Building Capacity to Work with 2SLGBTQIA+ Youth: **Understanding Concepts and Terminology**

THE 3CS: COMFORT, CONFIDENCE, & COMPETENCE

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Preface

This document was produced through the Center for School Mental Health (CSMH), Faculty of Education, Western University, as a supplementary resource for those advising Genders and Sexualities Alliances/Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA) and/or those facilitating the Healthy Relationships Program (HRP) for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Two-Spirit, and Queer/Questioning (2SLGBTQIA+) Youth. This document is intended to help educators, administrators, and youth workers better support sexual, gender, and romantic minorities by introducing them to relevant:

Concepts and Terminology

The terminology explored in this document is by no means exhaustive. Language, particularly within 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, is contextual, fluid, and consistently evolving to capture and communicate various identities, ways of being, and experiences. This supplementary resource is a living document that unpacks the multitude of knowledges and experiences that exist within 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, at this particular socio-cultural-political time.

The term 2SLGBTQIA+ is used extensively in this document. It is meant to capture all gender, sexual, and/or romantic minority identities/ways of being (e.g., genderqueer, same gender loving, pansexual, demi-sexual, non-binary, aromantic, gay, demiboy, lesbian, etc.). When using an acronym, it is important to recognize who is included and potentially excluded. To embrace identities, expressions, and experiences that are not explicitly named in the 2SLGBTQIA acronym, we placed (+) at the end. We recognize that this symbol is not wholly sufficient for communicating the multitude of identities, expressions, and experiences within rainbow communities.

We encourage those who work with 2SLGBTQIA+ youth to enhance their understanding of the following terms and concepts to further develop their *comfort*, *confidence*, and *competence* with respect to sexual, gender, and romantic diversity.

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Acknowledgments

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- Egale Canada (non-profit organization): https://egale.ca/

- Them. (next-generation community platform, storytelling through the lens of today'sLGBTQ community): https://www.them.us/

- Sexplanations: https://www.youtube.com/user/sexplanations/about

- Its pronounce metrosexual (blog): https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/about/about-the-blog/

- LGBTQIA Resource Center at UC Davis (student community center): https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary

- Fae Johnston (community organizer, educator, facilitator, and consultant): https://www.faejohnstone.com/

- Brittany Packnett Cunningham (activist, educator, and writer): https://brittanypacknett.com/bio

- Kimberle W. Crenshaw (Professor of Law, leading authority in civil rights, creator of"intersectionality" lens): https://aapf.org/kimberle-crenshaw

- Hilary Mutch (LGBTQ2S+ Community Engagement Coordinator, Centre for Sexuality)

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The 3Cs: COMFORT, CONFIDENCE, AND COMPETENCE

The 3Cs is a capacity-building framework for those working with 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. 3C stands for:
1. **Comfort;**
2. **Confidence**; and
3. **Competence**

This document aims to help educators, administrators, and youth workers bolster these three essential areas.

*Building **comfort** is mandatory, necessary, and a work in progress.* This involves developing and enhancing one's knowledge about broad-based concepts that are often conflated, such as assigned sex at birth, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual and romantic attraction, etc.

*Building **confidence** is possible, challenging, and evolving.* This involves developing a nuanced understanding of how language is utilized, and culture is embodied by 2SLGBTQIA+ folks. Confidence involves developing a working understanding of 2SLGBTQIA+ identities, expressions, and experiences that are subsumed under broad-based concepts.

*Building **competence** is infused, ongoing, and sustainable.* This is a lifelong process that is more reflexive than the two prior Cs. Building competence involves developing the ability to understand one's own positionality within communities and contexts. It involves constant agitation and self-reflection to understand how systems of oppression and systems of privilege affect 2SLGBTQIA+ youth.

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COMFORT: UNDERSTANDING CONCEPTS

Being **comfortable** with pertinent broad-based concepts, such as gender identity, is the first step to building positive relationships with 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. Understanding what they mean - the similarities and distinctions among them, and how they should be used builds a solid foundation for further learning about the identities, expressions, and experiences housed within them (e.g., sexual attraction –> pansexual).

Identities/Ways of Being: How you understand yourself and want others to understand you. Can involve anything (e.g., hobbies, career, romantic/sexual attraction, gender, race, nationality etc.). It can also exclude anything.

Attraction:

- **Sexual** and **Romantic**. What makes you interested in a person or want to be with a person - in a physically intimate way and/or in an emotionally intimate way. You can experience both, neither, or only one.

- **Sexual Attraction:** Who are you interested in sexual intimacy with. Words like gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, and asexual among hundreds of other labels can be used to describe the ways sexual attraction is or is not experienced.

- **Romantic Attraction:** Who are you interested in emotional/romantic intimacy with. What kinds of emotional intimacy, if any, do you want? Words like homoromantic, panromantic, polyamorous, biromantic, and aromantic can be used to describe the ways romantic attraction is or is not experienced.

- **Notes on Attraction:** Sexual and Romantic attraction may or may not align (e.g., gay and homoromantic or gay and heteroromantic). Some people need to feel romantic attraction before feeling sexual attraction or the other way around.

Gender: Gender is felt internally and (often) expressed externally and is self-identified. Gender encompasses gender identity and gender expression.

- **Gender Identity:** How you internally identify on a gender spectrum or outside of that spectrum. Terms to describe a person's gender identity can include: agender, non- binary, girl/woman, boy/man, masculine-of-center, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, and many more.

- **Gender Expression:** How folks may express their gender. Individuals can express the gender that matches their gender identity or the gender that society expects them to present as. Gender can be expressed through clothes, pronouns, hair and make up, the way someone walks and talks, and much more.

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- **Notes on Gender:** A person's gender identity may not match their gender expression for a variety of reasons. It could depend on how safe they feel in varying contexts (e.g., school, friend's house, work, home, etc.), how much effort they want to put into their appearance, the resources they have to invest in their expression, and/or their general interest or lack of interest in expressing gender.

  Gender identity and gender expression relate to each other but can also exist separately. Gender labels are often given at birth, based on the appearance of body characteristics (i.e., sex assigned at birth - male, female or intersex) even though gender is not rooted inbody characteristics.

- **Attribution:** When someone assumes an individual's gender identity, they are attributing a gender to that person. Attributing a gender to an individual without knowing their gender identity can lead you to misgender and/or mispronoun them. It is best to use the individual's chosen name and/or gender-neutral pronouns until you know what they go by.

- **Body Characteristics:** How our body exists and changes over time. Can include sex characteristics (ovum, testes, chromosomes, hormones, internal/external anatomy), secondary sex characteristics (facial hair, body hair, chest development, fat distribution, Adam's apple, etc.) as well as other characteristics, such as height, hair colour, eye colour, tattoos, piercings, hormones, and surgeries. Body characteristics do not dictate gender.

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CONFIDENCE: UNDERSTANDING AND USING TERMINOLOGY

Learning about various identities/ways of being, expressions, and experiences, and understanding how to use terminology respectfully and accurately can build one's **confidence** with working with 2SLGBTQIA+ youth.

THE LABEL TABLE

Discovering a label that works for ones' sexual orientation or gender identity is an individual process. Others do not get a say in what term best fits an individual. As a person grows and discovers more about themself, their labels may evolve as they find new ways to describe their ways of being.

The prefixes and suffixes in this table make up many of the commonly used labels within 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. Not all prefixes and suffixes can combine to create an intelligible label (for instance "Gendersex" does not make sense); but understanding what different affixes and suffixes mean can help with deciphering unfamiliar labels.

PREFIX	DEFINITION	SUFFIX	DEFINITION
Pan	All or everything	Sexual	Sexual intimacy preference
Homo	Same	Romantic	Emotional intimacy preference
Hetero	Different	Gender	gender identity/expression
A	Without, not, or absence of	Amory/amorous	Intimate relationship preference
Bi	Two; more than one	Fluid	Not set, changing
Tri	Three or beyond a binary	Variant	Different than standard
Poly	Many	Boy	Someone who identifies as a boy (child/youth)
Demi	Part way between (on a spectrum)	Girl	Someone who identifies as a girl (child/youth)
Femme	Feminine	Woman	Someone who identifies as a woman (adult)
Masc	Masculine	Man	Someone who identifies as a man (adult)
Trans	Change/changing/transition	Gyne	Having to do with female, feminine, femininity
Inter	Between, together, among	Andro	Having to do with male, masculine, masculinity
Andro	Having to do with male, masculinity	Queer	Not straight/cis/heteronormative
Gyne	Having to do with female, femininity	Non-conforming	Not conforming to a binary or spectrum
Gender	Gender identity/expression	Sex	Category assigned at birth based on biological characteristics

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Combining Prefixes and Suffixes to Create Identity Labels: Sample Definitions

- **Demi-boy:** Partway or closer on the spectrum to "boy" on a masculine/boy ↔ feminine/girlspectrum.

- **Poly-amorous:** Preference or openness to more than one consenting intimaterelationship (romantically and/or sexually).

- **Pan-sexual:** Potential to be attracted to many/all types of persons.

- **Demi-sexual:** Part way on an Asexual ↔ Sexual spectrum; need to feel a strong emotional attraction to a person to be interested in a physically intimate relationship.

- **A-romantic:** Uninterested in emotional/romantic intimacy; can be fulfilled by closefriendships or other types of relationships; exists on a spectrum.

- **Gender-fluid:** Having a gender identity that is changing; not static.

Examples of Identity/Ways of Being Labels

- **Gay**: A man who is attracted to other men. Sometimes this term is used by persons of other gender identities to mean "not straight."

- **Lesbian**: A woman who is attracted to other women.

- **Bisexual**: Sexually attracted to more than one gender identity.

- **Two-Spirit**: A term coin by Indigenous communities referring to another gender role believed to be common among many first peoples of Turtle Island (known as North America to settlers). It is used as an umbrella term that bridges Indigenous and western understandings of gender and sexuality and breaks free from the violently homophobic/transmisogynistic language and culture imposed by colonialism. Two-spirit specific definitions change nation to nation, and person to person. Not all Indigenous peoples who are sexual and/or gender minorities refer to themselves as Two-Spirit (not for white people to use).

- **Trans/Transgender**: Identifying with a gender identity than is different from one's sex/gender assigned at birth.

- **Agender**: Without a gender.

- **Queer**: Not straight (sometimes means not cisgender as well). Historically and contemporarily has been used as an insult to shame gay/lesbian/bisexual/pansexual, sexual minority folks. This is a reclaimed term, and should not be used to label gender/sexual minorities unless they have acknowledged that they are ok with the use ofthis term.

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- **Intersex**: Possessing a combination of sex characteristics (chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals) that differs from expected, dichotomous, biological characteristics for "male" and "female".

Examples of Acronyms

- **MSM**: Men who have sex with men. This acronym does not indicate sexual/romantic/gender label and is often used in a health care context.

- **WSW**: Women who have sex with women. Again, it does not indicate sexual/romantic/gender labels and is often used in a health care context.

- **MSM** and **WSW** are terms used to understand sexual behaviours, but not used to describe people. These terms cause men (and women) to be reduced to their sexual behaviour and ignore their identities and communities. MSM, specifically, was first used during the HIV/AIDS crisis because coming out as non-heterosexual was stigmatized. Health care workers are pushing to move away from the usage of these terms.

- **Mx**. (pronounced: mɪks/MIKS): The gender-neutral friend of Mrs., Miss., Ms., or Mr.

- **GP**: Gender pronouns (e.g., he/his/him, her/she/hers, they/them/theirs, etc.). Some folks use more than one gender pronoun, use any gender pronoun, or use no gender pronounsat all.

- **LGBT/LGBTQ/2SLGBTQIA+/LGBTQ2S+**: Sample acronyms for rainbow communities, with endless variations. L: Lesbian, G: Gay, B: Bisexual, T: Trans, 2: Two-Spirit, Q: Queer or Questioning, I: Intersex, A: Asexual. Important to note that when using acronyms, there are intentional choices on what letters are included or excluded; LGBT, GLBT or LGBTQ fail to recognize many sub communities within larger rainbow communities (e.g., asexual, intersex, genderqueer, aromantic, etc.).

- **GSRM** – Gender, sexual, and romantic minorities. A label that encompass all persons who do not align with a cis and hetero notions of gender and sexual/romantic attraction.

- **QPOC**: Queer person of colour (being a queer person and a racialized person is an important intersection of oppression to recognize, understand, and address).

- **QTPOC**: Queer trans person of colour (being a queer person, a racialized person, and a trans person is an important intersection of oppression to recognize, understand, and address).

- **SGL**: Same gender loving. Traditional gay, lesbian, queer terms are grounded in Eurocentric culture so the term "same gender loving" was coined by a Black queer scholar to express this identity within the Black American community (not for white people to use).

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- **SAAB**: Sex assigned at birth. What medical professionals write on a person's birth certificate based on their body characteristics (e.g., male, female, intersex).

- **SRS**: Sex reassignment surgery or gender confirmation surgery is a surgical process that may be used to transform one's body. Sex reassignment surgery is not a goal, or a completion of a gender transition. It is an optional, private, and personal process.

Examples of Vocabulary Ally: People who work in solidarity with minority populations.

- **Passing**: Appearing as a cisgender and/or heterosexual person, intentionally or not.

- **Outing**: Revealing another individual's personal information (e.g., gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status, job status, family history, mental or physical health issues, or nearly anything about their identity that has been shared in private) to others without their consent**.**

- **Misgendering**: Attributing a gender to someone that is incorrect/does not align with their gender identity. Can occur when using pronouns, gendered language, or assigning genders to people without knowing how they identify.

- **Body Policing**: Any behaviour which (directly or indirectly; intentionally or unintentionally) attempts to correct or control a person's actions regarding their own physical body; frequently happens with regards to gender expression or size.

- **Constellation**: A way to describe the arrangement or structure of a polyamorous relationship.

- **Closeted**: An individual who is not open to others or potentially themselves about their sexuality and/or gender identity (or other aspects of their identities). This may be by choice and/or for other reasons such as: fear for one's safety; peer or family rejection; ordisapproval and/or loss of housing, job, etc.

- **Drag (King/Queen/Monarch**): Someone who performs (hyper-) masculinity or (hyper-) femininity.

- **Transition/Transitioning**: Referring to varying social, medical, and/or legal processes a person may use to move away from their sex/gender assigned at birth to their gender.

- **Chosen Family**: Many 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and adults have difficult relationships with or no relationship at all with the people who raised them. Chosen family is the group of (often) lifelong friends that function as a supportive and loving family.

COMPETENCE: UNDERSTANDING OUR POSITIONALITY AND PRIVILEGES

Building **competence** means developing the ability to understand one's positionality within communities and contexts. It involves understanding when to elevate the voices of others, particularly marginalized folks, rather than our own. Being able to position ourselves within contexts and conversations helps build safer spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. Building competence is a continuous and self-reflexive process. The terms described below unpack the different lenses and concepts used to understand systems of oppression and peoples' positions within them. The resource list at the end of this document can be reviewed to further explore these important concepts.

Privilege

A set of unearned benefits given to people who fit into specific social groups. Privilege is the opposite of oppression. The world has become structured around identities that are seen as superior, such as: white, male, cisgender, able-bodied, straight, Christian, etc. Possessing one or more of these privileged identities provides an individual with particular advantages that are not afforded to everyone. For instance, not all people can look to the police for protection; not all people have the right to marriage; not all people have access to health care; not all people can access post-secondary education; and not all people can vote. The existence of privileged identities has a real impact on government, education, and laws because it is typically individuals with the most privilege who are making decisions locally, provincially/territorially, nationally, and internationally. Possessing privileged identities does not mean you have never experienced hardship; it simply means that your race, gender, sexual orientation, or ability - for example, will never be something that disadvantages you.

Intersectionality

A term coined by lawyer and scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw, in 1989. Intersectionality is a theory that describes how overlapping social identities, such as race, gender, sexuality, and class, contribute to unique experiences of oppression and discrimination. As Brittany Packnett articulates, "Intersectionality is a lens through which to explore and explain the unique ways in which people who belong to two or more oppressed social groups are subjugated systematically, institutionally and interpersonally…Intersectional oppression is not just more oppression; it is *different* oppression." Not all women make 78 cents to the dollar (for every dollar a white man earns) - Indigenous women make 58 cents to the dollar. Not all drug users face the same chance of being incarcerated - poor and/or racialized drug users face higher incarceration rates. Not all 2SLGBTQIA+ pride events are accessible to those who are racialized and/or poor. Anti-oppression work *must* use an intersectional lens because without it, queer movements, feminist movements, and civil rights movements leave behind those who face the most marginalization and oppression.

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Anti-Oppression

Anti-Oppression work questions and subverts inequitable and unjust social actions and systems. Recognizing that systems of oppression exist is the first step to dismantling social and systemic inequities. To work towards anti-oppression, it is necessary to change policies and practices to protect and affirm minorities, confront internal biases, notice and call out microaggressions in ourselves and others, and create safer spaces for folks with marginalized identities to share their needs, thoughts, stories, and hopes.

Microaggression

One-on-one interactions (comments, looks, gestures, facial expressions, physical movements) that perpetuate oppression and the 'othering' of people. For instance, asking a Black woman if you can touch her hair; asking a trans person about their genitals; crossing the street when seeing a Black man, talking to a person with autism like they are a child; or asking a bisexual individual about a three way. To those who are not part of a particular minority group, these may seem like innocent actions, but they are rooted in objectification and alienation. They cause people with marginalized identities to remain 'othered,' and they perpetuate harmful stereotypes and biases that can lead to aggression, violence, and in some cases, death. Often times, those perpetuating microaggressions do not notice, understand, or care about the impact of their actions. This is why it is essential for folks to be acutely aware of the potential impact of their words and actions, and not focus on their intention.

Colonialism

Colonialism/Colonization is the process of conquest where one nation establishes a colony on another nation's territory with the intent of monopolizing power, land, and resources. European colonialism involved the brutal establishment of European sovereignty on stolen Indigenous territory. Colonialism is not only about taking control over land and resources; it requires the dominating group to see themselves as fundamentally superior to another group.

Colonization in Canada continues today through the ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples and the denial of Indigenous nation's sovereignty. Because it is ongoing (through colonial government systems), all Canadians are settlers on Indigenous land (regardless of if they came 150 years ago or 1 year ago) and benefit from the oppression of Indigenous peoples. Settlers should participate in decolonization work through recognizing their position and privileges, and cultivating space for Indigenous' voices to articulate experiences, needs, and demands.

Cissexism

The assumption that being cisgender (i.e., gender identity matches sex assigned at birth based on body characteristics) is superior to other ways of being. Leading to the discrimination of trans, gender diverse, and gender non-conforming folks.

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Heterosexism

The assumption that being heterosexual is superior to other sexual orientations, leading to the discrimination of sexual and/romantic minorities.

Transmisogyny

The intersection of misogyny (sexism) and transphobia (cissexism). The experience of transwomen and trans feminine folks are often distinct from those of trans masculine or transmen and ciswomen. This is a particularly violent intersection where transwomen or transfeminine folks are not provided the same access to resources provided to transmen or ciswomen. Where transwomen and trans feminine folks are seen as a danger to ciswomen and harassed or attacked for being seen as "tricking" straight cismen.

Future Directions

This document is by no means exhaustive of all 2SLGBTQIA+ knowledges, understandings, and experiences. It provides a springboard for teachers, administrators, and community partners to reflect on and fill personal and professional educative gaps. The concepts and terms within this document will likely evolve and expand over time. It is everyone's responsibility to be curious and learn about language and culture shifts. This process requires embracing humility and engaging in lifelong learning.

Resources

Gender/Attribution /Body Characteristics:	• https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/GLSEN-Gender-Triangle-Education-Guide.pdf
Label Table and Vocabulary	• https://www.itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2013/01/a-comprehensive-list-of-lgbtq-term-definitions/ • https://www.them.us/story/what-does-queer-mean • https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary • https://everydayfeminism.com/2016/03/difference-between-gay-queer/
Two Spirit	• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4lBibGzUnE
Privilege	• Johnson, Allan G. "The Social Construction in Difference" in *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice.* 2013, pp. 15-20.
Microaggressions	• Sue, Derald Wing. "Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation." NJ; Wiley, 2010.
Intersectionality	• Crenshaw, Kimberlé "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8. Available at: http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8 • Packnett, Brittany. 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/30/us/the-effect-of-intersectionality-in-the-workplace.html
Colonialism	• Said, Edward W. 1978. Orientalism. New York: Pantheon Books.
Heterosexism/Cissexism	• https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary
Transmisogyny	• Johnstone, Fae. "Unpacking Transmisogyny" 2018, The Fulcrum. https://thefulcrum.ca/features/unpacking-transmisogyny/
Ally	• http://www.blackgirldangerous.com/2013/09/no-more-allies/ • https://everydayfeminism.com/2013/11/things-allies-need-to-know/

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