



IGLYO ON
GENDER

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INTRODUCTION

GENDER IS, at the same time, an easy and difficult subject to write about, also when looking through the lens of LGBTQ youth. In a way you could say that everything IGLYO does is about gender, because discrimination of, phobias about and violence against LGBTQ people are a matters of heteronormative understandings of gender. It's about limited

concepts of gender as being only about masculine men and feminine women, of heterosexual desire and so on. But it's also something that might be hard to put your finger on because gender is everywhere in different ways.

HERE YOU HAVE the opportunity dive into several different ways of approaching gender through an LGBTQ perspective. The articles in this issue are also written in very different styles, going from personal reflections to academic articles, and with some texts that are found somewhere in-between. These are, for instance, texts about queer body image in lookist societies, and how gender connects with sexual desires in bisexual women. It's about the discrimination and harassment faced by male-bodied femmes both outside of and within the LGBTQ community, and it's also about how gender norms are reinforced with something so basic as language, making everyday communication in itself a part of keeping up a two-part gender divide.

THIS ISSUE of IGLYO On has something for everyone. I think you'll be intrigued by new ways of seeing things in one article while recognizing some of your own experiences in another. You might also get a bit angry by some articles and the unfairness they describe. I hope you take this anger and use it in a constructive way. Show support to people who are oppressed by heteronormative understandings of gender and question gender norms in your everyday life. If there is one common message from all of the texts collected here, then I think it is exactly that.

ROH PETAS

Chair of IGLYO

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We Will Not Be Cheerleaders

GENDER QUEER

AND LGBTIQ PERSPECTIVES OF BODY IMAGE

**ANJA
KOLETNIK**

BODY IMAGE is a subjective, very personal and yet socially constructed experience. A person's body is the most tangible, virtual part of their existence. The body is the poignant place of collision between personal identity and social norms. It is the area upon and within which individuals form themselves, express themselves and showcase to which level they are wanting and willing to be conterminous with generally accepted social (hetero)norms. Body image refers to a person's feelings and understanding of the visual form, aesthetics and

sexual attractiveness of her, his or hir own body. There are many influential factors for the formation of a person's body images, as it is considered to be a product of one's personal experiences, personality, and various social and cultural forces. A person's perception of their appearance can be and usually is (very) different from how others actually perceive her, him or hir. As others, LGBTIQ identified individuals experience their bodies, physical appearance and physical wellbeing, through cognition of their intimate and public social interactions.

SOCIETY that surrounds us constantly puts great emphasis on beauty of the human body and has distinctive norms in accordance to which people are expected to conform their appearances. Beauty norms and their specific demands about visual appearances of the majority of the population vary from culture to culture. Identifying and living as an LGBTQI person amidst heteronormative cultures is challenging on many levels, formatting of external body image, visual and physical appearance being one of them. However, a person's perception of their own body may not correspond to society's standards. It hardly ever genuinely does, and it shouldn't have to.

JUST LIKE societies have predetermined norms about beauty and visual appearance, they also have strongly indoctrinated gender norms, roles and stereotypes. Body image of an LGBTQI identified individual is a complex personal and social construction, which is created under the impact of biculturalism and power relations that exist between the hetero-

normative majority of society and the LGBTQI subculture, which sometimes have coterminous and sometimes exclusive norms and standards for the body. Society's understandings and expectations about execution of gender roles, as they are distributed in the heteronormative and patriarchal system and the rejection of these very expectations on behalf of LGBTQI people and their ideologies, add much complexity to this topic. Esther D. Rothblum et al. suggest that gender may even be a stronger predictor of body dissatisfaction than sexual orientation. One of the reasons for such belief is the fact that from birth on, we are socialized within the dominant heteronormative culture, which imposes stereotypical values and norms of beauty and visual appearance on us based on our expected gender. Queer ideologies negate the narrow minded ideals of mainstream society and choose not to put a person's physical appearance to the fore. Queer identity can therefore act as a shield from beauty norms, stereotypes that represent

"Queer identity can act as a shield from beauty norms."

slenderness as an ideal body form and gender roles which are obliged to an individual based on their biological sex. With all that said, queer ideologies and LGBTQI identified individuals exist amidst of mainstream society, so such identity cannot fully offer surpassing or overcoming heteronormative, patriarchal and sexist values and norms.

BODY IMAGE and feelings about one's body are too often a field of great vulnerability for LGBTQI people. The ways in which we form our visual appearances, regardless of however intimate and personal these decisions might be, are political. As Barbara Kruger said: "Your body is a battleground". But that is not factor of distress only. Next to feeling pressure in co-existing with socially accepted norms for body images, LGBTQI individuals can also experience great liberation and pride while not conforming to them. Personal decisions and self-control of how to form and construct physical appearance and body expressions can also

be, and for many are, a form of visual differentiating. In this process ones gender identity and sexuality (can) become more visual, which can be unnerving, but also empowering as people are consciously being, looking and expressing themselves without conforming to the mainstream and heteronormative norms. Not only are LGBTQI people not conforming, their forms of appearance and body expression might be defying heteronormativity, their body and visual image can therefore be a subversive entity, one that questions the inherent stability of gender itself. Quite queer, right? Or should I say left?

ANJA KOLETNIK is a 27 year old social worker from Slovenia and have been involved in LGBTQ activism for some years now, mainly involved in working with LEGEBITRA and Ljubljana Pride. Anja is involved in various European projects and highly motivated for working on the topic of LGBTQ rights and visibility on the Balkan region. Main topics of interest include lesbian and queer body image, gender issues, gender mainstreaming.

EXPERIENCING GENDER IN THE CONTEXT OF BISEXUAL DESIRE

**IRINA
DIMITRIADE**

INTRODUCTION

“They are promiscuous and desire anything that moves, with them it’s like... whatever” is a statement that I heard not only once during my research on the life stories of women experiencing bisexuality. Such stereotypes have the dramatic effect of denying the complexities of bisexuality. Thus, the purpose of this article is to counteract the stereotypical discourses and take a closer look at bisexual desires, while also following how gender is experienced in the context of sexual desires and experiencing sex.

The data presented in this article is part of a larger research that aimed at answering the following research question: how do women who experience bisexuality live (negotiate, narrate, explain, reject, subvert) the trajectories of their sexuality? My methodological approach consisted of life stories interviews with seven young women aged between 22 and 27 years old, five of them Dutch and two Americans, all living in various cities of the Netherlands. All were female identified, cisgender, white, able bodied, with a higher education

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degree and a middle-class background. Their stories prove that bisexual desires are a complex, and often conflicting reality in which subjects move and have to constantly give meaning for a coherent sense of self.

BI/SEXUAL DESIRE

In her analysis of Judith Butler (1990)'s concept of gender trouble, Callis (2009) argues that bisexuality does indeed cause gender trouble and shakes the male/female binary. Gender trouble appears when gender does not match sexuality, which is why "a lesbian is assumed to be masculine, keeping the 'correct' gender and sexuality matched up, and minimizing the challenges to the gender system" (Callis, 2009: 228). According to the author,

...bisexuality... cannot be easily matched, because it does not allow gender to be wholly tied with sex object choice. If a person is choosing both sexes as erotic partners, her or his gender cannot be matched with sexuality. A woman who sleeps with men and women cannot be read as either feminine or masculine without causing gender trouble. Either her gender is constantly changing (with her partner), or her gender does not match her sexuality (Callis, 2009: 228).

Thus, liking both similar genders and different genders

to one's own¹ unsettles the certainties offered by labels such as straight, gay or lesbian, male or female. This causes uncertainties not only within the larger heteronormative and homonormative power structures, but also in the lived experiences of women with bisexual desires, who have to constantly give meaning to their construction of the self.

The sexual desires of my respondents did not have gender as a central component. Their desires are mostly non-gendered and defined as inclusive and not limiting their potential sexual object choices. They mention being attracted to the person, not the gender. The most common personality features that my respondents prefer are self-confidence, uniqueness, openness and authenticity. Despite this non-gendered framework, gender is an element that cannot be escaped, thus my respondents do mention having gendered preferences in their potential sex partners. The features that my respondents prefer in women are quite varied and combine normative understandings of femininity "girly girls" (Layla) with queer and norm-subverting preferences "girls that don't follow the assigned gender roles" (Jane). When it comes to men, my respondent's desires are mostly

1. Definition of bisexuality from "Bisexual isn't about there being only two sexes", The Bisexual Index, www.bisexualindex.org.uk/index.php/Bisexuality#binary (20.06.2011)

based on normative understandings of masculinity “strong, masculine, real men” (Isis).

Therefore, the sexual desires of my respondents are on the one hand subverting the gender binary by not having gender as a central element, and on the other hand they are reinforcing normative understandings of femininity and masculinity through their specific preferences in men and women. In other words, bisexual desires are both transgressing a normative system and reinforcing it at the same time (Gustavson, 2009: 412).

Nonetheless, when describing what they desired in women, my respondents provided me with greater details and talked with more enthusiasm and excitement, while the desires for men were seen by most of them as something that was just part of their sexual trajectories and needed no extra attention. This difference in attitude may be related to the actual sexual experiences of my respondents (only four of them experienced sex with both men and women) and whether these experiences fulfilled their desires.

EXPERIENCING SEX

When it comes to experiencing sex, my respondents seemed to have contradictory discourses. On the one hand, some of them men-

tioned that their involvement in a sexual act does not depend on the gender of the partner, but on other factors such as comfort or how well they know the person. On the other hand, the same respondents not only mention that they experience sex differently with men than with women, but they get involved in a different way, which is mostly due to their sexual experience.

When having sex with men some of my respondents aim at subverting heterosexual sex through exploring other sexual options based mostly on non-penetrative forms of sex. Moreover, they prove to be ambivalent and critical about penetration, which some prefer for an increase of pleasure, while others do not, thus the need of a comfortable setting for negotiating sex. Interestingly enough, for some of the respondents who have sex mostly with women, penetration (for Diane) or the normative involvement in what is perceived as heterosexual sex – women as submissive (for Jane), is something they sometimes miss when having sex with their female partners.

Sex with women gives most of my respondents a contradictory lived experience. On the one hand, it comes with a higher level of enthusiasm and intimacy compared with the sex they have with

“Queer identity can act as a shield from beauty norms.”

men, while on the other hand it makes my respondents feel insecure and without confidence. The lack of experience with women makes some of my respondents overcome their insecurities by fantasizing mostly about having sex with women. However, this does not translate into a higher level of confidence when it comes to actual behavior.

Thus, my respondents have different understandings and levels of involvement in the sexual acts they experience with men as compared with women. A concrete lack of sexual experience with women leads to an idealized image of such potential experiences which some of them explain through the familiarity with female bodies, while sex with men is perceived and experienced in a more critical manner. A follow-up analysis of their future experiences would be interesting in order to see whether their understanding, perception and practice of sex with women changed in any way.

Lastly, the discourses that my respondents have employed to relate both sexual desires and experiencing sex prove to be based on more general descriptions rather than specific ones (for example, there was no specific mention of fetishes, age preferences, ethnicity etc). This can be explained either through my re-

spondents' choices to keep their desires open and non-exclusive, or through the fact that they are still exploring and making sense of their sexual potential. Once again, following their experiences in time might provide a conclusion for this aspect.

In conclusion, the stories of the seven women involved in my research prove that bisexual desires are not as simplistic as one might think. Rather, they lead to fragmented lived experiences, in which women have to give meaning to conflicting aspects and incorporate them into a coherent sense of self. The way each of them goes through this process vary and prove the complexity of the sexual trajectories for women who experience bisexuality.

The article was originally published on Balkans region LGBTIQ news portal Queer.hr

IRINA DIMITRIADE is a graduate of the University of Amsterdam, Graduate School of Social Sciences, where she obtained a Cum Laude degree for a Master of Science in Sociology, with a track in Gender, Sexuality and Society. The findings of this article are part of her MSc thesis entitled *Oscillation: A Life Stories Analysis of Women who Experience Bisexuality*. Irina is also a Board Member of ANSO – Association of Nordic and Pol-Balt LGBTQ Student Organizations where she is actively involved in queer activism, and the producer of the radio podcast show *Girls Talk* on female sexuality.

GENDERED CHILDHOOD AND TRANS*PHOBIA

WHAT DOES IT TAKE to make a child feel, behave, move, walk, talk, love, learn and much more like a boy or a girl in western societies? Do we learn to be either a girl or a boy or is it determined by our hormones, our brains, our genetics?

Those are questions that will be answered in different ways depending on who you ask. A quote that you might hear from a lot of middle-class white Europeans might go like this:

“Well, first I thought that this thing with the differences between genders was not that true, and I did not raise my child to be male/female, but my sons/daughters

behavior was soon, well you know, boyish/ girlish, just like that. I guess boys will be boys (and vice versa) after all...”

WHILE RESEARCHERS and other natural scientist keep on presenting research findings that try to prove that our gender is determined by certain brain structures or proportions of hormones, modern gender studies, sociologists and other humanities scholars assume that most of our supposed gender-specific behavior is attributable to our conditions of socialization. Socialization is not the same as education

**SADJA
HALINA
JORDAN**

and upbringing. In a nutshell, socialization is growing into and adaption to social conditions—and on the same the co-creation of those. Socialization is process of exchange between individuals and with what lies ahead of them. They take shape and are formed, not only when it comes to “be” male or female, but also many other categories like class, religion or origin are factors of socialization.

WHY DOES IT SEEM to be so much easier to believe in biological determinism of gender specific abilities, temper, preferences and so much more? Why do so many people prefer to believe in hormones or genetics when it comes to declare “differences” between the sexes, rather than to reflect their own socialization and that of others? A good reason might be that it is the easiest way. If it is determined by nature, it can’t be changed by humans. There is nothing we can do, so why bother to care for equal opportunities? This is also why pseudo-scientific books with titles like *“Men are from Mars and Women from Venus”* sell so well.

SO, IF WE TAKE socialization as a process to gain an individual personality within a certain society and it’s possibilities and limits, a persons sex as it has been written down after birth is a crucial factor, as it still is one of the most important categories that allows people to classify each other in most societies. Societies do not only create standards on what a male or female person is able and allowed to reach in life, it also creates strict rules. The first rule says that being a man is defined by not being female and the other way around. Definition here works via differentiation. The first rule leads to the second: There are only two possible genders, male or female. There is not a socially legitimized way of being in between those bipolar categories, neither it is possible to switch back and forth or even for good. It is clear that this limitation affects every individual in his/her/hir embodiment of gender. To make sure that those limitations are not forgotten, society found many ways to punish those who can’t or don’t want stick to those rules.

Even very young children seem to know the appropriate way of behavior for their gender and they start to admonish deviant behavior if they see it. The little boy who wears nail polish in kindergarten gets laughed at, especially by other boys. Until a child is about 3 years old, it does not know that there are different sexes and gender, a child usually thinks that “everything” is possible. This is why you can hear a 3 year old boy talking about getting pregnant or similar thoughts. But once a child finds out that there are two genders (given by society) and that it belongs to only one of those, a differentiation led by the standards the world around offers. There are little solid arguments that could explain how genes or hormones or brains make children mock each other for wearing a certain color or preferring a certain part in role plays. It is a society that puts such an importance on being clearly male or female which makes children being afraid of acting different and getting excluded. This limitation of free expression of gender does not only lead to a much narrowed range of possibilities for the

individual, it is also the foundation for a deeply anchored transphobia, trained from the very beginning of our lives. People who can’t or don’t want to be categorized by the sex written down in their birth certificates fall out of the system as deviant and unwanted.

THIS IS A HUGE OBSTACLE

that we as LGBTQ youth activists have to keep in mind. It is not their physics or genes or brains that let people act in certain ways, it is the way they found their place in society. On the one hand, this means that people can change. On the other hand, it is worth considering what Albert Einstein said: “It is easier to shatter an atom than a prejudice”.

But I think that it's still worth trying out.

SADJA HALINA JORDAN currently lives and works in Germany. She has a bachelor’s degree in gender studies and business history and just started a master course. Sadja co-founded the queer students group at the University of Göttingen and served on the IGLYO Board during 2012. Moreover, he works free-lance as a lecturer on gender equality, queer-feminism and domestic violence and also does educational work on those issues.

THE

BIG

GAP

**FELIPE
PASQUALOTTO**

WHEN WE SPEAK about living in society it seems obvious to me that people seek to group themselves based on their affinities. We are, after all, all inclined to find comfortable places where we can identify ourselves with others and establish healthy relationships. But when I look at my own reality (man, gay, Brazilian) I find trouble replicating this logic in my relationships.

Gay men in Brazil still appear to suffer a serious limitation of “options” regarding possible lifestyles. Immersed in an extremely religious, patriarchal and sexist culture, gay men only have a few role models

with whom they can identify themselves and also only a few groups in which they can insert themselves and interact in the pursuit of fully living their “*homo-affectivity*”. It’s worth remembering that Brazil still imports from more developed countries – especially from the USA - their behavioral and cultural references, which do not necessarily reflect the desires and needs inherent to their own reality.

From the conflict between the models brought in from other realities – in which organizations, identifications and reproduction of LGBT struggles are historically much older

than the Brazilian ones, creates a polarization. At one extreme the man with high purchasing power - represented by the stereotype of the strong muscular man, “Barbie”, found shirtless in nightclubs, that embodies the extreme appreciation of the body, the futile and glamorous life. At the other end the marginalized gays, not only by society in general, but also rejected by their own gay environment for being too “effeminate”, that suffer most directly the everyday prejudice and that find in the stigmatized ghetto a security zone. They are the gay men of low income, that incorporates gestures regarded as feminine.

BETWEEN the two extremes we find a huge gap. This space is occupied by those who, even aware of their sexuality, do not fit into any of the easily identifiable stereotypes and/or don’t feel comfortable in reproducing, in their own relations, patterns and social representations brought from Europe and North America about who is, or should be, the gay men. This “ordinary-gay”, for a lack

of identification with what he knows as a gay reality, ends up swinging between extremes or simply lost about their role in this vast and complex equation. The result is a feeling of “not belonging” (of being placeless), a lack of identification which, among other things, contributes to the characterization of political apathy regarding their rights.

THAT DOES NOT MEAN

that the international developments and imported models are bad. These are the landmarks and world icons that serve as direct reference and bring up the discussion about the meanings and the “*homo-affectivity*” living developments. President Obama’s support to gay marriage, movies and TV-series picturing new family models, and even the “coming out” of the singer Ricky Martin are all very important developments. However, they are still far from the reality lived by Brazilian’s gay man, that is composed of a variety of conditioned characteristics not only by the country’s

extent, but by their enormous social inequalities, by the high income concentration and the hard access to quality education, information and politic education.

A RESULT of a peculiar historical process, my country still suffers with other huge gaps that interfere in the identification and commitment of these gay men with a unified movement, a movement that should be sympathetic to the demands of lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people as well. The disparities in income, access to education and in the notions of citizenship, and also the racial-ethnic prejudices, end up imposing themselves as major challenges to be solved before the Brazilian gay scene becomes, in fact, plural and legitimate.

SESPITE the complex scenario, in the last seven years we have obtained small achievements that represent major advances in the building of a genuine Brazilian gay conscience, which is consistent with our history, culture and needs. Other models have been presented out of the polarizing axis. The groups of men called “bears” have never been as organized and present as they are now,

for example. We elected our first openly pro-LGBT deputy, Jean Willys, winner of TV’s Big Brother’s Brazilian version, and noticed a progress in the recognition and rights guarantees for this population, as it is in the case of the legal support to the “*homo-affectivity*” unions, and in the case of the, shy but important, jurisprudence’s growth in favor of same-sex couples’ right to adoption.

We can only hope that these steps multiply at a rapid pace and allow us to, very soon, have a mass of gay men sufficiently appropriated of their social roles to come out of the opposite extremes, if they wish so, and gather around a diversity valorization ideal, the diversity that is an inherent condition of the gay identity. Then, finally, can we contribute significantly to the struggle for full citizenship of all those included in the acronym LGBT.

FELIPE PASQUALOTTO

Despite his formal job as an assessor for the Brazilian Government, Felipe is really passionate about the LGBT issues – especially regarding gay men. Together with two colleagues he posts LGBT news on twitter and facebook under the name “ABC do LGBT”.

WHAT IS GENDER DISPLAY?

GENDER SOCIOLOGY studies the social processes by which gender identity and gender roles are constructed. Sociology is a multi paradigm science, which makes it one of the best methods for explaining social dimensions of gender and sexuality issues today.

In this paper is presented the theory of Erving Goffman (1979) "Gender Display," which is based on the so-called interpretive theories that study the processes by minimalistic gender perspective, arguing that apart from the main macro processes and regulators such as religion, economics, educa-

tion and others, which construct gender identity in our societies, gender identity is something that we constantly **play** and "do"¹ on a daily basis and individual level, confirming and reproducing learned roles and stereotypes that way. Individuals are not passive participants in this process, but active participants through the practices they do and their interactions with others.

SEPARATING the man from the woman is a basic cognitive method for communication between humans. Without proper representation of

**SHABAN
DARAKCHI**

1. This is a term introduced by West, C & Zimmerman.D. H. 1987. Doing gender. In "Gender and Society", Vol. 1, Issue 2. Pages 125-151

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gender individuals have difficulties in their relationships with others. Gender identity is a major dividing line in social interactions. The main thesis of Goffman is that gender is socially constructed. In his book *Gender Advertisements* he analyzes the ways in which the individual learns what is to be a man and a woman and how to present this set of characteristics in everyday life. In Western societies, there are two main categories – masculinity and femininity, but transgender people provoke and prove that this process is not natural, but constructed in society. He calls this “**gender display**”.

Notions of masculinity and femininity are deeply rooted in the culture of any society and incorporated in the body, its position, gait, etc. This deep internalization of the gender identity prevents this set of behaviour and everyday gender performances to be visible and obvious. Goffman aims to make all of these invisible and seemingly non-problematic features visible and understandable. For this purpose,

he explores one of the most obvious and explicit expressions of culture-advertising and popular media. Its main idea is to show not only the way we act from the commercial and economic standpoint but something more – how they present and construct a “normality” of masculinity and femininity.

AFTER A DETAILED content analysis of a large number of magazines and advertisements, he outlines the highlights in the messages they send:

WOMEN’S TOUCH female and male hand. Female hand is normally shown as gentle and controlled by the environment. It is controlled and touches objects with the fingertip. Mid-formed hand. The male hand is shown as a powerful one, firmly holding objects, changing and controlling, dominant. Female touch is an expression of weakness. Touching the neck, shoulders and a bare neck talks about the weaknesses of women. Touching is an expression of

tenderness, weakness, vulnerability and defencelessness.

REUTILIZATION OF SUBORDINATION There are two main divisions in this point. Firstly, women are always put lying down. It recreates the feeling of powerlessness and helplessness, and this situation is directly related to a sexualized female body associated with three main techniques: **submission, helplessness and dependence.** Other techniques for presenting women are the raised knee, tapping feet and shoes, curved body and head positioned to one side, exposing the neck on display, all this talk about vulnerability and inability to react. The second aspect is the pornography, which in turn makes the whole concept of femininity in “submission, helplessness and dependence.”

In opposition, the male body is always upright, active and ready to act and defend, obey and even humiliates; eyes are always forward. The only places you can see the position of men in women’s body representation are in gay ads where

the social construct of gender is shown with particular clarity. In this type of advertising female subordinate techniques are used on obedience because these messages are designed for men again.

PERMITTED WITHDRAWALS

This term is the representation of women as emotionally tired with head bowed, dreamy eyes, eyes closed, dead, fainted, zombie, nervous, biting lips, disregarding problems and emotionally fragile and vulnerable, calling to be defended. This allows her to withdraw from the world of serious and significant issues that require determination and emotional stability. This is especially noticeable when there is a man and a woman in one advertisement, where the man is standing with a strong facial expression, proactive and ambitious while the woman is normally presented lying on the man’s shoulder or head, waiting and hoping to be rescued.

INFANTILIZATION it is a process in which the boys are presented as really active in

“The raised knee, tapping feet and shoes, curved body and head positioned to one side.”

order to catch examples and ideals of their fathers, while girls and women are utilized, wearing the same clothes, hairstyles, doing the same things and are shown as the same. The second point is the representation of women in positions, manners and actions typical for children, touching the lips for example. The representation of women as children is a method of belittlement and subordination. They are not mature adults. However, this has its consequences in modern societies providing role models for young girls to act like big women with all the usual accessories, posture, mannerisms, make up, clothes etc. This is a typical mechanism used by modern pop music. This in turn is a mechanism for the reproduction of subordinate femininity.

THE CODE OF MASCULINITY

To be able to understand what is masculinity and femininity and their social implications in this context it is required to point out a few pairs of opposite characteristics

determining cultural norms constructing masculinity and femininity. These are respectively the **strength-weakness; stiffness- tenderness; activity-passivity; rough-sensitive; dominant-subordinate; powerful-powerless etc.**

From this perspective, masculinity is constructed on the basis of what is not feminine. It is associated with power, preparedness, maturity, emotional control, confidence, independence, self-calm. This code of masculinity presents men in ads having a face with confident eyes, hands in pockets or folded around the body. In most cases active and controlling the situation. This code is changing with the advent of gay fashion. The positions of the body of man begin to resemble those of the female body. The main message here is sexual desire again. This itself is a problem in the identification of heterosexual men and buying a specific product. Therefore in later advertisements to hide this homo eroticism women are brought in the ads for gay men.

IN THE TRAP CODE, masculinity constructed in this way must always be proved (Badinter) and is associated with performance of violence (Bourdieu). On the other hand in the representation of women coming to play masculine roles in many movies and photo shoots in recent years is problematic itself, because this reproduction is imposing the male model again as universal. The most powerful evidence of the cultural construction of gender roles are cases where athletes voicing in male sports and activities make “legitimizing” photo shoots to prove that they have lost their femininity, producing a full range of postures typical for the code of femininity, which are mentioned above. Goffman says that the ads do not require and create codes and stereotypes rather they **simply represent the existing constructs**, deeply embedded in the culture of a society.

The big question of Goffman’s thesis is how the people **display** their gender identity and to what extent they perceive advertising as legitimiz-

ing their gender role behaviour, respectively. What is the **degree of resistance** on an individual level and what are the main factors that determine this resistance. We need to examine whether gender model is problematic, if we passively or actively participate in what is offered to us by the media. An important methodological issue of gender sociology today is how to change the ads and messages that suggest, given the economic and political factors.

Except a very useful tool for analyzing gender stereotypes and the construction of gender identity, the thesis of Goffman is a very useful tool for reflexive thinking in the processes of studying the dynamic of gender dimensions nowadays.

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SHABAN DARAKCHI is a PhD student at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Currently working on a project called „Dynamic in notions about gender and sexuality among Bulgarian Muslims“. He is developing a gender platform in European Association for the Defence of Human Rights – Bulgaria.

HE SAID,

SHE SAID,

AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

International youth speak about the gendered grammars and vocabularies that structure their native languages.

**EMILY DAINA
ŠARAS**

ONE OF THE BENEFITS of studying at an incredibly international graduate school like Central European University is the opportunity to be immersed within the interculturalism and diversity present on our campus. We come from different countries, have different social backgrounds, and have grown up speaking a variety of different languages – and all of these experiences come together in our everyday educational environment. Our common language at school is English, and so it is usually quite comfortable for students to

communicate and share with one another, both in and out of the classroom. However, I had never considered that our experiences with our common language, native for some, learned for others, could factor *negatively*, and almost *subconsciously*, within the shaping of our world views until a few weeks ago, when I overheard an insult said by one of my peers in the cafeteria:

“Ugh, he’s such a girl,” Viktor said.

I admit, I wasn’t shocked to hear this kind of language coming from a graduate student at

my liberal institution, as I had heard similar phrases many times before. But I decided to take a stand: I called Viktor out on this microaggression, explaining that even these seemingly innocuous sexist comments, over time, add up to form dangerous, offensive, and oppressive stereotypes about marginalized groups. “Hey, it is just a saying in my native language, Russian,” Anton explained. “My friends and I say it all the time – it doesn’t mean anything bad about women. It’s just what we say.”

I immediately doubted his excuse. Isn’t this particular microaggression also common in English, and in other languages, too? Even though using sexist language is a non-physical aggression, I thought, it is violent in its own way. But I began to consider the complexities of language and how gender bias is ever-present in the small prefixes and suffixes we attach to everyday nouns and verbs, and how linguistic structures and formalities require us to – instantaneously and often subconsciously – assume the gender of people, objects, and ideas as we write and speak. Through informal interviews with many of my classmates studying within the international environment of Central European University, I attempted to capture more information about the gendered

realities of the languages we speak, trying to understand how our grammars, vocabularies, and idiomatic expressions keep the structures of gender inequality alive in our societies today.

One of my first informants, Ellen, spoke about the Dutch language. Reflecting on her mother tongue, Ellen noted that Dutch has gendered personal pronouns [hij, ze] as well as gendered nouns, but in fact the “only words that stand out to native speakers are those which are gender-neutral.” Gendered nouns in Dutch, she says, “are not really important to study and genders of nouns are becoming more vague, except for nouns that indicate occupation” – to which, I ask: *why must some languages differentiate between to people who have the same job but are of different genders?* My German, Dutch, and Spanish-speaking classmate, Marisol, explained that this was the hardest part of learning *English* for her: the fact that “teacher” can mean both a female teacher and a male teacher was particularly confusing as that contrasted with the patterns of the other languages she was studying in school.

IN CONTRAST to the gender-vagueness of the Dutch language, the Lithuanian language was described as heavily gendered,

from prefixes to suffixes and everything in between, by my colleague from Lithuania, Jonas. Not only is there a clear division between male and female pronouns, he explained, but “every single noun has its gender. Furthermore, other parts of our grammar structures adopt a gender according to the gender of the original noun. Suffixes on parts of our sentences also indicate gender.” I asked him if vocabulary influences the ways he thinks about objects and ideas, to which he replied, “it has a rather substantial influence on Lithuanian culture – for example, every child in Lithuania knows that the sun has a mother’s role and the moon has a father’s role in Lithuanian fairytales. Moreover, an object’s gender is constant, and it never changes.” Marisol, reporting about German, noted that there are objects and subjects that are assigned genders by their articles – “for example, you should refer to a cat as she and a dog as he, regardless of actual sex” – while in addition there is a gender-neutral article and pronoun for particular nouns that have been assigned the “neutral” article. My Russian-speaking friend, Veronika, explained that her language has three genders for nouns, which then must be mirrored by changing suffixes on adjectives and verbs.

AS MY INTERVIEWS continued, I became particularly obsessed with languages that offered “neutral-gender” pronouns to talk about people. One of my dear role models as a singer is cabaret performer extraordinaire Mx. Justin Vivian Bond, who uses the non-generated pronoun “v” instead of the standard English “he” or “she”. I was excited to learn from a fellow activist Alva, a Swede, about the adoption of “hen” within the language as a neutral gender pronoun a few years ago. Horowitz, a Hungarian classmate, also revealed that his language lacks gender-specific pronouns: “nem” is used regardless of perceived or actual gender. “Thank goodness,” he exclaimed, “at least from a perspective of equality in grammar!”

BUT GENDER goes deeper into our languages than the formal structures suggest, as I learned through hints from Horowitz about Hungarian slang: “for example, people associate gayness with the inclusion of lots of suffixes in spoken or written Hungarian. The word *szuper* (super) becomes more and more ‘queer’ if it is augmented, such as *szupcsi* or *szupcsika*.” Hearing his enlightened examples, I realized that the spectrums of gender, sexual orientation, and identity can be reflected in the

“The word *szuper* (super) becomes more and more ‘queer’ if it is augmented.”

more *unwritten* rules of language, and that words that have equivalent definitions may suggest subtle differences in meaning, as well as the identity and social power of the speaker. And perhaps as a result of the gender neutral structure of Hungarian, Horowitz noted, “we are still not used to the idea of gender within the Hungarian language, and yet somehow we, too, are affected by the gender binary. The Hungarian social sciences are increasingly clarifying the difference between sex and gender, and hopefully in the future, this difference will be better understood by the Hungarian public.”

I WAS ABLE to talk with two other friends about their languages which lack gendered pronouns and yet still have sexism present within other linguistic structures. Aizhan explained that in Kazakh there are not any gendered nouns, nor is there a division between he or she, simply “ol” meaning *someone*. But she revealed her anxiety that a very conservative and traditional society still persists in Kazakhstan, which is reflected in the way language is used to perpetuate stereotypes and enforce the subjugation of women in her country. Thom, from Turkmenistan, reported that he never pays attention

to grammar while speaking, as it comes naturally to him, but that “there are certainly gender-specific terms that imply whether an object is male or female, even though we only have a gender-neutral pronoun. The kind of language that helps to perpetuate stereotypes of women as weaker still exists.”

TO WRAP UP my informal interviews, I asked my informants whether they could imagine their languages *without* gender playing such a critical structural role. Ellen revealed that studying languages that had many peculiar gender structures already “felt weird and complicated,” and she felt that speaking genderless language would be possible for her “because of growing up with a language [Dutch] that does not pay much attention.” Marisol was keen on the idea of non-gendered languages, and said that “in many ways, I think it might be a good idea. The binary oppositions of male and female, found for instance in Spanish or Dutch, are essentially just a reflection of the binary oppositions that hegemonic languages – and the societies they structure and construct – represent and thereby qualify the world with.” Thom passionately believes that removing the gender bias in the grammar and vocabulary of his

language would be for the better. “Turkmen needs to escape sexist vocabulary to become more objective and neutral in terms of gender,” said Thom. That way, our society would be able to move beyond the stereotypes that are holding us back.”

BUT NOT ALL of my informants agreed with Ellen, Thom, and Marisol. Subtracting all of the factors of gender from Lithuanian “would literally destroy the whole structure of the language,” said Jonas. “Even new and international words that are being introduced to the language in this day and age are being assigned a gender during the process of adaptation.” Since gender plays a central role in the language’s structure, Jonas simply can’t imagine a future form of Lithuanian existing without it. Veronika’s understanding of Russian echoed Jonas’s explanation: “Unfortunately, Russian wouldn’t exist without the structure that gender provides...though it’s a funny social construct, since somehow people make mistakes with it all the time!”

OVERALL, my interviews with coursemates revealed that the biases in language run deeper than the simple use of gendered pronouns for people. Although the increased use of gender-neu-

tral pronouns by queer, trans*, genderqueer individuals signifies that an important linguistic development towards a fuller equality for all is on our horizon, the reality is that language is a *long-term* social process, structuring deep pathways within our subconscious that are difficult to rewire. We will need a momentous, long-term effort to move our native tongues beyond the constructs of gender that inhabit every possible loophole of our linguistic structures. However, as advocates for gender equality, our first and most important step is to simply *identify* the kinds of gender bias that remains hidden, the discrimination that permeates the structures of our everyday speech. Only then can we begin to speak from a place of true equality.

Names have been changed to protect anonymity.

EMILY DAINA ŠARAS is a musician (Classical voice, soprano), anthropologist, and human rights activist from Hopedale, Massachusetts, USA. She has received both a CEU Fellowship and a CEU Alumni Scholarship for her MA studies at Central European University in Sociology and Social Anthropology. As President of the Student Union, she works closely with the Human Rights Initiative at CEU to combat sexism, homophobia, and other forms of bigotry on campus and within the greater CEU community in Budapest, Hungary. Contact her at emilydainasaras@gmail.com



WE WILL
 NOT
 BE CHEERLEADERS

I WAS 4 YEARS OLD when I was called a ladyboy for the first time. I didn't even know what gender was. I still don't know. The reason that I don't know is simple: It's because there is no answer, just fucked up perceptions due to fucked up normative socialization. However there is a hell of a lot of people who think they know the right answer and are hell-bent on telling me that I simply do not fit in. That I am incorrect.

BEING A FEMME and being somebody people perceive as "actually being a boy" means fighting a battle on all fronts. I am a faggot. I am a tranny. I am an "I can't tell if that is a boy or a girl?". Actually, I am happy to be all these things. But I do not like it when they are spoken to me as if they were a threat. On the way home from a club in heels I mind macho-men as if they were mines in battlefields. I don't want to, but I know all too well, from

**ALEXANDER
 ALVINA
 CHAMBER-
 LAND**

experience, that I must. A few times however I have had the privilege of hearing straight men scream: "Oh my GOOOOOOOD, I THOUGHT THAT WAS A GIRL. I GOT TURNED ON". My middle finger is fully functioning and is the only thing that gets "turned on" by these types of comments.

BIG FANS of second wave feminist theory (most of them white, hetero cis-women) still have the nerve to fucking call me "privileged as a man", thereby ignoring that I don't define as male and am never perceived as a heterosexual dude. I'm more used to heterosexual dudes trying to beat me up, harass me and/or being afraid of me than trying to bond with me. The situations where I experience male-privilege are not non-existent, but they are few and very far between.

DISCRIMINATION and power work in very many different ways and this is something of utmost importance when discussing LGBT-issues. We

don't all meet the same power dynamics or discrimination. When a more masculine presenting gay man talks about discrimination on the streets he often talks about not being able to kiss his boyfriend in public, and while this is most definitely discrimination and therefore something worth fighting against, my own battle is different. For me street harassment persists whether or not I am holding a guys hand. It is ever-present. Even the few days when I try to hide behind boy drag, my feminine way of talking and moving still rubs the transphobic heteropatriarchy the wrong way. It is ever present, in the form of sexual harassment, and not just the threat of physical violence, but also of sexual violence. It is present in people groping me or feeling in between my legs to see if I really am a "boy or a girl". My experience is not the same as a transwoman's, nor is it the same as a gay man's – as femme and genderqueer my experience is somewhere in the spectrum between gay man and transwoman.

BEING a femme faggot/ genderqueer doesn't only mean facing discrimination on the streets. It's also at non-hetero clubs. The political queer world is getting better, but still has a lot to learn. As long as feminine gender-presentations are not seen as as good or attractive or queer as masculine gender-presentations we quite obviously have not dismantled patriarchy. However, even if the queer world still has many issues to work through, it is nothing compared to the mainstream gay world (and do not even get me started on the straight world!).

WHEN I WAS around 19/20 I went out to a lot of gay clubs. Being categorized as a "hot young feminine twink" meant that I had to count on being treated like a piece of meat and getting my ass unconsensually squeezed about once a night. Being the person I am, I of course yelled at them and told them to fuck off. One night an older gay man told me he wanted to take me under his wings

and tell me everything about the gay world. He pointed to this masculine stud-like guy and was like "You're about as good-looking as him, but you will NEVER obtain his status or be as sought-after as him, because he is masculine and straight-acting and you're feminine and faggotty".

AND BECAUSE I was femme boys just kept on getting the wrong perception of me. I was supposed to be quiet, passive, submissive, nice and all these things (or if I had an attitude – be sassy, apolitical and just into partying), when in reality I was none of these things. My relationship pattern seemed to be a carbon copy of Courtney Love's description of Kat Bjelland's: "80 percent of the boys she likes are super-scared of big loud girls with presence and they like girls who are like what they think Kat is, which means 80 percent of her boyfriends only like her because they think she's soft and cute and not clever or hard or flipped-out at all, which is why she PLOWS through them." In

"It is present in people groping me or feeling in between my legs to see if I really am a 'boy or a girl'."

general boys have not found it attractive that I'm a "Proud Graduate of The Courtney Love School of Charm."

AND IT'S LIKE, okay I didn't enjoy plowing through boys like a bulldozer, but instead of forcing myself to change I have become very selective. Cuz I'm not gonna change or say I'm sorry for living in a deeply patriarchal society where you code my femininity as being weak, pretty AND pretty stupid, and last but not least as "My body is up for grabs." Instead I'm gonna put on my dress and give you the loudest most guttural scream in the deepest voice you can imagine. Or put on a business suit and act like a valley girl. A pretty powerful valley girl. An intelligent valley girl. A valley girl who's fucking intelligent even when wearing a short skirt, heels and a ton of make-up – thank you very much.

I THINK the things that I stated above should be blatantly obvious. But in today's society, they are not. It's fuck-

ing annoying. We sure as hell have a reason to fight. Abuse of power does not come as a surprise. So, I try not to let anyone have power over me and try to not have power over anyone else. I wish for it to be this way both on a micro-between people-level and on a macro-system-level (anarchism).

WE HAVE LOADS of work to do. We're busy dismantling the power of masculinity – the business suit, the grayness, the "I would never fuck a guy, but when it comes to everything other than sex all I like is other dudes", the leather boots, the deep voice, the man-size no need to shout = Intelligence = Power = the person with all the answers and also the one with all the insightful questions that he asks only to the other men who also have all the right answers.

AND THE REST of us are expected to sit in the background like cheerleaders singing along: What a man, what a man, what a man, what

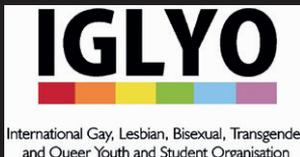
a mighty good man, what a mighty mighty good man...

BUT WE WILL NOT. Instead we will go home and masturbate all night and we will not be thinking about him.

PS. A message to Lady Gaga: I was not born this way. The reason I'm really good at walking in stilettos and effortlessly jumping up on tables is simply because I've studied Catwoman and other cats since I was five.

ALEXANDER ALVINA CHAMBERLAND

is a queerfemme-inist performance artist, activist, poet and writer. Originally hailing from Northern California, Chamberland is now based in Sweden and has performed in cities like New York, Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam, London, Copenhagen, San Francisco and Stockholm. In may 2012 they released an audio-collection of their poetry on spotify, itunes etc, "The revolutionary audacious fruition...!"



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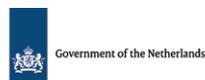
17 Rue de la Charité
1210, Brussels
Belgium

WWW.IGLYO.COM

CONTRIBUTORS Alexander Alvina Chamberland, Shaban Darakchi, Irina Dimitriade, Sadja Halina Jordan, Anja Koletnik, Felipe Pasqualotto, Emily Daina Šaras

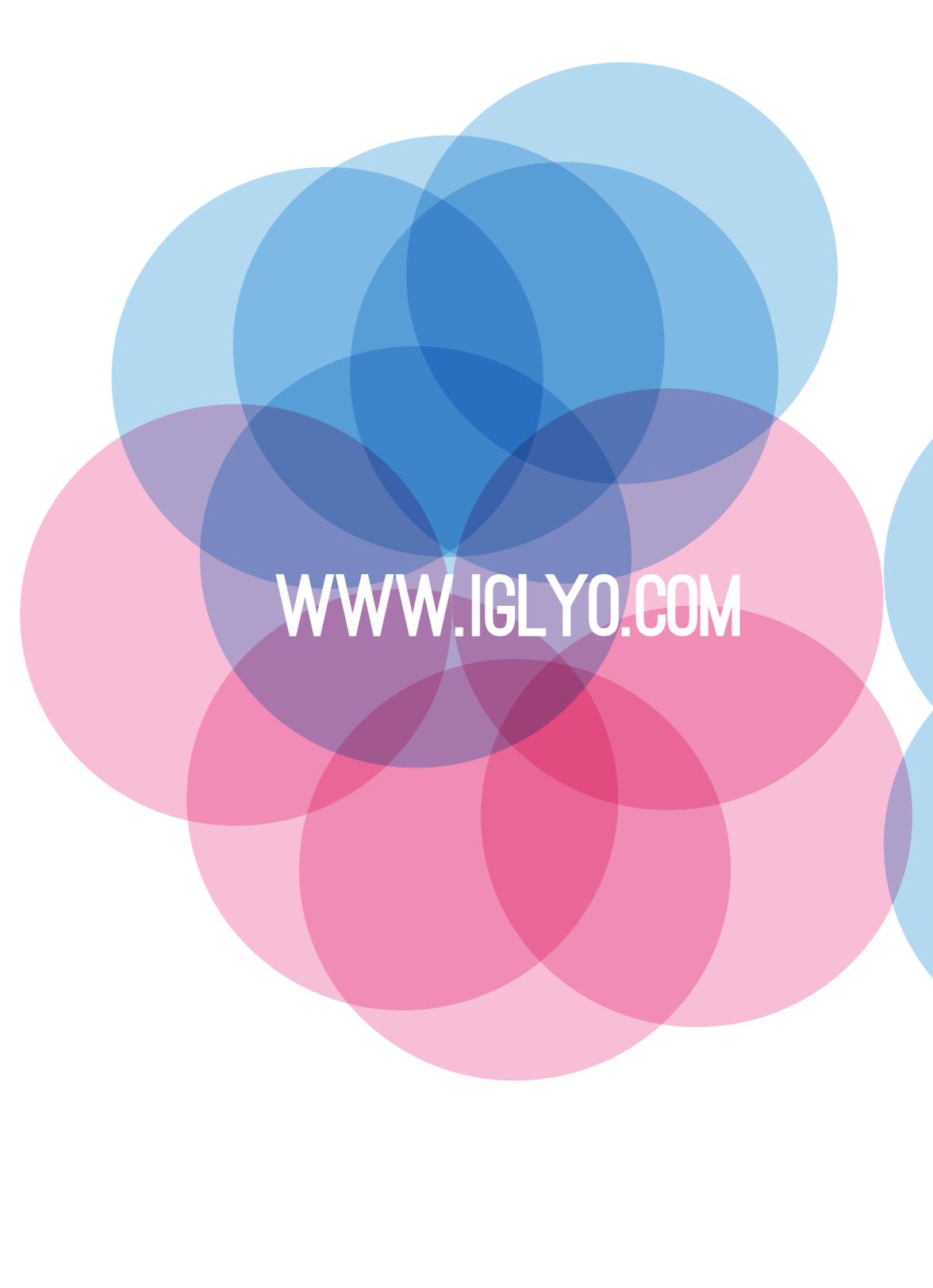
DESIGN Hilda Forss

<http://hildaforss.tumblr.com>



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An abstract graphic design featuring a cluster of overlapping circles. The circles are arranged in a roughly circular pattern, with some overlapping others. The colors range from light blue and pale pink to deep blue and vibrant magenta. The circles are semi-transparent, creating darker shades where they overlap. In the center of the composition, the text 'WWW.IGLYO.COM' is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

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