curriculum, 2019, p. 315).

Discrimination. Unfair or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups on the basis of grounds set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code (e.g., race, sexual orientation, disability) or on the basis of other factors. Discrimination, whether intentional or unintentional, has the effect of preventing or limiting access to opportunities, benefits, or advantages that are available to other members of society. Discrimination may be evident in organizational and institutional structures, policies, procedures, and programs, as well as in the attitudes and behaviours of individuals. (Ontario Ministry of Education – Health and Physical Education Curriculum, 2019, p. 205).

Homophobia. According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, “the irrational aversion to, fear or hatred of gay, lesbian or bisexual people and communities, or of behaviours stereotyped as ‘homosexual’.” (From *Teaching Human Rights in Ontario: A Guide for Ontario Schools.*) (Ontario Ministry of Education – Health and Physical Education Curriculum, 2019, p. 308).

Transphobia. According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, “the aversion to, fear or hatred or intolerance of trans people and communities.” (From *Policy on Preventing Discrimination because of Gender Identity and Gender Expression.*) (Ontario Ministry of Education – Health and Physical Education Curriculum, 2019, p. 316). Another easier definition to remember is the fear, dislike of, and/or prejudice against transgender people.

Biphobia. Prejudice, fear or hatred directed toward bisexual people. It can include making jokes or comments based on myths and stereotypes that seek to undermine the legitimacy of bisexual identity, like "bisexuality is a phase." Biphobia occurs both within and outside of the LGBTQ community. (Human Rights Campaign, 2022. Bisexual FAQ.

<https://www.hrc.org/resources/bisexual-faq>)

Microaggression. A statement, action, or incident regarded as indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group. In the queer community, there are a variety of phrases and popular sayings that can be considered unintentionally offensive or discriminatory. (Human Rights Campaign, 2022. Bisexual FAQ.

<https://www.hrc.org/resources/bisexual-faq>)

Anti-Discrimination and harassment: includes bullying awareness and prevention programming.

The Language of Gender

The vocabulary of gender continues to evolve and adapt over time. There is not a set agreement on the definitions used, however, below there are some working language included and examples of frequently used terms.

A-gender: A person who sees themselves as not having a gender. Some agender-identified people see themselves as being gender neutral, rather than not having any gender, but in any case do not identify with a gender.

Bi-sexual: refers to an individual with the potential to be emotionally and/ or sexually attracted to members of any sex.

Cis-gendered: refers to an individual who's gender or sense of identity that aligns with their assigned sex at birth.

Equity: refers to the right of the individual to a fair share of the goods and services in society.

FtM: A person who was assigned a female sex at birth and whose gender identity is a boy/man.

Gay: refers to an individual who is emotionally and/ or sexually attracted to a person of the same sex; often interchangeable with the term homosexual.

Gender Binary: A system that constructs gender according to two discrete and opposite categories: boy/man and girl/woman. It is important to recognize that both cisgender and Transgender people can have a gender identity that is binary.

Gender Expression: This is how we present our gender in the world and how society, culture, community, and family perceive, interact with, and try to shape our gender. *Gender expression is also related to gender roles and how society uses those roles to try and enforce conformity to current gender norms.***

Genderfluid: People who have a gender or genders that change. Genderfluid people move between genders, experiencing their gender as something dynamic and changing, rather than static.

Gender Identity: refers to how we view ourselves as masculine or feminine. For many, gender identify matches their physical body. For some, the way they see themselves as masculine or feminine is different form their physical body.

Gender role: The set of functions, activities, and behaviours commonly expected of boys/men and girls/women by society, which is socially and sometimes culturally constructed.

Genderqueer: An umbrella term to describe someone who doesn't identify with conventional gender identities, roles, expression, and/or expectations.

Heterosexual: Refers to an individual who is emotionally and/ or sexually attracted to members of a different/ another sex.

Heterosexism: the belief in the inherent superiority and 'normalcy' of heterosexuality. It is the foundation for homophobia.

Homosexual: refers to an individual who is emotionally and/ or sexually attracted to members of the same sex.

Intersex: a medical term for someone who is biologically not clearly male or female; generally more accurate and more acceptable than hermaphrodite.

Lesbian: refers to a female who is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to the same sex. Lesbian is the preferred term for women.

LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Two-Spirited, Queer, and Questioning.

MtF: A person who was assigned a male sex at birth and whose gender identity is girl/women.

Non-binary: An umbrella term for gender identities that are not exclusively masculine or feminine.

Queer: a term used in a number of different ways, i.e. as an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and other non-heterosexual identities. It is also used as a way of reclaiming and co-opting a once negative term; to remove 'queer' as a term of abuse. However, not everyone finds the term empowering; some resist it because of its use among homophobic people. Queer is a term that is increasingly gaining acceptance as an academic term.

Questioning: refers to a person who is exploring the possibilities of, or who is in the process of figuring out their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sex: Used to label a person as "male" or "female" at birth, this term refers to a person's external genitalia and internal reproductive organs. When a person is assigned a particular sex at birth, it is assumed that it will be their gender, which it might be, but this is not always the case.

Sexual Orientation: Sexual orientation and gender are separate, though related, as part of our overall identity. Sexual orientation is interpersonal (who we are physically, emotionally and/or romantically attracted to). It encompasses the range of human sexuality from straight, gay, lesbian, bi-sexual.

Transgender/Transgendered: Trans-identified is a broad term that describes people who feel that their anatomical sex does not match their gender identity, and/or whose appearance and behaviours do not conform to the societal roles as expected of their sex.

Transition: "Transitioning" is a term commonly used to refer to the steps a transgender, Agender, or non-binary person takes in order to find their gender that they feel as though they are.

Transsexual: a person who experiences intense personal and emotional discomfort with their assigned birth gender and may undergo treatment (e.g. hormones, and/or surgery) to transition genders.

Two-spirited: refers to a member of the Aboriginal community who is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Individual Aboriginal peoples have their own words in their own languages that describe different gender identities and sexual orientations.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Please refer to the [FAQ section of the American Psychological Association website](#) for commonly asked questions and evidence based responses.

Resources

Alberta Health Services. Teaching Sexual Health. (www.teachingsexualhealth.ca)

Gender Spectrum. Some Common Myths About Gender.
(<https://genderspectrum.org/articles/myths>)

Gender Spectrum. The Language of Gender.
(<https://genderspectrum.org/articles/language-of-gender>)

Kids Help Phone. (<https://kidshelpphone.ca/> or 1-800-668-6868)

Niagara Region Sexual Health Centers.
(https://www.niagararegion.ca/living/health_wellness/sexualhealth/sexual-health-centres.aspx)

Physical & Health Education Canada. Always Changing.
(<https://phecanada.ca/programs/always-changing>.)

Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, Sex & U. (<http://www.sexandu.ca>)

References

Ontario Ministry of Education (2019). *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8: Health and Physical Education*. Toronto: Ontario. Print.

Taylor, C. & Peter, T., with McMinn, T.L., Elliott, T., Beldom, S., Ferry, A., Gross, Z., Paquin, S., & Schachter, K. (2011). *Every class in every school: The first national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools. Final report*. Toronto, ON: Egale Canada HumanRights Trust.

Jaffray, B. (2020, September 9). *Experiences of violent victimization and unwanted sexual behaviours among gay, lesbian, bisexual and other sexual minority people, and the transgender population, in Canada, 2018*. Statistics Canada. Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00009-eng.htm>