

Public Policy and
LGBTQ Populations:
Social Work with Gender and
Sexually Diverse People

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Overview

- Definitions
- Recognition of Gender and Sexual Diversity
- Human Rights Legislation for LGBTQs
- LGBTQs and Social Policy
- LGBTQs and Social Work
- Social Work with LGBTQs
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Definitions

- **Straight:** People who are sexually attracted to the opposite sex
- **Lesbian:** Women who are sexually attracted to other women
- **Gay:** Men who are sexually attracted to other men
- **Bisexual:** People who are sexually attracted to both women and men
- **Cisgender:** People who retain the sex they were biologically assigned at birth
- **Transgender:** A person whose gender identity does not correspond to their biological sex assignment at birth
- **Transsexual:** A person who has a strong desire and undergoes hormonal treatment and/or reassignment surgery to assume the physical and gender attributes of the opposite sex
- **Two-Spirit People:** Gender and sexually diverse individuals of Indigenous descent
- **Intersex:** Individuals born with genitalia of both sexes
- **Queer:** Individuals who highlight their gender and sexual fluidity or a politicized term that represents a progressive, radical stance beyond the mainstream LGBTQ movement
- **LGBTQ:** An acronym often used to capture the above

Recognition of Gender and Sexual Diversity

- Historical & Social Overview:
 - Modern era LGBTQ movement arose from the Gay Liberation Movement of the late 1960s-1970s
 - Gay Liberation Movement sought material changes and a shift in discourse
 - Over time LGBTQs fought the major pillars behind their oppression (the law – ‘criminals’, medicine – ‘sick’ and religion – ‘immoral’) increasing their social acceptance in the process
 - The essence of liberation is emancipation, which is a driving goal in today’s Queer Liberation Movement

Human Rights Legislation for LGBTQs

- Federally ‘Sexual Orientation’ is an analogous prohibited ground for discrimination in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1995) and an explicit ground in the Canadian Human Rights Act (1996)
- ‘Sexual Orientation’ now included in all provincial (ON 1986) and territorial human rights legislation across Canada
- ‘Gender Identity and/or Expression’ now included in human rights legislation in seven provinces and one territory and is currently being debated at the federal level in the Senate
- Same-sex adoption is legalized in all provinces and territories with varying rules therein
- Same-sex marriage was legalized in 2005 across the country, making Canada the 4th in the world to do so

LGBTQs and Social Policy

- Ontario has been at the forefront of some of the more innovative policy of late:
 - Bill 13: Accepting Schools Act, 2012
 - Bill 33: Toby’s Act: (Right to be Free from Discrimination and Harassment Because of Gender Identity or Gender Expression), 2012
 - Vital Statistics Act, 2012
 - Proposed Bill 77: Affirming Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Act

LGBTQs and Social Work

- 'Sexual Orientation' is generally captured in social work ethics and professional standards of practice in Canada (CASW, CASWE)
- Social work lags on the issue of gender identity and gender expression
- *Joint Statement on the Affirmation of Gender Diverse Children and Youth* (CASW, CASWE, 2015)

Social Work with LGBTQs

- Social work has had to move from its historical shadows of being complicit with the law, medicine and religion in oppressing LGBTQs to working with and for these populations
- This has meant taking a strength-based, anti-oppressive approach that is both affirming and empowering
- Social work also has a role to play in advocating for research, funding, programs and services, whether in mainstream settings or specialized that equitably address LGBTQ concerns and issues

Towards a Future of Full LGBTQ Recognition

- Despite the progress made, LGBTQs continue to be a population that faces discrimination and oppression
- Intersectional characteristics expose this along lines of race, ethnicity, gender, class, (dis)Ability, geographical location, age, creed, etc.
- Legal justice does not necessarily translate into social justice for LGBTQs, hence social work regarding these communities continues


