

studio180

Study Guide

2013/14

Cock

by Mike Bartlett

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A. Tips for Using this Guide

Thank you for choosing to bring your students to Studio 180 Theatre's **Canadian premiere** production of *Cock* by Mike Bartlett. We are excited for you and your students to join us at the theatre and we have created this Study Guide to support and enhance both the production and your efforts to incorporate the play into your ongoing class curriculum.

The themes, issues, questions and opportunities for exploration this play provokes are vast and we have done our best to supply a comprehensive, varied, accessible, challenging and engaging array of resources. *Cock*, like all Studio 180 shows, tackles some Big Questions – including every perspective, opinion and angle is impossible. We do hope, however, that this Study Guide provides you and your students with some useful background information, effective resources and productive suggestions for classroom discussion and further study.

Our Study Guide is a comprehensive document, so here are some tips on how to use it:

- **Prior to attending the show**, we recommend you **check out Sections D & E** for a brief background on the company and the play as well as an important section on theatre etiquette.
- The better students are prepared for what they are about to see, the more they will get out of the experience at the theatre. **Suggestions for pre-show preparation** and creative ways to engage with some of the themes of the play prior to attending the performance **are recommended in Sections H & I**, which offer classroom activities and samples of the wonderful comic book art featured in our lobby exhibit at the theatre.
- We recognize that teachers attending this production may have a broad range of experience leading **anti-homophobia, heterosexism and equity education** in the classroom. **For teachers seeking additional resources, we have included Sections F & H, and Appendix A.** The Appendix offers Sam Killermann's article, "Breaking Through the Binary: Gender Explained Using Continuums," including "The Genderbread Person" infographic.
- We recommend all teachers take some time to review **Section B – Guidelines for Safe & Productive Classroom Discussion.**
- The **follow-up** possibilities and potential for dialogue and exploration inspired by this play are limitless. In **Section G** we offer suggestions of themes and questions we hope **will provoke lively discussion in your classroom.**
- **For a more in-depth follow-up experience**, we recommend you **check out Section J**, which offers articles representing a broad spectrum of approaches, styles and points of view around some of the themes and questions inspired by the play. Pick an article that will speak to your students' specific interests and needs and use it as a springboard to class discussion.
- As much as we want to, we can never cover it all. Luckily, we are part of a community of individuals and organizations doing inspiring work around issues of identity, youth support and LGBTQ rights. Please **see Section K – Recommended Resources** for a sample of places to go **for additional support and materials.**

B. Guidelines for Safe & Productive Classroom Discussion

Studio 180 is known for provocative shows that tackle potentially sensitive, personal and controversial topics. In the case of *Cock*, issues of sexuality, sex, gender and identity are explored, and the play includes some very strong and sexually explicit language.

We have developed the following guidelines to help you lead productive pre- and post-show sessions in which all students feel safe, respected and able to contribute openly and honestly to discussion:

- Class members should make a commitment to respecting one another. Invite suggestions from students as to what “**respect**” means to them. Some of these ground rules may include a commitment to confidentiality, or the agreement that only one participant speak at a time or that ideas are never to be ridiculed or put down.
- Your class may include students from a wide variety of cultural, racial, religious and national backgrounds. Students may come from different socioeconomic backgrounds and some may identify as LGBTQ. Others may be questioning or even struggling with their sexual or gender identity. Students will enter into the conversation as they feel comfortable. **Teachers and students must resist the urge to place individuals in the spotlight based on their perceived identity or point of view.**
- It is the moderator’s role to establish as safe a setting as possible, and they must take special care to ensure that **students holding a majority opinion do not vilify those “on the other side” who hold a minority view.** The moderator should also pose questions to the class to help keep the conversation on track.
- The point of a classroom discussion about the issues addressed in *Cock* should not be to reach a class consensus. The goal should be to **establish a forum for a free and respectful exchange of ideas.**
- **Please keep in mind that the better students are prepared prior to attending the play, the more they will get out of the experience.** An awareness of what they are about to see will provide students with greater access to the ideas presented onstage. For this reason, this Study Guide is filled with background information and suggestions for classroom discussions and activities. In addition, **we offer pre-show chats before every Wednesday matinee, beginning at 1PM.** Please let us know if you plan to take advantage of this opportunity at the time of booking.
- Your students’ experiences of the play will also be heightened by effective follow-up class discussion. **We offer post-show Q&A sessions after every Wednesday matinée and Thursday evening performance** to assist in the follow-up process, but it is important to note that students will continue to process their experiences long after they leave the theatre. If time permits, a follow-up discussion a few days later will likely be helpful and productive.

If you are interested in finding out about **Studio 180 IN CLASS** – our program of production- and topic-based **workshops** – please contact **Jessica** at **416-962-1800** or jessica@studio180theatre.com or visit studio180theatre.com/in-class.

C. Teacher Response Form

Studio 180 is grateful for your feedback and strives to incorporate your suggestions into our education programming. Kindly complete this form and return it by mail to **Studio 180 Theatre, 19 Madison Ave, Third Floor, Toronto, ON, M5R 2S2**. Or, find it online at studio180theatre.com/teacher-feedback. We welcome student feedback as well, so please do not hesitate to send us student reviews, reports, projects and other responses.

1. How did you find out about *Cock*?

2. Did you find the Study Guide useful in preparing your class for the play and/or in helping to shape post-show class discussion?

3. Did you find the pre-show chat and/or post-show Q&A session productive and interesting?

4. What were some of your students' responses to the play?

5. Did the themes and issues of the play inform or enhance your course curriculum? Were you able to use the experience at the theatre as a springboard to class work and if so, how?

6. Do you have any additional comments?

D. Introduction to the Company and the Play

1. *Studio 180 Theatre*

Inspired by the belief that people can engage more fully in the world through the experience of live performance, Studio 180 produces socially relevant theatre that provokes public discourse and promotes community engagement. Our inaugural production of *The Laramie Project* played to sold-out houses at Artword Theatre in 2003. Its success led to a 2004 remount at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, earning two Dora Award nominations.

Since then, Studio 180 has continued to offer acclaimed productions of plays that tackle difficult issues and generate powerful audience and community responses. These are often Toronto, Canadian and/or North American premieres of large ensemble pieces that are contemporary, internationally renowned, and unlikely to be produced elsewhere –

- In 2006, we presented the Canadian premiere of British playwright Robin Soans' *The Arab-Israeli Cookbook* at the Berkeley Street Theatre Upstairs.
- In March 2008, the Canadian premiere of *Stuff Happens* by British playwright David Hare ran at the Berkeley Street Theatre Downstairs.
- In October 2008, we presented the world premiere of *Offensive Shadows*, by Toronto playwright Paul Dunn, at the Tarragon Theatre Extra Space. That year *NOW Magazine* named Studio 180 "Toronto's Best Independent Theatre Company of 2008."
- In November 2009, Mirvish Productions remounted our acclaimed production of *Stuff Happens* at Toronto's historic Royal Alexandra Theatre.
- For our 2008/09 through 2011/12 seasons, Studio 180 participated in the Berkeley Street Project Initiative, producing one show annually as part of the Canadian Stage subscription season. Productions included *Blackbird*, *The Overwhelming*, *Our Class* and *Clybourne Park*, (with *Our Class* and *Clybourne Park* each earning Dora nominations).
- In December 2010/January 2011, we co-produced *Parade* with Acting Up Stage Company earning two Dora nominations, including Outstanding Production of a Musical.
- In October 2011, we produced Larry Kramer's landmark drama *The Normal Heart* in association with Buddies in Bad Times Theatre (one Dora nomination) and, due to its overwhelming success, we remounted the production in October/November 2012.
- In February 2013, we were proud to be a part of Mirvish Productions' inaugural Off-Mirvish second stage series with our remount of *Clybourne Park* at the Panasonic Theatre.
- Also in February 2013, in celebration of our company's 10-year anniversary, we staged a reading of *The Laramie Project* at the Panasonic Theatre, this time featuring over 50 Studio 180 alumni artists.

Our first production of 2013/14 was the Toronto English-language premiere of *God of Carnage*, presented by David Mirvish as part of the Off-Mirvish series at the Panasonic Theatre. We are now excited to be launching a five-year partnership with The Theatre Centre, beginning with this Canadian premiere production of the Olivier Award-winning *Cock* by Mike Bartlett.

Studio 180 is also dedicated to fostering Canadian voices by supporting local playwrights. We are currently working with Hannah Moscovitch (*The Children's Republic*, *East of Berlin*, *In This World*) and Paul Dunn (*Offensive Shadows*, *Gay Heritage Project*, *High-Gravel-Blind*).

2. *Cock* by Mike Bartlett

28-year-old John is confused. He has broken up with his boyfriend and fallen in love again... with a woman. Award-winning British playwright Mike Bartlett's provocative drama is staged in the round, on a bare stage, without the use of props. The effect is a stark, raw and sophisticated exploration of identity, society and family expectations, and the struggle we all face to answer the question, "Who am I?"

Teachers interested in a complex and theatrically innovative approach to questions of personal and sexual identity will find *Cock* to be a perfect springboard to class discussion for senior high school and university students.

In 2009, *Cock* premiered in London, UK, at the Royal Court Theatre, winning a 2010 Olivier Award. In 2012, it received its acclaimed North American premiere at the Duke in New York. Studio 180 is proud to be producing the Canadian premiere of *Cock* at The Theatre Centre.

WARNING: Coarse and sexually explicit language.

While sex is described in the play, there is absolutely NO nudity or simulated sex onstage.

If you have questions or concerns about the content of the play or would like to request an electronic reading copy, please do not hesitate to contact us at education@studio180theatre.com or 416-962-1800.

3. Mike Bartlett – Playwright

Only 32 years old, Mike Bartlett is already a prolific, award-winning playwright. In addition to his works for the stage, he has written for television, film and BBC radio. His critically acclaimed play *Cock* earned the 2010 Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre and went on to a successful Off-Broadway run in New York. His other plays include *My Child*; *Artefacts*; *Contradictions*; *Earthquakes in London*; *Love, Love, Love*; *Decade*; *13*; *Chariots of Fire*; *Medea – A new version*; and *Bull*.

E. Attending the Performance

Prior to the performance, please ensure that your students are well prepared. The better prepared they are, the more they will get out of the experience. The following guidelines should help you and your students get the most out of attending *Cock*:

- **Please arrive early.** When travelling in the city, whether by school bus or TTC, it is always best to leave extra time in case of traffic or transit delays. **All Wednesday matinée performances will begin promptly at 1:30PM.** To avoid disruption, **LATECOMERS will not be admitted.**
- **An added incentive to arrive early!** Audience members attending *Cock* will have the unique opportunity to experience our fantastic **lobby exhibit** featuring artwork from the 2013 anthology *ANYTHING THAT LOVES: Comics Beyond “Gay” and “Straight.”* Please encourage your students to check out the comic book art decorating the theatre lobby. **You might even want to have a class discussion comparing the impact of different artistic approaches to similar themes** (graphic story telling and live theatre). For a preview of the exhibit, check out **Section I** of this Study Guide.
- **All photography and recording of the performance is strictly prohibited.**
- Please impress upon your students the importance of **turning off all cell phones**, music players and other electronic devices. If students understand *why* it is important to refrain from using electronics, they will be more likely to adhere to this etiquette. **Remind students that they will be seeing people performing live in an intimate space** and, as a rule, if you can see and hear the actors, the actors can see and hear you. Even text messaging – with its distracting, glowing light – is extremely disruptive in the theatre. **Please be courteous.**
- **Outside food and beverages are not permitted in the auditorium.** Spills are messy and noisy snacks and bottles can be disruptive for performers and patrons alike. Please ensure that students have the opportunity to eat lunch prior to attending the performance.
- **CONTENT WARNING: *Cock* contains some coarse and sexually explicit language.** If you have concerns about content or language prior to attending the performance and wish to receive further details, please do not hesitate to contact our education department at education@studio180theatre.com or **416-962-1800**. We will be pleased to provide you with an electronic reading copy of the script.
- **We encourage student responses and feedback.** Please take the time to discuss appropriate audience responses with your students. After each Wednesday matinée and Thursday evening performance, we offer a talkback (Q&A) session because we are interested in hearing what our audiences have to say and engaging in a dialogue inspired by the play. It may be helpful for students to think of some questions prior to attending the performance. As well, if students are aware of the post-show talkback they will be better prepared to formulate questions during the performance. Following the performance, kindly take a moment to complete **Section C – Teacher Response Form**. Your feedback is valuable to us.

F. Anti-Homophobia and Heterosexism Resources

“Anti-homophobia education is no different from education to combat harassment and discrimination related to race, religion, gender, disability, or class. People will only be treated with respect if the biases, stereotypes, prejudices, myths, and negative ideas about them are dispelled.”

*Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism:
A K-12 Curriculum Resource Guide*, Toronto District School Board, 2011

Cock is about one man’s personal struggle with identity and relationships. The central character, John, has identified as “gay” his entire adult life. When his seven-year relationship falls apart, he is surprised to find himself falling in love with a woman for the very first time.

This is not a play that addresses issues of “coming out,” bullying, homophobia, discrimination or inequality in basic or traditional ways.

At times, the characters explore what it means to be “different.” **Gay and straight characters reflect upon societal and familial expectations of love, relationships and identity.**

At times, hetero-normative paradigms are challenged and even inverted. The result is a more **sophisticated and complex examination of sexuality and sexual identity** than those to which students might be accustomed.

Keeping this in mind, teachers should be aware that students may have varying levels of experience discussing, thinking about and unpacking questions about sexuality, sexual orientation and identity. Class leaders without prior experience teaching anti-homophobia and heterosexism should refer to published school board guidelines. We recommend the TDSB’s 2011 Equitable and Inclusive Schools’ *Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism* Resource Guide for Kindergarten to Grade 12 Curriculum (you can download the PDF at studio180theatre/TDSB-challenging).

1. Getting Started

It will be useful for in-class work surrounding *Cock* to begin with the class leader’s assessment of what students already know and understand. When conducting in-class workshops we like to begin with group brainstorming sessions around key themes and terminology.

For some groups, the following definitions provided by the *Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism* Resource Guide may be of value.

Bias: Bias is the opinion, preference, inclination, perspective or slant that informs actions and/or text. Bias can be positive or negative. This definition differs from a common usage in which bias has only negative connotations, such as prejudice, unreasoned justification, distorted interpretation and unfair influence. To deal with text knowledgeably, the reader must interpret it from competing perspectives, and determine whether bias is positive or negative.

Stereotypes: A stereotype is a false or generalized conception of a group of people, which results in the unconscious or conscious categorization of each member of that group without regard for individual differences. Stereotyping may be based on misconceptions and false generalizations about racial, age, ethnic, linguistic, religious, geographical or national groups; social, marital or family status; disability, gender or sexual orientation. Stereotypes are often

developed with little thought and they can lead to high levels of resentment. Stereotypes lead to inequities of all kinds: employment, housing, social acceptance and all forms of exclusion.

Prejudice: Prejudice is a set of opinions about or attitudes toward a certain group, or individuals within it, that casts that group and its members in an inferior light, and for which there is no legitimate basis in fact. It can be a consequence and a cause of discrimination. The term is derived from the word “prejudge.” Prejudicial attitudes are very resistant to change because concrete evidence that contradicts the prejudiced view tends to be dismissed as “the exception to the rule.”

Discrimination: Discrimination is the differential allocation of goods, resources and services, and the limitation of access to full participation in society, based on individual membership in a particular social group.

Homophobia: Homophobia refers to the social, systemic and personal assumptions, practices and behaviours that impose negative value on and discriminate against homosexual women and men. Homophobic acts can range from name-calling, to violence targeting lesbian or gay people, to eliminating them from curriculum, or to not providing legal and social supports.

EXERCISE

As an introductory exercise, write the following on the board and ask students to complete the sentence: “***I know homophobia is happening when I see/hear...***”

2. Exercise: Aspects of Identity and Contextual Power

The TDSB's *Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism* Resource Guide offers numerous activities for engaging in classroom anti-homophobia and heterosexism work (download the PDF at studio180theatre/TDSB-challenging). We particularly recommend this Aspects of Identity and Contextual Power exercise.

James Banks Continuum: Stage 1

Time: 75 minutes

Description

The overall goal of this activity is for students to realize that no one has “all the power” or “none of the power” and that power changes based on context. During this activity students will reflect on the different aspects of our identity. Students should begin to recognize and consider the idea that we may not choose parts of our identity and there are other parts of our identity that we might change. Students are also introduced to some basic anti-oppression terms. Finally, through real-world examples, students will recognize that power is relative to particular situations: what gives you power in one situation might work against you in another.

In relation to Anti-Homophobia education, this activity provides multiple opportunities for a facilitated discussion on whether being LGBTQ is a choice and how the choice to “come out” can help or hurt you in different situations.

Planning Notes

Teacher prints and cuts out each individual “Aspect of Identity.” You will need as many envelopes as you have groups. Seven to twelve aspects should be placed in an envelope: when grouping your aspects, you should try to avoid stereotyping. See **Appendix 1** (on page 12) for examples of aspects and groupings.

Prepare your working definitions for privilege, oppression, equity and equality. You may choose to have something ready on chart paper but do not display it until after the first phase of the activity.

Prepare and print out your list of contexts. See **Appendix 2** (on page 13) for examples.

Prepare discussion questions or journal prompts. See **Appendix 3** (on page 14) for examples.

Prior Knowledge

None

Assessment and Evaluation

- Journaling can be used to assess or evaluate written communication and metacognition skills.
- Teacher can track oral responses from the facilitated discussion to generate both oral communication and thinking/inquiry assessment.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

Part A: Aspects of Identity (35 minutes)

1. Place students into random groups: do not let them choose their group members. Groups of 5–6 work best but it can also be done with groups of up to 15 members.
2. Explain to the students that they are about to be given an envelope that represents a Grade 9 student. Inside each envelope will be different aspects (traits, characteristics, past experiences) of this pretend person's identity. If you are comfortable with the analogy of identity as a "backpack," you may choose to use that now. Do not explain the concepts of privilege or oppression yet.
3. Give each group an envelope with the 7–12 "Aspects of Identity" that you have already prepared. Make sure that each aspect is on a separate piece of paper because students will be physically shuffling them around.
4. Ask the students to quickly physically sort each of their "Aspects of Identity" into one of two categories based on whether they are things you can't choose (fixed, can't be changed, e.g., they were born) or something that you can choose (can be changed, was learned, e.g., thoughts). Essentially, does the imaginary student have the power to change this aspect of their identity or not? Note: it is not important that the students complete the task or agree on their choices – the real goal is to have students in groups discussing and debating what aspects of identity you do or don't have power over.
5. Each group briefly gives a report-back, just naming each aspect of identity and which of the two categories they put the trait in. At this point, you might feel the need to facilitate a debrief discussion on some of the group choices.

Part B: Working Definitions (10 minutes)

Provide students with working definitions for the following terms: oppression, privilege, equity and equality.

Part C: Privilege and Oppression as Contextual (30 minutes)

1. Explain to students that these "Aspects of Identity" can be both positive and negative. An aspect that is positive in one situation might be negative in another. This means that context (space and place) changes which aspects give you power and privilege.
2. Explain to the students that you are going to shout out different contexts. When you shout out a context, you want them to quickly group all their aspects as being an advantage, disadvantage or neutral.
3. Shout out the different contexts. If you are running behind with your time, you can do this very quickly, like a "speed round."
4. Facilitate discussion on the activity. Refer to Appendix 3 for sample discussion questions. Or ask students to reflect on the activity by journaling. Refer to Appendix 3 for sample journaling prompts.

APPENDIX 1: ASPECTS OF IDENTITY

Possible Student “Identity Packages” – Large print copies are recommended.

Student 1	<p>MALE NOT SURE IF HE IS STRAIGHT/HETEROSEXUAL PARENTS ARE DIVORCED AND STILL FIGHT JEWISH SHORT GOOD AT MUSIC BECAUSE THEY PRACTICE ALL THE TIME SPENDS ABOUT 3 HOURS A DAY BABYSITTING 2 YOUNGER SISTERS THINKS THEY ARE OVERWEIGHT IS VERY FUNNY AND WELL-LIKED</p>
Student 2	<p>MALE KOREAN IS ADOPTED BY 2 PARENTS CHRISTIAN CAN'T AFFORD THINGS LIKE FIELD TRIP FEES OR NEW CLOTHES TALL SOMETIMES HAS MILD SEIZURES IS FEELING DEPRESSED LATELY</p>
Student 3	<p>MALE BLACK IS GREAT AT INDEPENDENT WORK BUT DOESN'T LIKE GROUPS MOM IS VERY SICK AND HAS BEEN FOR A LONG TIME DOESN'T GET AN ALLOWANCE ASTHMATIC HAS ALWAYS BEEN GOOD AT ART THINKS THEY ARE UGLY</p>
Student 4	<p>FEMALE WHITE LESBIAN ALWAYS BEEN GREAT AT READING AND WRITING DAD DRINKS TOO MUCH IS VERY POPULAR IN SCHOOL WORKS A PART-TIME JOB 4 NIGHTS A WEEK FOR 5 HOURS IS VERY CONFIDENT AND SECURE</p>

Student 5	FEMALE DYSLEXIC HAS 2 SUPPORTIVE PARENTS MUSLIM RICH GOOD AT SPORTS HAS NO CLOSE FRIENDS
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APPENDIX 2: SUGGESTED CONTEXTS LIST

Being on the basketball team

At a school dance

In math class

Doing a group project for English class

Going to a school overnight retreat

Being on Student Council

Walking alone at 11pm at night

Being randomly stopped by a police officer

Preparing for a major test

Wanting to ask someone out on a date

Working on the school newspaper

Going to parent-teacher interviews

Trying to get a part-time job

Trying to replace a textbook stolen from their locker

Being active on Facebook

Being asked to do an assignment that requires 3 hours on the computer

In the change room after gym class

Needing to find a lab partner when their usual one is absent

Trying to get extra help from a teacher after school

APPENDIX 3: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND JOURNAL PROMPTS

The questions below can be used for facilitated discussion or as journal prompts.

- What were some of the aspects of identity that were mostly hidden but that you think probably really affect people?
- Some people think that some aspects of identity are more important than others. Why do you think some people feel this way?
- What are the kinds of aspects of identity that seem to “trump” or beat out all the others? Why might this be?
- How might your imaginary student look different in 10 years? Why do youth have less power to change who they are and their situation than adults?
- Many of the aspects we looked at today would be hidden. Now that you are thinking more about how these hidden aspects might affect a person, how are you going to try and treat people differently?
- What can schools, classrooms or teachers do to make things more equal?
- How can we be more gentle and respectful with each other when school is often a place of competition and social stress?
- If you could go back in time and talk to your Grade 7 self (for high school) or Grade 6 self (for intermediate) about what we talked about today, what would you say?

Anti-Homophobia Focus

- Thinking about all the aspects we talked about today, are there some that would make it harder for a person who is gay or lesbian to “come out”?
- What are the situations where it is most difficult to be gay or lesbian?
- You can’t choose to be gay or straight but you can choose to “come out.” Why do you think some people “come out” when they are 14 and others “come out” when they are 40?

Journal Prompts Only

- What do you think are the three most important aspects of your identity and why?
 - Think of an incident when you didn’t think about the tough times another student may have been going through. What would you do differently now?
-

G. Major Themes: Classroom Discussion and Activities

1. *Theatrical Presentation*

a) **ISSUE-BASED THEATRE**

Studio 180 is unique in that we produce plays that speak to socially and politically relevant issues. With your class, examine the company's Vision and Mission statements.

Studio 180's Vision – The experience of live performance inspires people to engage more fully in the world

Studio 180's Mission – To produce socially relevant theatre that provokes public discourse and promotes community engagement

1. What do these statements mean to you? Does Studio 180's Vision resonate and have meaning? How effectively do you think the company's Mission serves its Vision? How does this production of *Cock* work toward fulfilling our Mission?

***HINT:** Some prompt questions: How did the play provoke you to engage in the world differently? What conversations did you have with friends after seeing the play? What surprised you about the play? After seeing the play do you have new questions about sexual orientation, identity or anything else?*

2. Why live theatre? What makes theatre an effective art form through which to explore themes, issues and human behaviour? Numerous excellent feature films, documentaries, books and articles exploring similar themes of identity and sexual orientation are widely available. What is unique about live theatre? Consider what is specific about your intellectual, emotional and communal responses to attending live theatre, compared to engaging in other forms of art, communication and media.

***HINT:** How does live theatre HUMANIZE issues and why is the humanization of social and political issues important?*

3. Brainstorm issues that you would like to see turned into a piece of theatre. If you were going to see another play, or write a play yourself, what would you want it to be about? This question may serve as a jumping off point for **drama students** to begin their own issue-based theatre projects around stories and topics of particular relevance to them.

b) **POINTS OF VIEW – CHARACTERS**

One way we hope theatre will be an effective tool to explore important issues is through the portrayal of multiple perspectives or points of view. How effective is *Cock* in exploring different sides of a story, question or topic? Was the play even-handed? Did you feel that a multitude of opinions and points of view were expressed? Were the characters portrayed fairly? Which characters and stories were the most memorable? Which voices remained with you longest and why? Which moments had the greatest impact? Which characters surprised you? Did the play create questions for you regarding the characters or their circumstances? Did you form an emotional attachment to any of the characters? Who did you want to hear from more? Did you disagree with what some of the characters were saying? What would you ask those characters, given the opportunity?

c) POINTS OF VIEW – PLAYWRIGHT

What do you think the playwright's point of view is regarding the characters he has created? How is Mike Bartlett commenting on the characters, their relationships and society as a whole?

HINT: During an exploration of these questions there might well be as many different answers as there are students in the class. Use this discussion to **highlight the significant role the audience plays at the theatre** and how audience interpretation is equally as important as the author's intention. Here is a **fun activity** that illustrates this concept:

SCULPTING

Activity goals:

- Get students out of their heads and into their bodies in a fun and creative way
- Challenge students to express themselves physically
- Enhance verbal and non-verbal communication and cooperation skills
- Explore the exciting ways in which art can have multiple meanings and interpretations for both the creator and the audience/viewer

Step by step:

1. Select one student to be the SCULPTOR and four students to be the CLAY.
2. Select a title for the sculpture (this can be designated by the teacher or offered by the class – we like to use theme-based words from the play but you can also use your imagination and come up with things like invented play or movie titles).
3. Designate a brief amount of time (10 to 30 seconds) in which the SCULPTOR may sculpt.
4. The SCULPTOR must then use the designated title to silently create a sculpture in the allotted time. This can be done with MIRRORING (the SCULPTOR positions him or herself and the CLAY must imitate precisely) or by physically positioning the CLAY.
5. Ask the SCULPTOR to describe their masterpiece and then invite class members (art critics, gallery patrons, etc.) to describe what they see.
6. The activity can be repeated in any number of configurations (e.g., in pairs, with multiple groups of three, four, five or more, etc.)

d) STAGING

Cock is staged **in the round**. This means that audience members are seated around the entire playing space. Most audience members will likely be familiar with a more traditional seating configuration whereby the stage or playing space is located on one end, with all the audience members facing it.

How is it different to watch a play in the round? How did the staging affect your experience of the play, your connection to the characters and your relationship to the space?

What did the playing space evoke (boxing ring? stadium?) and is there a metaphoric or symbolic significance to the staging for this specific play? What techniques did the actors use to include the entire audience in each moment? What techniques did the director use to stage the play in this formation?

Another unique component of the production is the fact that some actions are discussed but not physicalized. Can you come up with some examples of this technique? Why do you think the playwright chose this unusual convention and what was the effect?

e) **STRUCTURE**

What are the unique ways in which *Cock* is structured? How does the playwright play with **time** and how is the **passage of time** signified? What are the effects of his approach? Does the story follow a linear chronology or does it jump back and forth between the past and the present? Why do you think the playwright is telling the story this way and what information does this structure provide? How does it affect you as an audience member?

f) **CHARACTERS**

In *Cock*, John is the only character who is referred to by name. The names of the other characters are never spoken. In fact, they are not even given names in the script and are merely referred to as “M,” “W” and “F.” What do you think these letters signify and what is the playwright saying about these characters by choosing to omit their names?

***HINT:** At one point, “W” says to John in reference to “M,” “I don’t even know his name – I don’t want to know his name.” This might be a clue to one theory behind Bartlett’s use of initials rather than names for the characters.*

g) **DESIGN**

How did the design of the production affect the presentation of the piece? *Cock* is unique in that it is **staged on a bare playing space without the use of props**. Why do you think the playwright made this bold choice and what are its effects? How was **lighting** used to create mood or ambience? Did lighting work to define space and setting? With a play such as *Cock*, with such a limited set design, is there an increased emphasis placed on the lighting design? How was **sound and music** used to affect the presentation? How were **costumes** used to define characters? How did the costume designer make use of **colour, texture and style**?

h) **ARCHITECTURE & SPACE**

Cock is one of the first productions to go up in the newly renovated Theatre Centre in the historic Carnegie Library. What was it like to see a play in this particular performance space? What architectural elements are unique to this space and how did they affect the experience as a whole? If you have been to other plays in other theatres, how did the experience compare?

SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDY

Have your students research the historic Carnegie Library building, the building’s history, its significance to the neighbourhood and the West Queen West neighbourhood itself.

How has this neighbourhood changed, evolved and gentrified over the last decade? What role do you anticipate The Theatre Centre and Studio 180 Theatre will play in the evolution of the neighbourhood?

2. Identity

a) WHO AM I?

W: Be yourself.

John: But I have absolutely no idea who that is...

What is **John's central struggle** throughout the play? Why do you think he struggles with his **authentic self** and knowing what that is? Do you think John's **identity crisis** is **unusual** or **unique**? Is there anything **familiar** or **recognizable** to you in his struggle and the questions he asks himself? What do you think **triggers** John's identity crisis? Who do you think are the people who contribute to his struggle and why? Who are the people who make things harder for him and who is supportive and helpful to John? **Are there people, institutions or other factors in your life that serve to shape, mould or even force you to be the person you are?** Examples: family, friends, media, school, teachers, religious institutions.

b) AUTHENTICITY

What does it mean to be our authentic selves? Amidst pressures from family, friends and the media, including socialized norms based on gender, culture, religion and other factors, **how can we ever know who we truly are?** And do we need to know? **Is the pursuit of authenticity important?** Does it matter *why* we feel/think/love the way we do? Why or why not? **What is the tension between authenticity and the desire to fit in?** In what way is the pursuit of belonging in conflict with the pursuit of authenticity? As a class or in small groups, engage with these questions within the context of the play. The following are suggested excerpts from the script to help kick-start the conversation:

John: I used to do voices, I remember this, and I don't think anyone can really understand it when I say it but I remember one moment when I couldn't think what was my own voice, I'd been doing high voices and northern voices and men's voices and impressions of the teachers and my dad, and people on the telly and everyone was laughing and I tried to go back to my own voice but I couldn't remember what it was.

John: ... there's this one guy I saw must've been a student and he used to wear a long black coat, white make up you know like a goth? And I'd see him every morning and what he was wearing was like fuck you to the world you know? And course he looked a bit stupid but I loved the fact he didn't care. I loved that, but then one day he got on the tube, and he was different, he'd had a hair cut – and was wearing really normal, normal boring topman clothes, everything about him had become like everyone else, I never noticed him again after that it was like he disappeared.

John: At uni, when I finally decided I'd do it and *come out*, all these people hugged me and were proud of me and said how brave I was and suddenly people were touching me and I was wearing different clothes and I was part of a *scene*, even walking differently I think and everyone said the real me was emerging, that I'd been repressed, and so I thought I must've done the right thing then, but it didn't feel like that to me.

c) SEXUAL ORIENTATION

In the play, John's crisis of identity is tied to his sexual identity and triggered by discoveries and surprises regarding his own sexual and romantic desires. Sexual orientation describes an individual's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. Our sexual orientation often plays a part in helping shape our individual identity, but it isn't the whole picture. So why is it that we tend to get so hung up on defining ourselves, and one another in these terms?

1. You might want to begin by checking out Sam Killermann's "**Breaking Through the Binary: Gender Explained Using Continuums**" and the accompanying infographic "**The Genderbread Person**," included in **Appendix A** of this Study Guide. This is a fun and accessible introduction to concepts of sex and gender, the distinction between the two and the many different ways we identify ourselves.
2. Have you ever met someone and wondered privately (or publicly) whether they were gay or straight? Have you ever heard someone ask, or ever been the one asking, "What team do they play on?" Why do you think it's so important for us to identify, classify and label people's sexual orientation?
3. When are identity labels useful and when are they damaging? Brainstorm ways in which labels can be positive (e.g., community-building, fostering a sense of belonging) and when they can be negative (e.g., limiting possibilities, fostering stereotypes). **Remember that this conversation applies to all labels – not just those pertaining to sexual orientation.** Impress upon students the importance of allowing everyone to determine the ways we define ourselves. It is up to each of us to self-identify the way we choose.

Think of a time that you wondered about another person's sexual orientation. What assumptions did you make about that person and why? Chances are you were recognizing elements of that person's gender expression – the many different ways we express socially determined "masculine" or "feminine" characteristics (such as the way we dress, talk, walk, etc.). How can we nurture more inclusive and less judgmental conceptions of gender to allow a broader range of acceptable possibilities? How do you think we could all benefit from this process? Read Sunny Drake's piece "**My Boyfriend Is a Lady**" (**Section J2**) to inspire this conversation.

d) BEYOND THE BINARY

The play *Cock* sheds light on the fact that, despite society's progress with regard to LGBTQ rights, we still tend to assume that people are either "gay" or "straight." Perhaps establishing this **binary** is a useful and simple way to promote and nurture understanding and acceptance in a mainstream culture that is fundamentally homophobic and heterosexist. Furthermore, we tend to like to classify things in order to understand them. But where do these classifications and labels fall short? **When might it be damaging or harmful to assume that people are either "gay" or "straight"?** That we must adhere to either one or the other?

Here are some suggestions for initiating this conversation with your students:

1. After attending the performance, use the following excerpts from the play to spark class discussion:

F: The fact is that some of us like women and some like men and that's fine that's good in fact that's good, a good thing, but it seems to me that you've become confused.

John: I don't know, I don't – maybe it's not a switch, one way or the other, maybe it's more like a stew, complicated things bubbling up –

John: They're horrible horrible words what they do how they stop you... and I can see now I can see that it's about *who the person is*. Not man or woman but *What they're like. What they do*. Why didn't anyone say? I thought I thought your generation was all for that. Peace. Love. So why are you telling me that *what* I sleep with is more important than *who* I sleep with?

2. Check out **Section I**, which contains an introduction to and preview of our **ANYTHING THAT LOVES** lobby exhibit of comic book art on themes of non-binary sexuality. When you attend the production, you will have the chance to experience the exhibit in its entirety and reflect upon the ways the various artists get you thinking beyond categories of "gay" and "straight" or "man" and "woman."
3. Read Cheryl Dobinson's wonderful article "**The Fencesitters?**" (**Section J1**), which sheds light on the ways bisexual people are dismissed, discriminated against and isolated from both mainstream and queer communities that tend to fixate on binaries. Use the suggested questions to prompt class discussion in response to the article.

3. *Expectations & What Is “Normal”?*

a) IDENTITIES SHAPED THROUGH OTHERS’ EXPECTATIONS

Chances are, most people who see the play *Cock* will be able to relate in some way to John, the central character, and his struggle to figure out who he is amidst the pressure of expectations from his friends, family and society at large. We don’t have to be questioning our sexual orientation to know what it’s like to feel pressure to live up to expectations. Adolescence is a particularly crucial time of self-discovery – when figuring out how to navigate the expectations of others is essential. The following excerpts from the play may help kick-start this conversation.

M: Well maybe this is Disney, maybe this is high school the fucking musical and you’re meant to be together forever and ever John, maybe she’s the one the one that you want yeah?

John: I mean he always made me feel like I used to be, as I was when we met, and you know we met when I was twenty-one, twenty-two really young, and I was always the younger one and he wanted me to stay like that and it’s only now that I’ve realised, I’m a completely different person, and acting like that like twenty-two was making me so depressed I mean I just stopped talking, stopped having any real any real confidence.

John: I know it’s weird but I’m trying to work out how to handle this who to be because I’m two different people with the two of you when you’re separate and now I’m in the middle and no one.

1. Can you relate to John’s struggle in any way? Who are the people in your life who have expectations of who you should be? What are the institutions and other social factors that create expectations of who you should be? What do those expectations feel like? In your class discussion, be sure to address both the positive and negative aspects of these expectations (e.g., parents can set high standards in a positive way that provides goals to strive for and they can also set unwelcome expectations when it comes to questions of career or romantic aspirations, cultural practices or religious beliefs).
2. What are the **rewards** John receives from being the person M wants him to be and what are the **costs** associated with conforming to those expectations? How do these resonate for you? Think of examples from your own life. What are the rewards (e.g., being liked, receiving affection) and the costs (e.g., feeling phoney, unfulfilled, depressed) associated with living up to society’s or an individual’s expectations of us?

b) CONFORMITY & BEING “NORMAL”

Normal. What a loaded word! On the one hand, most of us want to fit in with our family, peers and society at large. On the other hand, most of us also want to be considered unique and special. There seem to be rewards and costs associated with both ends of the “normal” spectrum and part of shaping our own identities involves navigating the space between “fitting in” and “standing out.” How does the play *Cock* speak to this experience? How have you experienced this in your own life?

Some excerpts from the play might help you begin this conversation (see next page).

M: Yes, maybe you're the most complicated sexual being that ever existed. Because it doesn't seem to be the same level of problem for most people.

John: I mean if you really think about it tonight could change everything. I turn one way I have children and a normal family...

F: I don't know maybe you want children that's understandable, maybe you're having a crisis of confidence, maybe you think for some reason you want to be more... normal, in some way...

John: This isn't what I want.
I just.
I think this is easier.

c) HETERONORMATIVITY

You may be familiar with the term **heterosexism** – a belief in the superiority of heterosexuality resulting in the discrimination of LGBTQ people. **Heteronormativity** describes the social forces that compel us toward a heterosexist paradigm or model – how in mainstream society, our rules, structures and institutions are founded on the assumption that everyone is “straight” and that everyone basically wants the same things and aspires to live the same way. So, for example, the assumption is that if you're a man you're looking to fall in love with a woman (and vice versa), maintain a monogamous relationship, eventually get married, find a place to live together (ideally purchase a home), have a biological child or two and continue the cycle.

Heteronormative expectations go beyond assuming sexual or romantic desires; heteronormativity makes a slew of assumptions about all of our desires and aspirations. Furthermore, these expectations impact straight as well as LGBTQ people. Just because LGBTQ people desire and deserve equal rights and freedoms, it doesn't necessarily follow that all LGBTQ people necessarily want to get married or become parents. In the same regard, just because someone is attracted to members of the opposite sex, it does not necessarily follow that she or he aspires to parenthood, marriage or even monogamy.

1. How does the play *Cock* challenge notions of heteronormativity? Which characters can be seen as disruptive to this notion and why?
2. How are LGBTQ members of our society harmed and discriminated against by heteronormativity? How are the gay characters in the play impacted? Come up with examples from the real world of how heteronormativity impacts LGBTQ people.
3. How are straight people impacted by heteronormativity? Describe how the heterosexual characters in the play are impacted and come up with examples from the real world.
4. Are there ways in which men and women are differently impacted by a heteronormative society? Do men and women have different expectations placed upon them? Come up with examples from the play as well as examples beyond the play. How does the intersectionality of class, race, religion, ability and gender come into play in this conversation? For example, are there different expectations with regard to marriage and family when it comes to women from certain cultural or religious backgrounds compared to others?

The following excerpts from the play provide examples of how some of the characters confront and attempt to navigate society's heteronormative expectations.

John: I really like you. I'm so happy, I was so worried that although that's what I thought that I really was into sexually, romantically everything I was worried that actually it was just wishful thinking that maybe I wanted the children and the house and the life and what I considered normality...

W: All these couples living the dream in their own world, doing things that couples do, doing the things they think they should do, but no no sorry that's bitter I mean these couples want to set up home, you know, they're thinking of the future. They're trying out marriage. What would it be like, could we spend our whole lives together... I mean I'm so jealous of the ones that I think are really in love. I mean there's that whole Bridget Jones thing of finding a man, but I'll never do that I've been married, I've found a man, you know, but it didn't work because it wasn't right, I'll never do it again I would rather be on my own than do that however fucking lonely I get.

F: When you came home with my son, and you said you loved each other, it took some getting used to of course, I mean I've never thought it was wrong but it's just not how you imagine your life turning out when you have an only child, of course you hope for grandchildren and not, you know you hope for biological grandchildren really...

W: So I'll go forever, and me wearing your shirt, in a hotel in Paris, walking around glimpses of what's between my legs, all of that and everything else in the future, all leaving, all going, me pregnant eating biscuits and then the hospital bed, everything you described to me, everything we imagined, you holding my hand, and Jack's born and grows up there he is, and later Katherine and later their kids all six of them, gathered together to see us, all of us around the table at Christmas see? We're all smiling and I'm still looking great even though we're old, and everything about us both is beautiful until we die together and happy, all of that is walking out the door and you'll be left with him. Just him.

d) THE UNEXPECTED

The play *Cock* surprises us by inverting a more traditional “coming out” narrative. In our fundamentally heterosexist society, stories about people questioning or coming to terms with their sexual orientation and revealing difficult truths to loved ones almost exclusively involve heterosexual characters discovering or realizing an attraction to someone of the same sex or gender.

1. How does *Cock* deviate from this traditional narrative?
2. Can you think of examples from the play that invert the traditional or expected narrative? What impact did this have? What did it make you think or feel?
3. In the play, which people and/or forces cling to the status quo and which people and/or forces are disruptive agents? How are these instances unique, unusual, unexpected or surprising?
4. How would this play be different if John and M were a heterosexual couple?
5. How do you think the play would be different if John and M were female?

The following excerpts from the play will help you continue this conversation:

John: I have a problem I have a really big problem, she'll embarrass me if I I don't know I have dinner with mum and dad and she comes over and starts talking or if she turns up at work and people ask questions.

W: Something happened when we slept together I could see what happened in your head that night, what you let yourself think for a moment that maybe it was okay, maybe it was allowed, and as I said before I'm just very honest and I have a feeling it's only a matter of time before the things that've been nudged out of place in your head finds a new a new pattern and you realise that, John, you can do what you like. It's okay.

John: Because if what you're saying is right that I'm in the wrong place with the wrong person doing the wrong things, and really it's *us* it's us that could have a happy life with all the things we talked about –
Then...
I mean I'm so scared you're right.

H. Questions of Identity: Classroom Activities

The following suggested activities have been provided by Professor Rai Reece of the Faculty of Social and Community Services at Humber College.

1. *Circles of My Self*

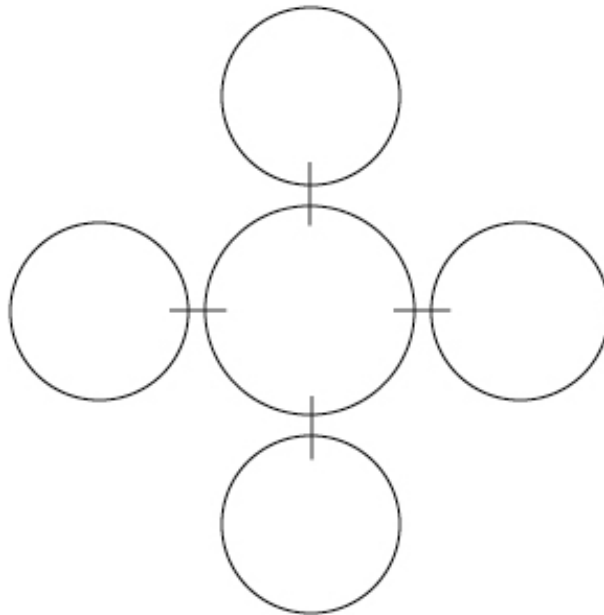
This activity highlights the multiple dimensions of our identities. It addresses the importance of individuals self-defining their identities and challenging stereotypes.

Draw a circle in the centre of a page and then draw four satellite circles surrounding it – each connected to the centre with a straight line. Place your name in the centre circle and write an important aspect of your identity in each of the satellite circles – an identifier or descriptor that you feel is important in defining you. This can include anything: Asian, female, brother, athlete, Taoist, Muslim, or any descriptor with which you identify.

1. Share a story about a time you were especially proud to identify yourself with one of the descriptors you used above.
2. Share a story about a time it was especially painful to be identified with one of your identifiers or descriptors.
3. Name a stereotype associated with one of the groups with which you identify that is not consistent with who you are. Fill in the following sentence:

I am (a/an) _____, but I am NOT (a/an) _____.

(E.g., if one of my identifiers is “Christian,” and I think a stereotype is that all Christians are radical fundamentalists, my sentence would be: “I am a Christian, but I am NOT a radical fundamentalist.”)



2. Common Ground

This activity identifies common stereotypes and misconceptions that we face in our daily lives. It highlights the commonalities we share, despite the various identifiers that make us all unique.

Have students stand in a circle facing into the circle. As the facilitator, instruct students to step inside the circle if they identify with a statement when you make it. You may begin with a few rounds in silence during which students simply physicalize their responses and observe others. As the activity progresses, students should be encouraged to verbally discuss their responses, entering into the conversation as they feel comfortable.

Following the activity, facilitate a debriefing during which students can share their overall experiences and reflect on how much *common ground* they were able to identify.

Some examples of statements include: “Step into the circle if...”

1. You have been treated differently based on your religion.
2. You have been treated differently based on the way you dress.
3. You have been stereotyped based on your race.
4. You have been stereotyped based on your gender.
5. You have stereotyped someone else.
6. You have used a homophobic slur.

3. Don't Label Me

The purpose of this activity is to identify and acknowledge homophobic stereotypes, slurs and labels. By exposing stereotypes, slurs and assumptions, we can work to move beyond negative language and misconceptions toward understanding, empathy and true equality.

On large cardstock or pieces of paper, write several identifiers and place them on the walls around the room. Examples may include: Gay, Straight, Bisexual, Queer, Transgender, etc.

Provide students with post-it note pads and instruct them to work independently and silently, brainstorming words they associate with each identifier. Have them stick the post-its by the appropriate identifiers. Encourage students to work quickly and on impulse – resisting the urge to self-censor.

After a few minutes ask students to stop writing and circulate throughout the room, reading the various responses.

As a class, discuss some of the words you read and what they made you think or feel.

NOTE: This activity can also be carried out using identifiers based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion or ability.

I. **ANYTHING THAT LOVES** Anthology

When you attend Studio 180's *Cock* at The Theatre Centre, you will have the opportunity to check out our wonderful lobby exhibit of artwork from the comic anthology *ANYTHING THAT LOVES: Comics Beyond "Gay" and "Straight,"* edited by Charles "Zan" Christensen and published by North West Press (2013).

We've chosen to include two selections from the exhibit in this Study Guide, for students wishing to engage further with this fun, creative and provocative approach to some of the themes addressed in the play. The pieces by Stasia Burrington and Alex Dahm take unique approaches to different questions of identity, labels and sexual orientation. Examine one or both individually or as a class and invite responses to the work.

This investigation can be part of your pre-show preparation or post-show follow-up to the play and will provide the opportunity for students to engage with some of the play's themes through an alternate medium.

For each piece, **compare the experiences of engaging with comic art versus live theatre.** Once you have attended the performance, **compare the experience of engaging individually with the pieces from the Study Guide versus your communal experience in the theatre lobby.**

1. What are the strengths of each medium?
2. Which experience is more personal?
3. Which experience feels like more of a communal or shared experience and why?
4. What is the impact of each experience?
5. What are the shared themes, issues and questions provoked by the play and the artwork? How does each medium address similar questions in different ways? Do they reinforce one another?
6. With regard to the Stasia Burrington piece: What message does this piece evoke and what does it make you think of? Does it inspire you to think of any instances from your own life or experiences in a new way?
7. With regard to the Alex Dahm piece: What are the ways in which this piece speaks to questions of identity and labels? What does it make you think about in terms of the way we use labels and identify one another?

SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDY

Choose a theme, issue, question or story that is important to you and depict it through graphic storytelling. Students can work independently or in writer/illustrator pairs to create their work. Seek inspiration from your own life and tell the story of a time when you learned something about yourself, changed the way you thought about something, were pleasantly surprised by someone or achieved a great success. The possibilities are endless. Be creative, have fun and don't be afraid to express a part of yourself through the characters you create.

1. Introduction by Charles “Zan” Christensen

FROM THE EDITOR OF “ANYTHING THAT LOVES”...

THE GAY IDENTITY IS OPPOSITIONAL

Gay identities are often forged in fire: bold and brash personalities that protect us from those who would question and challenge us as we reveal who we are. Who hasn’t witnessed someone freshly “out”, trying on the identity of an aggressive bulldyke or a flamboyant queen? These stereotypes don’t encapsulate all that we are as queer people, but embracing instead of running from them is often our first step in figuring out how we’re going to live our lives exactly as we want.

At the start, and often continuing for the rest of our lives, we are defined in opposition to the straight culture at large. We are at war. The war may be a friendly rivalry for most—such as the “war between the sexes”—but like that other conflict, it often turns hostile.

Is it any wonder, then, that a college friend—on telling me that she married a man after I asked how she’d been doing—laughed and told me that she felt like a “traitor”? Is it any wonder that Erika Moen’s readers of her incredibly personal webcomics about her queer identity and marriage to a man think of her as a threat?

In the course of a phone conversation I had with another college friend, he confided a long list of people that I knew from school—fellow students, instructors, high-profile artists—who were bisexual but who lived their lives as straight or gay, instead.

Is it any wonder that so many bisexual people choose not to label themselves as such, when faced with the prospect of alienation from not just the straight world, but the gay one as well?

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

I’ve always been ambivalent about the idea of bisexuality, but friendly and supportive to actual bisexual people. I’d challenge my gay friends when they resorted to “you’re just fooling yourself” when referring to bisexual people, asking them why they’d forgotten the pushback they’d gotten from friends and family when they revealed their own sexual identities. People told them that they didn’t know themselves and weren’t who they claimed to be, and now they were taking the same position with others.

With bisexuals, I’d been supportive of “them” and “their” challenges, but now I was faced with the idea that our failures as a gay community and as a culture at large to embrace bisexual people were contributing to homophobia that hurts all of us, and leading to the deaths of queer teens.

With that realization, I knew I had to change my thinking about the binary nature of sexuality, and start to dismantle the oppositional nature of my gay identity. I had to find a way to embrace all who would embrace queer people as sisters and brothers, and tear down the divisions that hurt us and the people we care about.

“ANYTHING THAT LOVES” THE ANTHOLOGY

I want this project to shake things up. I want it to spark discussions. I hope that seeing people’s individual journeys, no matter where those journeys take them, will inspire readers to look beyond limiting labels and categories, and to lay down their arms in the battle between “gay” and “straight”.

The true aim of the queer liberation movement, as I understand it, has always been to affirm the right to determine one’s own ideal romantic and sexual life. The utopian world where everyone is free to follow their hearts (and libidos!) benefits everyone, not just lesbian and gay people.

Why do bisexual people in different-sex relationships have to be at the edges of our community, instead of actually part of it? How about their spouses? All of our family members? The outspoken heterosexual champions of LGBT rights?

I think if we change the way we think about the queer community, stop thinking of it as a VIP club with a litmus test required for entry, we’ll see our ranks swell rapidly, and hasten the coming of the day where we reach the tipping point, and there are more of “us” than of “them”.

Maybe, just maybe, by that time we’ll have found something else to squabble about besides who we happen to love.

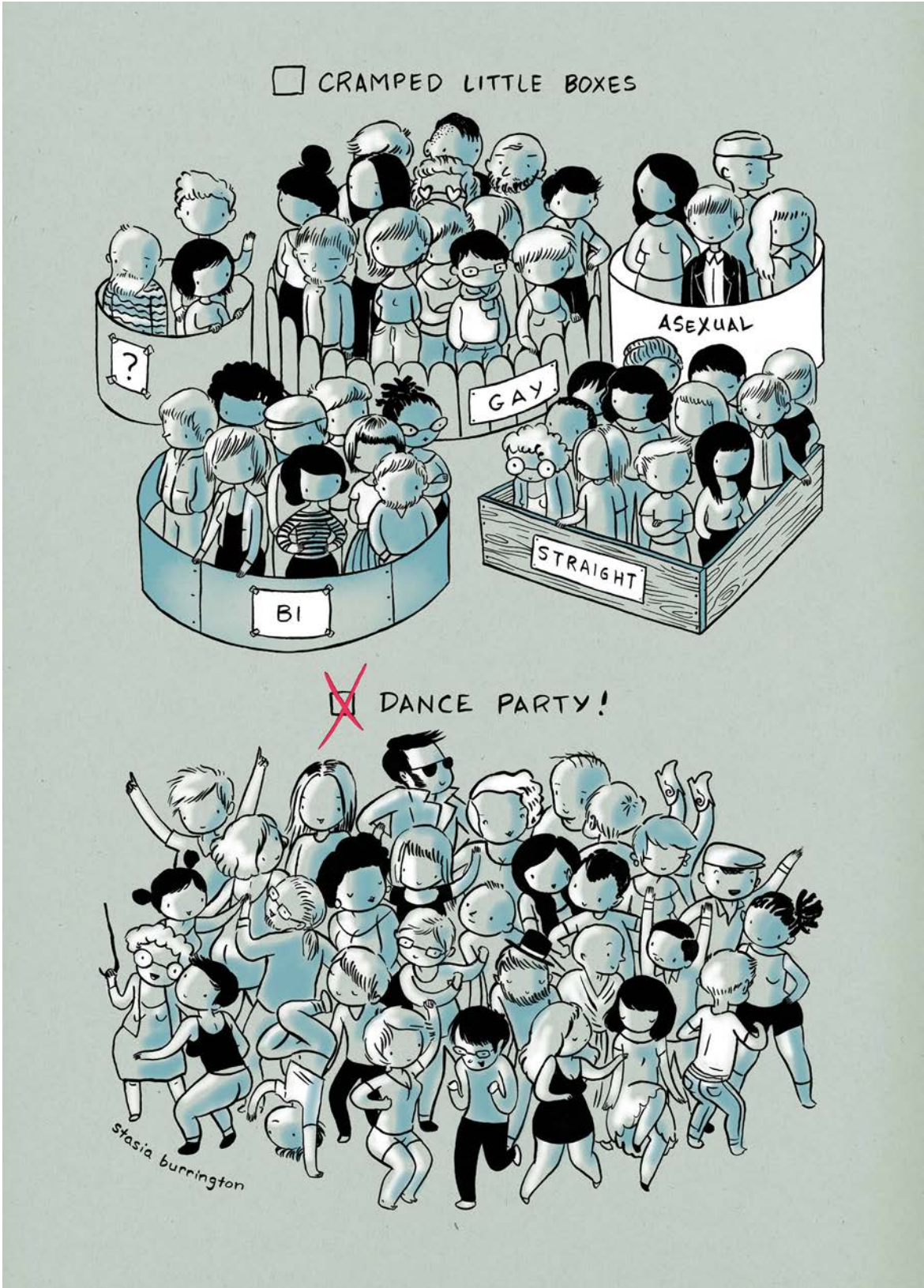


Charles “Zan” Christensen
Seattle, WA, 2013

CHARLES “ZAN” CHRISTENSEN
NORTHWESTPRESS.COM

Charles “Zan” Christensen founded Northwest Press in 2010, and was the founding President of the nonprofit organization Prism Comics, which supports LGBT comics, creators and readers. With artist Mark Brill, he has co-created the comics *The Power Within* and *The Mark of Aeacus*. He lives in Seattle.

2. Art by Stasia Burrington



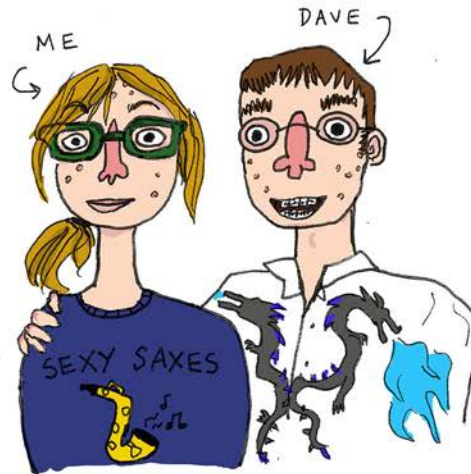
3. Art by Alex Dahm

IN-
BETWEEN
ALEX DAHM

I'VE BEEN WITH
MY PARTNER FOR 8 YEARS.



WE STARTED
DATING WHEN
WE WERE
13 YEARS OLD.



WELL, AS MUCH
AS ANYONE CAN
"DATE" AT 13.

FOUR YEARS INTO OUR RELATIONSHIP, I CAME
OUT AS TRANS.



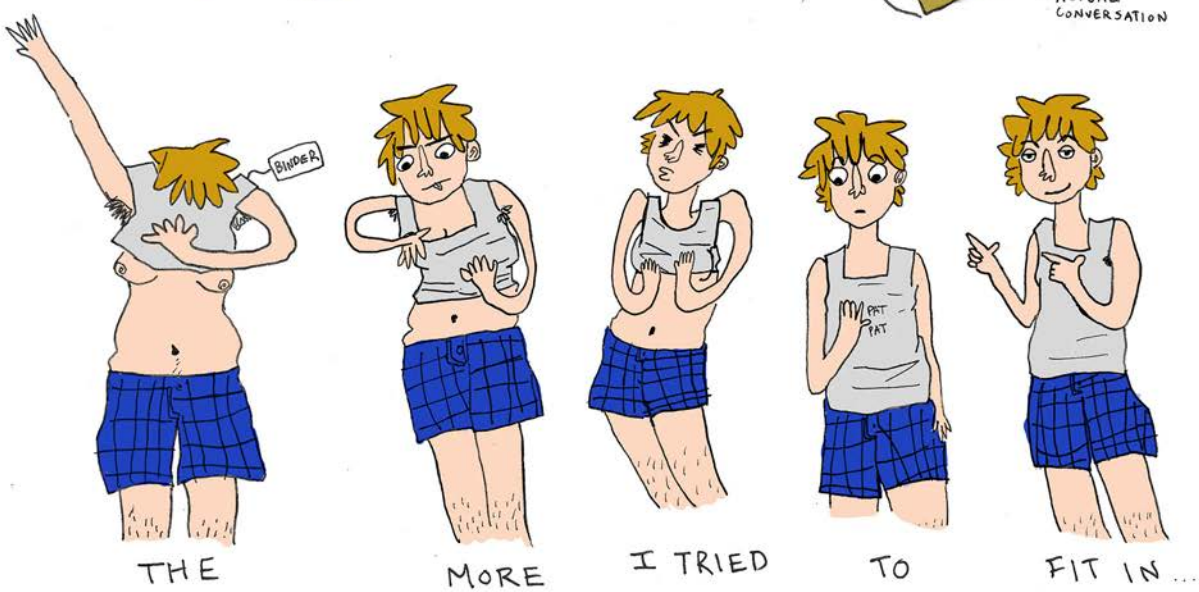
AND WE DID.



IN FACT, WE WERE HAPPIER THAN EVER.



BUT, NOT EVERYONE WAS SO ACCEPTING.



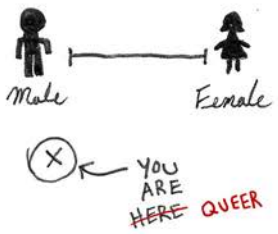


I FELT SO MUCH PRESSURE TO "PROVE" MY MANLINESS.

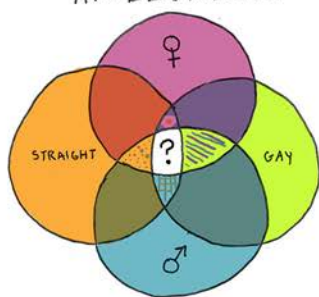


TO PROVE I WAS BOTH MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY "TRANS ENOUGH."

WHEN REALLY, I WANTED OUT OF THE STUPID BINARY ALL TOGETHER.



I LIKED LIVING IN THE SPACES IN-BETWEEN.



WHY GO THROUGH ALL THE TROUBLE OF COMING OUT AS A BOY-



IF I DON'T GET TO DECIDE WHAT KIND OF BOY I WANT TO BE?

SOMETIMES I ASK DAVE...



HOW DO WE IDENTIFY?



I GUESS WE IDENTIFY AS...



J. Readings for Post-Show Discussion

1. *The Fencesitters?*

By CHERYL DOBINSON

Published July 19, 2006

Xtra

Cheryl Dobinson is a bisexual writer, researcher and community activist. For the past 15 years she has volunteered and worked extensively in Toronto's LGBTQ community. Cheryl is currently the Director of Community Programming and Research at Planned Parenthood Toronto as well as a part-time consultant with the Re:searching for LGBTQ Health team at the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health. Cheryl is very involved in the Toronto Bisexual Network, lives in Toronto's gay village, and wants a t-shirt that says, "This is what a bisexual feminist looks like."

Have you ever heard judgments about how someone identifying as bisexual is just "confused"? Or "can't make up their mind"? Comments like, "bisexuality is just a stopover en route to eventually coming out as gay?" Have you ever made these comments yourself? Cheryl Dobinson's article illuminates some of the specific ways in which bisexual people are discriminated against in both mainstream and queer communities and the uniquely isolating experience of having one's identity questioned, challenged and disregarded, not only by the mainstream, but by those whom one would have pegged as allies. We recommend this piece because though the LGBTQ acronym has gained visibility in mainstream culture, there remain significant ways in which those represented by the "B" tend to be excluded from the equation. We love how Dobinson's writing and the personal accounts she documents force us to examine our assumptions about sexual identity – how does the article challenge you to think of sexual orientation in a new light?

Suspicious still haunt the bi/homo divide

Why would someone call Deborah Singh a traitor?

She's a bright, articulate and political woman who works, volunteers and plays in Toronto's lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) institutions and businesses. Yet a gay man she works with recently called her just that – a traitor.

Singh, 27, currently has a male partner. She is bisexual, or, more precisely, "a brown omnisexual woman" and she finds that many gay men and lesbians just don't get it. Singh says the traitor remark "really burned because it was like he was saying that I didn't belong in the space or I wasn't queer enough to work there."

In spite of the prevalence of the LGBT acronym, there is often a disconnect between bisexual people and gay and lesbian people.

Of course, bisexuals and gay and lesbian people share a lot: the experience of same-sex attraction and the resulting homophobia and exclusion from the straight world. They differ in that bisexuals may be in opposite-sex relationships, which can bring social acceptance and privilege from the mainstream. Bisexuals may also experience the added prejudice of biphobia, which can come from gay men and lesbians as well as straights.

In the queer realm, it can feel like gay men and lesbians call the shots – lesbian and gay communities and resources are more developed than any bisexual equivalents. Many bisexuals see themselves as being closer to gay men and lesbians than straights, and can feel frustrated and hurt when their fellow queers reject them or fail to include them.

For many gay men and lesbians, the difference of opposite-sex attraction trumps the similarity of same-sex attraction. It means that bisexuals have access to things they don't have access to – namely heterosexual privilege. Bisexuals may be viewed as people who could be gay or lesbian, the argument goes, if only they were more self-aware, politically aware or mature.

Gay men and lesbians may see these differences as things that will end up hurting them – whether in relationships, community or politics.

"If I find out a woman is bi, I don't pursue the relationship," says H. Ruth Cutler, a 41-year-old lesbian. "I don't want her to be checking out men while we're together.... If I found out she was sleeping with men I'd be really sick. I myself have a lot of jealousy and anger toward men."

Cutler thinks of bi women as essentially straight and not interested in actual relationships with women. She notes that her ex started dating a bi woman after they broke up, and then the bi woman left the ex for a man.

Bi women sometimes approach her on-line, and typically they want a woman for a threesome with their husband – not her scene. This helps form her opinion that bisexual women are "weak and ambiguous sellouts" who are confused and just can't decide.

Cutler also recounts the story of a female friend who recently came out of a 20-year relationship with a woman. After the friend slept with a man they both knew, Cutler's opinion of her changed dramatically.

"I told her she was a whore and said, 'I didn't know you were straight. Maybe that's why your girlfriend left you,'" says Cutler. "She disgusted me because she slept with a man, and she probably wasn't gay anymore."

The personal and the political both factor into how Tamara Daley, 28, views bisexuals. Coming out as lesbian at 21, Daley doesn't understand how someone could be attracted to men and women at the same time. Her own experience was being straight and only liking guys, then being lesbian and only liking women.

Daley says bi people are the holdouts in the fight for gay and lesbian rights. She wants bisexuals "to be on our side.... If you're already half gay, be 100 percent."

When it comes to dating and relationships, bisexuality poses particular challenges for gay men and lesbians – and even for some bisexuals. The challenges stem largely from fears of increased competition and the presumed appeal of opposite-sex relationships.

Rod Albrecht, 47, recently split with his gay male partner of several years. Albrecht's bisexuality was a source of conflict in the relationship.

"He hated that I was bi. I could comment on guys' [looks] but could not comment on women. He would bring it up to bait me. I was told, 'That part of your life is done,'" recounts Albrecht, who first identified as gay at age 16, but at 19 fell for a woman.

Kat Zinguer, an 18-year-old who grew up in Russia, describes an incident where she told a woman whom she really liked that she was bisexual.

“The conversation died down, and the response was, ‘You can’t be serious.’”

But Zinguer herself admits that she too is “a little bit suspicious of bisexual women.”

“I would rather date a lesbian than a bi woman because I don’t feel the insecurity of her going off with a man,” she says, aware of the irony.

As a gay man in a four-year monogamous relationship with a bisexual man, Burke Christian, 27, says that at the beginning it was “difficult to figure out where I stood in the grand scheme of things, potentially competing with gay men, bi men, straight women and bi women.”

But as the relationship has progressed, he’s felt more comfortable and secure.

“A lot of my peers were really concerned about me entering into a relationship with a bisexual,” says Christian. They thought bi men “are greedy, don’t know what they want, are gay men in transition, and that there’s no such thing as a bisexual.... Not that it should bother me but it does have an impact.”

Bisexual men also feel the impact of what gay men think of them. Daniel da Emi, 37, knew he was interested in both men and women before he ever learned the word “bisexual.” He thinks that for many gay men, bisexuality is seen as “a false state of mind that results from mental instability and/or self-denial.”

Once he was talking to a group of friends about his weekend escapades. “A friend’s partner said jokingly that all my experience revolves around guys and yet I refer to myself as bisexual. ‘Why don’t you come out as gay?’” Da Emi told him that he does talk about dates with girls – but to a different crowd.

Other bisexuals also use different language and show different sides of themselves depending on the situation.

Annemarie Shrouder, 36, originally came out as a lesbian. Now she generally avoids identifying, though she sometimes identifies as bisexual depending on her mood and the company she’s keeping.

“I have felt more tentative as a bisexual woman within the community than I did when I identified as a lesbian,” says Shrouder.

A gay friend has told her that he doesn’t believe bisexuality exists and that she just hasn’t “found the right girl yet.” A past girlfriend has “insisted that it was impossible to be attracted to/to be in love with both genders.”

A fear of such unsupportive reactions can lead some bisexuals to keep their dual attraction in the closet.

When at age 19 she first realized she was attracted to men and women, Shlomit Segal, 45, kept it quiet for a while.

She was attending Dawson College New School in Montreal. “There were a lot of queer people there... It was the era of lesbian separatism. I became friends with some lesbians but generally they were quite anti-bisexual.”

Now she has a mix of openly bisexual and lesbian friends who all get along: “It doesn’t seem like an issue anymore.”

However it is still an issue for Shaun Alphonso, 18, who notices gay men and lesbians holding on to stereotypes about bisexuals.

“Just this past week I was walking down the street in the village and I heard somebody talking about bisexuality and they said, ‘These people just need to make up their mind.’”

Alphonso says that his own sexual identity “keeps flipping between bisexual and gay, but right now I believe it’s bisexual.”

He commonly hears remarks like “Bisexuality is a defence against coming out as gay,” and “So and so is a slut because they’re bisexual.”

Stereotypes about bisexuals can upset existing friendships between gay men when one of them comes out as bisexual. Brian Bukowski, 35, identified as gay when he came out 15 years ago in Saskatchewan. Ten years later, when he dated a woman for the first time, reactions of his gay male friends “ranged from disgusted to bemused.”

“With most of the gay male friends my age – and lesbian friends, too – there were periods of tension,” says Bukowski. “Lesbian friends, they clicked in to how they relate to straight men.... Those friendships I never gained back.”

Though he doesn’t agree with it, Bukowski can understand how gay men end up equating bisexuality with closeted, married guys.

“If you identify your label strongly you start to put everybody else in a slot,” he says.

For some gay men and lesbians, their perceptions of bisexuals are based on their own coming-out process combined with their lack of exposure to out bisexual people.

Stewart Montgomery, 64, married a woman in 1966, when he still thought his attraction to men was “a strange illness.” Based on his own experience of “being fine with a woman because I didn’t know myself,” he has wondered if bi men are “guys who haven’t made up their mind yet.”

Montgomery thinks he’s becoming more open-minded about bisexuality as he gets older, but also says he doesn’t meet out bisexuals in queer-oriented groups like the Forte choir or the seniors group Prime Timers.

“No one is talking about bisexuality,” Montgomery says, which makes it difficult for attitudes and opinions to change.

Dino Paoletti, a 47-year-old gay man, agrees that gay men and lesbians often see bisexuals as being in transition, sometimes because of having identified as bisexual themselves before coming out as gay or lesbian.

His own view of bisexuality is that it is “totally amazing” and he credits his bi friends with allowing him to see more possibilities in the world. That includes the late Karol Steinhouse, a bi social work professor at Ryerson, who he met in the mid-1990s.

“It was through sharing her personal experience and life narrative that I gained another window into my own and began to critically reflect on my own experience as a gay man, the ways in which the boundaries of my own sexual identity were more permeable than I had allowed myself to consider,” says Paoletti.

Actually knowing and having meaningful connections with bisexual people also plays a role in how Sharon Larade, 43, has come to see bisexuality. She and her partner of eight years both identify as lesbians, but when they first met her partner identified as bi.

“I’ve been influenced by people I’ve known who’ve come out as bi,” says Larade. “I was probably like some of my friends who think bis are fencesitters.”

She thinks that part of the reason for negativity and skepticism about bisexuality is people’s internalized homophobia.

“It’s like when straight people encounter gay people and then get insecure and have to show they aren’t gay by being homophobic,” says Larade. “There is an exclusionary hierarchy, where gay and lesbian is ‘more pure.’”

“We all have a responsibility to educate and inform ourselves and each other and to push each other a bit around this,” says Larade.

She doesn’t think that bisexuals should be the ones who have to make it happen. Cultivating an openness and acceptance across the gay/bi divide is all of our work. ■

Suggested questions to prompt class discussion

1. In what ways does the author suggest that bisexual people can be specifically and uniquely isolated?
2. What are some of the bisexual labels, stereotypes and assumptions cited in the article? Have you ever heard any of them used? Have you ever used one yourself? How do you think hearing these things might make someone feel?
3. How many of the points of view illuminated in the article are present in the play *Cock*? Why do you think the characters feel the way they do and how do their words impact others?
4. Both the play and the article shed light on our predisposition to want people to “pick a side” or make a choice between “gay” or “straight.” Why do you think this is important to us? Why do you think we’re uncomfortable with the idea of people existing somewhere along a continuum rather than firmly on one side or another?
5. Do you think our sexual orientation, physical and emotional attraction can be fluid and changing? Why or why not? Why do you think people tend to feel threatened or uncomfortable with the idea that someone might change their identity?

6. Read **Section J3 – Heterosexual Privilege Checklist** in this Study Guide. How do the concepts of privilege in general and heterosexual privilege in particular impact conversations about bisexuality? How does heterosexual privilege interfere with bisexual people being fully accepted in queer communities?
7. What do the testimonials collected in this article suggest about our ability to see beyond our own experiences or points of view? Can you find examples in the article of people who make judgments about other people's sexuality and identity based on their personal attractions or identity? How do characters in the play make assumptions or cast judgments based on their own personal experiences? Can you think of examples from your own life of people making assumptions based on their own experiences? (e.g., achieving academic success, struggling with depression, struggling with addiction, responding to peer pressure, being able to afford the same things as one's peers...) Why is it easy to make assumptions about people? How can assumptions be damaging? How can we change the ways we make assumptions and draw conclusions about people?

2. *My Boyfriend Is a Lady*

By SUNNY DRAKE

Published July 8, 2013

[The Glamorous \(?\) Life of...](#)

Sunny Drake is an award-winning theatre artist, educator and community and arts consultant who has performed his innovative, multi-disciplinary creations worldwide. The following essay was written for The Glamorous (?) Life of... Sunny's blog of musings on queer and transgender identity and other issues of equality and social justice (sunnydrake.wordpress.com).

We recommend this article for students looking to engage more deeply in issues of gender and sexual identity. Read the article as a class or in small groups and use it as a jumping-off point for post-show discussion.

A sales assistant was trying to usher me out because the store had closed 10 minutes ago. I told her I was waiting for my partner who was using the washroom. So the sales assistant dashed over to the men's washroom entrance and started calling out "Hello? Hello? The store is closed!" I blushed and shuffled over to the women's washroom and softly called out to my lady partner. The sales assistant looked me up and down with that "Who are you kidding? Does your girlfriend know you're gay?" look that I've become so accustomed to.

The sales assistant hadn't even seen my partner, so it wasn't that my partner was being misgendered as male, it's that I was being read as gay. Sometimes I wonder how people know I'm queer. Then I look down at my outfit on any given day. It usually involves something like: pink leopard print necker-chief and matching pocket square, dangly fake pearl earring, tight shorts, bright pink socks and studded boots. Oh... that's right, most straight people can't differentiate between effeminate men and queer men. And mostly it's only queer men who have the guts to express femininity in a culture like mine where femininity is punished and devalued. Patriarchy devalues both women AND femininity. I feel very sad for all those straight (and queer) pansy men who are in the closet about their love of lace, ruffles, pink and dangly earrings. For that matter, I also know a lot of women who choose not to present their feminine sides because of the harassment they get from dudes. Ugh, more reasons why the patriarchy is not only horrible and violent, but incredibly boring as well. The world will be so much more sparkly, frilly and joyous when we throw down the racist, able-ist, colonial heteropatriarchy!

I love that people read me as gay/queer. I am queer, and that's very important to me. I feel so grateful that I'm queer! Yet I find it incredibly awkward when they assume I have a boyfriend. They are often being really sweet by trying to affirm to me, "Hey, I can see you're gay, and that's fine by me!" And I want to celebrate their open-mindedness without embarrassing them, so how do I respond? My "closet" looks quite different than some other queers I know. For me, coming out of the closet involves declaring to the world, "My boyfriend is a lady!" Sometimes I say this directly and then they assume I'm straight, or more likely closeted, and look apologetic like they've just insulted or outed me, when in fact, I see being read as gay or queer as a compliment. Just as commonly, they get a betrayed look on their face and say something like, "But you said you were gay?" to which I'm a little baffled because generally this is people I may have known for two minutes or less and probably only talked about the weather. Many people are so compelled by their stereotypes that it's as if before I even open my mouth,

a loud speaker announces, “This is Sunny. He’s Gay. Gay.... Gay gay gAy GAY gaaaaaaaay.” Other times I just avoid using pronouns about my partner for as long as possible and let them continue with their assumptions that I have a boyfriend. But then I feel like a fraud who’ll be discovered at any moment and also I want to honour and celebrate my wonderful lady partner.

Me and my partner get stared at a lot in public. We sometimes make a game of trying to figure out why. Maybe we make each other look trans? My partner is not trans, but she is quite tall and has a somewhat deep voice for a cisgendered woman. And I’m a short dude with some of the tell-tale signs of a trans-man (at least to the trained eye). Maybe we’re just a sight because she’s so much taller than me. Maybe it’s because we’re often both wearing dazzling, sparkly outfits. Or possibly they’re worried about my partner – “That poor woman, is she the last one to know that her boyfriend is so clearly gay?” I feel like yelling, “She knows I’m gay and she’s hella gay too!” Well, we’re both queer with an affection for the word “gay.” We’re both attracted to queers of all genders: women, men, genderqueers, including both trans and non-trans people.

Whereas my queerness is hyper-visibility, my partner’s queerness is often invisibilized because she’s a femme cisgendered woman and therefore doesn’t fit people’s stereotype of queer women as butch. She’s only read as queer when she’s being sweet with someone who’s being read as female. Or when she’s with me – because they’re reading me as gay, they’re reading her as something-other-than-straight.

I’m considering making a t-shirt or a pamphlet entitled: “My boyfriend is a lady and we’re both hella queer!” ■

Suggested questions to prompt class discussion

1. Sunny Drake describes assumptions people make about him based on the way he dresses. Can you relate to this in any way? How do we tend to stereotype or label people based on their clothing or style? What words and labels are commonly associated with the way people dress? When have you made assumptions about someone based on what they were wearing? When have others made assumptions about you? How did it feel?
2. How does the article make you think about sexual orientation and gender identity/expression? How are gender and sexual orientation connected and how are they independent from one another? Refer to **Appendix A** of this Study Guide for a comprehensive breakdown of these distinct categories and how they relate to one another.
3. What assumptions do we make about people’s sexual orientation based on ways they express their gender (e.g., the ways they dress, style their hair, talk, play sports...)? Can you think of a time when you made assumptions about someone based on their gender expression? When someone made assumptions about you? Does Sunny Drake’s personal story make you think about these assumptions in any new or surprising ways?

3. *Heterosexual Privilege Checklist*

The following checklist is based on Peggy McIntosh's seminal work on race and privilege entitled, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*. These are merely a sampling of privileges some of us enjoy by virtue of our heterosexual identity, and we at Studio 180 like to use these examples as a springboard to discussions of heterosexual privilege and homophobia as part of our Studio 180 IN CLASS workshop program.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer-identified people have a range of different experiences, but cannot count on most of these conditions in their lives. On a daily basis as a heterosexual person...

1. I can be pretty sure that my classmates will be comfortable with my sexual orientation.
2. If I pick up a magazine, watch TV or play music, I can be certain my sexual orientation will be represented.
3. When I talk about my heterosexuality (such as in a joke or talking about my relationships), I will not be accused of pushing my sexual orientation onto others.
4. I do not have to fear that if my family or friends find out about my sexual orientation there will be economic, emotional, physical or psychological consequences.
5. I am not accused of being abused, warped or psychologically confused because of my sexual orientation.
6. I can go home from most meetings, classes, and conversations without feeling excluded, fearful, attacked, isolated, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, stereotyped or feared because of my sexual orientation.
7. I am never asked to speak for everyone who is heterosexual.
8. I can be sure that my classes will require curricular materials that testify to the existence of people with my sexual orientation.
9. People don't ask why I made my choice of sexual orientation.
10. People don't ask why I made my choice to be public about my sexual orientation.
11. I can easily find a religious community that will not exclude me for being heterosexual.
12. I can count on finding a therapist or doctor willing and able to talk about my sexuality.
13. I am guaranteed to find sex education literature for couples with my sexual orientation.
14. I do not need to worry that people will harass me or violently attack me because of my sexual orientation.
15. My masculinity/femininity is not challenged because of my sexual orientation.
16. I am not identified by my sexual orientation.

17. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help my sexual orientation will not work against me.
 18. If my day, week or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has sexual orientation overtones.
 19. Whether I rent or I go to a movie theatre, I can be sure I will not have trouble finding my sexual orientation represented.
 20. I am guaranteed to find people of my sexual orientation represented in my school's curriculum, faculty and administration.
 21. I can walk in public with my significant other and not have people double-take or stare.
 22. I can go for months without being called straight.
 23. My individual behaviour does not reflect on people who identity as heterosexual.
 24. People do not assume I am experienced in sex or that I even have it merely because of my sexual orientation.
 25. I can kiss my partner in public without being watched and stared at.
 26. I can be open about my sexual orientation without worrying about my job.
 27. I will not be prohibited from adopting a child based on my sexual orientation.
 28. I will not be denied the opportunity to donate blood based on my sexual orientation.
 29. My ability to be a good parent will not be challenged or questioned based on my sexual orientation.
 30. The way I look, dress or talk will not be ascribed to my sexual orientation.
 31. I am free to travel to most places in the world without fear of harassment or discrimination based on my sexual orientation.
 32. I can take a honeymoon or romantic vacation with my partner anywhere I can afford to travel.
 33. I am guaranteed to find representations of families that look like my own in children's literature, music, television, plays and movies. ■
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Suggested questions to prompt class discussion

1. If you are heterosexual, how many of these “privileges” did you recognize from your own life? How many of these statements ring true? If you are LGBTQ, how many of these privileges resonate as things you cannot take for granted?
2. How does this list make you feel? What surprised you? What resonated? Were there privileges you’d previously never thought about that you are now able to recognize as true to your life?
3. If you are LGBTQ, which of these examples are especially painful, frustrating, challenging or frightening to experience? If you are not LGBTQ, which of these examples do you imagine would be the most painful, frustrating, challenging or frightening to encounter?
4. Are any of these examples inaccurate and why? If this list makes you feel angry, hurt, defensive or powerless, take the time to express these feelings and explore the reasons why you might feel this way.
5. Once we acknowledge that we experience certain privileges in society, what do we do about it? How do we move from awareness to action? This conversation might spark a deeper exploration about privilege, equality and activism. Students should be encouraged to research prevailing inequalities and instances of discrimination within their school, neighbourhood, community or city and put together a plan to take action.

SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDY

The above checklist is by no means complete or exhaustive. As a class, can you come up with additional privileges that people experience by virtue of being heterosexual?

SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDY

Students interested in a deeper investigation of the nature of privilege in our society might want to explore other types of privilege that some of us experience. Research and construct your own checklists of privileges based on things like race, gender, class and ability.

4. Mississauga Catholic School Says No to Harvey Milk Quote on GSA Posters

By ANDREA HOUSTON

Published December 16, 2013

Daily Xtra

Teachers interested in bringing the conversation closer to home within the context of a school setting should consider using this excerpt from a recent news item as a springboard to class discussion about homophobia, heterosexism, privilege and inclusivity.

Student battle to create gay support group highlights problems with implementation of Accepting Schools Act

Christopher Karas, a French Catholic school student in Mississauga, can't understand why his school is refusing to allow his newly formed gay-straight alliance (GSA) to use a Harvey Milk quote on its posters.

The Milk quote – “All young people, regardless of sexual orientation or identity, deserve a safe and supportive environment in which to achieve their full potential” – has been deemed to be too controversial, according to an email Karas received from his vice-principal in October.

“I was told that I can't have a picture of Harvey Milk or his quote on the posters,” Karas says. “I also had ‘sexual orientation’ written on the posters.”

But Karas says vice-principal Vicki Marcotte told him to change that to “self-expression” because “she felt it was too much about [the] LGBT community and not inclusive of everyone.”

In an email, Marcotte says she won't print the posters “because the quote is tendentious.”

Karas, 18, attends École Secondaire Catholique Sainte-Famille, part of the Conseil Scolaire de District Catholique Centre-Sud (School Board District Catholic Central South) in Mississauga. He says he wants to go public with his story to ensure there's a safe and supportive club for future students, even after he graduates.

“There is seriously a problem with our school district,” he says. “I'm worried I won't have this group next year for other students.”

The group is not actually called a GSA. Group members took the name Porte Ouverte (Open Doors), which was chosen because it “sounds the most inclusive,” he says.

Karas started fighting for a GSA last March, when he first put in a request for a “Bill 13 group” at his school.

Throughout 2012, he says he followed the fight surrounding the Accepting Schools Act. He read about other students across Ontario, like Leanne Iskander and Christopher Mckerracher, who publicly fought for acceptance at school. Their stories inspired him to go public with his.

At the end of last year, after months of asking for a GSA, Karas called *Xtra*, hoping a little pressure from media might push the board to give him the group he's asked for. In a phone call

at the time, superintendent Andre Blais confirmed to *Xtra* that a group would be formed at the school in September.

When September rolled around Karas got his group, which now meets once a month. But the group faced further resistance when it came time to design posters, organize events and start to discuss sexuality.

The Accepting Schools Act states that school administrators must grant students permission to start a GSA if they request one. When the legislation passed in 2012, it was the culmination of a lengthy battle waged by students demanding GSAs at their schools. Until that time, many Ontario Catholic schools had consistently prevented students from forming queer-focused support groups. Some boards, like the Halton Catholic District School Board, went as far as banning the creation of gay-straight support groups.

That's what makes Karas's battle so difficult, he says. Unlike Iskander, who faced a blanket ban on all GSAs, Karas has a group. But he says the school is trying to prevent it from becoming "too focused on queer stuff."

Karas feels the board and school administrators are censoring and restricting the content of the group, and making it difficult for the group to present itself as a GSA.

Davina Smith, another of the group's founders, says the posters have caused unnecessary friction between the group and the school's administration.

"This gets on my nerves," she says, noting that the objection to the poster design gives the impression that the board is homophobic. "That's the impression that I get... Harvey Milk is talking about giving youth hope. What's wrong with that?"

"The school board is all over Chris," she adds. "Chris has a vision. He wants to help gay youth, but the school board is Catholic."

Smith, who is also part of the yearbook committee, says that group has little supervision or oversight from school administration and no interference from the board. "We barely have two teachers watching over us," she says.

Xtra recently visited the school to speak with vice principal Marcotte and principal Alain Lalonde.

Lalonde, who admits he has never met with the group or taken part in any meetings, says Karas and Smith's group was never intended to be about LGBT issues.

"The idea behind the group was about inclusion, not necessarily just a gay-straight alliance," he says. "There's a committee that was formed, of four other students. They as a group decide what is being done. I know Christopher presented the posters, but that has to be decided as a group."

Lalonde says it's a school policy that administrators must approve all posters and education materials connected to student groups.

Marcotte says the posters were discussed as a group, and Karas's posters were among other designs submitted for approval.

“The posters he submitted weren’t open enough for everybody,” she says. “There’s five students. It’s not just Christopher... everybody has a vote. They decided it wasn’t inclusive enough of everybody.”

But Karas says that’s not true. “The board was concerned that the group was not in favour of the Catholic doctrine and teachings,” he says. “The group is often reminded that we are scrutinized and under the watchful eye of the school district.”

Smith says Karas has the support of the entire group. “Everything that has happened so far, like the posters, we are all in complete agreement. There’s nothing wrong with his posters.”

Although they have asked to remain anonymous, the four founders all signed a letter expressing collective solidarity for Karas’s poster designs and his direction for the group.

It states: “We would like to express support for the work Christopher Karas has done to put in place Porte Ouverte. We support Chris’s poster design and Christopher’s efforts supporting Bill 13 by creating an inclusive group that is grounded in LGBTIQQA2SA acceptance, a place where students can have a safe space to talk about sexual orientation and gender identity.”

Karas came out when he was 15 and is still the only openly gay student at the school. Since he first announced his sexuality on Facebook, he says, he’s noticed a change in other students. Just being visible has made the school more accepting of LGBT students. But, he says, the school’s administration still has a long way to go.

“Imagine what that’s like being the only gay kid in the entire school,” he says. “I know there are others. Other students have told me they’re gay and asked for my advice, but they are scared to come out. That’s why this group is so important. It’s for them.”

So far, Karas says, response from other students has been positive. The group has about a dozen members who meet during lunch hour. He would like to see the group meet more frequently than once a month.

When it comes to talking about sexuality and gender identity, Smith says the group is a safe space to open up or just listen to others talk. She doesn’t think the school board is aware that the group has these discussions.

“I don’t know what the school board would say if they find out that we talk about that stuff,” she says. “I worry that they will push Chris even more.”

For the most part, Smith says, the school is accepting and welcoming. Most students and teachers are supportive. The problem is the school administration and the board, she says.

But Marcotte says the school is providing a safe space “that’s inclusive to everyone.”

When asked if he would allow a GSA at the school, called a GSA, which focuses on sexuality and gender identity, Lalonde deferred *Xtra* to the school board.

“I’m not going to get into that,” he says. “You have to speak to the school board about that.”

Lalonde says he’s never heard of any homophobic bullying at the school.

With regard to Catholic doctrine, he shrugs off concerns that LGBT students feel alienated. “Well, unfortunately that is part of the curriculum that we teach. We are a Catholic school in the Catholic board.” ■

Suggested questions to prompt class discussion

1. What does the Harvey Milk quote mean to you and how does it speak to inclusivity? Do you agree or disagree with the vice-principal's assessment? Do you think a school's GSA has a responsibility to make "straight" students feel as included as possible?
2. How does this debate speak to issues of privilege as illuminated by this Study Guide's **Section J3 – Heterosexual Privilege Checklist**?
3. How effective is a GSA or queer support group within a school if they are not permitted to express themselves and promote themselves the way they choose? What message do you think a school sends to its students by not allowing language that specifies LGBTQ students? What message does it send to LGBTQ students? What message does it send to heterosexual students?
4. How are heterosexual students and community members hurt by homophobia and heterosexism?
5. Is there a GSA at your school and if so, how much do you know about it? What is the value and impact of GSAs in high schools? How do you think they impact the community as a whole?

SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDY

Have your students research the historical figure Harvey Milk. Who was he, what were his accomplishments and what is his legacy? Findings can be shared in oral or written reports. Drama students might even want to create scenes or a full-length collective creation performance piece inspired by what they discover about Harvey Milk.

5. *Queer by Choice (?)*

By DARYL VOCAT

Daryl Vocat is a visual artist and print maker, whose work has enjoyed both solo and group exhibitions across North America and beyond. His writing has been featured in publications including Xtra and the punk zine HeartattaCk. Learn more about Daryl Vocat at darylvocat.com.

Why does the defense of sexual diversity and human rights frequently hinge on the insistence that we were “born this way?” In mainstream culture, the assertion that “nobody chooses to be gay,” just as “nobody chooses to be heterosexual,” has gained traction as one of the key arguments in favour of equal rights. We love how Daryl Vocat’s essay “Queer by Choice (?)” challenges this very premise and gets us thinking outside the nature versus nurture box.

QUEERKWIER:

adj: 1. differing from the usual or normal: PECULIAR, STRANGE

2. HOMOSEXUAL, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDERED, HETEROSEXUAL, or any combination of predetermined sexualities

3. COUNTERFEIT

vb: DISRUPT

n: one that is queer.

In a culture that bases itself on binaries I find it increasingly difficult to stake out an identity that I feel comfortable with. From the moment of birth we are forced into a culture that attempts to define us according to its specifications: man or woman, heterosexual or homosexual, producer or consumer, and so on. All of these categories deny human experiences and variations within them. In reality, our lives constantly change. What is defined now as one thing can have completely different implications in another decade or country.

The idea that is at the forefront of these thoughts is the hetero/homo dichotomy and its effects on our lives. I do not fit into the heterosexual category so society and my thoughts plop me conveniently into the homosexual category. I am told that in order for me to fight for queer rights I should tell people that my sexuality is biologically determined, that I was “born this way.” I can’t. That is like saying that I was born with an unwanted affliction and assumes that it is necessary and even desirable to become heterosexual.

Sexuality is not an innate orientation as most would believe, but rather a preference that in some way biology *may* play a role in defining. Having said that I am still trapped. If I claim that being queer is a social construction I am to deny my body and biology. However, if I acknowledge biology, my sexuality is defined from a determinist perspective. I won’t let that happen. Is the struggle for queer rights any less valid if people choose their sexuality?

We do not know what it means to choose heterosexuality. No one ever has to justify being straight or defend it as biological or chosen. If society weren’t so heterosexist, no one would care about why people are queer. And we wouldn’t be killing ourselves trying to live in predetermined categories.

In order for appreciation of queer sexuality, people need to recognize the possibility that they are not heterosexual, and not necessarily homosexual, but a complex combination of both ends.

I do not want anyone to accept or tolerate queer sexuality. Tolerance and acceptance stigmatize being queer into a problem that needs to be tolerated or accepted. It doesn't take any courage to be homophobic in a society that hates queers and ignores variability.

In the end, I am left in the dark drowning, searching for a reality. I have no answers, only questions, and define myself in oppositional terms. Is it possible to have a positive and accurate queer identity in a society that is both heterosexist and homophobic? Is trying to do so only an attempt to conform to unacceptable social ideals? Is it more important to break down heterosexuality rather than basing an identity on a notion of *other*? Is there such a thing as *queer identity*? ■

Suggested questions to prompt class discussion

1. Vocat asks, "Is the struggle for queer rights any less valid if people choose their sexuality?" Pose this question to the class and invite responses from the group. Why do you think the "born this way" argument has become so prevalent in our society? What are its merits? How does Vocat argue that this anthem falls short?
2. This essay takes on the nature versus nurture debate. In other words, are our identities shaped by our biology and determined from birth? Or are they shaped, over time, by social factors such as our life experiences, influences of people like parents, teachers and peers, social institutions, media, prevailing norms in society, etc.?

SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDY

Let's think critically about questions of "nature" versus "nurture." To begin this exploration, come up with commonly held assumptions about people based on attributes such as sex, gender or race. Identify prevailing notions about how people are "born this way" – possessing biologically determined characteristics. Can you think of social factors that possibly influence those characteristics rather than biology?

Here are some examples to get you started. You can begin with these and then generate your own!

Boys are naturally more aggressive than girls.

Girls love pink, sparkles and frills.

Men have deep, booming voices while women have soft, high-pitched voices.

Once you have completed this exercise, take some time to debrief. What ideas surprised you? Did any of your classmates suggest a new way of thinking about something? How does this conversation make you think differently about binaries? Are there inherent problems in thinking of our identities as either/or: Gay or straight, man or woman, etc.? In what ways might these binaries be limiting for us?

6. *Sing if You're Glad To Be Gay*

Lyrics by TOM ROBINSON

Written 1978 & 2004

Glad To Be Gay was originally written by Tom Robinson for a London Gay Pride march in 1976. An out gay songwriter, he subsequently formed the Tom Robinson Band (TRB) with three (non-gay) musicians and – inspired by the directness and confrontational style of The Sex Pistols – the band released a four-track EP called *Rising Free* on EMI Records in Feb 1978 that included the song.

The EP made the UK Top 20 – reaching 18 in the UK singles chart within a week of release. BBC Radio 1 refused to play *Glad To Be Gay* choosing instead the less controversial opening track *Don't Take No for an Answer*. However, listeners of rival station Capital Radio voted it No.1 on their Listeners' Hitline for six consecutive weeks.

The song was subsequently included on the North American release of TRB's *Power in the Darkness* album later in 1978. The song has been performed – with the lyrics occasionally updated – ever since.

These are the lyrics to both the 1978 and 2004 versions of the song, which reflect both the historical and political context of each time as well as the evolving personal experiences of songwriter Tom Robinson.

SING IF YOU'RE GLAD TO BE GAY (1978)

The British Police are the best in the world
I don't believe one of these stories I've heard
'Bout them raiding our pubs for no reason at all
Lining the customers up by the wall
Picking out people and knocking them down
Resisting arrest as they're kicked on the ground
Searching their houses and calling them queer
I don't believe that sort of thing happens here

Sing if you're glad to be gay
Sing if you're happy that way

Pictures of naked young women are fun
In Titbits and Playboy, page three of The Sun
There's no nudes in Gay News our last magazine
But they still find excuses to call it obscene
Read how disgusting we are in the press
The News of The World and the Sunday Express
Molesters of children, corruptors of youth
It's there in the paper, it must be the truth

Sing if you're glad to be gay
Sing if you're happy that way

Don't try to kid us that if you're discreet
You're perfectly safe as you walk down the street
You don't have to mince or make bitchy remarks
To get beaten unconscious and left in the dark
I had a friend who was gentle and short
Got lonely one evening and went for a walk
Queerbashers caught him and kicked in his teeth
He was only hospitalised for a week

Sing if you're glad to be gay
Sing if you're happy that way

So sit back and watch as they close all our clubs
Arrest us for meeting and raid all our pubs
Make sure your boyfriend's at least 21
So only your friends and your brothers get done
Lie to your workmates, lie to your folks
Put down the queens and tell anti-queer jokes
Gay Lib's ridiculous, join their laughter
"The buggers are legal now,
what more are they after?"

Sing if you're glad to be gay
Sing if you're happy that way, hey
Sing if you're glad to be gay
Sing if you're happy that way, hey ■

SING IF YOU'RE GLAD TO BE GAY (2004)

The LA police are the best in the world
I don't believe one of these stories I've heard
About pretty policemen in leather and jeans
Showing their leg through a slit in the seams
Seeking out superstars, leading them on
Then running them in when they start to respond
But back home in Britain, we're equal and free
Except when the case is a Labour MP

Sing if you're glad to be gay
Sing if you're happy that way

The Liars of Wapping are really the pits
Commissioned by bigots and written by shits
They plaster their pages with bingo & tits
Then add all the scandal and slander that fits
They rip into victims destroying their lives
From Anglican bishops to footballers wives
From internet perverts to lesbian mums
If it's vicious and fiction it's... there in The Sun

Sing if you're glad to be gay
Sing if you're happy that way

Now young Matthew Shepherd was killed in the States,
And left alone dying, and tied to a gate,
For being a pretty and gay 21
He was murdered by thugs who thought killing was fun
At his funeral Christian love showed its face
As the bigots all picketed, twisted with hate
But God doesn't hate fags you sickos, it's true
He even loves people as evil as you

Sing if you're glad to be gay
Sing if you're happy that way

For 29 years now I've fought for the right
For people to love just whoever they like
But the right-on and righteous are out for my blood
Now I live with my kids and a woman I love
Well if gay liberation means freedom for all
A label is no liberation at all
I'm here and I'm queer and I do what I do
And I'm not gonna wear... a "straight" jacket for you

Sing if you're glad to be gay
Sing if you're happy that way, hey
Sing if you're glad to be gay
Sing if you're happy this way ■

Suggested questions to prompt class discussion

Read the lyrics together as a class and listen to the recording available for download here: bothways.com/both2003/gtbg.htm. You can approach a class discussion of this song in many different ways:

1. Discuss the medium of song and the emotional impact that music lends to a political argument or conversation about important social issues.
2. Use the song as inspiration to investigate its historical context and the various world events referenced in the lyrics. Research these specific historical events as well as corresponding events that took place in Toronto and Canada.
3. Discuss common themes and questions between *Glad To Be Gay* and the play *Cock*. How do the two relate to one another? Are similar points of view illuminated?
4. What is surprising about the final verse of the 2004 version of the song? What is Robinson saying about identity, sexuality, human rights and equality? How does this resonate while thinking about the play? How does this verse enhance your understanding of some of the suggested readings in **Section J** of this Study Guide (especially sections **J1** and **J5**)?

K. Recommended Resources

Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism:

A K-12 Curriculum Resource Guide, Toronto District School Board, 2011

You can download this resource here: studio180theatre.com/TDSB-challenging.

Daryl Vocat – darylvocat.com

This Toronto-based artist/activist's writing is featured in **Section J5** of this Study Guide. Visit his website to learn more about his work and read more by Daryl Vocat.

It's Pronounced Metrosexual – itspronouncedmetrosexual.com

A fantastic online resource created by comedian and social justice advocate and educator Sam Killerma, filled with articles addressing a number of topics ranging from gender and sexuality to class privilege.

Glad Day Bookshop – gladdaybookshop.com

Boasting the title of the world's oldest LGBTQ bookshop, Glad Day is a phenomenal resource for anyone looking for materials and literature from an LGBTQ perspective. They have a great website and a wonderful store with knowledgeable and helpful staff, located on Yonge Street in the geographical heart of Toronto's queer community.

Supporting Our Youth – soytoronto.org

A leading non-profit organization supporting LGBTQ youth in Toronto.

The Fence – thefence.ca/index.htm

Cheryl Dobinson's zine, identified as "a new place of power for bisexual women." Dobinson's 2006 article from *Xtra Magazine*, "The Fencesitters?" is included in **Section J1** of this Study Guide.

The Glamorous (?) Life of... – sunnydrake.wordpress.com

Toronto-based theatre artist Sunny Drake's blog offers a personal and thoughtful perspective on issues of queer and transgender identity. His essay *My Boyfriend Is a Lady* is included in **Section J2** of this Study Guide.

The Safe Zone Project – thesafezoneproject.com

A free online resource providing classroom activities that promote LGBTQ awareness and ally training.

Toronto Bisexual Network – torontobinet.org

Youth Line – youthline.ca

The Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line is a toll-free Ontario-wide peer-support phone line that also provides online peer-support through their online forum and via e-mail.

Appendix A

Breaking Through the Binary: Gender Explained Using Continuums

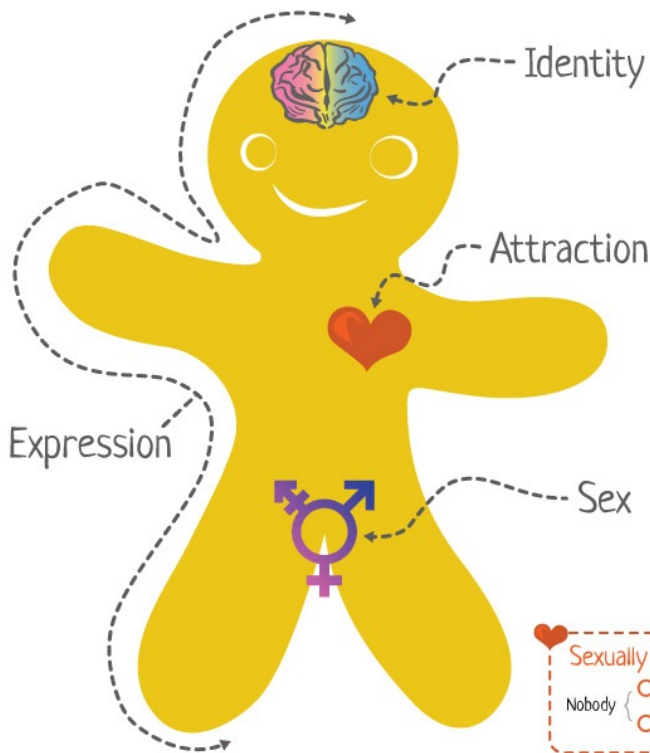
By SAM KILLERMAN

(itspronouncedmetrosexual.com)

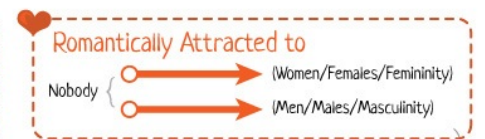
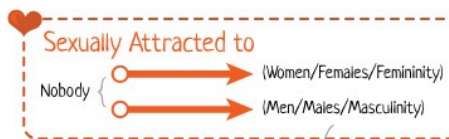
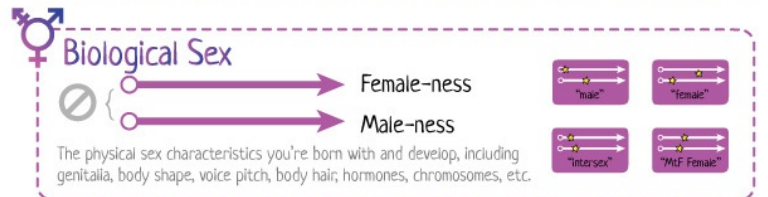
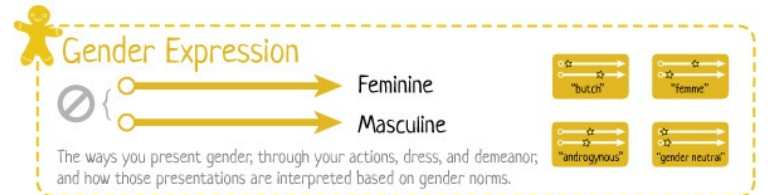
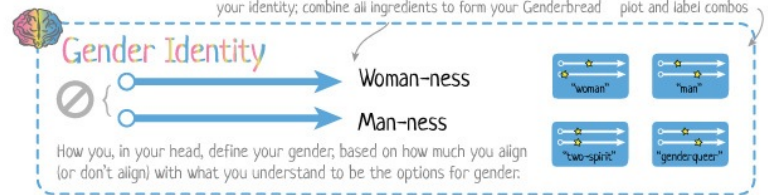
The Genderbread Person v3.3

Gender is one of those things everyone thinks they understand, but most people don't. Like *Inception*. Gender isn't binary. It's not either/or. In many cases it's both/and. A bit of this, a dash of that. This tasty little guide is meant to be an appetizer for gender understanding. It's okay if you're hungry for more. In fact, that's the idea.

by its pronounced **METRO**sexual.com



For a bigger bite, read more at <http://bit.ly/genderbread>



In each grouping, circle all that apply to you and plot a point, depicting the aspects of gender toward which you experience attraction.

by Samuel Killermann at www.ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com

BREAKING THROUGH THE BINARY: GENDER EXPLAINED USING CONTINUUMS

Written by social justice comedian Sam Killermann, this is an adaptation of a chapter from his book *The Social Justice Advocate's Handbook: A Guide to Gender*

Gender is a tough subject to tackle. There are many facets to consider and many pressures at play, and we have all been conditioned in such a way that our first instinct is almost unanimously wrong. But we're going to tackle it. No. We're going to tackle the snot out of it. Coming to our aid, I would like to present to you: The Genderbread Person!

Now let's talk about it.

THE GENDERBREAD PERSON

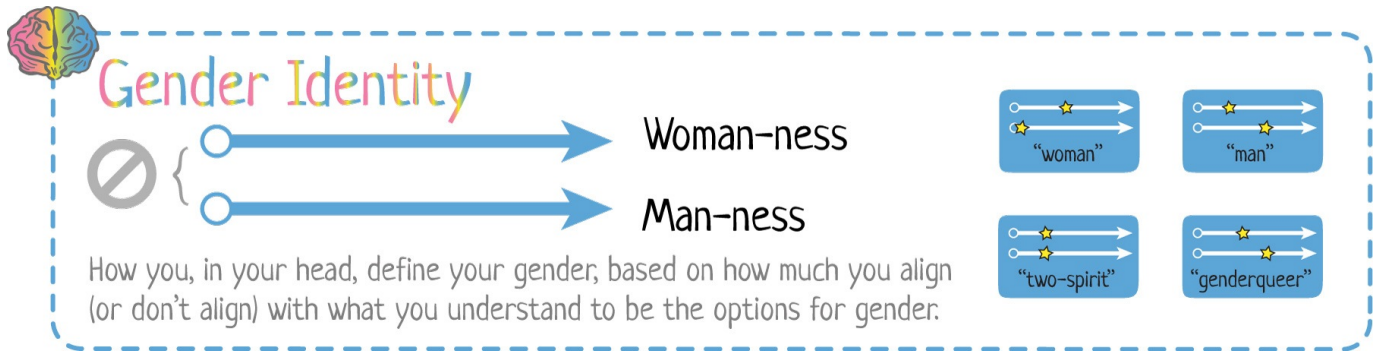
As you'll see above, we have four elements. Before I break them down, I want to talk in generalities. First of all, if you noticed that the first three categories all pertain to gender while the fourth pertains to sexuality, great job. Skip ahead to the next paragraph. For everyone else: if that doesn't make sense to you, or you're unsure of how all four interrelate, worry not. By the end of this reading, it'll all make sense or you can have your money back. And if you never gave me money, give me money.

Using two continuums for each element (the "-ness" approach), instead of having a scale from F-to-M, allows a person to demonstrate that they embody more of one aspect of gender without that meaning they are less of the complement (i.e., expressing gender masculinely, like wearing a beard, doesn't make a feminine expression, like wearing tight-fitting clothing, *less feminine*).

The schema used here to map out gender (the "-ness" model) allows individuals to plot where they identify along both continua to represent varying degrees of alignment with the traditional binary elements of each aspect of gender, resulting in infinite possibilities of "gender" for a person.

Also, I strongly condone and recommend people to plot ranges along the continua, instead of just points, to depict how their gender might vary (as a result of different social situations, stimulations, or other -ations).

Whenever I talk to groups about gender using this model, a common problem arises: people tend to assume that someone will consistently be similarly positioned in either the top or bottom of each of the continuum pairs above (all top, or all bottom), and when I explain that many people zigzag through the list, they give me blank stares. I'm about to say something that will likely freak you out, but be cool; it'll all make sense soon. Gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation exist independent of one another. With that said (I'm going to say it again later), let's move on.



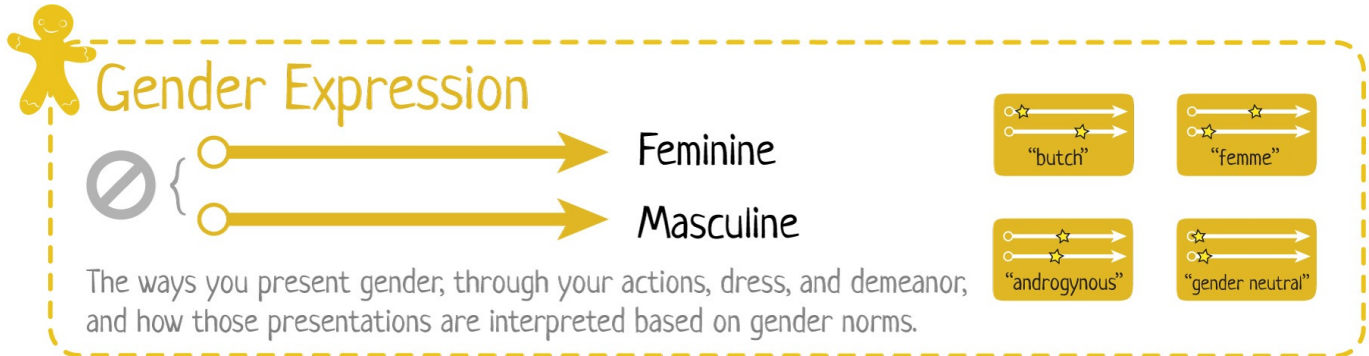
GENDER IDENTITY: WHO YOU THINK YOU ARE

On the left of both continua we have an empty set symbol, which is meant to represent a lack of what's on the right, and on the right we have “woman-ness” (the quality to which you identify as a “woman”) and “man-ness” (ditto, but with “man”). To the right we have some examples of possible plots and possible labels for those plots. Examples of common identities that aren't listed include agender, bigender, third-gender, and transgender.

Gender identity is all about how you think about yourself. It's about how you internally interpret the chemistry that composes you (e.g., hormone levels). As you know it, do you think you fit better into the societal role of “woman” or “man,” or does neither ring particularly true for you? That is, do you have aspects of your identity that align with elements from both? Or do you consider your gender to fall outside of the gender norms completely? The answer is your gender identity.

It has been accepted that we form our gender identities around the age of three and that after that age, it is incredibly difficult to change them. Formation of identity is affected by hormones and environment just as much as it is by biological sex. Oftentimes, problems

arise when someone is assigned a gender based on their sex at birth that doesn't align with how they come to identify. We'll talk about that more later.



GENDER EXPRESSION: HOW YOU DEMONSTRATE WHO YOU ARE

On the left of both continua we have an empty set symbol, which, you guessed it, represents a lack of what's on the right. On the right sides we have “feminine” and “masculine.” Examples of different gender expressions and possible labels are to the right. “Androgynous” might be a new word, and it simply means a gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity.

Gender expression is all about how you demonstrate gender through the ways you act, dress, behave, and interact—whether that is intentional or unintended. Gender expression is interpreted by others based on traditional gender norms (e.g., men wear pants; women wear dresses). Gender expression is something that often changes from day to day, outfit to outfit, and event or setting to event or setting. It's about how the way you express yourself aligns or doesn't with traditional ways of gendered expression, and can be motivated by your gender identity, sexuality, or something else completely

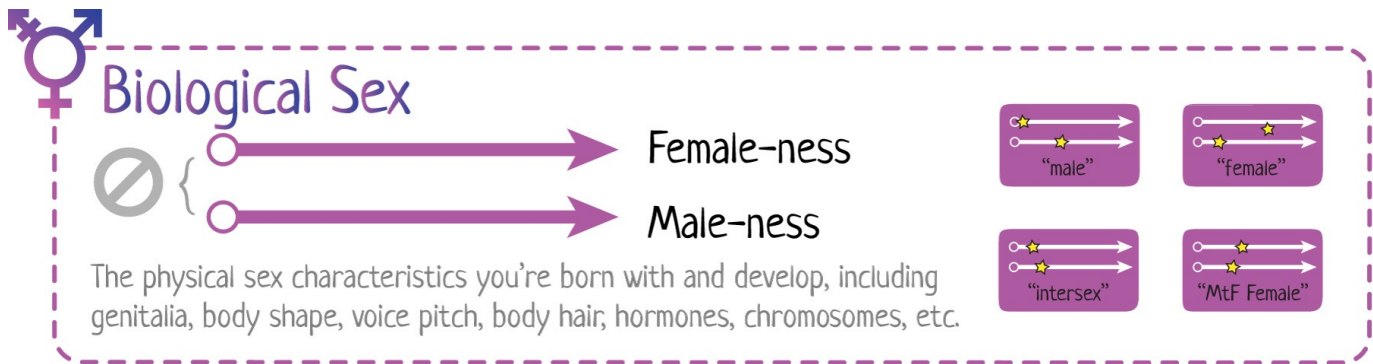
(e.g., just for fun, or performance). Like gender identity, there is a lot of room for flexibility here. It is likely that your gender expression changes frequently without you even thinking about it. How about an example?

You wake up wearing baggy gray sweatpants and a T-shirt. As you walk into your kitchen to prepare breakfast, you're expressing an androgynous-to-slightly-masculine gender. However, you see your partner in the kitchen and decide to prowl in like Halle Berry from Catwoman, then you are expressing much more femininely. You pour a bowl of cereal, wrap your fist around a spoon like a Viking, and start shoveling Fruit Loops into your face, and all-of-a-sudden you're bumping up your levels of masculinity. After breakfast, you skip back into your bedroom and playfully place varying outfits in front of you, pleading with your partner to help you decide what to wear. You're feminine again.

I assume this entire time you were imagining it was you, with your gender identity, acting out that example. Now go back through the whole thing, but this time imagine someone with a different gender identity from you going through the motions. Now you are starting to understand how these concepts interrelate but don't interconnect.

“IF YOU CAN'T EXPLAIN IT TO A SIX YEAR OLD, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND IT YOURSELF.”

– ALBERT EINSTEIN



BIOLOGICAL SEX: THE EQUIPMENT UNDER THE HOOD

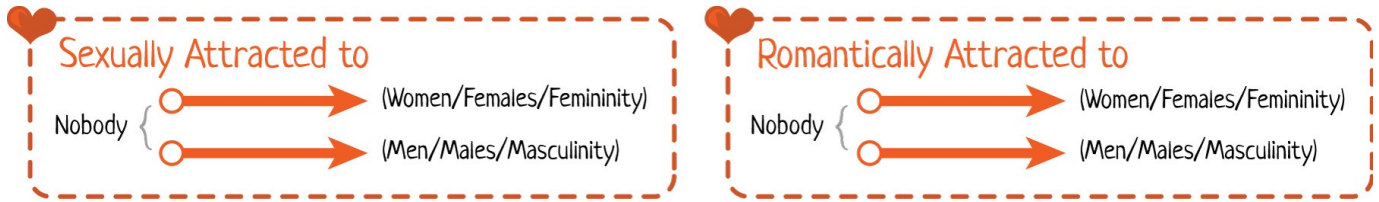
On the left of both continua we have an empty set symbol, representing a lack of what's on the right, and on the right we have "female-ness" and "male-ness" (both representing the degree to which you possess those characteristics). In the examples to the right, you see a new term, "intersex," which is a label for someone who has both male and female characteristics. You also see two "self ID" (self-identification) labels, which represent people who possess both male and female characteristics but identify with one of the binary sexes.

Biological sex refers to the objectively measurable organs, hormones, and chromosomes you possess. Let's consider biological sex in the ultra-reductive way society does: being female means having a vagina, ovaries, two X chromosomes, predominant estrogen, and the ability to grow a baby in your abdominal area; being male means having testes, a penis, an XY chromosome configuration, predominant testosterone, and the ability to put a baby in a female's abdominal area; and being intersex can be any combination of what I just described.

In reality, biological sex, like gender identity and expression, for most folks, is more nuanced than that. We will get to that in a later chapter, but for now I want to talk a bit more about intersex people.

For example, someone can be born with the appearance of being male (penis, scrotum, etc.), but have a functional female reproductive system inside. There are many examples of how intersex can present itself, and below you can see some statistics from the Intersex Society of North America illustrating the frequency of intersex births. (Check out the stat I bolded, but be prepared to be shocked.)

<i>Not XX and Not XY</i>	<i>1 in 1,666 births</i>
<i>Klinefelter (XXY)</i>	<i>1 in 1,000 births</i>
<i>Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome</i>	<i>1 in 13,000 births</i>
<i>Partial Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome</i>	<i>1 in 130,000 births</i>
<i>Classical Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia</i>	<i>1 in 13,000 births</i>
<i>Late Onset Adrenal Hyperplasia</i>	<i>1 in 66 individuals</i>
<i>Vaginal Agenesis</i>	<i>1 in 6,000 births</i>
<i>Ovotestes</i>	<i>1 in 6,000 births</i>
<i>Idiopathic (no discernible medical cause)</i>	<i>1 in 110,000 births</i>
<i>Iatrogenic (caused by medical treatment)</i>	<i>no estimate</i>
<i>5 Alpha Reductase Deficiency</i>	<i>no estimate</i>
<i>Mixed Gonadal Dysgenesis</i>	<i>no estimate</i>
<i>Complete Gonadal Dysgenesis</i>	<i>1 in 150,000 births</i>
<i>Hypospadias (in perineum or penile shaft)</i>	<i>1 in 2,000 births</i>
<i>Hypospadias (between corona and tip of penis)</i>	<i>1 in 770 births</i>
<i>Total number of people whose bodies differ from standard male or female</i>	<i>1 in 100 births</i>
<i>Total number of people receiving surgery to “normalize” genital appearance</i>	<i>1 or 2 in 1,000 births</i>



ATTRACTION: WHO YOU ARE ROMANTICALLY AND SEXUALLY INTO

We have two related ideas here. On the left of each we have “nobody,” meaning no feelings of attraction. On the right we have “men/males/masculinity” and “women/females/femininity.” Sexual attraction can be thought of as the want, need, or desire for physical sexual contact and relationships. Romantic attraction is an affinity and love for others and the desire for emotional relationships. Some folks have both, some folks have neither, many experience more of one than the other.

Sexual orientation is all about who you are physically, spiritually, and emotionally attracted to (here we’ve broken it out specifically into sexual and romantic attraction), and the labels tend to describe the relationships between your gender and the gender types you’re attracted to.

If you are a man and you’re attracted to women, you’re straight. If you’re a man who is attracted to men and another gender, you’re bi- sexual. And if you’re a man who is attracted to men, you’re gay. These are the labels most of us know the most about. We hear the most about it, it’s salient in our lives, and we can best understand where we stand with it. It’s pretty cut and dry, right? Maybe.

There's much more to attraction and sexuality. Some folks define and experience attraction without gender as a factor; they might identify as "pansexual." If you experience romantic attraction but not sexual, you might identify as asexual or "ace," or, depending on the gender(s) you're attracted to, hetero-, homo-, or panromantic. If you're attracted to folks who are trans* or androgynous, you might identify as skoliosexual.

Interestingly enough, pioneering research conducted by Dr. Alfred Kinsey in the mid-twentieth century uncovered that most people aren't absolutely straight or gay/lesbian. Instead of just asking "Do you like dudes or chicks?" (very sciency, I know), he asked people to report their fantasies, dreams, thoughts, emotional investments in others, and frequency of sexual contact. Based on his findings, he broke sexuality down into a seven-point scale (see below), and reported that most people who identify as straight are actually somewhere between 1 and 3 on the scale, and most people who identify as lesbian/gay are between 3 and 5, meaning most of us are a little bi-.

0—Exclusively Heterosexual

1—Predominantly heterosexual, incidentally homosexual

2—Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual

3—Equally heterosexual and homosexual

4—Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual

5—Predominantly homosexual, incidentally heterosexual

6—Exclusively Homosexual

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: INTERRELATION VS. INTERCONNECTION

It's important to keep in mind that the Genderbread Person isn't meant to be a diagnostic tool for "figuring out" someone else's gender, but a tool for individuals to better understand themselves, or explain *their* gender to someone else. With gender, as with all aspects of identity, you can't speak for someone else about their lived experience.

Remember earlier when I said that thing and then said I would say it again? This is me saying that again: though the four things I presented above are certainly interrelated, they are not interconnect- ed. What do I mean by that?

Gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation are independent of one another (i.e., they are not connected). People's sexual orientation doesn't determine their gender expression. And their gender expression isn't determined by their gender identity. And their gender identity isn't determined by their biological sex. And also, every other mismatch of A isn't determined by B combination you can dream up from those inputs. Those things certainly affect one another (i.e., they are related to one another), but they do not determine one another.

If someone is born with male reproductive organs and genitalia, he is very likely to be raised as a boy, identify as a man, and express himself masculinely. We call this identity "cisgender" (when your biological sex aligns with how you identify), and it grants a lot of privilege (you already read about that, remember?). It's something most of us who have it don't appreciate nearly as much as we should.