

THE HETEROSEXUAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Heteronormativity
 Straight
 LGBT
 Sexual orientation
 Heterosexual
 Heterophobia
 Bias
 Sexuality
 Discrimination
 Violence
 Gay
 Lesbian
 Bisexual
 Coming out
 Gender
 Media

- ✓ 1. To give learners some insight into how subjective (different from person to person) **sexual orientation** is.
- ✓ 2. To help learners understand heteronormativity, and how oppressive and discriminatory a 'straight' frame of reference can be to LGBT people.
- ✓ 3. To help learners be more sensitive and empathetic to those who are different.
- ✓ 4. To promote acceptance for all people irrespective of their sexual orientation.

45 minutes

The Heterosexual Questionnaire (provided)

PROCEDURE

- 1 Tell learners that you would like them to answer a questionnaire about being heterosexual. Tell them that it is ok if they are not heterosexual, but that they should answer it anyway. They do not have to disclose their sexual orientation to anyone to answer this questionnaire.
- 2 Tell them that the questionnaire is quite difficult, but that they should try to answer all questions. They will not be graded on their responses.
- 3 Hand a questionnaire to each learner. Allow 15-20 minutes to answer it.
- 4 After completion of the questionnaire lead a discussion by asking:

a. How did you feel about answering the questionnaire?

Expect answers such as:

- 'I felt like I was being interrogated'
- 'Angry, that I had to explain myself'
- 'Confused about why I was being asked this personal information'
- 'Confused about what I was supposed to answer'
- 'Irritated that I was being asked such silly questions'

b. Was it easy or difficult to fill out? Why?

c. Which questions were the most difficult? Why?

d. Did any of the questions sound familiar? Why? Where have you heard them before?

e. What do you think the point of the questionnaire was?

- 5 Now explain that this questionnaire was designed to help non-LGBT (straight) people understand the experiences of LGBT people, by exposing them to heterophobia, an (imagined) bias or fear of straight people. It shows up some of the misconceptions (incorrect ideas) and biases against LGBT people that exist in our society. Because heterosexuality is taken as the norm, most LGBT people frequently face such questions, or have to explain or defend their sexuality to straight

people. This places a considerable strain on their interactions with people, including meeting new people, seeking healthcare and other services, or any interaction where someone may ask them about their sexuality, or where they may have to disclose their sexuality.

- 6 Conclude by asking them to reflect and share what they have learned from the activity.



TEACHER TIPS



General

An exercise like this works best if it is carried out before learners are introduced to sexual orientation and homophobia. It allows them to 'organically' identify and challenge their own biases.

Sexual orientation is a controversial topic and some teachers may feel uncomfortable talking about it. As a teacher it is important that you create an environment of respect and understanding for all your learners, and that your personal views or religious beliefs do not prevent you from doing this. Remember that discussions about sexual orientation are not about moral judgement, or religious views, but about treating people equally and fairly, and respecting other people's right to engage in mutually consensual relationships of their choice, as afforded to them by the law.

Teaching learners about sexual orientation may help them be more empathetic to other people who they may see as different. Remember that young people need accurate information and an opportunity to discuss an issue that may be difficult for them. They should be encouraged to share their feelings, but reminded that discrimination, hate and violence are always wrong.

As you lead this activity, remember that there are probably gay, lesbian, bisexual, and teens who are questioning their orientation, in your group. It does not matter that this exercise is focused at learners who identify as straight.

It is important that you make LGBT learners feel acknowledged and understood (whether they have 'come out' or not). You will not know the sexual orientation of every participant, so be very sure to use inclusive and affirming language. For example, say 'we,' 'all people,' and 'some people,' not 'they' or 'people like them.'

Never ask learners to disclose their sexual orientation in class.



Making the link with Gender and Violence

Alert your learners to the fact that those who are seen as 'different', are often more vulnerable to violence. Remind them how media objectifies women making it easier for men to perpetrate violence against them. Similarly, seeing LGBT people as 'others' or abnormal, makes them easier targets for violence. In order to curb violence against all vulnerable groups, we need to focus on what we have in common, and how we each have value, and how no person is less than another.



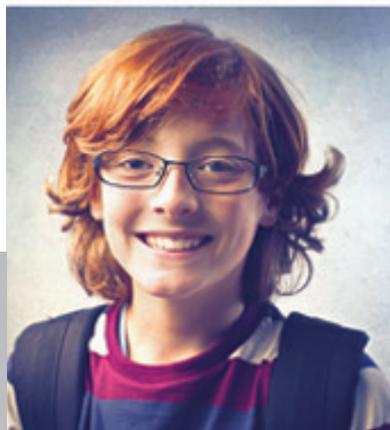
Assessment Ideas

This is not a good exercise for assessment as it is intended to solicit learner's feelings about difference, stigmatisation and isolation, as the basis for further discussion.



Alternative Exercise

Guided Imagery: Imagine this!



Questionnaire adapted from:

Rochlin, M (1995) 'The Language of Sex: The Heterosexual Questionnaire', in *Gender in the 1900s: Images, Realities, and Issues*, ed. Nelson, E.D. and Robinson, B. W. Nelson Canada: Toronto. Pp. 38-39.

THE HETEROSEXUAL QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What do you think caused you to be heterosexual?

2. When and how did you first decide you were a heterosexual?

3. Is it possible that your heterosexuality is just a phase you will out-grow?

4. Is it possible that your heterosexuality stems from bad experiences with people of the same sex?

5. If you've never been sexually or romantically involved with a person of the same sex, is it possible that all you need is a good same-sex partner?

6. Do your parents know that you are straight? Do your friends know? How did they react?

7. Why do you heterosexuals insist on flaunting your heterosexuality? Can't you just be what you are and keep it quiet? Is it really necessary to see heterosexuals on TV and in the media?

8. Why do you heterosexuals feel compelled to recruit others into their lifestyle?

9. Why do heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex?

10. A disproportionate majority of child molesters are heterosexuals. Do you consider it safe to expose children to heterosexual teachers?

11. Just what do men and women do together in bed?

12. Even with all the societal support marriage receives, the divorce rate is spiralling. Why are there so few stable relationships among heterosexuals?

13. Considering the global problem of overpopulation, why are heterosexuals so careless about having children?

14. How can you become a whole person if you limit yourself to heterosexuality and fail to develop your natural, healthy homosexual potential?

15. Statistics show that heterosexuals are most affected by STIs, and that lesbians have the lowest incidence of STIs. Is it really safe for a woman to have a heterosexual lifestyle and run the risk of disease and pregnancy?

16. There seem to be very few happy heterosexuals. Techniques have been developed that might enable you to change if you really want to. Have you considered trying therapy?

17. Would you want your children to be heterosexual, knowing the problems they'd face?
