

GRADE 8 | LESSON 4
EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO SAFETY

LESSON SUMMARY

LESSON 4: EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO SAFETY

- In this lesson, students first reflect on the ways self-concept is influenced by the messages from friends, family, media, society and culture, and then they tighten their lens to examine how external influences can shape attitudes about gender. With the recognition that adolescence is a time of significant change for most people, students are asked to reflect on ways external influences have impacted their own self-concept.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

ANALYZING INFLUENCES

- Analyze how friends, family, media, society and culture can influence self- concept and body image. (NSES PD.8.INF.1)
- Analyze external influences that have an impact on one's attitudes about gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. (NSES ID.8.INF.1)

ACCESSING INFORMATION

- Access accurate information about gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation. (NSES ID.8.AI.1)

ADVANCE PREPARATION

MATERIALS

- Per student copies of “Audrey_Graphic Organizer” (a half sheet)
- (optional) Class Set of transcript for *Toilets, Bowties, Gender and Me*
- Student notebooks or scrap paper

ACTIONS

- Ensure pedagogical familiarity and comfort with lesson plan
- Preview *Toilets, Bowties, Gender and Me* to determine if you wish to print copies of the transcript (Audrey has an Australian accent)
- Determine if you will print any “More Information” resources for the latter part of the lesson.
- Plan where students will write reflections
- Ensure functioning of audiovisual setup
- Test video playback
- Questions? Contact Michele Rusnak or a district STEM Coach.

WARM UP

INSTRUCTIONS: WHO AM I?

- Push students to write down as many statements as they can in the time you choose to provide. Hopefully they will come up with at least 5.
- Solicit a couple of responses. Optional: After each response, ask students to raise their hand if they wrote down a similar response.
- Remind students (from Lesson 3) that the responses one gives to the question, “Who am I?” make up that person’s self-concept. Today they will be looking at how a person’s self-concept is formed and how external influences can impact it.

WHO AM I?

Who are you?

Write down 5 – 10 statements
that begin with, “I am...”.



**WHAT INFLUENCES
SELF-CONCEPT?**

INSTRUCTIONS: WHAT INFLUENCES SELF-CONCEPT?

- Use these animated slides to introduce the idea of self-concept and to present what factors influence self-concept.
 - "What is Self-Concept?"
 - "What Influences Self-Concept?"
- Then, ask students to review the "I am..." statements they wrote at the beginning of class. (Think-Pair-Share)
 - Which statements are related to their individual self, their relational self, their collective self?
 - What do they think has most influenced their responses – Friends? Family? Social groups and institutions?

Give students some time to think and then share with a partner before soliciting some responses to share with the class.

TEACHER REFERENCE: DEFINITIONS

- Media - the communication outlets or tools used to store and deliver information or data. The term refers to components of the mass media communications industry, such as print media, publishing, the news media, photography, cinema, broadcasting, and advertising. (Wikipedia)
- Society - a very large group of people held together over time through formalized relationships. Relationships can be economic, legal, political, or some combination of these.
- Culture - the knowledge, beliefs and practices of a group of people.
- <https://press.rebus.community/mscy/back-matter/glossary/>

TEACHER REFERENCE: DEFINITION OF SOCIALIZATION

From Introduction to Sociology, 1st Canadian
Edition – Chapter 5: Socialization

Socialization is how we learn the norms and beliefs of our society. From our earliest family and play experiences, we are made aware of societal values and expectations.

Socialization helps people learn to function successfully in their social worlds. How does the process of socialization occur? How do we learn to use the objects of our society's material culture? How do we come to adopt the beliefs, values, and norms that represent its nonmaterial culture? This learning takes place through interaction with various agents of socialization, like peer groups and families, plus both formal and informal social institutions.

WHAT IS SELF-CONCEPT?

At its most basic, self-concept is a collection of beliefs one holds about oneself and the responses of others. It embodies the answer to the question "**Who am I?**"

- Individual Self



Attributes and personality traits that differentiate us from other individuals. Examples include introversion or extroversion.

- Relational Self



Defined by our relationships with significant others. Examples include siblings, friends, and spouses.

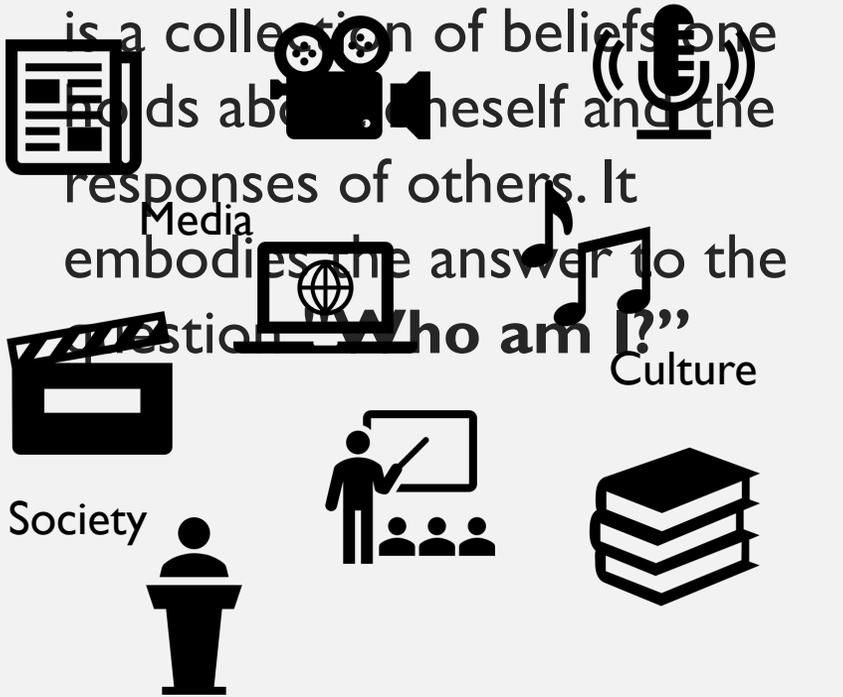
- Collective Self



Reflects our membership in social groups. Examples include British, Republican, African-American, or gay.

WHAT INFLUENCES SELF-CONCEPT?

Social institutions self-concept is a collection of beliefs one holds about oneself and the responses of others. It embodies the answer to the question "Who am I?"



- Individual Self 
- Relational Self 
- Collective Self 

Attributes and personality traits that differentiate us from other individuals. Examples include introversion or extroversion.

Socialization is how we learn the norms and beliefs of our society. From our earliest family and play experiences, we are made aware of societal values and expectations. This learning takes place through interaction with various agents of socialization, like **peer groups and families**, plus both formal and informal **social institutions**.

Defined by our relationships with significant others. Examples include religion, race, and gender.

Reflects our membership in social groups. Examples include British, Republican, African American, or gay.

SELF-CONCEPT AND GENDER

INSTRUCTIONS:WHAT DO YOU THINK?

OVERVIEW

Students are asked to “think” about their response to a prompt and then, when given a cue, to arrange themselves along an imaginary line that represents the continuum of answers between a strong “yes!” and a strong “no!”.

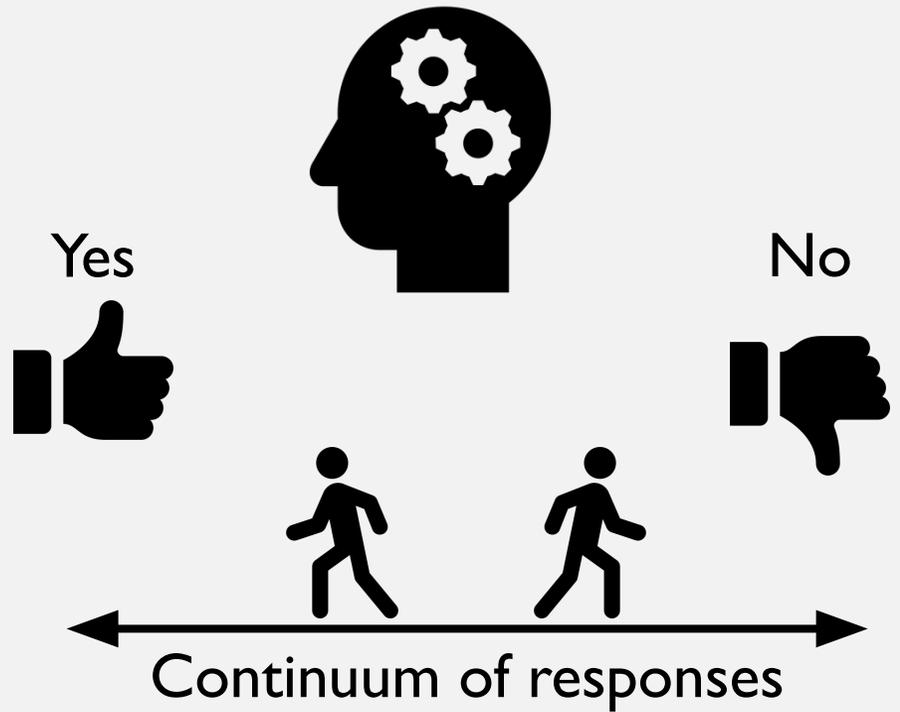
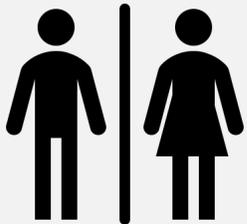
After they align themselves, ask them to share with a partner and then solicit some responses to share with the class.

ADVANCED PREP

- Figure out which end of your room will be for “yes” and which end will be for “no.”
- What infrastructure or techniques(Signs? Physical demonstration?) will help students understand the task, including the nature of the continuum represented by the two ends of the room?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Does society treat
men and boys 
differently
from
 women and girls?



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Does society treat
men and boys 
differently
from
 women and girls?



What if society can't
determine your
gender?

Continuum of responses



INSTRUCTIONS:AUDREY MASON-HYDE

- Use slide “About Audrey Mason-Hyde” to introduce a person who feels that society has difficulty determining their gender and wants to share what it feels like.
- Use slide “Graphic Organizer” to introduce the notetaking tool that students will use while they are watching. Discuss each section of the anchor, emphasizing the connection between the three sections.

Topics of investigation

- How do **other people’s ideas** of gender impact Audrey’s life?
- How do **Audrey’s ideas** about gender impact her own **self-concept and body image**?

ABOUT AUDREY MASON-HYDE



- From the city of Adelaide in Australia
- 12 years old in this video
- Key Question: *Why is it so important for us to know someone else's gender?*

Toilets, Bowties, Gender and Me
Audrey Mason-Hyde
TEDxAdelaide | 19 Jan 2018



Other people's ideas
about Audrey and gender

How do **other people's ideas**
of gender impact Audrey's life?

Audrey's thoughts and feelings about gender

Changes to Audrey's self-concept and behaviors

How do **Audrey's ideas** about gender
impact her own self-concept and body
image?



GRAPHIC ORGANIZER



Subtitles are recommended for all videos, when available. *Toilets, bowties, gender and me* (10:34) by TEDx Adelaide

Note: Audrey prefers pronouns they/them/theirs. Students can be encouraged to use these as a way to show respect to Audrey as a person, but be mindful to avoid and discourage judgement when mistakes are made. See slide notes for additional teacher resources about the use of gender neutral pronouns)

DISCUSSION: AUDREY MASON-HYDE (TEACHER)

- According to Audrey, why is it so important for other people to Audrey's gender?
- Language and differential treatment of boys vs. girls
- What are some examples of how other people's behaviors and ideas about gender made Audrey feel?
- Bathroom comments – discomfort
- Assuming gender – discomfort, questioning
- Nontraditional dress (Bart) - inspired
- What are some ways that Audrey's self-concept and body image developed?
- Girl! (preschool)
- Tomboy girl (early school)
- Not a girl, not a boy, just me (now)
- What are some ways that Audrey's sense of style developed?
- Preschool: Girl-ish, but don't care too much
- Early School: No girl style; just boy style. Love of bowties.
- Inspired by Bart: Re-introduced "flamboyant" elements – eyeliner, nail polish, sparkle pants

DISCUSSION:AUDREY MASON-HYDE

- According to Audrey, why is it so important for other people to Audrey's gender?
- What are some examples of how other people's behaviors and ideas about gender made Audrey feel?
- What are some ways that Audrey's self-concept and body image developed?
- What were some of the experiences and thoughts that led to changes in Audrey's self-concept and body image?

INSTRUCTIONS: MORE INFORMATION

- As time allows, encourage students to explore accurate information about gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation using resources such as these. You might browse the as a whole class (projected on screen), print out samples for students to read on their own, or share the websites via BLEND or Google Classroom. For a completely non-digital format or hard copy supplementary resources, see your librarian for suggestions.

MORE INFORMATION

- “Gender Identity and Development in Children” (Healthychildren.org – American Academy of Pediatrics)
<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/Pages/Gender-Identity-and-Gender-Confusion-In-Children.aspx>
- “Sexual Orientation & Homosexuality” (American Psychological Association)
<https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/orientation>
- “Transgender People, Gender Identity and Gender Expression” (American Psychological Association) <https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/transgender>
- “Gender Identity” (Caring For Kids - Canadian Paediatric Society)
<https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/gender-identity>

REFLECTION

INSTRUCTIONS: REFLECTION

- Choose one of the two “reflection’ options for your students to complete at the end of this lesson.

3 – 2 – 1 REFLECTION

- Three (3) facts I learned today about **self-concept**...
- Two (2) things about **self-concept** I think are important to share with others...
- One (1) time the behaviors of other people caused me to question my own self-concept...

REFLECTION

Describe a time when the behaviors of other people caused you to question your own self-concept.

How did you feel?

In what ways did your behaviors or thoughts about yourself change?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Caring for Kids. “Gender Identity.” *Gender Identity - Caring for Kids*, Canadian Paediatric Society, May 2018, <https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/gender-identity>.
- Cherry, Kendra. “What Is Self-Concept and How Does It Form?” *Verywell Mind*, Verywell Mind, 17 Dec. 2018, <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-self-concept-2795865>. (Accessed October 2, 2019)
- Little, William. “Introduction to Sociology – 1st Canadian Edition.” *Introduction to Sociology 1st Canadian Edition*, BCcampus, 6 Nov. 2014, <https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontosociology/chapter/chapter5-socialization/>. (Accessed October 2, 2019)

BIBLIOGRAPHY, CONT'D

- “Media (Communication).” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 15 Sept. 2019, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_\(communication\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_(communication)). (Accessed October 2, 2019)
- Poepsel, Mark. “Glossary-MEDIA, SOCIETY, CULTURE AND YOU.” *Media Society Culture and You*, Press Books, <https://press.rebus.community/mscy/back-matter/glossary/>. (Accessed October 2, 2019)
- Rafferty , Jason. “Gender Identity Development in Children.” *HealthyChildren.org*, American Academy of Pediatrics, 18 Sept. 2018, <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/Pages/Gender-Identity-and-Gender-Confusion-In-Children.aspx>. (Accessed October 2, 2019)

BIBLIOGRAPHY, CONT'D

- “Sexual Orientation & Homosexuality.” *Answers to Your Questions*, American Psychological Association, 2019, <https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/orientation>. (Accessed October 2, 2019)
- Talks, TEDx. “Toilets, Bowties, Gender and Me | Audrey Mason-Hyde | TEDxAdelaide.” *TEDx Talks*, YouTube, 19 Jan. 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCLoNwVJA-0&feature=youtu.be>. (Accessed October 2, 2019)
- “Transgender People, Gender Identity and Gender Expression.” *Answer Your Questions*, American Psychological Association, 2019, <https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/transgender>. (Accessed October 2, 2019)
- Icons compliments of Microsoft Office - <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/insert-icons-in-microsoft-office-e2459f17-3996-4795-996e-b9a13486fa79>

I wonder what you first think when you see me.

Perhaps it's something about my curls - people often mention them.

Or "What a dapper little man."

In my experience, one of the first things people do is assume I'm a boy or aren't sure whether I'm a girl or a boy.

We do this to everyone. We assume what gender someone is, based on how they look, and if we can't tell, we get confused.

I say "we" because I do it too. It's ingrained. Our first decision and mostly unconscious.

But why?

Well, I'm Audrey, and if we are talking biology, I'm female. But I feel it's more complex than that.

For an entry point, let's look at my style.

As you can probably see, I have a unique style, but I wasn't born wearing suits, bow ties, and flamingo socks. My style had to evolve, and it will keep evolving, and I think it gives some insight into my changing experience of gender.

Here's a photo of me before I started school, wearing a Star Wars top, a skirt, and sneakers, demonstrating to the world that I'm a girl! It's the skirt, right? We all know that sign.

So at this age, I was just a girl who didn't care much about what I wore. It was functional and varied.

This all took a different turn when I hit the age of five and started school.

I remember one of my first days at school, and I was in the girls' toilet when two girls I knew came near me and said, "Look, there's a boy in here." I looked over my shoulder, but there was no one there. So I asked them, "Where?"

I realized they meant me. I was really shocked, as I'd only been around people who knew and understood me. I felt upset and alienated.

Eventually, this misrecognition started happening in public bathrooms as well, with adults assuming my gender. Often, I would get things like, "Why are you in here?" or "Wrong bathroom." This eventually led to me being hesitant and tentative about even going to the bathroom in public.

Mostly, people didn't actually say anything at all. They just stared at me. This felt, and feels, worse.

At school, this happened increasingly often, but while many people in that situation might have started dressing more typically female, in dresses, with long hair, or bows, I became more and more masculine presenting, wearing what we consider to be boys' clothes because in them I felt most authentically myself.

I was pretty adamant about just wearing male things. What that meant to me was no pink, or even purple, or any form of dress, skirt, or even glitter and frills.

I didn't think of myself as a boy, but anything that was identified as female felt uncomfortable to me.

I adopted the label of "tomboy," which meant a girl who wore boy clothes and played with boys' toys. To me, this avoided conflict. Tomboys are common, right? They're even considered a stage - as though we'll grow out of it.

My parents never fought my insistence on avoiding dresses. They allowed me to choose what I wore because they believed it had no bearing on who I was.

I started wearing shirts and bow ties to any slightly formal event. Here's a photo of me at six wearing a bow tie I made out of paper because Dad was wearing his fabric one.

As for my experience in bathrooms, I tried to avoid the problem by waiting until people left before I went in because otherwise, I'd feel trapped.

Until about the age of nine, when someone mistook me for a boy, I would reply comfortably that I'm a girl. But eventually, it stopped feeling right; instead of gaining confidence, the more it happened, I lost it.

"Girl" didn't feel right, but "boy" didn't feel correct either. So, what did I want? I'm not sure I really knew at the time.

My friends started getting more and more into sports, but I was never sporty, I was a bookworm. If I were a boy, people would probably have said I was a sensitive one.

They don't tend to use that term as much for girls, because it's what's expected. So I started hanging out with a group of girls. This didn't really alter my style, more my attitude to the word "tomboy," which I grew to dislike.

I started to realize I could still be a girl and wear typically male things. In my mind, I was still a girl because I didn't feel like a boy.

At the age of eight, I traveled with my parents and the cast of our film, "52 Tuesdays," to the Berlin International Film Festival. "52 Tuesdays" was partly about a mom transitioning from female to male.

I imagine some of you are thinking, "Oh, no! Audrey just got this gender confusion from her parents film making." But this gender questioning happened before they started considering it, and they say I've taught them as much about this as they've taught me.

Anyway, in Berlin, I met Bart. Bart wore drapy black materials, high heeled boots, nail polish, and eyeliner, but he wasn't dressed as a woman.

This demonstrated to me that I could be flamboyant and androgynous with my style, that my love of bow ties didn't need to exclude anything traditionally female.

That year, when the film won the Crystal Bear Youth Jury Award, I took to the red carpet in eyeliner and nail polish. Here's a photo of me that night. Note the bow tie.

I started to think of gender as something more dynamic. Gender was not your genitals or even what you wore or acted like, and maybe it wasn't fixed.

I'm going to take a second to pose a question to you.

Why does it matter to you whether I am a boy or a girl?

And if you think it doesn't, I'm going to really ask you to stop and think. Have you ever come across someone whose gender you just can't place? Have you wanted to know, even if you don't care either way, have you wanted to know what they are?

For those of you who say, "No, I'm totally comfortable not knowing, I don't use 'he' or 'she' when talking about them, I just treat them as a human without any gender identifiers."

Well, that's impressive. It's hard to do.

Just try and talk about someone for a minute without using gender terms. It's really difficult.

"This is Audrey. Audrey is a ...young person who doesn't identify as any gender. Audrey writes stories and they love writing. Audrey loves writing - not the stories love writing."

Oops.

It's hard for all of us.

We want to know because of our language and, also, in my experience, it's because we treat men and boys differently to women and girls. And we want to know how to treat them.

Sometimes I'm glad that people mistake me for a boy because I get to have real conversations with people. They ask me about my future, and we talk about what I want to do.

Often, when they find out I'm not a boy, they don't know how to treat me.

My friends, who show more outward signs of being girls, often get called things like "sweetheart," or "darling," or "love." People comment on how pretty they are.

Recently, when I traveled overseas, I noticed a trend of gender neutral or all-gender public bathrooms, which makes me feel so relieved. Having that choice makes me love going to the bathroom in public, and I love I don't have to tell anyone what genitalia I own.

Here's a photo of me in my sparkle pants, as I call them. They really added flare to my style, and they also really confuse some people about whether I am a boy, or even, possibly, make them uncomfortable because I seem like a very flamboyant, or even girly, boy.

Though I don't think this is always easy, I'm so happy with the choices I made when I was younger to wear what made me feel good and that I felt expressed me because I think I would be a much unhappier kid otherwise.

I still get called a boy in public situations, but, in terms of bathrooms, I try to go to the all-gender or unisex ones, or, if I can't, I go to the disabled toilets.

Although I do still use the girls' loos (toilets) in school and sometimes in public. Using the girls' toilets, I never feel good, and I still have a tendency to go with someone else.

Though I'm not labeled as a particular gender when I go to the disabled toilets, I don't feel great still, because it just reminds me that there are mostly no toilets for people like me, who don't identify within the gender binary, and that toilets are just another way we categorize people.

My style has evolved drastically since the Star Wars t-shirts and skirts of my early childhood, and I think it has a lot to say about how I now appreciate and consider gender.

I've realized that, for me, gender is a spectrum. What my gender expression and identity is, is entirely about me and not about how other people perceive me.

I don't know how we deal with that in a world so desperate to define by gender.

I'm going to leave you with that same question: Why does it matter to you whether I am a boy or a girl? Or that I am in the wrong bathroom? Does it really matter to you which bathroom I use? Because it does matter to me.

Would it hurt you not to know someone's gender?

Because despite how uncomfortable it might make you feel, you assuming my gender makes me feel uncomfortable every day. All I'm asking is for you to just sit with that little bit of uncomfortable to make someone else feel better.

Because it does matter to me.

It matters to me when I walk with my friends and you say, "Hey, girls!" But I don't want you to make amends, I don't hold my grudges, but everytime you say that it smudges my happy thoughts into undefinable words.

It matters to me when you say I'm a handsome lad because while you may be complimenting, it makes me question my inner vision of myself.

So, strangers, sit uncomfortably while I tell you how my gender ranges from day to day, sometimes neutral, sometimes fluid, sometimes gentle, sometimes fierce.

It doesn't make me a boy, but it doesn't mean that I'm realigning, and I don't want to be redefining what it means to be a girl.

Because I'm not a girl. So it does matter to me.

(Applause)

Toilets, Bowties, Gender and Me
Audrey Mason-Hyde
TEDxAdelaide | 19 Jan 2018



Other people's ideas
about Audrey and gender

A large, empty rounded rectangular box for notes.

Audrey's thoughts and feelings about gender

A large, empty rounded rectangular box for notes.



Changes to Audrey's self-concept and behaviors

A large, empty rounded rectangular box for notes.



Toilets, Bowties, Gender and Me
Audrey Mason-Hyde
TEDxAdelaide | 19 Jan 2018



Other people's ideas
about Audrey and gender

A large, empty rounded rectangular box for notes.

Audrey's thoughts and feelings about gender

A large, empty rounded rectangular box for notes.



Changes to Audrey's self-concept and behaviors

A large, empty rounded rectangular box for notes.



I wonder what you first think when you see me.

Perhaps it's something about my curls - people often mention them.

Or "What a dapper little man."

In my experience, one of the first things people do is assume I'm a boy or aren't sure whether I'm a girl or a boy.

We do this to everyone. We assume what gender someone is, based on how they look, and if we can't tell, we get confused.

I say "we" because I do it too. It's ingrained. Our first decision and mostly unconscious.

But why?

Well, I'm Audrey, and if we are talking biology, I'm female. But I feel it's more complex than that.

For an entry point, let's look at my style.

As you can probably see, I have a unique style, but I wasn't born wearing suits, bow ties, and flamingo socks. My style had to evolve, and it will keep evolving, and I think it gives some insight into my changing experience of gender.

Here's a photo of me before I started school, wearing a Star Wars top, a skirt, and sneakers, demonstrating to the world that I'm a girl! It's the skirt, right? We all know that sign.

So at this age, I was just a girl who didn't care much about what I wore. It was functional and varied.

This all took a different turn when I hit the age of five and started school.

I remember one of my first days at school, and I was in the girls' toilet when two girls I knew came near me and said, "Look, there's a boy in here." I looked over my shoulder, but there was no one there. So I asked them, "Where?"

I realized they meant me. I was really shocked, as I'd only been around people who knew and understood me. I felt upset and alienated.

Eventually, this misrecognition started happening in public bathrooms as well, with adults assuming my gender. Often, I would get things like, "Why are you in here?" or "Wrong bathroom." This eventually led to me being hesitant and tentative about even going to the bathroom in public.

Mostly, people didn't actually say anything at all. They just stared at me. This felt, and feels, worse.

At school, this happened increasingly often, but while many people in that situation might have started dressing more typically female, in dresses, with long hair, or bows, I became more and more masculine presenting, wearing what we consider to be boys' clothes because in them I felt most authentically myself.

I was pretty adamant about just wearing male things. What that meant to me was no pink, or even purple, or any form of dress, skirt, or even glitter and frills.

I didn't think of myself as a boy, but anything that was identified as female felt uncomfortable to me.

I adopted the label of "tomboy," which meant a girl who wore boy clothes and played with boys' toys. To me, this avoided conflict. Tomboys are common, right? They're even considered a stage - as though we'll grow out of it.

My parents never fought my insistence on avoiding dresses. They allowed me to choose what I wore because they believed it had no bearing on who I was.

I started wearing shirts and bow ties to any slightly formal event. Here's a photo of me at six wearing a bow tie I made out of paper because Dad was wearing his fabric one.

As for my experience in bathrooms, I tried to avoid the problem by waiting until people left before I went in because otherwise, I'd feel trapped.

Until about the age of nine, when someone mistook me for a boy, I would reply comfortably that I'm a girl. But eventually, it stopped feeling right; instead of gaining confidence, the more it happened, I lost it.

"Girl" didn't feel right, but "boy" didn't feel correct either. So, what did I want? I'm not sure I really knew at the time.

My friends started getting more and more into sports, but I was never sporty, I was a bookworm. If I were a boy, people would probably have said I was a sensitive one.

They don't tend to use that term as much for girls, because it's what's expected. So I started hanging out with a group of girls. This didn't really alter my style, more my attitude to the word "tomboy," which I grew to dislike.

I started to realize I could still be a girl and wear typically male things. In my mind, I was still a girl because I didn't feel like a boy.

At the age of eight, I traveled with my parents and the cast of our film, "52 Tuesdays," to the Berlin International Film Festival. "52 Tuesdays" was partly about a mom transitioning from female to male.

I imagine some of you are thinking, "Oh, no! Audrey just got this gender confusion from her parents film making." But this gender questioning happened before they started considering it, and they say I've taught them as much about this as they've taught me.

Anyway, in Berlin, I met Bart. Bart wore drapery black materials, high heeled boots, nail polish, and eyeliner, but he wasn't dressed as a woman.

This demonstrated to me that I could be flamboyant and androgynous with my style, that my love of bow ties didn't need to exclude anything traditionally female.

That year, when the film won the Crystal Bear Youth Jury Award, I took to the red carpet in eyeliner and nail polish. Here's a photo of me that night. Note the bow tie.

I started to think of gender as something more dynamic. Gender was not your genitals or even what you wore or acted like, and maybe it wasn't fixed.

I'm going to take a second to pose a question to you.

Why does it matter to you whether I am a boy or a girl?

And if you think it doesn't, I'm going to really ask you to stop and think. Have you ever come across someone whose gender you just can't place? Have you wanted to know, even if you don't care either way, have you wanted to know what they are?

For those of you who say, "No, I'm totally comfortable not knowing, I don't use 'he' or 'she' when talking about them, I just treat them as a human without any gender identifiers."

Well, that's impressive. It's hard to do.

Just try and talk about someone for a minute without using gender terms. It's really difficult.

"This is Audrey. Audrey is a ...young person who doesn't identify as any gender. Audrey writes stories and they love writing. Audrey loves writing - not the stories love writing."

Oops.

It's hard for all of us.

We want to know because of our language and, also, in my experience, it's because we treat men and boys differently to women and girls. And we want to know how to treat them.

Sometimes I'm glad that people mistake me for a boy because I get to have real conversations with people. They ask me about my future, and we talk about what I want to do.

Often, when they find out I'm not a boy, they don't know how to treat me.

My friends, who show more outward signs of being girls, often get called things like "sweetheart," or "darling," or "love." People comment on how pretty they are.

Recently, when I traveled overseas, I noticed a trend of gender neutral or all-gender public bathrooms, which makes me feel so relieved. Having that choice makes me love going to the bathroom in public, and I love I don't have to tell anyone what genitalia I own.

Here's a photo of me in my sparkle pants, as I call them. They really added flare to my style, and they also really confuse some people about whether I am a boy, or even, possibly, make them uncomfortable because I seem like a very flamboyant, or even girly, boy.

Though I don't think this is always easy, I'm so happy with the choices I made when I was younger to wear what made me feel good and that I felt expressed me because I think I would be a much unhappier kid otherwise.

I still get called a boy in public situations, but, in terms of bathrooms, I try to go to the all-gender or unisex ones, or, if I can't, I go to the disabled toilets.

Although I do still use the girls' loos (toilets) in school and sometimes in public. Using the girls' toilets, I never feel good, and I still have a tendency to go with someone else.

Though I'm not labeled as a particular gender when I go to the disabled toilets, I don't feel great still, because it just reminds me that there are mostly no toilets for people like me, who don't identify within the gender binary, and that toilets are just another way we categorize people.

My style has evolved drastically since the Star Wars t-shirts and skirts of my early childhood, and I think it has a lot to say about how I now appreciate and consider gender.

I've realized that, for me, gender is a spectrum. What my gender expression and identity is, is entirely about me and not about how other people perceive me.

I don't know how we deal with that in a world so desperate to define by gender.

I'm going to leave you with that same question: Why does it matter to you whether I am a boy or a girl? Or that I am in the wrong bathroom? Does it really matter to you which bathroom I use? Because it does matter to me.

Would it hurt you not to know someone's gender?

Because despite how uncomfortable it might make you feel, you assuming my gender makes me feel uncomfortable every day. All I'm asking is for you to just sit with that little bit of uncomfortable to make someone else feel better.

Because it does matter to me.

It matters to me when I walk with my friends and you say, "Hey, girls!" But I don't want you to make amends, I don't hold my grudges, but everytime you say that it smudges my happy thoughts into undefinable words.

It matters to me when you say I'm a handsome lad because while you may be complimenting, it makes me question my inner vision of myself.

So, strangers, sit uncomfortably while I tell you how my gender ranges from day to day, sometimes neutral, sometimes fluid, sometimes gentle, sometimes fierce.

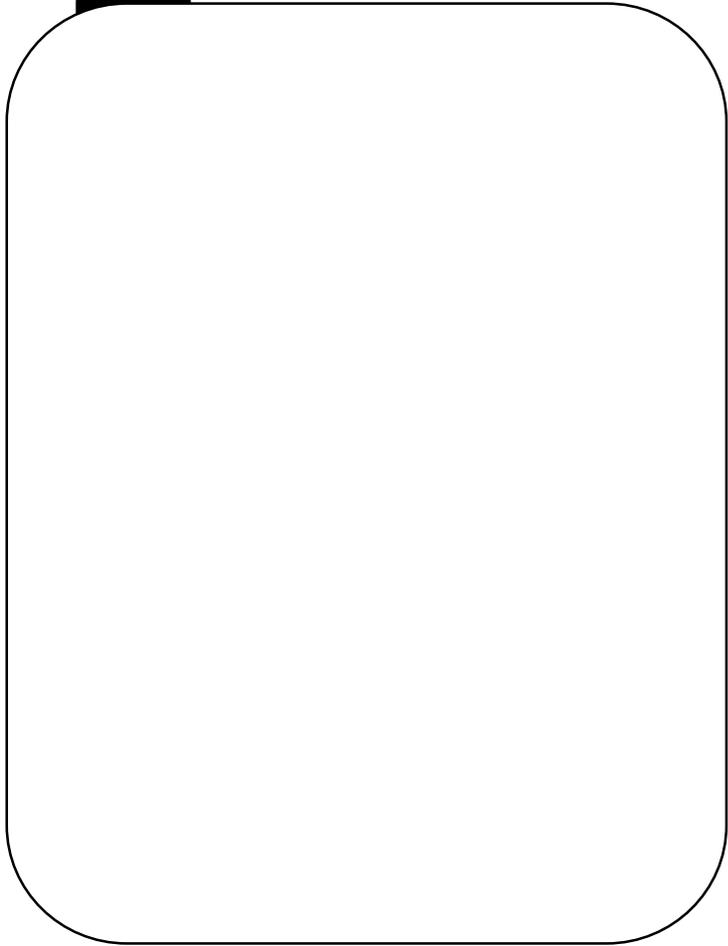
It doesn't make me a boy, but it doesn't mean that I'm realigning, and I don't want to be redefining what it means to be a girl.

Because I'm not a girl. So it does matter to me.

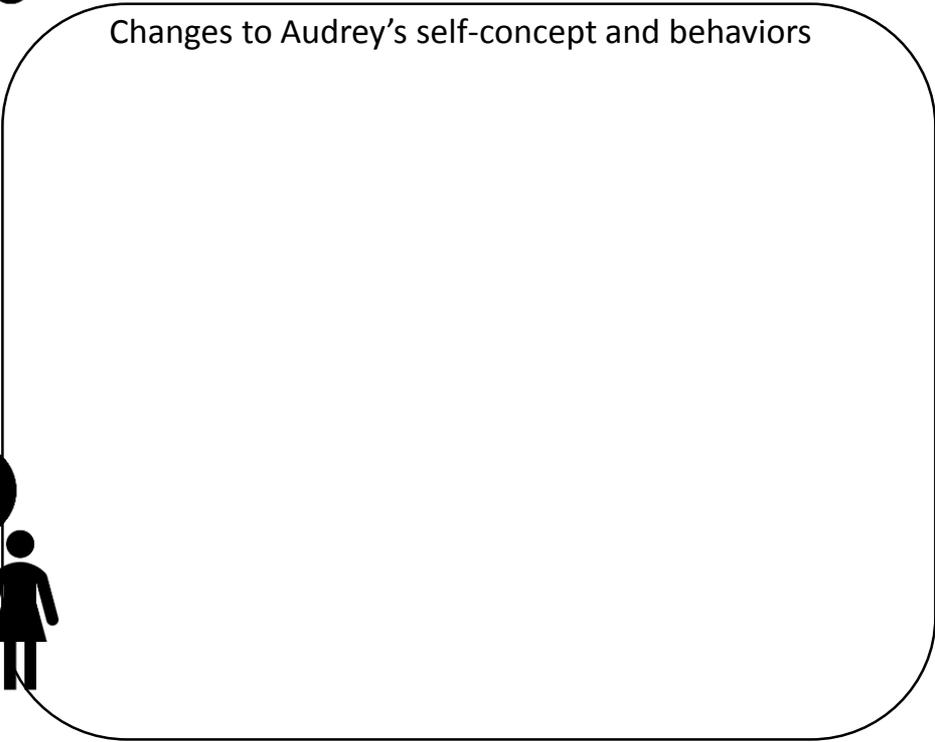
(Applause)



Other people's ideas
about Audrey and gender



Audrey's thoughts and feelings about gender



Changes to Audrey's self-concept and behaviors

