



My-ID Teacher Training Background Reader

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0. Introduction

This is a background reader for the participants in the My-ID training. The reader consists of 4 articles we think are useful for teachers to be able to teach about sexual and gender diversity in class.

This reader can be read from start to end, but you don't have to. You can also read the articles separately or use the table of contents to look things up.

The first article is an explanation of the theory which is the basis for the My-ID teaching pedagogy. The second article is more like a reference guide, listing questions students may ask in class, offering the factual informative answers and suggestions on how to respond to such questions when they are biased and require another teaching strategy than giving information. The third article is about the Rainbow Keys: ten criteria for good school content policy to integrate sexual and gender diversity. The fourth article does not deal with the topic of sexual and gender diversity, but with the (gradual) process of introducing improvements on this topic in school. This process aspect is still often forgotten.

The reader is made available both as a pdf and as an MS Word file, which makes it easier for participants to copy parts of the guide and adapt them for their own purposes. This publication has been co-funded by the European Union (Erasmus+ program). Both GALE and the European Union have a policy of not limiting the dissemination of knowledge and publications through copyrights. The texts can freely be used provided that the source is mentioned as follows:

Dankmeijer, Peter (2022). My-ID Teacher Training Reader. Amsterdam: GALE

1. How LGBTIQ+ discrimination works in school

If you want to raise awareness about sexual and gender diversity, you should consider that almost all people hold to some extent stereotypical expectations of how other people should behave according to certain social norms. Since we were all raised with such expectations, and because society is largely organized around such norms, it is almost impossible to escape them. We often don't realize how certain social norms lead to exclusion and discrimination, like LGBTIQ+ discrimination and exclusion. In order to effectively combat such exclusion, we need to understand how social norms work.

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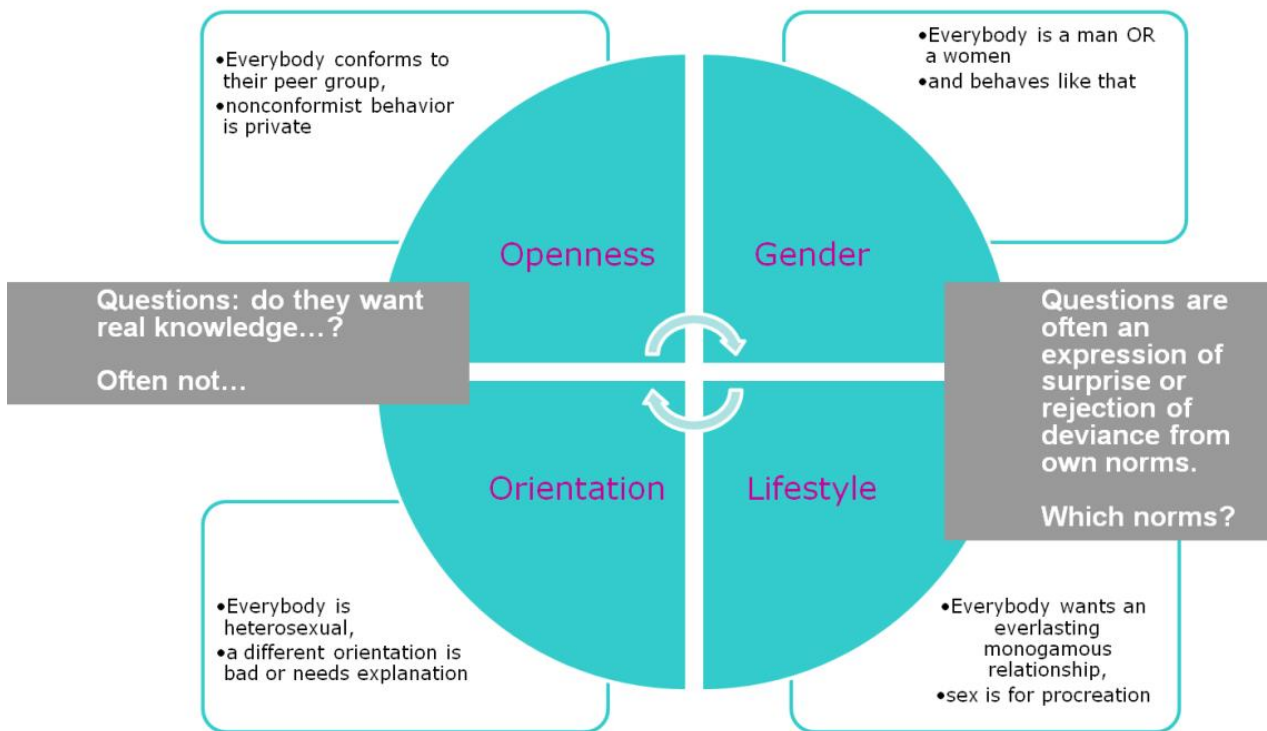
The OGLO model

GALE has developed the OGLO model to explain how social norms work and how they lead to discrimination and social exclusion¹. The model begins with the question "What is homophobia/transphobia exactly?". If we analyse the 40 most common questions young people ask in sessions about sexual and gender diversity, we will see that it is not only a problem that "gay, lesbian or transgender" people are discriminated. There is the broader problem that people have much wider stereotypical expectations about how people are supposed to behave. They have a norm with which they determine their own behaviour and judge the behaviour of others. The OGLO-model posits that this "standard norm" consists of four domains:

1. Openness

¹ Dankmeijer, Peter, GALE, Sexual Diversity in Schools: Reader, 2018

2. Gender
3. Lifestyle and sexuality
4. Orientation and sexual preference



GALE call this the OGLO model. The model is useful to better recognize the norms behind the different types of discrimination.

The norm on *openness* means that you follow the norm of your peer group (community, (sub)culture, church) when you're in public and you should hide feeling and behaviours that are not conforming to the group norms and values.

The norm on *gender* indicates that people expect you to be a real man OR a real woman and that you should behave expectation of your biological sex.

The norm on the *lifestyles* is a set of expectations about relationships and sexuality. The conservative (Western) version of this set of expectations is that a relationship should be everlasting, romantic and monogamous. As to sexuality, the most conservative expectation is that "real sex" is defined as penal-vaginal intercourse which is only acceptable when it has the main aim to procreate. Although the norms on lifestyle have been relaxing since the invention of the contraceptive pill and the following empowerment of women to make their own sexual choices, a lot of the described norms and values are still very common, and other forms of relationship or sexuality may be rejected more or less strongly.

The norm on *orientation* or sexual preference is that people assume you are attracted to the opposite sex, that means that, according to the norm, you can only be heterosexual. If you are different, you should *explain* it (coming-out), and some people may think you are 'weird', or even 'sick' or 'sinful'.

This complete set of norms and values was labelled "forced heterosexuality" by Alice Schwarzer (1973) That term was later broadened somewhat and 1991 called "the norm of heterosexuality" or "heteronormativity" by Michael Warner. Heteronormativity does not mean that everybody must be heterosexual, but it implies the assumption that everyone is straight and should behave according to the social ideal of the heterosexual couple. A key aspect of heteronormativity is the oppression of women and the lower valuation of femininity relative to the norm of dominant masculinity, with the side effect of marginalizing homosexuality. "Heteronormativity" is therefore not just a depreciation of homosexuality, but an analysis of the entire oppressive value system related to gender and sexuality.

The exclusion spiral

Of course, quite a lot of people do not follow the norm and when this does happen, it can cause an unpleasant feeling: a negative emotion.

Negative Emotions

This primary emotion is a natural and instinctive reaction. Our survival instinct is hard-wired as a "fight-or-flight response" in our brain. When we experience an image or an event that looks unusual to us, the first instinctive response of our brain is to decide whether we can fight it or not: it is an automated response is to fight or to flee. It is not useful to try to resist this instinct, it is too deeply embedded in us. But we can learn how to deal with it. Trying to restrain these primary emotions can have negative effects, such as self-oppression. This can lead to stress and on the long term to burn-out.

It is also not constructive to protest against other people who express their primary *homophobic, bi-phobic or transphobic instincts*. They will probably perceive this as a denial of their deepest emotions. If you want to deal with a person who has a primary phobic emotion, you first should allow the person to let some steam off, then you describe what you see and you can ask what is happening. It is important to do this without judgment. This creates space for the other person, while a judgement will probably just stimulate a new fight or flight response. A fight-or-flight emotion does not last long. As soon as you start discussing what happens, by reflecting the person shifts from emotional to a cognitive level.

Negative Attitudes

If negative emotions about sexual and gender diversity are accepted or even stimulated, people will eventually develop a negative attitude. It is important to know that a negative attitude consists of two various kinds of elements: cognitive and emotional elements. The cognitive aspects of the negative attitude are shown in the arguments used to reject sexual or gender diversity. For example, a person could say that "homosexuality" is forbidden by their religious belief, by saying that it is not natural, or that if everybody were homosexual, the whole mankind would go extinct. You can try to change this reasoning by giving people the right information, but this is usually not effective. We call this the "choc ice-cream effect. In an ice-cream bar, the ice-cream is covered by a layer of chocolate. We can imagine the chocolate layer as cognitive arguments covering the underlying emotions. In the "choc ice-cream" symbolism, the emotions are represented by the frozen inside: the ice-cream itself. Because in an attitude the emotions are often not so immediately recognizable anymore, we label this as "frozen" emotions. Because people with a negative attitude tend to be closed for a real dialogue and for learning, the choc ice-cream effect goes like this: as soon as you

have clarified one of their misunderstandings or prejudices, such a prejudiced person will jump to a next argument. This is because the core of the negative attitude is not on the cognitive level of arguments, but on the emotional level: that is, the feeling a person has. These "opinions" may not seem so emotional, but come out as rigid, disapproving, complaining, hurtful opinions and an overall negative feeling. A good education strategy is to engage in a dialogue about the feelings underlying the superficial opinions and prejudices. You can only deal with the cognitive part of questions when students are open and ask earnest and curious questions. This openness only occurs after you have dealt with the negative emotions and attitudes.

Negative behaviour

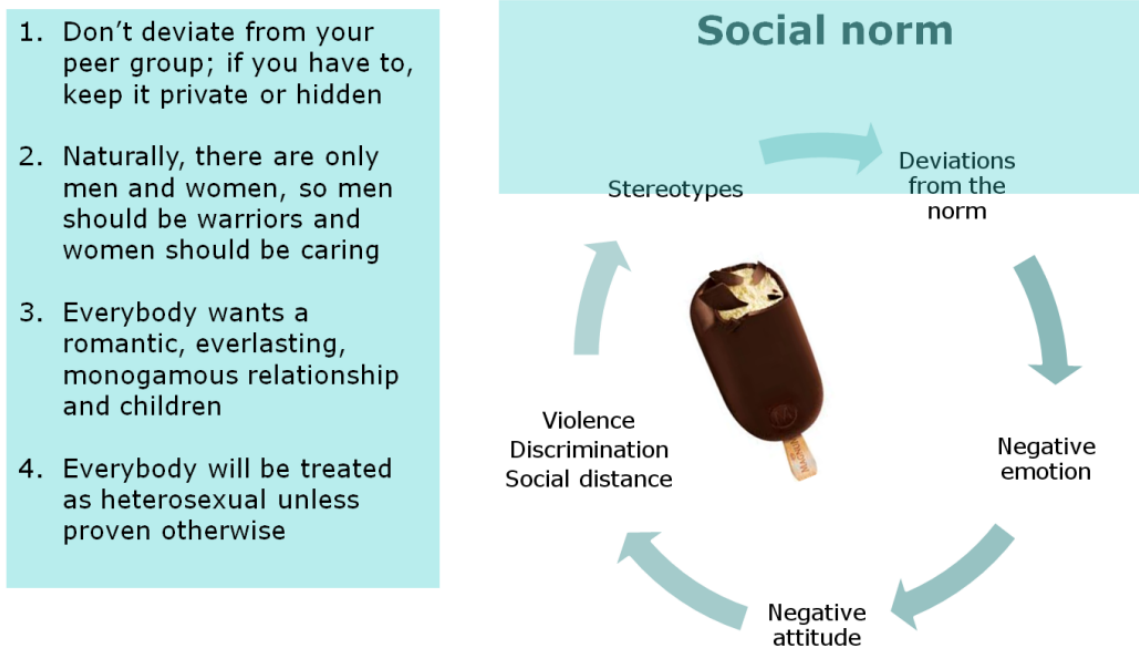
If a negative attitude becomes a negative behaviour, this can lead to discrimination. When we think about LGBTIQ+ discrimination, we often think about every explicit negative actions, like swearing or violence. But the most common form of discrimination towards LGBTIQ+ people is *social distance*. If people know, or suppose, that you are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex or you do not comply with heteronormativity enough in another way, they generally avoid contact with you, or they will come up with every possible excuse to literally keep a distance from you. This kind of social distance may sound innocent enough, but it can be a major reason of stress for LGBTIQ+: everyone needs social contact. When you are socially excluded, it can feel as social murder. This is why so many LGBTIQ+ high school students commit suicide (five times as many as straight teenagers). When they miss social connection, they lose their reason to live and see no way out any more. Stress caused by social distance is also called *minority stress*.

Stereotyping and negative images

If people maintain social distance towards LGBTIQ+, they deny themselves the opportunity to really meet them. Consequently, the only image of sexual and gender diversity they have in mind is an image that struck them because it was different from the norm of heterosexuality. "Black and white" schematized images that are used as a negative representations of an entire group of people are called stereotypes. So be

aware that "stereotypes" are not "extreme role models" that are self-created by LGBTQ+ people, but schematized images created by noticing only partial characteristics. Since stereotypes usually seem to come from a deviation of existing norms, they can lead to a fight-or-flight reaction. This way, the vicious circle keeps going.

How does social exclusion work?



1. Don't deviate from your peer group; if you have to, keep it private or hidden
2. Naturally, there are only men and women, so men should be warriors and women should be caring
3. Everybody wants a romantic, everlasting, monogamous relationship and children
4. Everybody will be treated as heterosexual unless proven otherwise

To wrap it all up: the OGLO model and the exclusion spiral provide a summary of what heteronormativity is and how the continuous strengthening of negative emotions, attitudes and behaviours creates a vicious circle of negativity and stereotyping. If we want to combat LGBTQ+ phobia and sexism, we need to discuss, analyse and reduce the power of heteronormativity and the negative spiral it creates - or reverse it to a positive spiral of appreciation for diversity. We can do this by:

1. promoting a vision of openness and tolerance (offering alternative norms)
2. by giving space to negative emotions without confirming them by touching the emotions involved, for example you can say what has surprised you or has intrigued you (pedagogic action on emotions)
3. you can engage in a dialogue about negative attitudes and their consequences and negative behaviours and develop a spiral curriculum to change norms in a more goal-oriented way (pedagogic and didactic planning)

4. you can stimulate pro-social behaviour by jointly setting ground rules for positive interaction, to limit social distance and to promote cooperation (regulating and stimulating behaviour)
5. offering other images than just heterosexual models and avoid focusing on exaggerated non-normative images (challenging stereotypes)

The fight or flight response

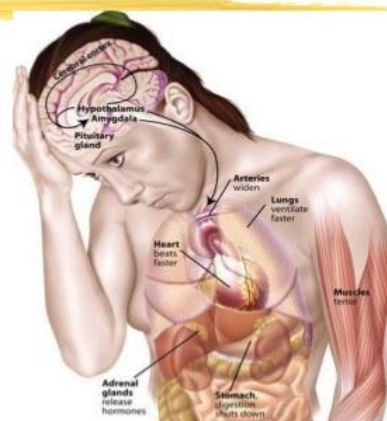
The exclusion spiral makes clear that social norms can lead to negative emotions. These negative emotions are the basic mechanism of exclusion and it is essential to understand how they work and how you can make diminish their negative effect.

Scientists call the negative emotion you may feel when you are confronted with something new – that may be threatening – the “fight or flight response”. The fight-or-flight response (also called the fight, flight, freeze, or fawn response, hyper arousal, or the acute stress response) is a physiological reaction that occurs in response to a perceived harmful event, attack, or threat to survival. It was first described by [Walter Bradford Cannon](#). His theory states that animals (and humans) react to threats with a general discharge of the [sympathetic nervous system](#), priming the animal for fighting or fleeing.

More specifically, the [adrenal medulla](#) produces a hormonal cascade that results in the secretion of [catecholamines](#), especially [norepinephrine](#) and [epinephrine](#). The hormones [estrogen](#), [testosterone](#) and [cortisol](#), and the the neurotransmitters [dopamine](#) and [serotonin](#), also affect how organisms react to stress.

The Stress Response System

Cannon proposed that the stress response (fast) was a **fight-or-flight** response marked by the outpouring of **epinephrine** and **norepinephrine** from the inner **adrenal glands**, increasing heart and respiration rates, mobilizing sugar and fat, and dulling pain.



It is important to realize that:

1. *everyone* has fight-or-flight responses when faced with potential threats, like when you have to deal with diversity outside your peer group or outside your normative framework; such a response is a normal basic instinct
2. that it is impossible and dysfunctional to try to stop it; if you try, the effect will be like building up pressure in a pressure cooker
3. the fight or flight response is a primitive emotion which usually last only a few seconds; as soon as you are able to *think* about it, your cognitive functions have already taken over



How you can deal with a fight or flight response

GALE developed a suggestion to deal with it that has 3 steps. Experienced teachers and trainers will be able to take these all these steps within a second. Less experienced group facilitators may have to take a bit more time like 30 second or a minute. When

you are not experienced, these seconds may seem like eternities, especially because the fight and flight response physically urges you to act now, or not act at all (flee, mentally close yourself off, freeze or fawn – pretend you go along with the wish of the other).

Step 1: Feel

The first thing you need to do is to realize that you have a fight-or-flight response. You need to make some time to feel this. Stop doing what you are doing or what your impulses tell you to do. Turn your attention to what happens inside your body. Take a deep breath and exhale. Feel how your body is stressed and how it relaxes when you breathe out. Inexperienced facilitators may want to try this out by breathing deeply three times.

As a teacher, do not be afraid that this self-reflection will allow your class to become unruly. Normally, you start to experience your own flight-or-flight response at the first moment your student makes a charged comment. You can already start to realize your own instinctual response while the student is still raging or refusing to say something. Let them rage, or let them stay silent for a while. No disasters will happen.

As soon as you start to reflect on how you feel, start to *think* about it, your fight-or-flight response will be over. Your cognitive level (reflection) takes over and some of the instinctual stress will wane.

Step 2: See

The second step is to turn your attention from the inside to the outside. Observe your students, or your discussion partners(s). Be conscious of what you really *see*, without judgment. For example: "a student has a contorted face, he may be angry or afraid", "this student sits with his legs stretched and his arms folded, and he looks to the ground, as if he wants to ward off something", "this other student is yawning as if she is bored or somewhere else with her mind", "one student looks around, he is watching what other people will do".

Try to really *see* your discussion partners with their whole being and all their emotions. Many judgments, guesses and fantasies about what they feel and think will come up in your mind, but try to 'park' these for a moment and have a caring way or *really seeing the reality* of your group.

Even when you still don't really *do* anything at this stage, your students or discussion partners will unconsciously notice you are trying to accept them for who they are, which is crucial for the next step.

Step 3: Connect

The third phase is to connect to the student or person that is caught in a fight or flight response.. The first thing you can do is to express what you see, again without judgment. Examples:

"I see you are sitting with your legs stretched and your arms folded, and you look to the ground. Can you tell me how you feel?"

"I see you are yawning. It is OK, but I wonder why you are suddenly getting so sleepy? Do you want to say something about that?"

"I notice you are looking around. What is going on in your mind?"

Make sure you are not attacking, ridiculing or sneering at your discussion partners; these are non-functional *fight* responses which prevent constructive responses. At the same time they can be covert *flight* strategies (by attacking first, you avoid confrontation on the level of empathic connection, which can be scary).

It may well be that students or discussion partners answer you with an new emotional fight-or-flight response. How often and how strong this happens are signs of how deep their fear is. Don't be afraid of it. Just repeat the three steps until students start to reflect about what they *say* rather than blurt out their emotional response. When you get at that post-emotional stage, you can start a proper *dialogue*, which oscillates between

expressing emotions, reflection on emotions, reflection on attitudes and recounting underlying experiences and expectations.

True dialogue

Please note that a further *dialogue* is not the same as traditional teaching. Dialogue means you, as a full personality with all your feelings and experience, exchange views with other persons with full personalities and own experiences. They have their goals and you have your goals. Find out which goals (relating to respect, human rights, etc.) you *share* and explore how you can *connect* to understand the world and people better and to improve the world and relationships. This search for connection between students, as well as between teacher and student, is a more horizontal relationship than traditional teaching. Of course, as a teacher or trainer, you do have more experience and knowledge; there is nothing wrong with that. But use this greater knowledge very sparingly, because dialogue is not about transferring knowledge but about mutual connection.

As a teacher, don't be afraid of also sharing your own feelings. If you are hurt by comments students make, you don't have to hide this. That is a wrong perception of what "professional distance" means. "Professional distance" does not mean you ignore your feelings while teaching, nor that you deny the emotional bond with your students. Even if you have a painful discussion with your political enemies - like with politicians - it can be functional to let it be known that you feel yourself being hurt by comments. "Professional distance" means you do not allow your own fight or flight impulses to make you act in dysfunctional ways. It means you are not forcing your private ideas on your students.

It does *NOT* mean you forget your teaching goals, like promoting respect and prosocial behaviour. These goals not have to be hidden. Students who reject any goals and engagement about prosocial behaviour have serious social and likely also psychological problems. It makes no sense to reject them because of disrespectful behaviour, on the contrary, you should care for them and check why they are in opposition. Do what you

can in your class or in your discussion, but if that becomes impossible, then try to refer to professional counselling.

2. Questions students may ask

In this article you find a series of questions students may about sexual and gender diversity ask and the *factual* answers on them. However, it is not useful to answers questions in a factual way when students ask them in a biased and emotionally loaded way. Biased questions can be considered “prejudiced remarks disguised as questions”.

For example when students ask a question because they think LGBTIQ+ people are weird and their questions are laced by surprise, shock, disgust or fear, it is often not useful to answers such a question in a factual way. Some “facts” may even strengthen their prejudice, because the nature of prejudice is that there will always be examples of LGBTIQ+ people or practices that confirm stereotypes, and just denying this will not work.

This is why we not only give objective information in this article, but also suggestions on how to respond to biased questions and remarks in a proper pedagogic way. In this article, we give examples of answers you could literally use to respond to students. These examples are not meant as a dictate, but as an example of how you could respond. Of course, we advise that every teacher finds their own way and style to do this and we hope this article serves as an inspiration.

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Frequently asked questions from students **can** be **divided into** the following categories:

1. Questions about *openness about being different*: coming-out, what is LGBTIQ+ discrimination, questions about LGBT (sub) cultures and LGBTIQ+ Pride.
2. Questions about *gender*: biological sex, gender, gender roles, offensive sexist words like sissies, tom boys and trannies.
3. Questions about *lifestyles*, partner choice, dating, sexuality and relationships, stereotypical prejudices about straight relationships and gay relationships and sexuality.
4. Questions about *orientation*: is it natural or learned, how is it different from heterosexual feeling, the cause, can you change preferences?

This categorization is based on the OGLO model.

For each question, we divided the answer into four parts:

1. **SHORT ANSWER:** This is a diplomatic but correct answer you can give if you are short on time and do not want to get into a discussion at that moment.
2. **LONG ANSWER:** this type of answer gives more factual information, but in a way that hopefully creates "creative doubt" in students and causes them to reconsider any biased questions or comments. For a teacher, it is *not* wise to give this kind of information if the question is biased or asked with underlying negative emotion.
3. **HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS:** this section gives the teacher an indication of what any bias behind questions may be based on and provides suggestions for how the teacher can try to nuance the norm of heterosexuality.
4. **QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE:** these are suggestions for specific questions the teacher can ask to initiate discussion and reappraisal of heteronormativity.

Questions about otherness

Is labelling yourself as LGBTIQ+ a fashion?

SHORT ANSWER

No. Fashion is short-lived and changes from season to season. Fashion is an invention of marketing companies.

LONG ANSWER

How men/women or boys/girls have sex, what their sexual preferences are and if or how they talk about it, is different throughout history. How cultures deal with LGBTIQ+ people is very different. How people and cultures deal with sexual and gender diversity can change, but this happens much slower than a fashion. It does not depend on marketing or a sudden wave of interest, but on slow cultural movements. In Western countries, the last 100 years saw a trend that same-sex attracted people became more

open. Some started to call themselves lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersexual or transgender. There are some people who like to try out things and call themselves bi-curious. This is because people slowly felt able to be more free, and it is not a short-lived fashion.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

This question is essentially about non-conformism. Why does anyone so need to be "different" or pretend to be "special"? That must be a superficial fashion! The underlying emotion of this bias is rejection of non-conformism and being different. The teacher's job is to create space for diversity. This is best done by responding to students' own need to be able to be themselves there to make their own choices, even if they deviate from expectations and norms.

ASKING FOR DIALOGUE

Have you ever heard of a marketing company promoting being gay or bisexual next season? Would you like it if there was such a fashion? Why did you think being gay, lesbian or bisexual is fashionable these days? Do you like being yourself, making your own choices? Do they sometimes deviate from what others think is normal? How would you feel if others called your own choices a "fad" or a fashion?

You can't be gay and religious, can you?

SHORT ANSWER

Same-sex attracted feelings are not related to any religion. So, any religious person can also experience same-sex attraction or non-traditional gender feelings.

LONG ANSWER

In conservative religions, however, it can be difficult to deal with such emotions, let alone show them. The holy books of Christianity and Islam condemn same-sex sex. These religions arose at a time when making many babies was important for survival as a people. There were also many strict religious regulations to be pure, especially for priests. Many people therefore feel that some of the literal guidelines in ancient holy books are now outdated. But Orthodox believers in particular believe that you should

follow the sacred texts literally. Regardless, most religions are not just a collection of precepts, but a community of people who support each other. If you find yourself attracted to the same sex, the risk of losing that support can be very threatening. In other religions, such as Hinduism, and in religions and customs of African and North American tribes, same-sex attraction, or choosing a sex between male and female, was a common part of society in earlier times, But after the colonization of much of the world by Christian countries, homosexuality was criminalized there too. The strange thing is that many Indians and Africans now say, "homosexuality is a Western import," while their laws against homosexuality are actually Christian colonialism.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

Some believers believe that heteronormative prescriptions around relationships and family are given by their god and therefore "natural," and that other choices are therefore "counter-natural," sinful or sick. A teacher who wants to reduce heteronormativity on this issue does not have to go against faith or precepts, but can ask how students deal with it. The teacher can also help clarify that following specific values and norms is one's own choice. To what extent a youth takes into account the wishes of one's family, societal expectations, religious order, holy books or customs in doing so is also one's own choice – with all the pros and cons that come along with such a choice. The question can be asked whether meeting expectations is consistent with one's own needs and what one can do to survive if they are not consistent.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Why do you think religion does not correlate with same-sex attraction? How do you talk religion about love? Is it about feelings or just behavior? Do the guidelines of that religion all still work (look at all the guidelines and whether believers all still adhere to them, not just the ones about homosexual behavior). Are the guidelines the same for sex between men, sex between women and for sex/gender change? To what extent do you think a religion should be flexible with the times? In this religion, do you get to decide for yourself or do you have to follow what books or religious leaders tell you?

Do animals have same-sex behaviour? Are there transsexual animals?

SHORT ANSWER

Yes. Researchers have documented gay and bisexual behaviour throughout the animal kingdom. And some animals can change sex or have no "biological sex" at all.

LONG ANSWER

As for homosexual behaviour, researchers have found examples of homosexual behaviour related to power and dominance. For example, large male monkeys often mistreat smaller male monkeys to assert their dominance. But there are also examples of animal relationships that could be seen by human eyes as romantic love, such as the two male flamingos at the Amsterdam Zoo who steal eggs from other flamingos every year and then raise the young flamingos themselves. But there are no animals that call themselves "gay" or "bi," labelling yourself as something is unique to humans.

As for animals changing sex: this happens regularly. There are three ways this can happen: males can change into females (protandry), females can change into males (protogyny), or there is a bidirectional or simultaneous sex change, where the animal in question can change sex at different times. This is especially common in fish. The brightly coloured clownfish is an example. Among clownfish, one female is dominant and she has sex with large male fish. When the female dies, the dominant male turns into a female and non-dominant males turn into dominant males.

There are also animals that have more or less intersex variation. This need not be an exception, as in humans. For example, female hyenas have a penis and they can have an erection.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

It may be that students think that homosexual behavior or sex change does not originate in the animal kingdom because they heteronormatively assume that only heterosexuality and cis-genderism is "natural. Possibly they seek confirmation of the false argument that homosexuality and transgenderism is "unnatural. The teacher who wants to counter this heteronormativity can ask why students think animals meet human expectations, and by asking what they consider "natural. The teacher can push for a conclusion that ideas about naturalness are based more on human nomenclature and expectations than on real nature itself.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

What do you consider "natural? What is that based on? Let's look up if any animals have gay behavior or change sex, shall we? Have you ever seen animals having sex with an animal of the same sex of the same species? Do you know other animals that change sex or have characteristics of both sexes? What does all this say about our (binary) views of sex?

How do you know (for sure) you are LGBTIQ+?

SHORT ANSWER

The best way is to sincerely look at your own feelings. What do you dream about? How does your body feel? Who do you look at first when you are at school? Who do you find "beautiful," and who do you find "attractive"? Do you prefer to hang out with boys or girls?

LONG ANSWER

As a boy or girl, you begin to have sexual feelings around puberty. Friends and peers may pressure you to approach, date or have sex with people of the opposite sex. Boys may also push you to be typically macho toward other boys and girls, or girls may push you to be seductive to boys. All these expectations and pressures can make it difficult to make your own choices in this regard.

Some young people are sure they are straight, gay or bisexual feelings from a young age and may soon identify with a label such as lesbian, gay, bisexual or something else. Others are not so sure of their sexual orientation. There are several choices you can make. There is a difference between feeling a sexual attraction, calling yourself lesbian, gay, bisexual or otherwise, and choosing a certain way to show it (coming-out, hanging out with others like you, going to LGBTIQ+ bars, joining specific meeting and dating apps, participating in LGBTIQ+ Pride, and so on).

Similarly, even during elementary school, some young people are aware that they do not feel at home in their biological bodies. Perhaps even then they begin to experiment with wearing clothes of their preferred gender. In some countries, such young people can be given hormone inhibitors as early as puberty so that they do not develop further

as boys or girls. That makes it easier later to have surgery that changes your biological sex.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

Young people may be insecure about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (or a combination thereof) because they have the heteronormative expectation that everyone is cisgender and straight. So when they have feelings that are inconsistent with that, they look for explanations from within their heteronormative framework: "if I'm gay, shouldn't I be disgusted by the idea of having heterosexual sex? ", "if I am gay, then I can't get married and have children, then I am abnormal, then I will be excluded", "if I don't fall for a girl as a boy, and I feel more comfortable with girls, maybe I am actually a girl myself" (intakes at gender clinics show that a significant number of young people who think they are trans, on closer inspection, turn out to be same-sex attracted, but may have a strong reluctance to admit a homosexual preference). Uncertainty about this and the need for "coming-out" are manifestations of the norm of heterosexuality. Teachers who want to reduce this uncertainty should consider whether the question was asked out of uncertainty or distaste. If it relates to uncertainty, the teacher can try to reassure the student and make it clear that vague feelings are okay, that you can take time to explore your feelings, and that any conclusion is okay. If necessary, the teacher can explore with students how to deal with expectations and norms. If the question is asked with distaste ("I don't want to be gay," "I don't want to be trans"), the teacher can work with the student to explore where the distaste comes from. Acknowledging the fear of not wanting to deviate can be a first step in recognizing and dealing with heteronormative patterns.

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QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

What are your feelings? Are you comfortable with your sexual feelings, or with your body? Are you pressured by peers or adults in your life? If you have a friend who may be LGBTIQ+, support them? How? Can you talk to someone about these things?

Can you see it when someone is LGBTIQ+?

SHORT ANSWER

No. LGBTIQ+ people cannot be identified by certain mannerisms or physical characteristics.

LONG ANSWER

This idea is based on generalizations about LGBTIQ+ that are often biased and have to do with gender. For example, there is a preconception that gay men are often "effeminate," and that lesbian women are often "man-wives," so basically: that they deviate from what people consider 'normal'. Indeed, scientists of the 19th century believed that LGBTIQ+ formed a kind of "third gender": a sex between male and female. That idea is now considered outdated in Western countries. We regard sex, gender and sexual orientation as different things. And recognizing what you are can only be seen by people showing it.

In Asia and the Pacific, the idea that there is a third gender does live (still?). That's because in their history there have always been people who held a position and role that stood between woman and man. The American Indians also knew a kind of third gender, called "two-spirit" (the spirit of two genders).

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

Confusing gender with sexual preference is a typical effect of heteronormativity, because a "real" man, according to the heteronorm, is meant for a "real" woman. So a gay or lesbian preference would then be characterized by not being a real woman or man, and that would also be recognizable.

Claiming that gay men and lesbian women "behave just like straight people" is not sufficient to refute this argument. After all, there are lesbian women who act tough and gay men who appear feminine or walk in drag. If the teacher tries to promote the belief that gays and lesbians are "just as normal" as straight people, they are actually affirming the heteronorm and implicitly condemning gender-role deviant behavior.

Instead, the teacher should encourage acceptance and appreciation of diversity and non-conforming gender behavior. This can be done by having students exchange about their own identity, how they make it visible and how annoying it is when others judge or condemn them for some aspects of their identity.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Do you think it is important to recognize LGBTQ+? Why? How can you deal with your feelings if you can't recognize them? What is your identity? Which aspects do you like to show, and which do you like less? How do you feel when others judge or condemn you for a small aspect of your identity? What makes it difficult to view people neutrally on what they show of themselves? What stops you from appreciating the diversity of people -visible and invisible?

How do gay and lesbian people contact one another?

SHORT ANSWER

Usually in the same way as heterosexuals meet other people, who they might feel attracted to: at parties, through friends or relatives, acquaintances, at a sports or cultural club or at evenings out.

LONG ANSWER

In locations where both gay and straight people visit, it is generally easier for straight people to find a partner. There are usually more heterosexuals than homosexuals. In addition, when a gay or lesbian person flirts with a heterosexual person, the heterosexual sometimes feels threatened or offended. Such heterosexuals have yet to learn that a flirtation by a gay or lesbian person is not a threat. Because of this risk, many gays and lesbians prefer to date in gay and lesbian bars or on websites specific to them. Bisexuals also have their own parties.

In countries where homosexuality is taboo or prohibited, it is difficult to have gay or lesbian bars. The authorities raid and close them. Sometimes police or criminals even go undercover on gay dating apps to arrest or blackmail gay men. In such situations, people who are attracted to the same sex are forced to meet secretly in hidden networks of girlfriends or friends, or to have sex along roadsides or in parks. This is not a free choice, but forced by discrimination.

For transgender people, dating is also difficult, especially if they are still in transition or not completely changing their gender. Other people may be surprised, uncertain, shocked, dismissive or aggressive when they discover that their date is not the expected gender. Many transgender people therefore put off dating until after their transition. Changing gender can also cause confusion among transgender people about what their dominant sexual orientation actually is. That may be another reason for putting off

dating. If a partner knows a partner is transgender and is happy with that, it can resolve a lot of uncertainty.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

Many students have no idea about the daily life of LGBTIQ+. They themselves are very preoccupied with dating, courtship and first relationships and sometimes experimenting with sex. These are mostly experiences within strict heteronormative frameworks, and they cannot imagine anything else. And if they do imagine anything, it is often biased images such as men having anonymous sex. The teacher who wants to reduce this heteronormativity can, on the one hand, draw attention to the fact that people may have prejudices and why, and on the other hand, explore with students what it would be like to live a life in which your relationship and sexuality are taboo or even forbidden.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Suppose your form of desired relationship were taboo or forbidden, how would you feel about yourself? What would you do then? If you were gay, lesbian or bi, where would you meet new friends or potential partners? When you tell this like this, is that your ideal of how you would do it or could you do it in reality? Suppose you are transgender and you are in the process of changing gender, would you date? Where would you meet people? Would you date a man or a woman? Or with another transgender person? Would you be afraid of a reaction if they found out you were trans? How would you deal with that?

Coming out: how do parents, friends and family respond?
Why do you need to come-out?

SHORT ANSWER

This depends very much on the society, the expectations from friends and acquaintances, and on how empowered the LGBTIQ+ person feels. People expect you are straight and cisgender, so LGBTIQ+ people often are asked to 'explain' why they are 'different'.

LONG ANSWER

Many young people choose to keep their LGBTIQ+ feelings a secret; others confide in friends and family. Coming out of the closet (coming-out) can evoke very different reactions: some accept it immediately and support their child or friend, others feel confused and scared when they discover (or suspect) that someone is not heterosexual or cisgender and need time, and still others reject it altogether. Some parents suspected their daughter or son was LGBTIQ+ when they were very young, and for some it is a sudden discovery. Researchers did divide parents into "accepters," "processors" and "rejecters." The majority of parents are "processors." The "rejecters" are mostly found in circles where there is a strong cultural or religious rejection of sexual and gender diversity. Friends generally respond more positively than parents, and mothers tend to be more supportive of gay and transgender children than fathers.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

The heteronorm is that your biological sex is established at birth, and your gender and gender expression automatically aligns with that. It is then expected that men fall on women and then women fall on men. Deviations from these standard expectations can be confusing or even shocking. Many cisgender heterosexuals feel that their position is so normal and natural that people who deviate need to explain that and explain why they are "different. We call this explanation "coming-out" or in Dutch "coming out of the closet." In a world without a heteronorm, coming-out would not be necessary because everyone would naturally take into account the possibility that you can have different kinds of gender characteristics, genders or sexual preferences and that everyone expresses them in their own unique way. Therefore, the emphasis on coming-out and on explanation is a typical consequence of heteronormativity.

If a teacher wants to nuance this heteronormativity, they can, for example, "de-centre" the question around coming-out and turn it around: when did you discover that you were cisgender/hetero? The discussion afterward can discuss why that question is "odd" (people with obvious privilege rarely ask why they have that privilege). You can also ask directly why LGBTIQ+ should explain why they are who they are. Let students discover for themselves why LGBTIQ+ should tell what gender and sexual orientation they are and why that is controversial.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Suppose you yourself are LGBTIQ+. What would happen if you came out of the closet, to your parents or friends? (Ask this question separately for sexual orientation and for gender, because it can make a lot of difference in terms of the answer). Which friend or parent would you choose to tell first? What kind of reaction would you hope for? Why would you tell? Would you be afraid of reactions? Why? What expectations (norms) does this have to do with?

Career and work: do you tell about your sexual orientation of gender identity?

SHORT ANSWER

Most LGBTIQ+ do not immediately tell about their sexual orientation or gender identity a job interview. It's not that they don't want to be honest, but they don't want to run the risk that they might not get the job.

LONG ANSWER

Research shows that if you tell people you are LGBTIQ+, there is a high risk that you will not get the job. So LGBTIQ+ make a good decision not to come out right away.

Once they are hired, then most LHBTIQ+ explore the situation at work first. If they have a permanent contract and the situation seems safe, they gradually come out in front of people they trust. If they don't, that says more about their environment than about themselves.

Coming out is preferable in a way. Hiding your identity can lead to self-denial self-image and frustration. In the long run, that can lead to burnout. It may also be that when people discover you are LGBTIQ+, they accuse you of being 'dishonest'. They then do forget that they themselves caused that situation and their complaint of 'unfairness' actually proves it. But if you are open, you may be at risk of being bullied, excluded or other forms of visible or covert stigmatization. So that also makes your life more difficult. LGBTIQ+ must balance and balance these needs and risks.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

Being open about one's sexual orientation or gender identity would not be a problem in a non-heteronormative society, but the more heteronormative the environment, the

more problematic it becomes. The environment presents the LGBTIQ+ person with a dilemma: hide and deny yourself at the risk of burnout or come out for it at the risk of stigma and discrimination.

The teacher who wants to nuance this can try to make students feel empathy for this impossible choice and discuss how LGBTIQ+ (and others in similar situations) can be spared such a dilemma. This can be done by making the environment more accepting and appreciative of diversity.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

What job are you looking for next? What do you think the social environment is like in that company or organization? Do the job or career opportunities require some level of personal contact? Suppose you are gay, lesbian or bi, would you tell them? To whom? Why those individuals? When is a work environment safe enough? What can you do about this?

Do LGBTIQ+ people suffer from discrimination?

SHORT ANSWER

Yes. Unfortunately, LGBTIQ+ still face discrimination. The degree and type of discrimination depends on the environment.

LONG ANSWER

Discrimination can be reflected in laws, in guidelines, through distorted media images and information, through withholding information (such as in school textbooks) and through negative attitudes and behaviours. In schools, scolding or yelling "gay!" or "sissy" is an example of such a derogatory attitude and behavior.

Research shows that the type and level of discrimination also varies for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people, intersex people and others who deviate from the norm of heterosexuality. Transgender people face the most discrimination. Lesbians and female bisexuals are discriminated against because they are both female and non-heterosexual. In general, people who are women or men who appear female and

people who are thought to have deviant sexual behavior are discriminated against more than others.

Because LGBTIQ+ can hide their feelings and identity, discrimination is not the same for all LGBTIQ+. If no one knows you are LGBTIQ+, the discrimination is not direct, but indirect. Even if you hide yourself, you constantly feel you have to be on guard and others constantly appeal to you to appear cisgender heterosexual. This is called "gender policing."

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

Gender inequality is a cornerstone of heteronormativity. Women and femininity are valued less than masculinity. This explains why women in general and also men who do not appear masculine enough (or worse: choose feminine behavior) are stigmatized more than people who make (cisgender) heteronormative choices. In addition, people who deviate from other aspects of the heteronorm (as mapped through the OGLO model) are also rejected. This is not just about LGBTIQ+.

The teacher who wants to nuance this can ask students to consider why LGBTIQ+ are discriminated against or stigmatized (patriarchal undervaluation of femininity and exclusionary hetero norms) and then discuss how this also limits the students' own lives. In addition, discuss how one can overcome these limitations for themselves and others.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Why are LGBTIQ+ discriminated against? What types of discrimination are there? What is stigma? Have you ever been stigmatized yourself? If not, why not? Do you think discrimination or stigma is acceptable? Why? What can be done against stigma and discrimination? What do you do yourself, what can you do? Do you think calling out words around sexual and gender diversity is discrimination? Why (not)? If you think it is just friendly chatter and teasing, how do you feel when you are called that?

Why do LGBTIQ+ have their own Olympics?

SHORT ANSWER

Because it's fun to play sports together in a friendly atmosphere. The Gay Games came about because gay and lesbian sports clubs were not allowed to participate in regular sports tournaments. So they started their own tournament. LGBTIQ+ do not want to make the same mistake as regular clubs: the Gay Games are open to everyone, including heterosexuals, if they do not discriminate.

LONG ANSWER

Once every four years, the Gay Games take place. There are also national and regional gay games. Thousands of people participate. Although the Gay Games are like the Olympics, the atmosphere is different. There is much more emphasis on friendship, solidarity, culture and human rights.

LGBTIQ+ do not always agree on everything. One example is that years ago, some wanted to limit the Gay Games to sports, while others also wanted to host cultural events and a human rights conference during the games. They could not agree and the culture people started their own event: the Outgames. Most LGBTIQ+ activists regret this division, so everyone hopes that one day they will come together again.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

Many subcultural LGBTIQ+ occasions and events have arisen from heteronormative exclusion from general occasions and events. But the 'among us' feeling in such LHBTIQ+ events was also found to have an additional element of relaxedness and friendliness, which general events often do not have. See, for example, the relaxed and friendly atmosphere during the Gay Games or during the Amsterdam Canal Parade. That's a totally different atmosphere than the competition and fights you sometimes see around soccer games. Non-heteronormativity apparently has added value. Therefore, such LGBTIQ+ events may well have a permanent existence even when legal LGBTIQ+ discrimination no longer exists. Until soccer and other games also become less competitive and more social events, where winning is fun but friendship is more important.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Do you think LGBTIQ+ sports clubs should be allowed to participate in regular tournaments? Would you mind sharing the shower with gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender athletes? Would you or your sports club consider participating in the Gay Games or Outgames, if it were in your city? As a straight person, would you consider

attending an LGBTIQ+ sporting event? Why do you think LGBTIQ+ sporting events never have fights, like soccer? Could soccer games be organized without nasty competition and swearing? How?

Questions about gender

Who plays the male and the female in gay and lesbian relationships?

SHORT ANSWER

That question cannot be answered for all gays and lesbians, because every couple will decide for themselves how to divide household tasks.

LONG ANSWER

Perhaps you have a somewhat stereotypical idea about what typical "male" or "female" tasks are. How would you divide the task in a heterosexual relationship? Is it mandatory that the woman stays at home, always cleaning, cooking and taking care of the children, while the man plays sports, fixes things and takes out the rubbish? This division of labour is changing rapidly in many countries. In modern societies, a traditional division of labour can create more problems than it solves.

But maybe your question is not about the household but about sexual roles. Perhaps you expect gay men to be effeminate and therefore have the perception that they prefer a passive role in sex. Or that you ask yourself how lesbian women have sex when there is no penis involved. Such expectations and questions align with the general idea that real women should be seductive and passive and real men active and "on top". These images and ideas are not a reality, not among gays and lesbians and often no longer among heterosexuals either. In an equal relationship, you can choose what you want to do. Maybe you like traditional sex in the "missionary" position, or maybe you like variety more. This applies to both heterosexuals and homosexuals.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

As already indicated in the long answer, there are numerous heteronormative expectations about gender roles and about sexuality.

The teacher who wants to nuance this can ask students if and why they prefer traditional division of labour in the household or if they (would) have sex. In this way, they take the focus away from the LGBTIQ+ and could make the discussion more about heteronormativity in their own lives. If they want to nuance this in their own lives, automatically the stereotypical value system and thus the images of LGBTIQ+ are also adjusted.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

How do you think about the division of roles in the household, or if you were to have sex? Do you want to be equal in your relationship? Which tasks do you prefer and why? Will you discuss this with your partner? Will you negotiate this with each other, or does one partner force the other into a division of labour, or a certain way of having sex?

Are gay men effeminate and lesbian women butch?

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SHORT ANSWER

No, not necessarily. Every person is different.

LONG ANSWER

If you have this image, it might be based on your idea of what a 'real' man or a 'real' woman is and you don't actually think gays and lesbians are real men and women. Do you think real men should be macho and real women soft and seductive? This is called a stereotype. You may wonder where this stereotypical idea comes from. Perhaps you have seen images of this or your parents or friends or girlfriends have told you that this is how it should be.

In the last century, scientists thought that gay men and lesbians were a "third gender", that is, a gender in between men and women. These scientists could not imagine how someone could be a real man or a real woman and be attracted to the same sex at the same time. They looked around and found some men and women who were not like

macho men and gentle women and thought this proved the existence of a third gender. But they missed all the gay men who looked macho and women who looked either soft. It later became clear that biological sex, gender, sex or gender roles and sexual preference are different things, all occurring in different variants. There are also heterosexual men and women who are not typically macho or seductive. It seems a bit insulting to push people into such extremely limited gender roles.

There are gay men who do look more feminine. Or lesbian women who are tough. But the question is whether there is anything wrong with that. It would be more pleasant and social if everyone could choose their own style, or just be the way they are.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

The heteronorm prescribes relatively strict gender roles. Underneath those prescriptions is the expectation that a man is dominant, a breadwinner or a hunter/warrior himself, and that a woman is seductive, nurturing, or even submissive to men. In short, a patriarchal image (male dominance) of how society and families should function.

If a teacher wants to nuance this, a broad approach is needed in which there is a constant focus on making boys more empathetic, social and caring, and empowering (empowering) girls' own choices and attention to ensuring that they develop corresponding assertive attitudes and skills. This starts with very small things such as making sure boys are not speaking all the time and making sure girls are asked to be the first speaker in a class discussion as often as they are asked to speak. More specifically, a teacher can also ask about stereotypical expectations about men and women and about masculinity and femininity. For example, explore with students whether they really value (what is considered) masculinity and femininity equally. Patriarchal notions are so strongly built into our cultures that there is almost always explicit or implicit lower valuing of 'femininity'.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Have you ever thought about your own gender role? Do you experience any pressure from your peers to behave in a certain "masculine" or "feminine" way? How much space should people have to be different in this? If you feel uncomfortable with deviant gender behaviour, why is that? How do you act on your feelings? Is this the right thing to do? Do you value femininity and masculinity equally? Do you really? For example: suppose you, or a politician were to cry in public, would you admire that? Is showing

emotions something male or female? Why would showing emotions be 'weak' and bad for your status?

If you are trans and regret your transition, can you change back?

SHORT ANSWER

It is possible, but it depends on the type of surgery you had. Incidentally, it is very rare.

LONG ANSWER

There is quite a controversy going on about so-called de-transition. The opponents of sex change are trying to thwart medical help for transgender people in many ways. In doing so, they use the arguments that transgender people's choice to transition is actually forced upon them and that doctors who cooperate in gender transition are actually performing mutilation and torture of the natural body. They also claim that young people in particular are susceptible to the 'fashion' of changing gender and that many of them realise after a while that they made a wrong choice and therefore want to change back to their biological sex. In doing so, they mention a few individual cases where this did happen. However, serious and large-scale research shows that very few transgender people regret their transition.

The decision to change gender is so drastic and so difficult to make, that it is hard to imagine people doing it out of 'fashion'. This certainly applies to young people. In some countries, young people can use puberty inhibitors. Puberty inhibitors delay the hormonal changes of puberty, making gender reassignment surgery easier. When a young person stops taking puberty inhibitors, biological development resumes its course. Puberty inhibitors are not harmful and do not have a permanent effect. Gender reassignment surgery is usually only possible from the age of 18, so most young people have about six years to make a final decision on whether to have such an operation and try out what it is like to go through life as their desired sex. That is a very long time to sustain a whim, so the 'fashion' argument is extremely unlikely.

In many countries where gender reassignment surgery is possible, transgender people have to undergo extensive psychological counselling after an intake, and then they have to get permission from a medical expert before they can undergo the surgery. Incidentally, this is a requirement that the transgender movement is protesting against. It is seen as an encroachment on the right to make your own decisions about your own body.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

The doubt that transgender people cannot make their own decision and are likely to backtrack on such a decision is heteronormative. Such doubts are based on the assumption that gender reassignment *cannot* be good because the biological sex would be the natural course of action.

The teacher can expose this form of heteronormativity by asking students whether they would also have such doubts or questions when it comes to other medical procedures that are more accepted, such as straightening floppy ears, using Botox, and other medical corrections that make it easier for a person to live better physically or socially (the decentring strategy).

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

You are asking for information, but may I first ask why exactly you are asking this question? Do you doubt the willpower (or right) of a transgender person to ask for gender reassignment surgery? Do you think this is easy, or something you would do because it convinced you by others? Are you aware of the requirements in this country before you can get gender reassignment surgery?

Are there things about your body that you would possibly want to change (someday)? What would it be like if, for such an operation or change, you first had to spend two years on a waiting list, then a year in therapy, after which a doctor decided whether you could do it? Why would this not be the case with Botox surgery? Why is it like this with gender reassignment surgery? The transgender movement considers it an infringement of their right to decide about their own bodies that a doctor has to decide whether or not they can change their gender. What do you think about that? In what cases should you not deny someone the right to self-determination? If you think there are such cases, may a medic decide instead of you if you fall under such a rule? For example: you have a terrible car accident and your genitals are badly damaged. You would like it to be repaired as much as possible. But your doctor thinks it is medically

irresponsible to repair it, even though it is theoretically possible. Is your doctor allowed to decide this, even if want something else?

Can you make an intersex person normal?

SHORT ANSWER

An intersex person has biological characteristics of both sexes. This is 'normal' for that person.

LONG ANSWER

For a long time, persons with intersex characteristics were thought to be a 'mistake of nature'. This was based on the assumption that a baby should 'normally' be a man or a woman. So in the past, when babies were born whose sex organs were not so obvious, doctors would do surgery as soon as possible to change the baby in a certain direction. Whether in consultation with the parents or not, it was decided whether the sex organs could most easily be changed to a penis or a vagina. This did not always work out medically. Many children with an intersex variation had to be operated on again every year to ensure that the original surgery continued, or that mistakes in previous surgeries were corrected. Those operations often happened during summer holidays because the family was embarrassed about it. So this also meant that children with intersex variations did not really have holidays and arrived at school exhausted after the holidays.

These kinds of so-called "corrective" surgeries are mostly no longer done now because the medical profession finally understands that intersex variations are a natural variation. "Corrective" operations are now seen as a medical act without the consent of the person on whom it is done. Young people with intersex variation should be old enough to be able to make a responsible decision about any surgery. "Corrective" operations on babies are now only done if the intersex variation causes major problems for physical functioning, for example if a baby cannot urinate properly.

Doctors used to think that intersex variations could be seen externally, but now we know that physical variations are also possible within the body and that there can be genetic and hormonal intersex variations.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

The heteronormative aspect of this question is of course again about the taken-for-grantedness of sex and gender, and the societal pressure to physically and socially conform to traditional gender expectations. In this case, this "gender policing" is implemented not only socially but also physically.

If a student asks a question that includes the word "normal", an alarm bell should immediately go off for the teacher. The word "normal" usually represents a social "norm" that is taken for granted and natural. In such cases, the teacher can start a discussion about what is considered normal and to what extent students feel that variations from the average are possible and permissible.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

What exactly do you mean by "normal"? Is this about the average, about what you yourself think is normal, about a social norm expectation?

In many countries, surgery to make a baby into a 'real' man or a 'real' woman is now considered unacceptable because baby cannot yet consent. What do you think of this rule?

Suppose you yourself later had a child who turned out to have an intersex variation, and suppose you had the right to change this without the baby's consent, what would you do? Why? Would you risk repeated laborious surgeries?

But biological sex is natural and gender is a phantasy, is it not?

SHORT ANSWER

A biological sex can be male, female or intersex. All three are natural. "Gender" is the term coined by social scientists for the way we feel and express ourselves. The way we feel is natural, the way we express ourselves can be an expression of our feelings but it can also be adapted to what the environment wants from you.

LONG ANSWER

Until the 1940s, the English word "gender" was mainly used in grammar to indicate whether a word was masculine, feminine or neuter. It was a fancy word that was basically synonymous with gender. There was a growing awareness after World War II, however, that biological sex and gender roles were different. Simone de Beauvoir, for instance, began her book "The Second Sex" with the famous statement that "women are not born as women, but made into women". She did not yet use the word "gender". Probably the sexologist John Money first used the term "gender" in 1955 to distinguish between biological sex and the way people behave as male or female. In the 1960s and 1970s, feminists started using the word more and more in this way; initially to talk about "imposed" gender roles, later also to indicate that people can also make their own positive choices in feelings and behaviour that were traditionally considered "masculine" or "feminine". This happened first in scientific circles and later trickled down to society at large. The term "gender" was thus not a "fantasy" but rather an invention to better distinguish between identity and behaviour.

The increasing use of the word "gender" coincided with the rise of social constructionism. This scientific approach says that the way we interact with each other is based not only on reality, but also on our perception and subjective explanation of reality. We make agreements about our values and norms, and these help determine how we see and judge things. Many 'agreements' were made a long time ago and, over time, are taken for granted and considered natural, rather than just as social agreements that could potentially change.

In the 1970s and 1980s, other scientists went a step further: if rules and stories about reality are considered so natural that no one doubts them anymore, they themselves become reality, because we act accordingly. In terms of "gender roles" and "gender", this means that not only do we behave as men or women, but the fact that we behave that way actually becomes evidence that we feel that way. Queer scholar Judith Butler calls this "performativity": it is not your "own" identity by virtue of which you choose certain behaviour (as the older feminists said), but the behaviour determines your identity. In short: it is often not so clear what is 'reality', 'natural', an 'illusion' or an 'expectation', and how you can make your own choices in the context of all the social pressures and history that define our context. Social scientists from the constructionist school believe that you should always look critically at what people say and do and how this relates to their history, interests and identity. You cannot take anything for granted.

This critical view does not sit well with conservatives, especially those who think there is one truth, and certain standards that everyone must meet. An example is the Roman

Catholic Church, which has taken the stance that the biological sexes "man" and "woman" were created by God to enter into marriage together for the purpose of procreation. In this version of "reality", sex that is not for procreation is unnatural and sinful and gay relationships are "intrinsically disordered" (not as God intended). Naturally, the Roman Catholic Church sees the term "gender" as a threat; after all, according to the church, there are only "natural" sexes.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

Hetero norms and the concrete rules and behaviours resulting from them are not just a theory, but also an explanation of reality. "Gender" and "heteronormativity" are spectacles through which we perceive and interpret reality. As we react to that perception, the perception becomes part of our reality. One could see the battle between conservative heteronormative visions and more progressive visions that emphasise flexibility as a battle between forces that want to defend traditional values and forces that want improvement. The biased question of whether gender is 'natural' and gender a 'fantasy' is therefore a weapon of someone with a conservative view to ridicule someone with a constructionist view ('your view is a fantasy').

If a teacher wants to enter or mediate this battle, you can start a discussion about what students think about what reality actually is and how to deal with it. Ultimately, then, it is also about how you want to be prosocial with others, even when people may have different images and interpretations of reality.

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QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

What exactly do you mean by "natural"? And what do you mean by "fantasy"?

Sexologists and feminists made a distinction between sex and gender because they saw that there is a distinction between how a body looks biologically inside and outside, and how people behave. Do you agree with that distinction? Why should or should you not make such a distinction? What is the difference between your opinion on this and the (biological) facts?

Sometimes images and reality get mixed up. Can you give an example of this? (Example: a road sign of a zebra crossing. This is a symbol of a legal rule. But people do what the sign says - they cross via the zebra crossing. If they don't, there is a good chance they will have an accident. The symbol causes a new reality).

Do you think you have complete autonomy to choose who you are and how you behave, or are you also influenced by your environment? What are the factors from your environment that influence you? Are they, for instance, social conventions, norms, expectations, your interpretations, or the interpretations of others?

Why does the LGBTIQ+ movement want to destroy the family with their gender ideology?

SHORT ANSWER

The LGBTQ+ movement does not want to destroy the family. The word "gender ideology" was invented by conservatives who want to vilify progressives.

LONG ANSWER

The last decade has seen a fierce battle between conservatives who feel their traditional values are threatened by progressives who question whether some traditions are still functional. This discussion is not always conducted neatly. Many arguments are nonsense or even lied.

The discussions and arguments focus on the "traditional family". By this is meant the marriage between a cisgender heterosexual man and a woman, with traditional roles, and with children. Radical conservatives consider this the only "natural" form of relationship. They believe this form is threatened by progressive ideas about alternative relationships. Because progressives use the word "gender" to distinguish between biological sex and gender roles, conservatives see "gender" as a critique of "natural" and "stable" marriage. The progressives' critique of rigid traditional relationships they denigratingly call "gender ideology". They think that accepting new forms of relationships and relations will lead to total destruction of the family and also of the state.

It is not. On the contrary, one of the demands of the LGBTIQ+ movement is to open marriage to gay and lesbian couples. The LGBTIQ+ movement could also make more radical demands, such as allowing any kind of relationship between two or more people and abolishing legal and financial benefits for dual relationships (this is called

individualisation). This also happened in some countries in the 1970s, but more conservative gays and lesbians preferred "equal" treatment to "individualisation".

In the fight against so-called gender ideology, queer scholar Judith Butler is particularly under attack. Her stance that the reality surrounding sex, gender and sexuality should be constantly scrutinised is perceived by conservatives as introducing total chaos into society. The LGBTIQ+ movement is also attacked on the basis that acceptance of sexual and gender diversity will undermine the stability of heterosexual relationships. In the process, old and new prejudices are trotted out (for example, that gays would be child molesters and that transgender people would be disguised men who want to rape women).

Research shows that in terms of argumentation, the radical-conservative anti-gender ideology movement is led by the Roman Catholic Church and funded mainly by wealthy American evangelical churches. In countries where populist and nationalist-fascist parties are growing, anti-gender ideology is used to frighten the population from innovation in thinking about relationships and sexuality, incite against progressive forces and promote centralisation of power, the breakdown of democracy and right-wing nationalism. In countries where such parties have been in power for some time, all sorts of measures are being taken to silence progressives, make conservative values mandatory and ban and prosecute expressions of sexual and gender diversity (and diversity and criticism in general).

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

Through the anti-gender ideology view, heteronormative conservatives seek to instil fear against innovation and against progressives.

Many teachers find it too dangerous to pay attention to anti-gender ideology in the classroom. Sometimes they consider it a potential threat to their jobs and the status of the school. During extreme political polarisation, some parties are already introducing directives requiring schools to impart ultra-right-wing values to students. Integer teachers can deal with this by discussing such guidelines and values but not giving the impression that these are the only choices for students. They can discuss both traditional and more modern forms of relationships and values. They can create their own material for this. If that is too dangerous, they can create a safe atmosphere in the classroom where there is space for students to discuss this political and social polarisation in constructive dialogue. In situations where political and social pressure is

intense, the focus could also be on discussing how to deal with political and social pressure.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

You talk about "gender ideology". Do you know what that means? Shall we study this? (Some suggestions for critical lessons on gender ideology can be found on the G.EDU platform (<https://geducyprusplatform.com/>), module 1, topic 3, activity 1 "gender ideology" and 2/3 "how to respond to critical questions").

How might the LGBTIQ+ movement destroy the "family"? What is the background and purpose of the "anti-gender ideology" movement? Shall we study this?

There is a lot of political and social pressure these days to behave conservatively, and to ridicule progressives, or label them as dangerous. Is this democratic? What could you do about this? Suppose you come across someone who is vehemently against LGBTIQ+ or against the term "gender". How might you respond to this? Do you think arguments will help? Is there any other way you can talk to such people constructively? Or even to find joint solutions?

Questions about lifestyles

Are gay men promiscuous?

SHORT ANSWER

Promiscuous is a negative word: it sounds like having sex all the time, and like you can't have a steady relationship. This is not typical of gay men.

LONG ANSWER

Studies on sexuality show that gay men have more partners and generally have more sex than straight men. In the past, this was probably because gay men could not marry, they often did not have children and also had few good examples of steady

relationships. But recent research also shows that even now, gay men have more sex and partners than straight men. This is probably because many gay men disagree with the idea that you can only have one partner your whole life. They then may have 'open' relationships, for example, where they make arrangements to have sex with others.

The numbers on numbers of permanent relationships of LGBTIQ+ and cisgender heterosexuals vary by country and by period in history. It seems that when there is more discrimination of gay men, more gay relationships are sneaky and different from heterosexual relationships (e.g. fewer permanent 'closed' or monogamous relationships). But even in countries where it has long been possible to have a legal gay relationship, fewer gay men have permanent relationships. If they do have steady relationships, over time it is more often 'open' (polygamous). Among straight men, steady relationships and marriage are much more common. Open relationships are less common among heterosexual men. Straight men may have so-called 'closed' relationships where they do 'cheat' with another woman. It is not clear exactly how often this happens because straight men are often not honest about this.

Lesbians (like heterosexual women) seem to be in more permanent relationships and have fewer partners over their lifetime. They are more likely to be in closed relationships.

Bisexual men and women are in between gays, lesbians and heterosexuals in terms of steady relationships and partners. Bi men have more sex than straight men but less than gay men. Bi women have more sex than lesbian and straight women.

In some cultures a man can marry multiple women, and in many cultures (straight) men are admired if they have lots of girlfriends and lots of sex. In contrast, the cultural norm is often that girls should not have sex outside their relationship or steady boyfriend.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

The aspect of the heteronorm that applies here is about expectations around relationships and sexual lifestyles. The most traditional version of the heteronorm states the only legitimate form of relationship is a marriage between a man and a woman and that it is meant to create children and a legacy (carry on the family name). The marriage must be monogamous to guarantee that the children are fathered by the man. Therefore, a man may cheat but the woman may not. Straight norms also come into play within sex itself. The most traditional sex is the "missionary position" where the man lies on top of the woman and penetrates her, and the woman undergoes this

passively. In old books on sexuality, all preparation for the missionary position is called "foreplay" (after all, the "act" is the real play). All other forms of sex were called "perversion" ("sex that does not lead to procreation") in those books.

In the more modern parts of Western countries, this is now a lot more nuanced. But many underlying heteronormative values and ideas about relationships and sexuality are still alive. For instance, there is often still the idea that a straight relationship is worth more than a gay one and that a bisexual relationship cannot be stable. Or the idea that gay men cannot or will not have a steady relationship because they are only after sex. And that an ideal relationship is perpetual, monogamous and romantic. Depending on how strongly such ideas live, deviations from those 'ideals' are more strongly rejected. Such intolerance is a threat to diversity in society.

If teachers want to nuance rigid norms and expectations around relationships and sexuality, they can enter into dialogue with students about their ideals and desires. One can ask follow-up questions about which aspects of these are influenced by societal values and norms, and which aspects reflect your real needs. The teacher can also note that there are apparently many different ideals and expectations on this topic, and ask students how they think you should deal with such different expectations. Is it necessary to condemn people with different expectations, or can you deal with them in other ways?

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

What is your ideal when you think about a relationship? Which aspects of it match your real needs and which aspects do you think are influenced by the expectations of your environment, and of your culture or religion? Have you once been in a more permanent relationship? Was it exactly as you expected? In what ways was it different? Did it make you adjust your expectation of what a relationship could be?

Think about sex between men and women. Is it better to have sex as a man or as a woman? What makes the difference? Should people (men and women, gay, bi and lesbian) be able to make their own choices? How are their choices influenced by expectations and norms?

Do people have different ideals and expectations of relationships? Suppose you encounter people who have a different kind of relationship than you (would like), how would you react to that? If you react negatively to them, why is that? How would the

people in a different kind of relationship feel about that? Are there other ways to respond to people with different ideas about relationships than you?

Why do gay men have sex in public areas?

SHORT ANSWER

When there were no gay bars, the only way for men to meet other men was in public places. But that was not so obvious to others because it did not happen very openly.

LONG ANSWER

Both gay men and straight couples sometimes have sex outside the home. It is a misconception that only gay men meet in public places. Just go to a park; you will often find heterosexual couples dating or having sex there too. Not everyone has the luxury of their own room or can afford a hotel.

Looking for contacts in parks or other public places is called "cruising". In the 17th century, Dutch prostitutes and men wanting to meet other men walked right past each other in churches and in some streets and nudged each other to make it clear they wanted something. This was called "kruysen". The English adopted this word as "cruising", after which it spread around the world in the English form.

Although cruising occurs in public places, it is usually done rather covertly. It is usually not prohibited. However, it is prohibited if one unexpectedly confronts others with sex in public and intentionally shocks them. Research on "gay bashers" shows that some guys look for gay men cruising and then pretend to be "suddenly shocked". They then use their so-called panic ('gay panic') as an excuse to beat people up. Only in very homophobic countries is such an excuse is accepted.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

The question or remark that gay men have sex in public is based on the heteronormative prejudice that all gay men are out for sex and do not care about heterosexual norms. Denying this prejudice makes little sense, as students often base such a comment on concrete examples where cruising does indeed occur.

If teacher wants to discuss this bias, it is better to broaden the discussion by talking about when one has the luxury of dating or having sex at home or in a hotel. If students (mostly boys) invoke 'gay panic' and are shocked, this can also be made broader by discussing when one feels shocked in heterosexual and in gay situations. Research shows that many heterosexuals say they are shocked when they see two men kissing in public, and only a small minority is shocked by a man and a woman kissing, or two women kissing. It can be discussed why this is and whether that is reasonable.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Sex in public places... this raises the question of what sex actually is and what is allowed in what type of places.

Do you think boys and girls kissing in public - at school, for example - is allowed? And if it's two girls? Or two boys?

If you still live at home and you meet someone you want to have sex with, where would you go? Do heterosexual couples never have sex in public places? If they do, how do they do it, openly or a bit hidden? Do gay men have sex openly where everyone can see? When and why do people sometimes complain about this?

How do women have sex with each other? Do they use bananas?

SHORT ANSWER

Women have sex with each other just like others. Maybe you are confused because you think that for real sex you need a male genitalia. But there are many other ways to enjoy it.

LONG ANSWER

Many heterosexuals assume that sex consists mainly of intercourse (penetration of a man's penis into a woman's vagina). In practice, however, lovemaking is usually more: a combination of kissing, cuddling, caressing, licking, biting, fingering and penetration. Lesbian women can do all these things too. Penetration can be done with a dildo (an

artificial penis or rod). And yes, some fruits and vegetables look like a rod and you can use them too. But watch out for the sharp edges and prefer not to use pepper 😊.

Bear this in mind: sex is not just about technique, but mostly about an experience. So what you do often matters less than how you do it and with whom.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

The heteronorm assumes that real sex consists of the penetration of a woman by a man. Since no man or penis is involved between two women, students may have problems imagining what lesbian sex might look like. Possibly, they can see only the use of a dildo (or fruit) as a substitute for a penis.

The teacher can best clear up this heteronormative misunderstanding by bringing the discussion to general sex education. Many students, both boys and girls, do not know where a woman's hot spots are and assume that penetration is the main way to satisfy a woman. They do not know that many women do not orgasm through vaginal intercourse and that other ways of arousal, like stimulating the clitoris are more important. If this is known, an important part of the confusion about lesbian sex has already been cleared. Next, it may still be necessary to exchange views on how women do not always need a man to have satisfying sex.

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QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Make a list of all the sexual techniques that exist. Categorise them: can heterosexuals do them, can gay men do them and can lesbians do them? What is your conclusion?

Is sex without penetration real sex? Why not? Do girls and boys think differently about this?

For you, is sex just a movement or technique? What else does it involve? In what way would you like to talk about this?

How do men have anal sex with each other?

SHORT ANSWER

Many people think of anal sex when they talk about gay men. But gay men can have sex with each other in many ways.

LONG ANSWER

Anal penetration can be physically pleasurable because the penis or dildo can rub against the prostate. This can be so erotic that it leads to orgasm. People also find anal sex very intimate: it brings you very close together, just as penis-vaginal intercourse does. This applies to both men and women, homosexuals and heterosexuals.

Because the bowel is also used for defecation, many people who engage in anal sex like to rinse the anus beforehand ("anal shower").

It is a misconception that only gay men have anal sex. Around 40 per cent of heterosexuals experience anal sex, for pleasure and sometimes to prevent pregnancy. But beware: anal sex can lead to increased risk of sexually transmitted infections. Using a condom (preferably extra strong) is recommended. Anal flushing is not effective against STI infection.

During the time of the AIDS epidemic, drugs were invented that could stop the spread of HIV. Later, it was discovered that you could also use these drugs as a kind of morning-after pill: if you have had unprotected sex, it often helps if you take these pills within 48 hours. Then the virus cannot settle in your cells. This is called PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis). You have to go to a hospital to get this. Even later, people tried to find out whether using such drugs would also help prevent infection if you take it beforehand. This is called PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis). Gay men who think they are at risk can now get PrEP on prescription from their GPs. Unfortunately, some GPs do not want to cooperate with this.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

The heteronorm assumes that real sex consists of the penetration of a woman by a man for procreation. Since men only have (anal) sex for pleasure, this is often seen as unnecessary lustfulness. This is also reason why some doctors do not want to prescribe PrEP to gay men. A similar effect is that some doctors do not want to prescribe erection pills to straight men if it is not necessary for a desire to have children.

In addition, anal sex is sometimes seen as 'dirty' by young people on the assumption that anal sex leads to states of defecation. Incidentally, they do not have this objection when they themselves have anal sex to prevent pregnancy.

The teacher can reduce this heteronormativity and sensation around anal sex by treating anal sex in a matter-of-fact manner within the context of sex education. In addition, naming that both straight and gay people engage in anal sex is a way to de-centre the emphasis on 'gay'.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Have you ever thought about anal sex? What are your images of it? Would you consider doing it with a boyfriend or girlfriend? If you have extremely negative feelings about anal sex (among gay men), why do you think that is? Is anal sex between men more disgusting than between straight men?

Questions about orientation

Why do some people experience same-sex attraction?

SHORT ANSWER

For the same reason, heterosexual people are attracted to the opposite sex.

LONG ANSWER

It is something you notice in yourself and there is no specific reason, it is just something natural. In this, heterosexual and homosexual attraction are not different.

Although your cultural environment may have a considerable influence on what and who you find attractive. After all, there are certain male images and female images that are considered super attractive. It is not for nothing that certain types of men and women keep recurring in fashion and commercials; these are not exactly images that are representative of society.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

Because of heteronormative expectations that only men fall on women and vice versa, students sometimes cannot imagine that men can also fall on men from a women on women. If they do try, they may continue to project heteronormative expectations onto

gay, bisexual and lesbian relationships. For instance, heterosexual pupils may think that gay people would be disgusted at the idea of doing it with women. It is also common for students to think that bisexuals are confused, unable to make a choice, or untrustworthy because the heteronormative framework is strictly binary.

One way to break this stereotypical way of thinking of students is to de-centre the question. After all, the question becomes ridiculous if you were to ask it about heterosexuals. This indicates that the question is based on a bias, and if learners realise this, you can explore the reason for the bias together. It is also possible to have a dialogue with pupils more generally about when you are attracted to someone and why this is so.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Would you also ask this question about attraction to the opposite sex? Why not?

When are you attracted to someone? What are the attractive aspects? Are these aspects that you feel deeply within yourself? Are there factors around you that help determine whether you find something attractive? Many young people really like certain pop stars or even fall in love with a pop star. Is this unique to everyone, or are certain men or women with certain characteristics more popular than others? Is this a purely individual choice or do social images also seem to influence who and what you find attractive?

How do you become lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender?

SHORT ANSWER

You don't *become* one. You are attracted to the same gender or not. You feel comfortable in a female or male body or not. But what you *call* yourself depends on your own choices and how your environment reacts.

LONG ANSWER

If you seriously want to know more about the research in this area, we can summarise it as follows. There is research among identical and non-identical (fraternal) twins that shows that same-sex attraction is partly genetic (that you are born with this tendency),

but apparently also partly determined by the environment. Only we do not know which environmental factors have an influence.

Other research shows that the way people display feelings around gender and sexuality varies by country, culture and time. There is also research showing that it is possible to suppress same-sex feelings for a while, but not 'cure' them (it is not a disease).

Anyway, you are not asking how to become straight. So the question is a bit odd. Some people ask this question because they would actually like to know if you can change feelings that are non-cisgender or non-heterosexual so that you meet standard expectations. But maybe other people don't want that at all.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

The heteronorm states that by default you are either a man or a woman, and heterosexual. If this is not so, it raises the question of why you deviate from the standard, or the question of how you can go 'back' to the standard.

Of course, both genetic and social aspects come into play here. Simone de Beauvoir did not say for nothing that women are not born but made into women. Gender is a social construct in the sense that many aspects of masculinity and femininity are enforced by society. The interaction between a person's feelings and the social influence on them is complex. But that is precisely why it is unfair to judge someone on it.

If teachers want to discuss this heteronormative aspect, it is wise to address social expectations on what can happen if you have feelings that do not conform to social expectations. To what extent can you shape these feelings and how do you negotiate with those around you that you are allowed to deviate from what they expect as the standard (heteronorm). It is also good to distinguish between deeper feelings of identity and the ways of expressing your feelings and needs in different situations.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Why are you asking this question? Would you also ask this question about heterosexuals? Why not?

Some young people who ask this question are not sure whether they are straight or bi or gay, or they don't feel comfortable with their physical sex. Then you may want to belong but at the same time feel yourself to be different. Suppose you have a friend who has such doubts. What would you recommend to them?

Suppose you yourself have homosexual, bisexual or transgender feelings. Would you then make them known to others? To whom and to whom not? Why or why not?

Can you become gay or lesbian by seduction or rape?

SHORT ANSWER

No. People don't choose to have same-sex feelings. You either have them or you don't.

LONG ANSWER

Many gays, bi's and lesbians have tried falling in love or having sex with people of the opposite sex before coming to the conclusion that their same-sex feelings are more dominant or proportionate.

For a long time, conservatives have argued that you are made gay by seduction, and that you can become transgender by confusion about gender. The seduction theory ensured that for almost a century there were laws making the age at which young people could have sex higher for homosexuals than for heterosexuals. In some countries, such laws still exist. There is still much controversy around transgender people about the extent to which they are allowed to decide for themselves whether they are male or female, or something in between or something that can vary.

Some (straight) men say lesbians can become heterosexual by having sex with men (so-called 'corrective rape'). There are cases of such 'macho' men raping lesbians for this reason. This, of course, never works. Rape is a terrible crime.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

For people with a heteronormative frame of mind, it is hard to imagine anyone voluntarily choosing to be lesbian, gay, bi or transgender. There must be some external cause.

One way to break this is to invite LGBTIQ+ guest speakers. If students hear authentic stories from LGBTIQ+ individuals, especially if they are more or less their age or only slightly older, it becomes easier for them to have empathy with their feelings and situation.

Another way is to also de-centre this question; that is, to turn it around in asking the question in relation to heterosexuality or about cisgenders. This makes the question ridiculous and then you can explore why the question does not apply that way.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Why are you asking this question? There seems to be a question underneath this question.

Can you become heterosexual through seduction? Or through rape?

Have you ever considered seducing or raping someone, to make them 'normal'? Or are you curious and would like to try out what it is like to have sex with someone of the same sex, but are afraid that such an experience might change your preference? Maybe you should discuss this with someone you trust.

Can you change a sexual preference?

SHORT ANSWER

Sexual preferences can change slightly over time. Sometimes you feel in love, and other times not. You may feel like having sex and at other times you don't. Your preference for men or women in general, or a certain type of man or women or nonbinary person can also change over time, often because you start to better realize some feeling that you already had before. But actively changing sexual preference long-term medically or through therapy is impossible.

LONG ANSWER

There are a lot of variations in what you feel, what you do and how you present yourself. These feelings may come from deep within you, but they are also influenced by society.

In societies where homosexuality is considered bad, most people will start out by expecting and trying to be straight. But often, they will later recognize their more deep feelings and needs. Sometimes people experience both same-sex and opposite-sex feelings. They may ignore one or both sides of this, or choose to live according to one of them, or to both. They may keep this hidden or come out as "bisexual".

Under pressure from conservative forces, attempts have long been made to change homosexual preference to heterosexual preference through prayer or therapy (so-called "conversion therapy"). Research shows that such therapies do not work but are harmful.

Research among heterosexuals, homosexual and lesbians shows that large numbers have erotic and sexual fantasies that do not align with how they express their identity in public. To a large extent, it is taboo for heterosexuals to admit they sometimes have homosexual fantasies. It is almost just as taboo for lesbian or gays to admit that sometimes have heterosexual fantasies. And even more controversial, many people have erotic fantasies involving domination and violence. All such things are still so taboo that there is little debate about them. But it shows that values and norms around gender and sexuality are very strong and often suppressed, both among straight and LGBTIQ+ people.

Politically speaking, the flexibility of sexual preferences is controversial. Due to the long-time suppression of same-sex attraction and relations, the LGBTIQ+ movement decided that it is politically would be more convenient to label same-sex attraction as a 'stable' orientation that cannot be changed through therapy. Internationally and in many countries, it is therefore currently politically correct to speak of "sexual orientation" rather than about "sexual preference".

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

The ideal heteronormative love is presented as a natural and stable heterosexual orientation. Other orientations or preferences are labelled as deviant or "intrinsically disordered". The aim of the heteronormative order is to correct deviance or to extinguish it (in many Muslim countries, there is a death penalty on being homosexual and in the USA there are already calls by the radical right to murder all LGBTIQ+).

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Why should anyone want to change their sexual preference? Why do you think heterosexual or homosexual preference is wrong? Is (expected) discrimination enough reason to change who you are?

Is there a cure for being LGBTIQ+?

SHORT ANSWER

No. Being attracted to the same sex is not a disease.

LONG ANSWER

Over 30 years ago, medics used to think that homosexuality was a disease, but over time it became clear that it is a normal variation of nature. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders (the DSM) in 1973. In 1990, the World Health Organisation (WHO) deleted homosexuality as a disease. Any therapy for LGBTIQ+ should focus on how to cope with discrimination, not how to become heterosexual.

Yet for years and even now, some doctors and churches continued to try to "cure" people who are attracted to the same sex. Research on such "conversion therapies" shows that if the person really wants to get rid of these feelings, it is possible to suppress same-sex feelings for a while, but impossible to get rid of them. The largest conversion therapy organisation (the US-based Exodus International) decided to disband in 2013, apologising for the harm they had caused thousands of people.

Today, respectable health organisations regard those conversion therapies as quackery. Sometimes conversion therapy is even considered torture because it almost always makes patients unhappier and sometimes cruel methods are used. Some strict religious organisations still offer conversion therapy. That is why more and more governments are explicitly banning it. Some religious organisations try to circumvent such a ban by calling the therapy "prayer sessions" and saying it falls under freedom of religion.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

The heteronormative view is that everyone should have a 'natural' heterosexual orientation. Deviations are seen as sin (for which you could ask forgiveness through prayer) or illness (against which you could use aversion therapy and 'habituation' to heterosexual thoughts).

Interestingly, hetero norms are often difficult to refute because they are in the realm of emotions and attitudes. In this case, however, it was possible to prove scientifically that

conversion therapy does not work and is even harmful. Therefore, this form of heteronormativity is now fast becoming obsolete. That said, students may still have such biases, and mere information about the APA or WHO decisions will not easily change their opinions.

Teachers can try to approach their students on this topic in a non-informative way. They can use dialogue to make them grow in their awareness that hetero norms about homosexuality being unhealthy are not constructive. They can do this by digging deeper with the students into the feelings that lead them to think that homosexuality is a disease. This will generally culminate in dialogue about what is 'natural' and 'healthy', ideally concluding that such notions are not rigid but based on people's opinions. And these depend on their social or religious views. This in turn leads to the discussion of how we interact with people who have different views and interpretations (prosocial or judgmental behaviour).

Footnote: We could have included a similar question here about trans feelings. We chose to include this under the "gender" section.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

Why do you seek a cure? What is 'sick' or 'not right' about homosexuality? What feeling do you have about it? Where does that feeling come from? Does it have something to do with what they say at home, or in your faith?

Health organisations today agree that homosexuality is not a disease. Why do you think they came to that conclusion?

Do you actually know how people used to do "therapy" with gays, bi's and lesbians? Let's look that up, shall we? Do you think such therapy could work? For example, suppose you wanted to get rid of your sexual fore colour, do you think that praying, aversion therapy and showing your erotic gay fantasies would help you get rid of your heterosexuality? Why do you think this would not work?

Could you turn your question around? Are there any straight people who might want to do therapy to become gay? Why or why not? Why would gay people want to? What do you mean by "normal"? Who decides what is normal?

Are same-sex feelings natural?

SHORT ANSWER

Yes. Same-sex sex occurs in every culture and we know examples from all stages of history. Also, many people who call themselves straight sometimes fantasise about sex with people of the same sex.

LONG ANSWER

It is a popular prejudice that sex is only for making babies. If you think this, all other forms of sex are morally wrong. But most people like sex because it is enjoyable to do. There seems nothing wrong with having sex for pleasure, as long as you do it with respect for each other.

Some people confuse *moral* condemnation with that something would be *unnatural*. But what is unnatural? Condemnations of things or people that would be unnatural have often been used to exclude people and customs of other people, up to murder.

Homosexuality has so far been observed in more than 1,500 animals (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexual_behavior_in_animals) and transgender (<https://daily.jstor.org/transgender-proclivities-in-animals/>) and intersex variations ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intersex_\(biology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intersex_(biology))) also occur regularly in nature. More and more examples of homosexuality (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_homosexuality) and transsexuality (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transgender_history) are being discovered throughout history and in different cultures (see, for example, <https://www.britannica.com/list/6-cultures-that-recognize-more-than-two-genders> and https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274392419_Sexual_Orientation_Across_Culture_and_Time).

Research on sexual fantasies and porn use shows that heterosexuals regularly have same-sex fantasies (just as gays and lesbians sometimes have heterosexual fantasies), although most of them will deny in conversations that they have such fantasies. The social pressure to categorise yourself as "straight" or "gay" (or whatever label) makes admitting flexibility in such feelings more difficult.

HETERONORMATIVE ASPECTS

The heteronormative morality that there are only two sexes there and that heterosexuality is the norm and therefore 'natural' compels some to call homosexuality and other forms of sexuality 'unnatural'. In reality, the issue is one of moral condemnation. Definitions of what is 'natural' or 'healthy' depend heavily on social and historical judgements.

A modern variation of this problem is how people today use the label "healthy" in relation to sexuality. Many sex education programmes talk about promoting "healthy sexuality", where the definition of "healthy" is actually a moral judgement. This is done both by conservative organisations (calling all forms of sex outside a heterosexual marriage unhealthy) and by progressive organisations (calling, for example, sexual behaviour that crosses the limits of others "unhealthy" rather than "undesirable").

A teacher may be able to allay students' feelings of being "unnatural" by inviting LGBTIQ+ guest speakers and making homosexual feelings (or transgender feelings) more close and ordinary.

QUESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE

What do you mean by "natural"? Why should homosexuality be unnatural and heterosexuality natural? What feeling do you have about this? By natural, do you mean that it feels "normal" or "ordinary" according to you? Suppose you knew more gays, bisexuals and lesbians, would that make it more normal for you?

If homosexuality is unnatural, why is it so prevalent among animals? And in cultures? And in history?

3. Rainbow keys: criteria for a safe and welcoming school for LGBTI+ students

In this article GALE offers ten criteria for a high quality school policy on LGBTIQ+ inclusion. These criteria are based on cooperation of GALE's sister organization Edu-Diverse (EduDivers) in the Netherlands based on cooperation with the national School Inspectorate and it's own concrete experiences with school consultancy in several cities. While the Rainbow Keys have been developed in the Netherlands, we believe that the criteria can be applied in other countries because generally quality criteria for schools do not tend to be widely different.

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Development in the Dutch context

In 2003, the Dutch School Inspectorate asked Edu-Diverse (Dutch expertise centre on sexual and gender diversity in schools) to develop a brochure for schools on how to integrate LGBTIQ+ issues in their school policy. To do this, Edu-Diverse studied the existing regular monitoring and control criteria the Inspectorate set for quality in schools, and extrapolated a set of specific points of attention related to LGBTIQ+ issues.

Over the years, Edu-Diverse redeveloped these points of attention into a set of criteria, which could help schools as a checklist to monitor the content of their school policy. In the context of the national "My-ID" campaign, Edu-Diverse even developed an online test based on the criteria. In this test, each criterion could be scored on four 'phases' of

school commitment. Schools could fill in the test and get an automated advice on how to improve their policy.

The Dutch National LGBTIQ+ Education Alliance (a mainstreaming network that existed from 2008 until 2016 and consisted of both LGBTIQ+ organizations and mainstream partners like the teacher trade unions) adopted the Edu-Diverse quality criteria and labelled them the “Rainbow Keys”.

The Rainbow Keys

For this publication, we have slightly adapted the Dutch original criteria for international use. The keys are divided in four pillars: (1) **G**oal setting, (2) **E**nvironment, (3) **E**ducation and (4) **C**are (the “GEEC-model”). The 10 keys/criteria are:

Goals: criteria for adequate school goal setting

1. The school has researched and reported on the situation the situation of LGBTIQ+ students.
2. The school has formulated a vision on teasing, bullying and discrimination and the role of sexual and gender in these areas.
3. The school has formulated an explicit vision on (LGBTIQ+) inclusive citizenship.

Experience shows that explicit and evidence-based goal setting by the management is the only way to secure a systematic and ongoing improvement of the school. But needs assessments and goals on their own have no effect when they are not implemented in the school environment, in the curriculum and in student care.

Environment: criteria for an adequate school environment

4. The school has made explicit agreements with students about prosocial behaviour, including behaviour towards minority students, like LGBTIQ+.
5. The school is consistent in dealing with negative behaviour, including to minority (including LGBTIQ+) students.

6. The school acts to support self-expression at school, including non-traditional expressions of sexual orientations and gender identities.

Dutch research showed that making agreements on social behaviour *with* students (not *for* students) within the first 6 weeks of the academic year is the single most effective measure to create a sustainable safe environment. Joint agreements on ground rules may have an effect of 70% behaviour change, provided all teachers implement the agreed rules with students in a similar way and are consistent in implementing the agreed rules throughout the rest of the year. An important example of being consistent is that the rule “no name-calling” also and always means “no homophobic name-calling”; and any transgression of this rule should be dealt with immediately in a similar way by every teacher. “It was just a joke or a non-judgmental remark” is not a legitimate excuse. This should of course be made clear by the teachers when they discuss these rules with their students, in order to get proper agreement and commitment.

Education: criteria for an adequate curriculum and teaching

7. The school teaches skills for prosocial behaviour and citizenship, which includes how to treat LGBTIQ+ people.

8. The schools offers both biological and social attention for sexual and gender diversity in a spiral curriculum.

Research shows that single lessons about sexual and gender diversity up to four hours have very limited attitudinal or behavioural effects, which often do not last longer than three weeks after the lesson. A spiral curriculum, which includes regular repetition of attention for sexual and gender diversity over the entire school duration and across subjects, may have a maximum effect of about 15% attitude sustainable change on students. But attention for sexual and gender diversity in the curriculum may have much more impact when it is combined with other interventions like setting rules for daily social behaviour. Attention should also be characterized by a positive and supportive attitude of teachers, and not just be a dry and informational approach.

Care: criteria for adequate student care

9. The school has an adequate system for student care including for (LGBTIQ+) students and students with behavioural difficulties; homophobic and transphobic students also require 'care' because they often have inadequate adult coping behaviour when they encounter LGBTIQ+ people.

10. The school involves (LGBTIQ+) students in the strategy to enhance school safety, well-being and school quality.

Most schools focus on supporting vulnerable students (with obvious learning difficulties) and on standards for punishment of angry or "difficult" students. Research shows that *punishment* mainly leads to avoidance of punishments (moving asocial behaviour outside the view of teachers), but not to more prosocial behaviour. It would be good if schools give more attention to how to handle "angry" students and students who display inadequate adult coping behaviours. The American Positive Behaviour Intervention Support (PBIS) program (<http://www.pbis.org/school/default.aspx>) has elaborate attention for this. PBIS is a heavily behavioural program that a school may wish to enhance with interventions that do not only target behaviours but also prosocial attitudes.

The Rainbow Key Test

Based on consultancy experiences in schools, Edu-Diverse imagined that a school typically goes through four phases of growing commitment for innovations. These phases are:

1. One or a few students or teachers mentions or support sexual and gender diversity
2. The school leadership takes initiative and develops a policy
3. The majority of the staff is committed to implement the keys
4. The majority of the students is committed to implement the keys

These four phases are based on the Dutch situation, in which it is mandatory for schools to be supportive for sexual and gender diversity, and this legislation has wide social support. In international trainings, GALE noticed that such social and political

support was lacking in other countries, and suggestions were made to add monitoring phases for less favourable circumstances. So GALE added two other phases:

0. Nobody has interest in school quality for LGBTIQ+

-1. The school displays a hostile attitude towards sexual or gender diversity

The Rainbow Key Test asks users to rate each key on this scale. You will find the test on the next page. The test can be used as a diagnosis of the school by asking students or teachers to fill it in during a workshop, and to discuss if the participants agree on scores. If they don't agree, further research could help clarify the real situation. The test can also be used as a template for next steps: a score on one phase would yield the advice to develop a strategy to move to the next phase.

The Rainbow Key Scoring Form

How to score each Rainbow Key:

-1=The school displays a hostile attitude on this key; 0=Nobody has interest in this key; 1=One/a few students/teachers mention or support this key; 2=The school leadership takes initiative and develops a policy on this key; 3=The majority of the staff is committed to implement this key; 4=The majority of the students is committed to implement this key

Goal Setting

1. The school has researched and reported on the situation the situation of LGBTIQ+ students

(-1) – (0) – (1) – (2) – (3) – (4)

2. The school has a vision on teasing, bullying and discrimination and the role of sexual orientation and gender in these areas

(-1) – (0) – (1) – (2) – (3) – (4)

3. The school has an explicit vision on (LGBTIQ+) inclusive citizenship

(-1) – (0) – (1) – (2) – (3) – (4)

School Environment

4. The school has made explicit agreements with students about pro-social behaviour, including towards LGBTIQ+

(-1) – (0) – (1) – (2) – (3) – (4)

5. The school is consistent in dealing with negative behaviour, including to minority (and LGBTIQ+) students

(-1) – (0) – (1) – (2) – (3) – (4)

6. The school acts to support self-expression at school, including expressions of sexual orientation and gender

(-1) – (0) – (1) – (2) – (3) – (4)

Curriculum

7. The school teaches skills for prosocial behaviour and citizenship, which includes how to treat LGBTIQ+ people

(-1) – (0) – (1) – (2) – (3) – (4)

8. The schools offers biological and social attention for sexual and gender diversity in a spiral curriculum

(-1) – (0) – (1) – (2) – (3) – (4)

Student Care

9. The school has an adequate system for student support including for (LGBTIQ+) students and homo/transphobic students

(-1) – (0) – (1) – (2) – (3) – (4)

10. The school involves (LGBTIQ+) students in the strategy to enhance school safety, well-being and school quality

(-1) – (0) – (1) – (2) – (3) – (4)

Scoring diagram

Rainbow Key	-1	0	1	2	3	4
1. Research/monitoring						
2. Inclusive vision on bullying						
3. Inclusive vision on citizenship						
4. Inclusive agreements prosocial behaviour						
5. Consistent implementation of prosocial agreements						
6. Free self-expression						
7. Training prosocial behaviour						
8. Sexual & gender diversity in spiral curriculum						
9. Student support system for LGBTIQ+ and homo/transphobic students						
10. LGBTIQ+ student participation						
Results						
TOTAL SCORE						

Cross the squares corresponding to your scores.

Count the number of crosses in each column and multiply the total with the score number. This means you can get a maximum of minus 10 in column “-1” and a maximum of 40 in column “4”. You can also count a total score.

4. The GALE school consultancy model

Edu-Diverse was asked by the Dutch cities of Amsterdam (2002-2011) and Leiden (2012-2017) to approach all the schools in their municipality and to advise them on how to integrate sexual and gender diversity in their school. Based on the school consultancy experiences of Edu-Diverse, GALE developed a guide for school consultancy on sexual and gender diversity. This guide does not focus so much on the content of sexual and gender diversity, but on the gradual process of adoption, implementation and embedding such an innovation. A version of this model was enhanced and [published by the Dutch Foundation for School Safety in 2022 as an official guidance for municipal health counsellors of schools who focus on comprehensive sexual education.](#)

In this article, we have slightly reformulated the guide – which was originally written for external school consultants – as a guidance that is also usable by internal staff of schools. We think of school leaders or teachers acting as project managers for the structural integration of sexual and gender diversity. The innovation model is not only based on concrete experiences but also on scientific organizational innovation theories. It is a 12-step model to coach organizational change related to sexual and gender diversity.

This model is intended for managers and advisers who already have some experience in this work and are strongly motivated to really embed attention to sexual and gender diversity in the school. It is not wise to offer this model as a step-by-step plan to school leaders who are still unsure whether they want to give much integral attention to sexual education or to sexual and gender diversity. The 12 steps, which together will certainly take several years, can be demotivating. The model makes clear that real change in schools requires quite a long and relatively intensive attention and investment. Having to motivate school leaders at the beginning of this journey can be daunting for managers already struggling with priorities and lack of resources.

To motivate *starting* school leaders to embark on a process-oriented approach can be better supported by the **GEEC** model, which is based on the Rainbow Keys:

Policy Pillar	Initiatives of innovators	Commitment of management	Commitment of the staff	Commitment of the students
Goals				
Environment				
Education				
Care				

The GALE School Consultancy Model has been developed for external and internal school consultants and project leaders. You can use it for your own insight in innovation processes, to plan your coaching and consultancy and even to track your progress. Using the (entire) model does require that the consultant or project leader can devote several years (at least three) to oversee or coach the integration of sex education or sexual and gender diversity.

- Each step can be prepared and evaluated based on the points for attention per step.
- It is possible to include the 12 steps in an Excel overview and to indicate per school to which point the innovation process has progressed.
- The consultant can possibly create an Excel diagram which consists of a (five-point scale; not good at all - very good) for each step. The consultant can then assign an assessment of the quality of the execution of each step. By also noting an explanation of the score, the consultant can increase their own reflection and the learning process to improve their consultancy and eventual impact in the school.

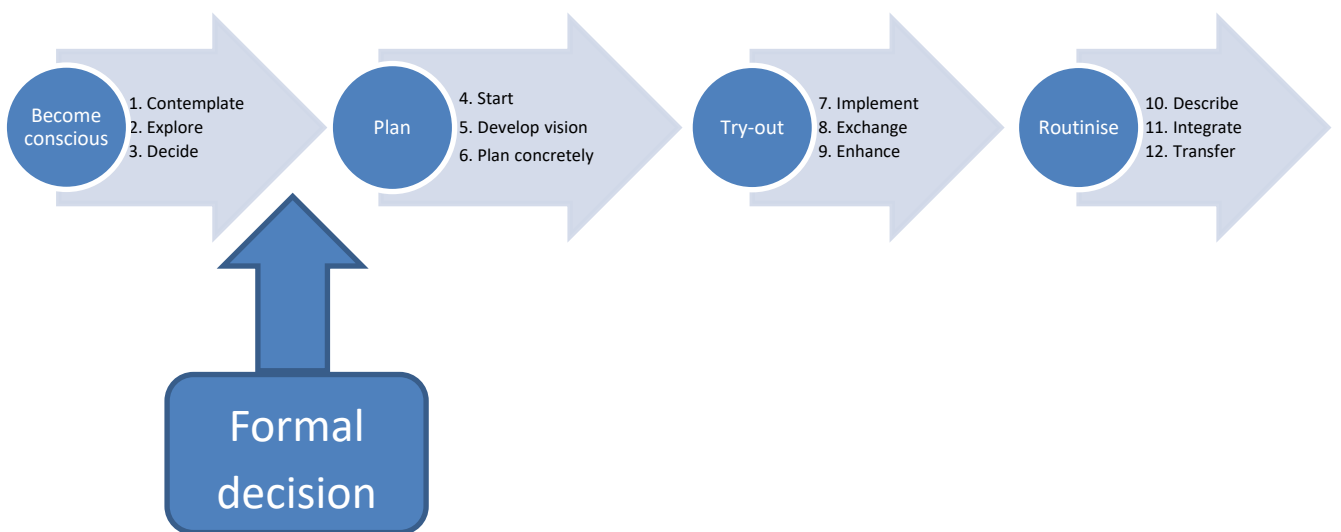
Gradually extending commitment

The expert on innovation processes Everett Rogers distinguishes 5 groups of personnel who should gradually be involved in the innovation (the labels for the groups have been edited here to terms more understandable for schools).

- **Innovators** : are always enthusiastic about innovation
- **Trendsetters** : follow the (successful) innovators and set the tone for others (Rogers calls these *early adopters*)

- **Benefolents:** join the innovation if it seems successful and feasible (Rogers calls this the *early majority*)
- **Conservatives :** join the majority and when innovation becomes an accepted routine (Rogers calls this the *late majority*)
- **Laggards :** remain in resistance, or want an exceptional position

The main strategy of a successful innovation is to *gradually* and step-by-step involve these groups, until the organization commitment for the new routine is so great that external consultancy is not necessary any more. The 12-step consultancy plan gives suggestions for more concrete steps to guide this growing commitment.



Phase 1: Becoming conscious

Goal: to arrive at a supported decision to develop a policy on sexual and gender diversity.

Step 1: Contemplate

- ➔ Prepare a conversation with the management by taking stock of what you already know about the situation of LGBTIQ+ students.
- ➔ Assume that the school knows little or nothing about the topic sexual and gender diversity, and possibly thinks that it is only about incidental implementation of a lesson.
- ➔ Have “triggers” at hand that can increase the urgency of the manager(s) to take action, like a concrete example of bullying, a complaint, a challenging coming-out or a gender transition that has created confusion or opposition.
- ➔ Make both a personal and professional connection with the school leader, gauge how their personal motivations align with your progressive vision on the topic.
- ➔ If the school management shows willingness, explore jointly how to increase urgency among innovators and trendsetters, including managing staff.

Step 2: Explore

- ➔ The exploration phase serves to make plans that are feasible and acceptable, which will facilitate a positive management decision.
- ➔ Look at both general rules and practices around prosocial behaviour and school safety (such as antibullying policy), and also at specific measures and interventions around sexuality and gender. If there is no mention of sexual or gender diversity in the school at all, this may reflect a taboo, but also just a lack of awareness. It is important to distinguish these; trying to fight a taboo in a situation where people are in principle not unwilling can create an undesirable enemy-perspective.
- ➔ Look not only at behaviour and attitudes, but also at school policy and the physical school environment (separate gender toilets, changing rooms, graffiti).
- ➔ Don't just look at students, but also at staff and parents.

- Use hard numbers if you can find or do research. Part of such research can also be done by students.
- Also gauge opinions and feelings (and underlying values and standards).
- Preferably discuss preliminary conclusions as widely as possible; the more the conclusions are shared by the entire school community, the greater the chance of support for a committed decision to work on LGBTIQ+ inclusion.

Step 3: Decide

- Discuss the results of the exploration, strive for a greater sense of urgency to engage with LGBTIQ+ inclusion. Look how you can integrate this in a broader context like antibullying, citizenship, human rights or sexual education.
- Discuss possible priorities (choose 1-3 specific priorities like stopping name-calling or setting up student care for trans students; don't try to undertake massive change on the entire range of issues involved with LGBTIQ+ inclusion or the eradication of heteronormativity; that is too abstract, too much and unrealistic).
- Promote prioritization of one or a few "levers" for broader change; choose a few specific interventions that will "automatically" call for further and wider organizational and cultural change. For example, stopping name-calling may sound like a single behavioural intervention but it can be leverage for discussion of a broader positive attitude toward sexual and gender diversity and even a broader positive change of the entire school culture. Creating a care plan for a transitioning student may not have such a broad "leverage" effect. But that depends how the strategy is implemented, as a single intervention or as a lever for wider change.
- Stimulate that not only innovators, but as many trendsetters as possible want to participate in thinking about potential plans. Innovators are always enthusiastic (sometimes even overenthusiastic), but trendsetters will later help get the rest of the team and students on board.
- Make sure that the priorities/levers are attractive to the larger benevolent part of the staff and not provoke too great resistance from the conservatives.
- Treat laggards respectfully, but don't involve them too much in the innovation activities and don't give them excessive space for their (unavoidable) complaints.

- ➔ This phase should conclude with a formal management decision to start working on LGBTQ+ inclusion. A supported formal decision is needed to prevent sections of staff, pupils or parents from later becoming obstructive and stalling the process.

Phase 2: Plan

Goal: extend the involvement from innovators to trendsetters and benevolent staff.

Step 4: Start

- ➔ Work with the school management to start a working group that will lead the inclusion of sexual and gender diversity in school.
- ➔ Encourage that this coordination group mainly consists of innovators and trendsetters and that at least one member of management (a trendsetter) is involved.
- ➔ Involve (LGBTIQ+?) students if that is possible.
- ➔ It is preferable that the working group is part of an existing structure, for example the care team or an existing working group on citizenship.
- ➔ Ensure that the working group members have sufficient resources and support (paid project staff hours, space to meet, support of the management). Make sure this does not become a “hobby”.
- ➔ Support the working group by making it clear which process they are going to follow, and that this process focusses not only on implementing concrete activities, but especially on gradually broadening the support in school.

Step 5: Develop a vision

- ➔ Start the work in the group by formulating a vision that aligns with the broader vision of the school. For example, a school that prides itself on sports activities, could focus on how a proper sports mentality means having a team spirit, which stresses inclusion next to competition. In a religious school, the sharing of a sense of community can be related to inclusion and discussion of why and when community members can be excluded (in this last case, it may be helpful to ask help of members of LGBTIQ+ religious groups).

- Involve all stakeholders (including staff, students, parents) in the vision formulation. But focus on innovators and trendsetters among them.
- Don't just think about preventing discrimination, but also about micro-aggressions and subtle exclusion. Beyond this negative perspective, you can create a more positive perspective in the plan: how can the school become more welcoming, warm and sensitive for LGBTIQ+ (and all other) students ?
- Do not only consider the individual personal development of students, but also the social context: different views on gender, cultural views on relationships and sex, heteronormativity, legal requirements. You may not be able to change these as a school, but you can formulate a vision on how you relate to such negative pressures and positive opportunities.
- Think about how the (often middle class, relatively progressive) culture of the teachers (with a likely focus on free choice and tolerance) relates to the culture of the students and their parents (sometimes: street culture, priority for cultural or religious norms that may be at odds with the more progressive vision of the school).
- Ensure that the final formulation of the vision should be supportive and can be used as a guidance in potential future conflicts about values and standards. For example, it may help to get the vision into more focus by imagining how the school will respond to some specific scenarios that threaten the vision.

Step 6: Plan concretely

- Work out the vision into priorities (levers for school culture change) and a concrete implementation plan.
- Determine how students enter the school and how the school wants to deliver them (start and end point of their learning path).
- Provide broad and continuing attention in the lessons by integrating sexual and gender diversity into a spiral curriculum.
- Provide attention within student care (school care and referral to external services on questions about relationships and sexuality). Consider not only guidance for LGBTQ+ students, but too how the team can deal with homophobic and transphobic students in non-disciplinary ways.
- Provide attention within the school environment by ensuring that students get to know each other well, that they build supportive relationships and that the formation of the group process in classes is guided so that class groups build a

mutually supportive atmosphere. This group development process in the first 6 weeks of the year is called the golden weeks. Include attention for sexual and gender diversity in these weeks to prevent that prejudiced sexual and gender stereotypes pop up later, which may lead to exclusion.

- ➔ Where necessary, improve and add sexual and gender diversity explicitly to (pro)social norms, agreements, rules, reporting mechanisms on unwanted sexual behaviour, discrimination, sexist/homophobic bullying, complaint procedures and rehabilitation after unjustified complaints. If this is not explicitly mentioned, students or parents may assume from a heteronormative perspective that sexual and gender diversity is 'naturally' not covered by general agreements.
- ➔ Ensure attention within formal school policy by adjusting policy documents, protocols and communication about this (school environment, website).
- ➔ Make sure the plan includes a division of tasks and a schedule for the pilot (trying out the agreed prioritized interventions).
- ➔ Make sure that the staff knows and is willing to perform the agreed tasks. Ask innovators, trendsetters and possibly some of the benevolent part of the staff to try out interventions. Inform the conservatives and the laggards but don't ask them to try out interventions.
- ➔ Involve innovators and trendsetters among LGBTIQ+ and supportive cisgender heterosexual students and supportive parents in pilot implementation where possible.

Phase 3: Try-out

Goal: see if the plans work as intended and improve.

Step 7: Implement

- ➔ Try out the plans as an “experiment” (pilot); this makes it clear that nothing is imposed, but that everyone can be involved and become co-owner of the innovation.
- ➔ Monitor the implementation (make a checklist of the concrete planning and keep track of whether it is being carried out as intended).
- ➔ Collect both positive and negative experiences.

Step 8: Exchange

- ➔ Spread the positive experiences to the entire school population and parents; this increases support.
- ➔ Discuss the negative experiences or pitfalls in a non-blaming way.
- ➔ Look for joint solutions.
- ➔ Organize mutual and team support.
- ➔ Evaluate the piloted interventions and decide which improvements the school wants to keep and how pitfalls or challenges can be overcome.

Step 9: Enhance

- ➔ Make the improvements visible to the entire school population and to parents.
- ➔ Continue to enable all stakeholders to provide feedback on new interventions and to suggest further improvements.
- ➔ Make sure it remains clear that the improvements on sexual and gender diversity support the existing integral school vision.
- ➔ Ensure that it is clear that specific improvements are part of a broader package of school policy, the safe school environment, the inclusive curriculum and optimal student care that as a whole contributes to ongoing improvement of the school climate (school culture).

Phase 4: Routinising

Goal: to ensure that the improvements become a stable part of the school culture.

Step 10: Describe

- ➔ Document the results of the pilot as new routines and rules.
- ➔ Publish the vision and most important routines on the website.
- ➔ Provide an action protocol on how to deal with sexually transgressive incidents and with a lack of respect for sexual and gender diversity.
- ➔ Write a guidance for the spiral curriculum.
- ➔ Document the lessons, so new teachers know how to use them.

- ➔ Create a document with suggestions for student guidance and referral in case of relational and sexual problems that cannot be handled by the school itself.
- ➔ Describe the improvements in such a way that people who were not involved in the development understand why the measures and interventions were designed and adapted and how they can or should be applied.

Step 11: Integrate

- ➔ Review existing curricula, protocols and policies and determine where the newly developed improvements can or should be integrated.
- ➔ Adapt relevant teaching materials, protocols and policies. Consider also explicitly mentioning sexual and gender diversity in the complaints procedure and rehabilitation scheme. The rehabilitation scheme is important because sometimes LGBTIQ+ staff or students are wrongly accused from a homophobic or transphobic perspective, and that proper and careful rehabilitation is then of great importance.
- ➔ Make sure that the school policy cycle explicitly includes a re-evaluation moment for the policy on sexual and gender diversity.
- ➔ Ensure that the decision on the integration is made by going through the regular decision-making procedures.
- ➔ Ensure that the new curricula, protocols and policies are communicated to all relevant stakeholders.
- ➔ Ensure that it is clear how stakeholders (pupils, teachers, other staff, parents) can provide feedback in the future and how they can propose improvements.

Step 12: Transfer

- ➔ Develop a guidance of leaflet for new parents, students and staff on how the school deals with sexual and gender diversity. This can be part of a general leaflet on school communication or prosocial behaviour.
- ➔ Actively inform parents about the policy before they enrol their children or during enrolment. One possibility is to ask all parents and students to sign a general “social” contract that explicitly forbids discrimination “on the ground of..” (mention all desired grounds and include sexual orientation, gender identity and (inter)sexual characteristics).

- Inform and actively involve new students in the agreements on prosocial behaviour (Golden Weeks, Ground Rules on the class level, ensuring that agreements in classes remain in line with school-wide agreements through annual adjustment of school-wide rules. Make this a bottom-up updating process that is repeated each start of the academic year.
- Introduce new staff to the policy through an introductory course and integrate sexual and gender diversity into such a broader introduction course.
- Provide guidance and support for new teachers in the first year of their appointment, so they are able to handle the desired type of attention to sexual and gender diversity.

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4.0	8-7-2023	Peter Dankmeijer	Updated final version

Note on language

In this reader, we use the acronym LGBTIQ+ for Lesbian, gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex variations, queer and “+” for “other identities related to sexual and gender diversity”. We use the term “sexual and gender diversity” as colloquial language to summarise diversity of sexual orientations, of gender identities and of sexual characteristics (intersex conditions and identities).

Author

Name	Organisation
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Summary

This reader offers background information to teachers who participate in the My-ID teacher training. The reader has 78 pages and contains 4 articles.

The first article describes how discrimination of LGBTIQ+ students works in school and describes the key mechanisms that are used in the teacher training.

The second article contains an overview of questions students may ask when a teacher touches upon the subject of sexual and gender diversity. It offers the teacher factual answers, but more importantly, it guides the teacher on how to deal with questions when they are biased and cannot be dealt with in an informative way.

The third article describes ten Rainbow Keys, which are criteria for a high-quality school policy that is supportive for LGBTIQ+ students. This article also provides a test which can be used as a self diagnosis of your school.

The fourth article describes a process-oriented 12-step plan which can be used by innovating teachers, school leaders or external consultants to guide the school from complete unawareness to complete integration of sexual and gender diversity and sustainability of commitment of the school population. The steps are based on both innovation theory and concrete practice on coaching schools on LGBTIQ+ issues.

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