



**My-ID Reader**  
**Sexual Diversity in Schools**

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### **How sexual diversity is perceived**

Sexual diversity, as a term, is used to refer to the existing sexual identities and orientations of our modern society<sup>1</sup>. It usually describes sexual behaviors that humans

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<sup>1</sup> J. Meyer, Elizabeth, Sexuality and Gender, 'Creating Schools That Value Sexual Diversity', 2009  
[http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=coe\\_dean](http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=coe_dean)

choose to engage in throughout their lives. For the purposes of this reader, sexual diversity focuses on vocational education and on the issues, that are currently present in schools.

Since ignoring diverse sexual identities can have undesired effects on students' health, it is necessary to provide the context in which discrimination happens at school. For this reason, it is important to make some distinctions between identity, orientation, and behavior, and see if school efforts of teaching sexual behavior in class can become more effective today.

### **How discrimination works in school**

If you want to raise awareness about sexual diversity, you should consider that people usually expect stereotypes about certain social norms.

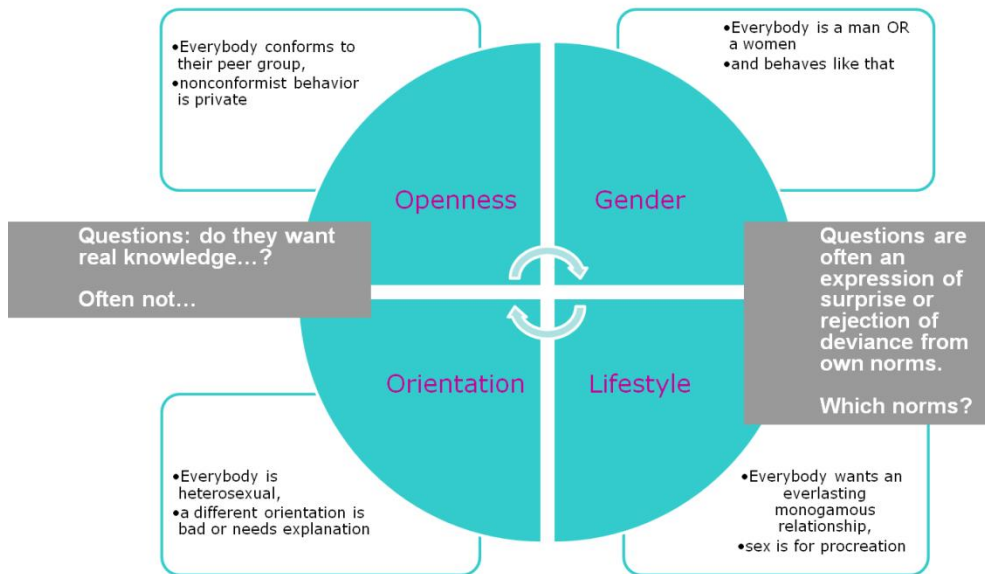
### **The OGLO model**

GALE has developed the OGLO model to explain how social norms work and how they lead to discrimination and social exclusion<sup>2</sup>. The model begins with the question "What is homophobia precisely?". If you analyze the 40 most usual questions young people tend to ask, you will see that it is not only a problem that "gay" people are discriminated. There is the larger problem that people have much wider stereotypical expectations about how people are supposed to behave. They have a norm with which they measure their own and your behavior. The GALE model posits that this "standard norm" consists of four domains:

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

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<sup>2</sup> Dankmeijer, Peter, GALE, Sexual Diversity in Schools: Reader, 2018



GALE call this the OGLO model. The models 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 behaviors that are not conforming to the group norms and values.

The norm on **gender** roles dictates that people expect you to be a real man OR a real woman and that you should behave like your biological sex.

The norm on the **lifestyles** and sexuality is a set of expectations about relationships and sexuality. The conservative 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 aim to procreate. Although the norms on lifestyle have been relaxing since the invention of the contraceptive pill and the following power 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.

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, or you are a strange or even discreditable person.

This full set of norms and values was labeled “the norm of heterosexuality” by Alice Schwarzer, and often shortened as “heteronormativity” (the term was popularized by the theorist Michael Warner in 1991, but the theory has been developed in the 70’s). 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.

### The discrimination spiral

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

#### *Negative Emotions*

This primary emotion is a natural and instinctive reaction. Our survival instinct has built 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: the first automated response is to fight or flight. 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 object to other people expressing their primary *homophobic, bi-phobic or transphobic emotions*. They will probably perceive this as a

misrecognition of their own personal feelings. If you want to deal with a person who has a primary homophobic emotion, you first should allow him or her 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 judging him or her 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 emotion to a cognitive level.

### *Negative Attitude*

If negative emotions about sexual 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 diversity. For example, such persons could say that "homosexuality" is forbidden by their religious beliefs, by saying that it is not natural and that if everybody were homosexual, the whole mankind would die. You can try to change this reasoning by giving people the right information, but this is usually not effective. We call this the "Magnum" effect. In a Magnum ice-cream, the ice-cream is covered by a thin layer of chocolate. We should imagine the thin chocolate layer of cognitive arguments covering the attitude. In the "Magnum" symbolism, the attitude is represented by the main part of the ice-cream: the frozen inside. We label this "frozen" emotions. Because people with a negative attitude tend to be closed for a real dialogue and for learning, the Magnum effect goes like this: as soon as you have clarified one of their misunderstandings or prejudices, such a person will jump to the 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 appear not as emotional, but surface as a solid, nagging, negative feeling and opinions. 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 when you have dealt with the negative emotions and attitudes.

### *Negative behavior*

If a negative attitude becomes a negative behavior, there is the possibility of discrimination. When we think about homophobia and LGBT discrimination, we often think about every explicit negative action, like swearing or violence. The biggest and more usual form of discrimination towards LGBT people is social distance. If people know, or suppose, that you are gay, lesbian or transgender, they generally avoid contacting you, or they will come up with every possible excuse to stay away from you.

This kind of social distance should be considered because it can be a reason of stress for homosexuals: everyone needs social contact. Stress caused by social distance is also called minority stress.

### *Stereotyping and negative images*

If people maintain social distance with homosexuals, they deny themselves the opportunity to meet them. Consequently, the only image of homosexuality they have in mind is an image that struck them because it was different from the norm of heterosexuality. "Black and white" crude images that are used as a negative representation of a whole group of people are called stereotypes. So be aware that "stereotypes" are not "extreme role models" that are self-created by LGBT people, but images created by observing 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 discrimination spiral provide a summary of what heteronormativity is and how the continuous strengthening of negative emotions, attitudes and behaviors creates a vicious circle of negativity and stereotyping. If we want to fight against homophobia, we should discuss and deconstruct heteronormativity and the negative spiral it creates. We can do that by:

1. promoting a vision of openness and tolerance,
2. offering other images than just heterosexual models,
3. 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,
4. you can engage in a dialogue about negative attitudes and their consequences and negative behaviors,
5. you can stimulate pre-social behavior by limiting social distance and by promoting cooperation.



## Teasing, bullying and discrimination

Bullying is a hot topic nowadays. But in schools, "friendly banter", making jokes and teasing can easily be confused or develop into bullying and even discrimination. So, what is bullying and in which way does it differ from teasing or from discrimination? And how do we deal with this difference, which often seems a "sliding scale"?



According to the most common definition, bullying is "repetitive negative treatment of a person by another person or persons". The difference with teasing is twofold. On one hand, the word "teasing" implies that the intention is not meant to be bad, on the other hand the word suggests that it is a one-of incident. The difference with discrimination is that discrimination is often target at a whole stigmatized group of people, rather than targeting one person. For example, homophobic name-calling is often not really targeting a specific person but a general comment like "that's so gay!".

In the current literature about bullying, the concept of discrimination does not occur. Formally "discrimination" means "unequal treatment". Discrimination is not always bad, because you often need to make differences between people. That is why in laws on discrimination and equal treatment, lawmakers usually use the term "unjustified unequal treatment". Negative treatment like bullying can of course be a possible form of "unjustified unequal treatment", but in general they call this only "discrimination" when victims are treated in a negative way because of their membership of a stigmatized social group. This is also a main difference with bullying or teasing. Discrimination is a form of negative behavior which targets social groups that are

systematically socially stigmatized. Therefore, we cannot compare teasing of red-haired people with discrimination of LGBT, handicapped people or people with a minority religion or political preference.

The attitude of people against teasing, name-calling, bullying and discrimination can differ per situation and per person. The sound of and attitude to such acts in different situations is valued in very different ways by different people. For example, from research in primary schools in the east of the city of Amsterdam, it turned out that teachers make no difference in their classes between teasing, bullying and discrimination. They tend to see negative behavior in school as a kind of continuum of relatively innocent and experimental ways of behavior of young children. It is difficult for them to see the difference between behaviors, unless children are obvious and explicitly hateful. Explicit hateful behavior is so rare that teachers feel quite flabbergasted and don't know what to do except to reprimand the student. But usually young people's behavior is much more ambiguous and teachers observe this as innocent, while the victims often experience this in a very different way.

Let's review a few examples of how negative treatment around sexual diversity is often considered to be innocent:

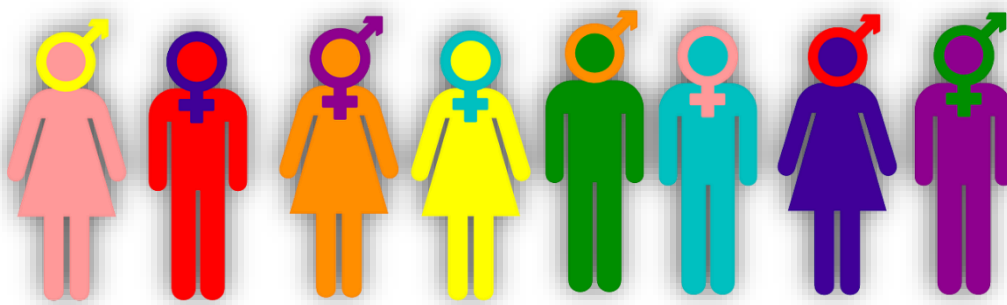
- Name-calling someone to be "homo" or "sissy" is often discarded as innocent, with the argument that students do not have the malicious intent to discriminate specific students that are gay. Some teachers would also say that students don't really know what such a word means and conclude that because of that the word is "without meaning". Such perceptions ignore both the negative impact such comments have on LGBT students and the fact that such name-calling words are never meant in a positive way, so they are not "without meaning".
- Not wanting to be social with gay or lesbian students by heterosexual students is often ignored as if such social exclusion is not hurtful because there is no

open violence.

- Generally negative comments about homosexuals are often ignored, because "everybody can have their own opinion", as long as specific persons are not being targeted.
- Denigrating comments about nonconformist gender role behavior (sissy, lezzie) are often not seen at all as discriminating nor as bullying. Some more "masculine" teachers may even use these words themselves.
- Discriminating curricular resources (negative comments about homosexual relationships or complete absence of such examples) and administrative arrangements that are hurtful (like not wanting to adapt the sex of a transgender student in the school administration) are left as they are because adaptation "is not allowed", or "it costs too much time".

Such types of dealing with teasing, bullying and discrimination are not limited to sexual diversity. But sometimes it may be that comments that are acceptable with regards to women, race or handicap, are more easily accepted but it's about sexual diversity. This is for example the case when name-calling for "gay" is not dealt with, while when students use words like "nigger", "whore" or "retarded", immediate measures are taken. Such a way of dealing with teasing, name-calling, bullying and discrimination may also seep into the student counseling. Homosexual students and gay and lesbian teachers often get the advice "to not care so much about negative comments", that they should "just ignore the comments" or that "name-calling does not hurt".

Or in some cases, the school attempts to "help" a bullied student or teacher by secluding them from negative comments. For example, by allowing them to have lunch in a separate room or to give a teacher the key to the back door of the school. This type of "protective" measures are denials of the signals, the pain and the complaints of LGBT students or teachers, and confirms their impression that the school is not willing to deal with a hostile environment.



The question we like to put now is: how do you deal with this? Undoubtedly as a person you are planning to do the best you can. But how is this going to work out in practice?

Think about incidents in your school and how you reacted and dealt with them. What are you feeling and thinking when you are in such an incident.

- Are you always consequent in positive and supportive behavior for LGBT students and colleagues? Do you, or can you expect to get support of your colleagues?
- Do you act up yourself, but are you unsure how colleagues and management of the school react?
- Or is this just a thorny topic in your school? Maybe you sometimes do not act in such incidents because you feel unsure about what to do?
- Or maybe you simply don't see such incidents and you wonder how you can get a better view of what's is happening among students?

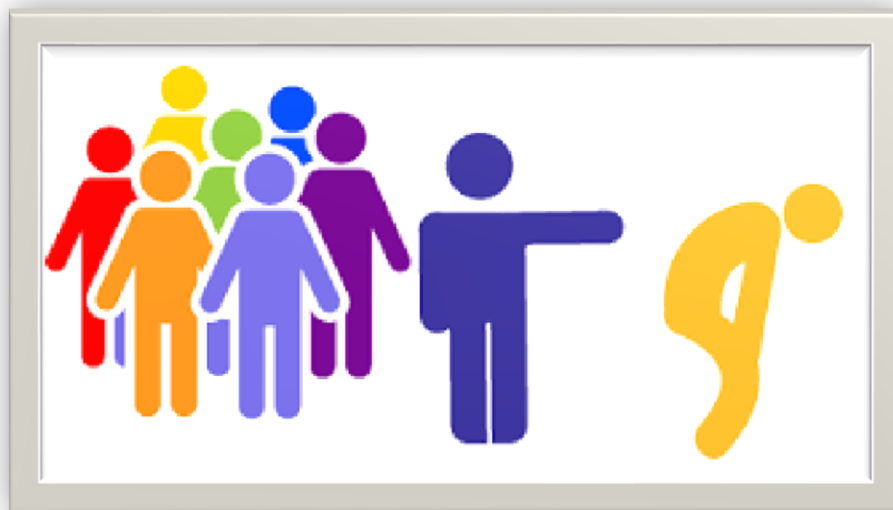
It is most helpful when both you, your colleagues and the school management have a sharp vision on what you understand teasing, bullying and discrimination is, and how you will deal with them as a team.

## FAQ & answers by students

You don't hear much about lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) people. Maybe you hear about them sometimes in the media, but often this kind of information is distorted. What is the truth? Here you find some questions you might have and answers. If you have more questions, mail them to [info@lgbt-education.info](mailto:info@lgbt-education.info), and we will consider it and maybe list them in a next version of this toolkit.

### Informational questions or prejudiced questions

Before we go into the questions themselves, first a note about how questions are asked. Do you ask the question because you are curious and want information? Or do you think LGBT people are weird and do you ask questions because you are surprised, shocked, disgusted or fearful? Is your question serious or are you looking for ways to prove your view of the world is right? When you are not curious for the answer, your question is prejudiced and not a real question but a comment in disguise.



### Four areas of questions

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

1. Questions about *openness about being different*: what happens after you come out, what is LGBT discrimination and questions about LGBT (sub) cultures.
2. Questions about *gender*; male and female roles and people who are called sissies, tom boys or trannies (sorry for the derogative words.)
3. Questions about *lifestyles*; dating, sexuality and relationships.
4. Questions about *orientation*, such as where does same sex attraction come from.

### Questions about otherness; being different

#### **Is being gay, lesbian or bisexual fashionable today?**

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

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 LGBT people is very different. Dealing with the phenomenon can change, but much slower than fashion. It depends to on marketing or a sudden wave, but on slow cultural movements. There is a trend in the last 100 years that same-sex attracted people became more open. Some start 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 feel to be freer, and not a short-lived fashion.

Have you ever heard of a marketing company which promotes to be homosexual or bisexual next season? Would you enjoy it if there where such a fashion? Why did you think being gay, lesbian or bisexual fashionable is fashionable today?

### **Religious persons don't have same sex attracted feelings!**

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

However, in conservative religions, such emotions may be difficult to deal with, let be express them. Main religions, like Christianity and Islam punish same-sex behavior. These religions started out as ideologies for people living in the desert, and making lots of babies was important to survive in those times. The guidelines in holy books from that time may be out of date, but orthodox believers do not want to make such nuances. Anyway, many religions are not only a set of beliefs but also a community of people who support each other. When you feel same-sex attracted, the risk of losing that support can be very threatening. In other religions, like Hinduism and African tribal religions, same-sex attraction was part of society in old times, but after being colonized by Christian countries, homosexuality was made punishable there also. The weird thing is that many Indians and Africans now say, "homosexuality is a Western import" while the laws against homosexuality are Christian imports.

Why do you think religion does not combine with same-sex attraction? How does your religion talk about love? Does it speak about feelings or just about behavior? Are the guidelines of that religion still all functioning (look at all guidelines and whether believers still adhere to all of them, not just the ones about same-sex behavior). To what extent do you think a religion should be flexible according to the times? Are you allowed to make own decisions in this religion, or do you have to comply to what books or religious leaders tell you?

### **Do animals show same-sex behavior?**

Yes. Researchers have documented same-sex sexual behavior throughout the animal kingdom.

Researchers have found examples of sex which is related to power and dominance. For example, big male apes often grab smaller male apes to reinforce their power. But there are also examples of what human would consider real love, like the two-male

flamingo's in the Amsterdam Zoo which steal eggs of other flamingo's each year and insist to raise young flamingo's themselves.

Have you ever seen animals have same-sex?

### **How do you know (for sure) you are LGBT?**

The best way is to sincerely look at you own feelings. What do you dream about? Who is it you look for first when you are at school? Who do you think is "beautiful", and who do you consider "attractive"?

As an adolescent boy or girl, you start to have sexual feelings around puberty. Friends and fellow students may pressure you to approach people of the other sex, to date or have sex. They may also push you to be typically macho towards other boys and girls, or to be seductive to boys. It may be difficult to make own choices about this because of all these expectations and pressures.

Some young people are certain about their LGBT feelings from an early age on and may identify with a label like lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Others are not so sure about their sexual orientation. There are different choices you can make. There is a difference between *feeling a sexual attraction, calling yourself lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, and choosing* for a particularly LGBT lifestyle (coming-out, associating with others like you and so on).

What are your feelings? Do you feel comfortable with these feelings, or threatened by these feeling or by peers? If you have friend who may be LGBT, do you support him or her? How? Can you talk to someone?

### **Can you see someone is LGBT?**

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

This idea is based on generalizations of LGBT people, which tend to be biased, as feminine gays and masculine lesbians are more widely visible than masculine gays or feminine lesbians. 19th century scientists believed that LGBT people have a kind of



"third gender": a gender between male and female. However, that idea is outdated. Some transsexuals feel like they belong to a kind third gender, other transsexuals do not.

Is it important for you to recognize LGBT people? Why? How can you deal with your feelings if you cannot recognize them?

### **How gay and lesbian people contact one another?**

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.

At locations where both gay and straight people go it is generally easier for straight people to find a partner. There are more heterosexuals than homosexuals. When a flirt with a heterosexual person, the heterosexuals often feel threatened or offended. They still should learn that being flirted by a gay or lesbian is not a disaster. Because of this risk, many gays and lesbians prefer to date in gay and lesbian bars or on specific websites for them.

In countries where homosexuality is taboo or forbidden, it is difficult to have gay or lesbian bars. The authorities raid them and close them. In such cases, same-sex attracted people are forced to meet each other in hidden friend's networks or have sex on the road or in parks. This is not a preferred choice, but forced by discrimination. If you would be gay or lesbian, where would you meet new friends or potential partners? Do you express an ideal, a norm; is your choice realistic in your situation?

### **Why do gays and lesbian have their own bars?**

Because there is a risk heterosexual feel offended when they flirt with them in a "heterosexual" bar. See also the explanation in the answer above.

Do you have a problem with gay or lesbian bars? Why? Where do you think gays and lesbians could best meet their partners and friends? If this would be at a general bar, how would you behave when a flirt with you?



### **LGBT coming out: how do parents, friends and family respond?**

This depends very much on the society, the expectations from friends and acquaintances, and on how empowered the LGBT person feels.

Many young people opt to keep their LGBT feelings as a secret, others confide in friends and family. Coming out can provoke very different pattern of response: some don't have a problem with their children's sexual orientation, others totally disapprove or feel confused and frightened when they learn (or suspect) that their child is not heterosexual. Others should think about before they respond and might find it difficult to (fully) accept it. Some parents suspected their daughter or son was LGBT when it was a child. Friends generally respond more positively than parents, and mothers are usually more supportive than fathers.

What would happen if you came out, to your parents, or friends? Which friend would you choose to tell first? What kind of reaction would you hope for?

### **Career planning and job search: do you tell about your LGBT feelings?**

Most LGBT people do not tell about their feelings or identity in a job conversation. It is not that they are not honest, but the risk that they will not get the job is too high. Research shows that if you tell you are LGBT, the risk of not getting the job is great. So, LGBT make the right decision not to come out right away.

Most LGBT then explore the situation at work. When they have a steady contract and the situation seems to be safe, then they may come out carefully to selected people. Coming-out is preferable in a certain way. Hiding one's identity could lead to feelings of lowered self-esteem and frustration. But at the same time, when you are open, you may be a target of stigmatization, which in turn makes your life more difficult again. So, LGBT people should balance these needs and risks all the time. It depends on how much the job and company requires being open about yourself and the risk.

What job are you looking for later? How do you think is the social environment in that company or organization? Do the job or career opportunities require having a degree of personal contact. Suppose you were LGB or T, how would you operate in such an environment? Is this righteous? What can you do about this?

### **Do LGBT people suffer from discrimination?**

Yes. Unfortunately, LGBT still suffer from discrimination and people's attitude towards LGBT people can be quite negative. The extent and kind of discrimination depends on the society. Discrimination can be expressed in laws, in guidelines, through distorted media images and information, through withholding information (like in school text books) and through negative attitudes and behavior. In schools, name calling and saying, "that's so gay" is an example of derogatory attitudes and behavior.

Because LGBT people can hide their feelings, discrimination is not the same for all LGBT people. When no-one knows you are LGBT, the discrimination is not direct, but indirect (because you hide to avoid it). So, it is not true that you can avoid discrimination by not coming out: not coming-out is a direct effect of the threat of discrimination.

Do you think discrimination of LGBT is acceptable? Why? What can be done against discrimination? What do you do yourself, what can you do? Do you think saying "faggot" or "that's do gay" is discrimination? Why (not)? If you think it is just friendly banter and teasing, how do you feel when you are called like that?

### **Why do LGBT have their own Olympics?**

Because it is fun to sport together in a friendly atmosphere. The Gay Games started because gay and lesbian sport clubs were not allowed to join regular sport tournaments. So, they started their own tournament. Gays and lesbians don't want to make the same mistake as regular clubs: The Gay Games are open to everyone, also heterosexuals, if they don't discriminate.

Once every four years the Gay Games take place. There are also national and regional gay games. Thousands of people take part. Although the Gay Games are like the Olympics, the atmosphere is different. There is much more emphasis on friendship, solidarity, culture and human rights. Gays and lesbians don't agree always on everything. An example is that a few years ago, some people wanted to limit the Gay Games to sport, while others wanted to include cultural events and a human rights conference. They could not agree and the culture-human right people started their own event: the Out games. Most gays and lesbian activists and most people regret this division, so everyone hopes they will come together again one day.

Do you think gay and lesbian sport clubs should be able to take part in regular tournaments? Would you have a problem sharing the shower with gay or lesbian sports people? Would you or your sports club consider taking part in the Gay Games or Out games, when it comes to your city?

### **Questions about gender**

#### **Who plays the male and the female who plays in gay or lesbian relationships?**

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

Maybe you have a somewhat stereotypical idea about what typical "male" or "female" tasks are. How would you divide task in a heterosexual relationship? Is it mandatory that the women stay home, always cleans, cooks and takes care of children, while the man works out, repairs stuff and puts the garbage out? These divisions are rapidly

changing in many countries. In modern societies, a traditional task division may create more problems than it solves.



From another point of view, it maybe you question is about sexual roles. It links into the prejudice that gay men are effeminate and the image that they [prefer a passive role in sex. Or that lesbian women prefer a butch position. All these images and expectation link into the general idea that real women should be seductive and passive and real man active and "on top". These images and ideas are not reality. In an equal relationship, you can choose what you want to do. It maybe you like a traditional position or that you prefer more variety. This is true for both heterosexuals and homosexuals.

How do you think about all this? Would you like to be equal in your relationship? What tasks do you prefer and why? Are you going to discuss this with you partner? Are you going to negotiate that with each other or will one partner force the other into a pattern?

**Are gay men effeminate and lesbian women butch?**

No, not necessarily. Every person is different.

Again, like in the last question, this may be an idea based on a lack of information. Maybe you have only seen distorted information about this. Or maybe you think real

men should be macho and real women should be soft and seductive. This is called a stereotype.

In the last century, scientists thought that gay men and lesbians were a "third sex", that is, a gender in between men and women. These scientists could not imagine how someone could be a real man or real woman and be same-sex attracted at the same time. They looked around and found some men and women that were not like macho men and soft women and thought this proved the existence of a third sex. But they missed all the homosexual men and women who look macho or soft. Later, it became clear that gender, sex roles and sexual orientation is different things and all come in a range of varieties. There are also heterosexual men and women who are not typically macho or seductive. It seems kind of offensive to push people in such extremely limited gender roles.

Have you ever thought about your own gender role? Do you experience any pressure from your peers to behave in a certain "male" or "female" way? How much space should people have to be different in this? If you feel uncomfortable by nonconforming gender behavior, why is that? How do you act on your feeling? Is this the righteous thing to do?

### Questions about lifestyles, sexuality and relationships

#### **Are gay men promiscuous?**

Promiscuous is a negative word: it sounds like you have sex without caring for your partner and like you have sex all the time. This is not the case for gay men. However, gay men seem to have more partners than heterosexual men, at least they admit to this. This is because they often cannot marry, they often don't have children and they have not many good examples of steady relationships. Also, some men do not agree with the ideal that you should have only one partner. Lesbians seem to have less partners, about the same as heterosexual women.

It is important to compare the behavior and opinions of gay men with those of heterosexual men. Many heterosexual men have lots of sex before they are married and have children. A considerable percentage of straight men even have extramarital sex after marriage, for example with prostitutes. The existence of prostitution is a proof that the ideal that heterosexuals are not promiscuous is a myth. But heterosexual men do not admit to this very often.

In some cultures, having several wives is acceptable and in many cultures, men have high status when they have a lot of girls friends and sex. The position of women and girls is often without power and with a low status.

Consider the relationships 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, gays and lesbians) be able to make own choices? How are their choices influenced by expectations and norms?

### **Why do gay men have sex in public areas?**

When there were no gay bars, the only way for men to meet other men was to meet in public areas. Search for contacts in parks or other public places is called "cruising". It is a misunderstanding that only gay men meet in public places. Go a have a look in a park and you will often find heterosexual couples as well. Not everyone has the luxury of a room of your own. If you still live at home and you meet someone you want to have sex with, where would you go?

### **How do women have sex with each other?**

Many heterosexuals tend to think that having sex is primarily composed of intercourse (penetration of man's penis in the vagina of a women). However, in practice sexual intercourse is usually more: a combination of kissing, cuddling, stroking, licking, biting, fingering and penetrating. Lesbian women can do all these things also. Penetration

can be done with a dildo (an artificial penis or rod).

However, consider this: sex is not only about the technique, but above all an experience. So, the reduction of discussion about sex to physical movements is limiting the whole thing.

Make a list of all the sexual techniques that exist. Categorize 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?

Is sex only a movement or technique for you? What does it entail more? What is the way you would like to talk about this?

### **How do men have sexual intercourse with each other?**

Many people think about anal sex when they talk about is gay men. Like women (see question above), gay men can have lots of ways to have sex with each other. Penetration is just one of them.

Anal penetration can be physically pleasant, because the penis or dildo can rub against the prostate. This can be so erotic that it leads to an orgasm. Also, people find anal sex very intimate: it brings your very close together, the same way as penis-vaginal intercourse does. This applies both for men and women, for homosexuals and heterosexuals.

It is a misunderstanding that only gay men have anal sex. Large numbers of heterosexuals have anal sex, for fun and to prevent pregnancy. But take care: anal sex may lead to more risk for sexually transmitted diseases. Using a condom is advisable. Have you ever thought about anal sex? What are you images off it? Would you consider having it with a girl friend? If you have extremely negative feelings about anal sex (among gay men), why do you think is that? Is anal sex between men dirtier then among heterosexuals?



## Questions about orientation

### **Why do some people experience same-gender attraction?**

For the same reason heterosexual people experience opposite-gender attraction.

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

Ask yourself this: would you ask this question also about other-sex attraction? Why (not)?

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

You don't become one. You have same-sex attracted feeling or not. You feel comfortable in a female or male body or not. How you call yourself depends on your own choices and how your environment reacts.

But if you earnestly want to know about the research in this area, we can summarize it like this. There is research that shows same-sex attraction is partly genetic (that you are born with this inclination). Other research show that the way people show these feelings differs per country, culture and times. There is also research that show that it is possible to suppress same-sex feelings for a while, but impossible to "cure" (it is not an illness, you see).

Anyway, you might as well ask how to you become straight. So, the question is a bit strange. Some people ask this question because they would like to know if LGBT people can be "cured" or if same-sex attraction can be changed.

We have some questions for you to consider. Why did you ask this question? Are you experiencing feeling that you cannot fit into expectations of others? Are you afraid you may be gay, lesbian or that this body of yours is the wrong sex for you? Or do you really think LGBT people are weird and maybe there is a way to change?

### **Can you become gay or lesbian by seduction or rape?**

No. People do not choose to have same-sex feelings. You have them or not.

Most gay and lesbian people have tried to fall in love or have sex with people of the

opposite sex before they conclude their same-sex feelings are more dominant. Some men say lesbians can be converted to being heterosexual by having sex with men. There are many reports of such "macho" men who rape lesbians with this reason. Of course, this never works. Rape is a horrible crime and people who say they are doing this for the well-being of other are extremely perverted.

Are you thinking of seducing someone, or even considering rape? Or are you curious and would like to try to have same-sex, but are afraid one encounter may "turn" you? Maybe you should discuss this with someone you trust. If you think rape will turn somebody heterosexual or it will increase your status as a macho man, you are completely wrong.

### **Can you change a sexual preference?**

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. These may be by choice, or you just feel like it. But actively changing them medically or through therapy is impossible.

It is the same with same-sex feelings: they are a lot of variations in what you feel, what you do and how you present yourself. In societies where homosexuality is considered bad, most people will start out to try to be straight. But often, later they will recognize their real feelings. 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".

Also, men who call themselves gay and women who call themselves lesbian women may recognize some of their feelings are bisexual, or heterosexual.

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 LGBT?**

First, let's be clear about one thing: being same-sex attracted is not a disease. Also, feeling that your gender is different from your body is not a disease. It is like an ugly nose you don't like and that you can change if you feel better with another nose.

Doctors used to think homosexuality was a disease, but over time it became clear it is a normal variation of nature. Homosexuality was taken off the list of psychological diseases in 1973. Still, some very old fashioned medical practitioners and churches keep on trying to "cure" same-sex attracted people. Research into such "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 "cure" them.

Why are you looking for a cure?

### **Are same-sex feelings natural?**

Yes. Sex between people of the same gender has been recorded in almost every human society and at every stage in history. Also, a vast number of straight people experience some same-sex attracted feelings. Straight people can also have the occasional "same-sex fantasy" (and gay and lesbian can have straight fantasies), although most of them deny having such fantasies.

A popular prejudice is that sex is only good and proper to make babies. This prejudice is fed by some religious organizations that would like that people have only sex for procreation. All other forms of sex, including same-sex, were condemned as morally wrong. But most people enjoy sex because it is a pleasant thing to do. There seems to be nothing wrong with having sex for fun, as long as you do it with respect for each other. Why should this only be true for heterosexuals?

## How to create a safer school environment

To trace the change in a school you can use the "GEEC matrix". "GEEC" stands for Goals, Environment, Education and Care. These are the four pillars of a good school safety policy. The GEEC matrix is a useful tool to give principals and teachers some insight in how school policy on prosocial behavior and sexual diversity works and how they can promote and implement it.

First, the school needs to become aware how (un)safe the situation at school is for all students including LGBTI students. Based on such an assessment, the school can formulate explicit goals to improve the situation. Without goals that are carried by the school, any intervention is destined to be well-willing, but incidental. The second pillar is the environment. Every school has rules and should have an antibullying policy. An antibullying policy is not just about forbidding bullying. It is also about discussing rules with students, creating a welcoming and warm atmosphere and making the school building a safe and homely environment rather than a concrete grey education factory. It also means that teachers and other staff have a common idea about how to deal with a-social behaviors wherever they appear. The third pillar is education: we need to educate the students and the teachers what good social behavior means and how you perform it. This is an essential part of being a good citizen and it should be integrated in the entire curriculum. Single lessons about homosexuality are not enough. The school needs to have constant attention for pro-social behavior from class 1 until the diploma. This is what we call a spiral curriculum. Finally, the fourth pillar is care or student care. Each school has a system to support students that face challenges. These may be learning problems, but they can also be problems at home, behavioral problems or personality problems - and they often a combination. From research, it is obvious that LGBTI students have a substantial risk of being socially excluded and being stressed, with negative impacts on their learning results. This may even lead to school drop-out and suicide attempts. The school needs to be aware of this and take measures to support LGBTI students. But it is not just LGBTI students that need support. Maybe we would say that homophobic students need more support: they have real behavioral problems, which often goes back to a lack of empathy,

extreme needs to conform to peer pressure and inadequate coping skills. These problems not only create conflict and unsafety in school, but will also limit the social performance and career of homophobic students after they graduate.

The GEEC matrix shows that changing the school is not a digital process: you cannot put safety "on" or "off". Each school should go through an innovation process to get safer. If we want to put this in an effortless way, we could distinguish between three or four phases.

In the first or zero phase nobody does anything, or single teachers or students undertake individual interventions, like inviting peer educators of the local LGBTI organization. Sometime e call this the “hobby” phase. In the second phase, the school management starts to think about how to improve policy. They do a needs assessment, decide it should become a priority, plan and implement a few first measures. In the third phase, the ideas and implementation of interventions are shared widely with the whole staff. Several teachers experiment in their classes and different interventions are adapted to suit the school.

In the fourth phase, the students get intensively involved. They are not just taught passively about sexual diversity, but also actively come with their own ideas for projects. Maybe they will start a Gay/Straight Alliance (a group of gay and straight students coming together for social purposes but maybe also for activism).

**The GEEC matrix**

	Individual action	Manager action	Team action	Student action
Goals				
Environment				
Education				
Care/counseling				

A school manager can reflect on the situation in their school. What kind of attention does the school have for sexual diversity? Also think about what kind of attention the

school has for related subjects like social behavior, citizenship, sex education, nondiscrimination and emancipation. Consider what type of interventions these were (research and goal setting, environmental interventions, teaching interventions or student care interventions) and note them in the appropriate squares in this matrix. These notes form a first subjective diagnosis of the school policy. This first analysis needs to be checked with other stakeholders in the school, and often the principals don't know what happens in the classroom and need to ask.

The manager can also use the matrix for planning. The next step is always to improve policy by filling in more squares, and moving from left to right. In other words, to gradually create more commitment in the management, in the team and among students, while at the same time making the policy more balanced by having attention for all four pillars.