

## Social Diversity

Social diversity refers to different characteristics seen in a particular society with respect to race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, religion, socioeconomic status, physical ability, level of education, occupation, nationality and immigration status, place of residence, language, cultural background, and so on.

People in diverse societies tolerate differences by generalising individuals into groups, which creates a culture of prejudice and discrimination. In such cases, social diversity becomes negative and this results into social differences (distinctions and discriminations that occur between or even within different social groups), inequality (unequal opportunities and rewards for different social positions) and division (segregation among the members of a society that are based on inborn or artificially crafted differences) (Shannon 2018).

Social diversity should be considered normal and healthy because human societies are composed of individuals with unique characteristics, backgrounds, experiences, and identities. It is important to recognize the potential of social diversity to enrich societies and promote social justice, equality, and inclusion. Social inclusion aims to create a society for all, a society in which no one is left behind and no one is invisible, a society that guarantees human rights and promotes justice for all, increasing the quality of life of citizens and improving individual well-being (Abbott, Wallace & Sapsford, 2017).

## Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a concept coined by K. Crenshaw – a pioneering scholar and writer on civil rights, critical race theory, Black feminist legal theory, and race, racism, and the law – in 1989 in her essay “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A black Feminist Critique of Anti-discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics”.

According to the [Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit](#), created under the leadership of UN-Women, people’s lives are shaped by their identities, relationships, and social factors, which combine to create advantages (privileges) and disadvantages (forms of oppression) depending on a person’s situation. Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how various social identities intersect and interact with each other, creating unique and complex experiences of privilege and oppression for individuals. Thus, intersectionality is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression, and we must consider everything and anything that can marginalise people – such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and physical ability. To promote social equity, it is important to recognize that



social factors such as patriarchy, ableism, colonialism, imperialism, homophobia, and racism affect the individuals.

For instance, the experience of a billionaire African American woman is different compared to a black woman who has a lower socioeconomic status and lives in a disadvantaged neighbourhood. On the other hand, a gay man's experience can be very different depending on the place of residence and the social acceptance he finds.

*K. Crenshaw: Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics: [LINK](#)*

## The Social Construction of Gender

The social construction perspective offers insight into the variability of gender differences across history and cultures, attributing these variations to societal processes. Gender serves as an organising principle for structuring societies, categorising individuals into two major categories: 'men' and 'women.' These categories come with distinct expectations and often unequal treatment, typically favouring men with more privileges. Gender-specific processes perpetuate themselves and gain strength through gender-based societal structures (e.g., organisations, regimes of nation-states).

Clementine Ford, author of *Boys will be boys*, stated that:

*Even more fascinating is the discovery that the colour themes modern society traditionally associates with masculinity and femininity are completely sideways. That is to say, when children's fashion ditched generic white for pink and blue, it wasn't to establish girls as the former and boys as the latter—it was the other way around.*

Pink, being a lighter shade of red, was associated with Mars, the god of war, so it was thought to be an appropriate colour for boys. (Guns!) Blue was more commonly associated with Venus and the Madonna (you'll notice historic works of art always depict Our Lady's veil as being a light blue), so it was assigned to girls.

An article in *Ladies Home Journal* even reiterated in 1918: "The generally accepted rule is pink for the boys, and blue for the girls. The reason is that pink, being a more decided and stronger color, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl".

Gender Equality was made part of international human rights law by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948. Therefore, UNESCO states that all forms of discrimination based on gender are violations of human rights, as well as a significant barrier to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for



Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The message is clear: it is imperative that women and men have equal access to opportunities, choices, capabilities, power, and knowledge as equal members of society. Providing girls, boys, women and men with the education, values, attitudes, and skills to address gender inequalities is a fundamental prerequisite for establishing a sustainable future that benefits everyone.

*The Social Construction of Gender:* [LINK](#)

*C. Ford: Boys Will Be Boys: Power, Patriarchy, and the Toxic Bonds of Mateship.* ISBN: 1760878626

*D. Brooks: Pink and Blue:* [LINK](#)

*UN: Peace, dignity, and equality on the healthy planet:* [LINK](#)

## The Man Box and Violence against Women

*The Man Box* is an idea initially conceived in the 1980s by Paul Kivel of the Oakland Men's Project and then further developed in the 1990s by Tony Porter, the founder of A Call to Men.

The Man Box is defined as a set of beliefs, conveyed by parents, families, peers, the media, and society at large, which exert pressure on men to be a certain way and to conform to specific behaviours and traits. Thus, these pressures and expectations encourage men to be self-sufficient, to act tough, to be physically attractive, to stick to rigid and conventional gender roles, to be heterosexual, to exhibit sexual prowess, to use aggression to resolve conflicts, to dominate others and never ask for help.

It is important to recognize that we are potentially damaging lives, relationships, and the adherence to these messages is associated with perpetrating and experiencing many forms of violence, as well as many other destructive behaviours, such as bullying and violence, sexual violence, alcohol use and abuse and other risky behaviours. Young men are those who most internalise these pressures and they agree that a guy who does not fight back when others push him around is weak or that a gay guy is not a real man among other harmful patriarchal messages. Young men outside the Man Box are those who reject these ideas and instead embrace more positive attitudes about manhood, which are much less likely to engage in harmful behaviours compared to respondents inside the Man Box. For instance, men in the Man Box were three to seven times more likely to report perpetrating physical bullying and three to six times as likely to report perpetrating sexual harassment.

The labels, expectations and pressures associated with conventional masculinity have the effect of entrapping and isolating men who, inevitably, fail to meet these idealised and inflexible concepts of manhood. Globally, men are more likely to die by suicide than women, due to potential reasons, namely: gender equality issues, differences in socially acceptable methods of dealing with stress and conflict for men and women, availability and patterns of alcohol consumption, and differences in care-seeking rates for mental disorders between men and women.



Therefore, enhancing our shared comprehension of how harmful masculinities manifest in society and influence health is crucial for addressing pervasive gender inequities.

The beliefs and practices of patriarchal masculinities and the greater political, economic, and social power that men have over women are the roots for violence against women and girls. The United Nations define violence against women as *any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life*. Women and girls are vulnerable to male violence from an early age and such violence takes many forms – physical, sexual, emotional, and economic. Pervasive forms of violence against women and girls around the globe include sexual exploitation, sexual trafficking, and harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting, forced and child marriage. Regardless of the gender of the victim, most perpetrators were male, and known to the victim.

Violence against women is a serious human rights violation and public health concern of pandemic proportions, associated with serious short and lifelong physical, sexual, and reproductive and mental health consequences for women and children.

The World Health Organization Global Database on Prevalence of Violence against Women is a comprehensive database on the prevalence of the two most common forms of violence against women globally: Intimate partner violence and sexual violence by someone other than a partner, referred to as non-partner sexual violence.

Challenging patriarchal masculinities involves fostering social change, and this transformation relies on individuals taking proactive steps in their own lives to turn these ideals into reality. It's about embodying the change they wish to witness in the world. The guiding principles for working to transform masculinities presented by UN Women Training Centre include:

**Work in solidarity with women-led work on violence against women and girls**, in order that such work reinforces existing initiatives, nurturing relationships of trust and collaboration and maintaining clear lines of communication and accountability.

**Carefully examine whether the messages and images unintentionally reinforce unhelpful traditional stereotypes about men and women** that contribute to violence against women and girls. It's important to be alert to the dangers of unintentionally generating other gender discriminatory attitudes (such as men feeling that they need to 'protect' women by limiting their mobility, freedom or privacy) or anti-equality perspectives (such as homophobia) that sometimes arise.

**Engage with men's interests in gender change and consider men as part of the solution.** Efforts to promote transformative masculinities must take into account the cultural specificities of what it means to be a man, recognise men's multiple interests in challenging norms of harmful



and violent masculinity, and link positive, non-violent masculinities with culturally compelling gender identities for men. This strategy will help diminish men's defensiveness and hostility for being blamed for the behaviour of some men.

**Recognises that all men do not commit acts of violence**, while emphasising that **all men need to be held accountable for their personal and political actions** (e.g., condoning sexism or violence), examining how their actions or inactions contribute to sustaining harmful masculinity norms and perpetuating violence against women and girls.

**Address men's vulnerabilities:** recognise that not all men are equal (intersectionality) and men may experience power and powerlessness at the same time in different contexts. Promoting gender justice requires acknowledging and addressing injustices that men may experience due to patriarchal norms, including various forms of violence. Transformative masculinities initiatives must involve active efforts to overcome sexism, social exclusion, homophobia, racism or any form of discriminatory behaviour against women or gay/bisexual/transgender men and women, or on any other basis.

**Recognise sexual diversity and sexual rights:** promote the respect for sexual diversity and the sexual and reproductive rights of all.

**Employ positive messages and multiple strategies:** framing men's involvement as part of the solution to gender-based violence and acknowledging with men that they are often grouped together and blamed for the actions of some without the recognition of their diverse beliefs and behaviours. It's crucial to create 'safe' spaces for open dialogue and learning about masculinity and violence without fear of judgement or hostility.

As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie pointed out: *We must raise our daughters differently. We must also raise our sons differently. We do a great disservice to boys in how we raise them. We stifle the humanity of boys. We define masculinity in a very narrow way. Masculinity becomes this hard small cage and we put boys inside the cage. We teach boys to be afraid of fear. We teach boys to be afraid of weakness, of vulnerability. We teach them to mask their true selves because they have to be, in Nigeria speak, **hard man**.*

B. Heilman, G. Barker, A. Harrison: *The man box: A Study on Being a Young Man in the US, UK, and Mexico*: [LINK](#)

B. Heilman, C. Manuel Guerrero-López, C. Ragonese, M. Kelberg, and G. Barker: *The cost of the man box*: [LINK](#)

World Health Organization: *Preventing suicide: A global imperative*: [LINK](#)

Promundo: *Unmasking Sexual Harassment*: [LINK](#)

World Health Organization Global Database on Prevalence of Violence against Women: [LINK](#)

Self-Learning Booklet: *Understanding Masculinities and Violence Against Women and Girls*: [LINK](#)

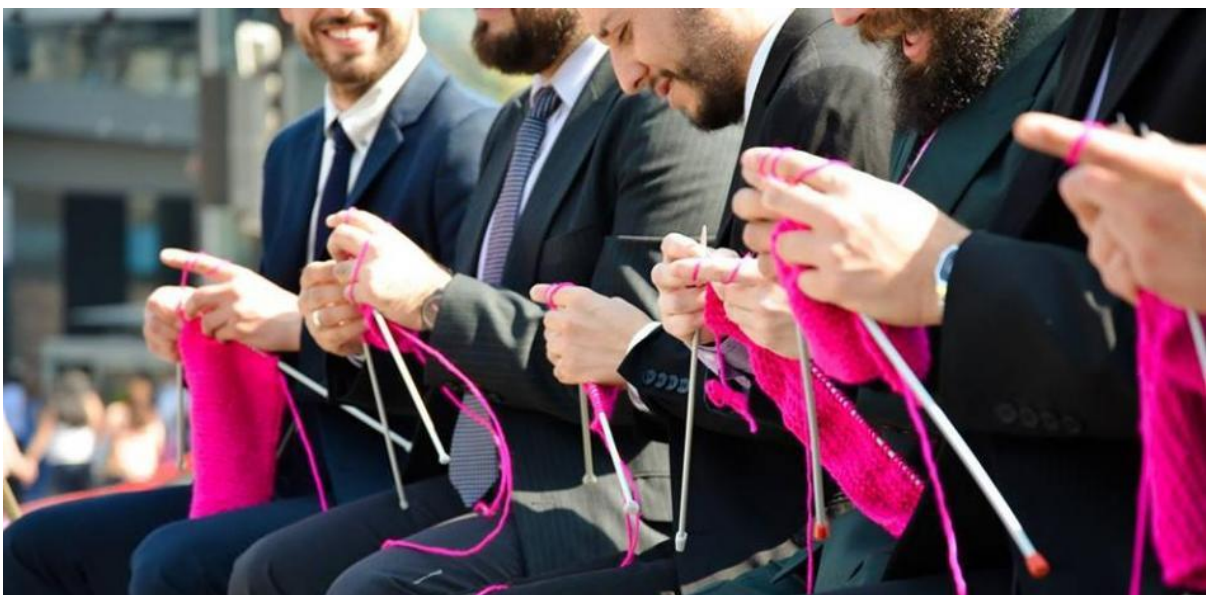


## Trivia – Reflection presented by Yuval Noah Harari:



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *We Should All Be Feminists*. ISBN: 9780008115272

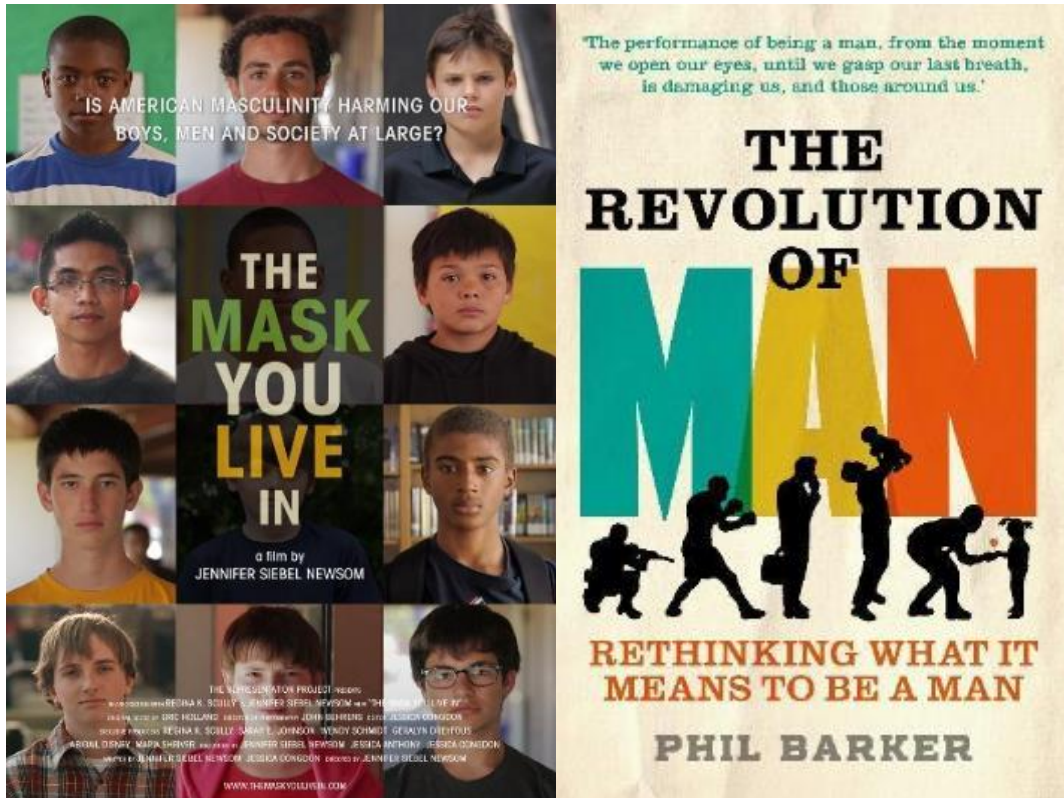
As Yuval Noah Harari pointed out in his book *Sapiens: A Brief History Of Humankind* (2015), the eighteenth-century ideal of masculinity and virility, visible in the portrait of Louis XIV, included a long wig, stockings, high-heeled shoes and a dancer's posture. Currently, in Western culture, these elements would be considered marks of effeminacy. Yuval Noah Harari also claims that, during most of history, dominant men have been colourful and flamboyant – e.g., American Indian chiefs or Hindu maharajas.



Chilean Collective named Hombres Tejedores (Men Who Knit), which uses an activity considered feminine to create a space for dialogue about the role of men in society, promote discussion around gender stereotypes and give visibility to alternative masculinities other than the hegemonic model.

Photograph taken from: [LINK](#) / Hombres Tejedores (Men Who Knit): [LINK](#)

### Suggestions



[LINK](#) to film: The mask you live in.

The Mask You Live In (Documentary): [LINK](#)

Phil Barker: The Revolution of Man. ISBN: 1760528919

## Sex Characteristics, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sexual Orientation – Definitions

Some tools, such as The Gender Unicorn, developed by Trans Student Educational Resources, can help us to distinguish important concepts.



## Sex assigned at birth

The assignment and classification of people as male, female, intersex, or another sex based on a combination of anatomy, hormones, chromosomes. The sex assigned at birth may be the same or different from gender identity.

- Female
- Male
- Other/ Intersex – Describing a person with a less common combination of hormones, chromosomes, and anatomy that are used to assign sex at birth. For some intersex people, these are apparent at birth, while for others they emerge later in life, often at puberty. Parents and medical professionals usually coercively assign intersex infants a sex and have, in the past, been medically permitted to perform surgical operations to conform the infant's genitalia to that assignment. This practice has become increasingly controversial as intersex adults speak out against the practice. The term intersex is not interchangeable with or a synonym for transgender (although some intersex people do identify as transgender). Intersex persons may have any sexual orientation and gender identity.

## Gender identity

Reflects a deeply felt and experienced sense of one's own gender. Most people have a gender identity, which is part of their overall identity – male, female, neither of these, both, or another gender(s). A person's gender identity may or may not be aligned with the sex assigned to them at birth.

- **Cisgender** (sometimes shortened to “cis”) is a term used to describe people whose sense of their own gender is aligned with the sex that they were assigned at birth. The term cisgender does not indicate biology, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life.
  - Cis woman
  - Cis man
- For **transgender** people, their sex assigned at birth and their own internal sense of gender identity are not the same. Transgender or trans refers to an umbrella term of many gender identities and expressions. The term transgender is not indicative of gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life. Some transgender people seek surgery or take hormones to bring their body into alignment with their gender identity; others do not. Trans people may have any sexual orientation and sex characteristics.
  - Trans woman
  - Trans man
- **Agender** – An umbrella term encompassing many different genders of people who commonly do not have a gender and/or have a gender that they describe as neutral.
- **Bigender** – Refers to those who identify as two genders. Can also identify as multigender (identifying as two or more genders).





Trans Students Educational Resources: The Gender Unicorn: [LINK](#)

## Gender expression or presentation

The physical manifestation of one's gender identity through actions and appearance, including speech, voice, mannerisms, clothing, hairstyle, body shape, etc. A person's gender expression is not always linked to the person's biological sex, gender identity or sexual orientation. Many transgender people seek to make their gender expression (how they look) match their gender identity (who they are), rather than their sex assigned at birth.

## Sexual and romantic/emotional orientation

It is important to note that sexual and romantic/emotional attraction can be from a variety of factors including but not limited to gender identity, gender expression/presentation, and sex assigned at birth. The attraction may be directed towards:

- Gender female
- Gender male
- Other gender(s)

Sex assigned at birth, gender identity, gender expression and sexual and romantic/emotional orientation are not the same, but they are intersecting aspects of a person. It is crucial to respect people's choice of terms, names, and pronouns to refer to themselves. An ally is someone who advocates and supports a community other than their own; allies are not part of the communities they help.

Although lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals encounter distinct challenges, they all face a collective risk of human rights violations due to their identities, expressions, behaviours, or physical attributes that are perceived as defying dominant gender norms and roles, including the binary concept of male/female.

## Sexual and Romantic/ Emotional Orientation

A person's physical, romantic, emotional, aesthetic, and/or other form of attraction to others. Most people have a sexual orientation, which is part of their identity. In Western cultures, gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Trans people can be straight, bisexual, lesbian, gay, asexual, pansexual, queer, etc. just like anyone else. For example, a trans woman who is exclusively attracted to other women would often identify as lesbian.

- **Heterosexual or straight** – experiencing attraction solely (or primarily) to some members of a different gender.
- **Homosexual** – a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex/gender. This [medical] term is considered stigmatising (particularly as a noun) due to its history as a category of mental illness and is discouraged for common use (use gay or lesbian instead).



- **Gay** – Someone experiencing attraction solely (or primarily) to some members of the same gender. Can be used to refer to men who are attracted to other men and women who are attracted to women.
- **Lesbian** – women who are primarily sexually or romantically attracted to other women.
- **Bisexual** – An umbrella term for people who experience sexual and/or emotional attraction to more than one gender.
- **Pansexual** – Capable of being attracted to many/any gender(s). Sometimes the term omnisexual is used in the same manner. “Pansexual” is used more frequently as more people acknowledge that gender is not binary. Sometimes, the identity fails to recognize that one cannot know individuals with every existing gender identity. Pansexual refers to those whose sexual or romantic attraction is not defined by gender.
- **Polysexual** – Capable of being attracted to multiple gender(s).
- **Demisexual** – refers to a person who experiences sexual attraction for another person after an emotional or intellectual bond has been developed.
- **Asexual** – The lack of a sexual attraction, and one identifying with this orientation. This may be used as an umbrella term for other emotional attractions such as demisexual.
- **Aromantic** – The lack of romantic attraction, and one identifying with this orientation. This may be used as an umbrella term for other emotional attractions such as demiromantic.

## Trivia: Story behind Pride



While Pride is often viewed as a celebration, its origins trace back to a riot against police brutality at the Stonewall Inn in New York City. On June 28, 1969, the Stonewall Inn experienced yet another police raid, due to laws which required a ‘man’ or a ‘woman’ to be wearing clothing items which ‘matched’ their gender on their state-issued ID. In response, the LGBTI community at

Stonewall, primarily led by trans women of colour, resisted, and fought back, leading to a significant increase in police brutality during six days of riots. This event became a catalyst for LGBTI activism in the United States. In many parts of the world, Pride remains primarily a protest that serves to draw attention to, commemorate, and advocate for the rights of LGBTI individuals. Although Pride has increasingly evolved into a prominent platform for celebrating queer joy and

resistance, various forms of LGBTI activism, protests, and community gatherings have existed globally in diverse forms throughout history.

Photograph taken from: [LINK](#)

## Suggestions



Amnesty International: LGBTI Rights: [LINK](#)

The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson (Documentary): [LINK](#)

## References

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- B. Akullu Ezati: Social Diversity, Gender, Equity and Public Policy: [LINK](#)
- Born Free and Equal: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Sex Characteristics in International Human Rights Law: [LINK](#)
- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women: [LINK](#)
- European DEI Initiatives: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Key Terms and Definitions: [LINK](#)
- Rights Law: [LINK](#)
- Safe Zone Project: LGBTQ+ Vocabulary: [LINK](#)
- S. Spaulding: Do You See What I See? How Social Differences Influence Mindreading: [LINK](#)
- The History of The Man Box: [LINK](#)
- Trans Student Educational Resources: Definitions: [LINK](#)
- UN Women Training Centre eLearning Campus: [LINK](#)
- World Health Organization: Violence against women: [LINK](#)
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