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Pride Month Issue

Svā



ALLIANCE SCHOOL
OF LIBERAL ARTS

STEVE
AFARICIO

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

from

Dr. Liju Jacob Kuriakose

Assistant Dean, Alliance School of Liberal Arts

Svā, the aptly named newsletter published by the Psychology students of Alliance University, proudly presents its third issue. What makes this issue stand apart is the way in which it has placed itself at the intersection of mental health and gender identity. In a society that has still largely failed to accept non-binary gender identities, it's a proud moment for me to see that our undergraduate students are taking this initiative to ponder and spread awareness about LGBTIAQ+ individuals, their mental health needs, and practice inclusivity through their writings.

The newsletter goes beyond cursory discussions on gender and addresses a diverse range of issues, from understanding gender identities and pronouns to the effect of social stigma on mental health and the need for an intersectional approach to addressing LGBTIAQ+ concerns.

Having grown up in a generation that spoke about queer identities with disdain and in hushed voices, the process of unlearning was not easy for my generation. Resources were not readily available and misinformation was rampant. Despite significant progress since then, the greatest challenge to acceptance today remains the same. Amidst the cacophony of social media anti-LGBTIAQ+ warriors, this newsletter stands as a beacon of understanding and acceptance!

FACULTY NOTE

from

Ms. Sukriti Khanna

Assistant Professor, Psychology

In this perpetually evolving landscape of psychological research, one of the most highlighted areas have been gender studies. The research in this area has proved to be a great support in normalizing the dialogue as well as the acceptance for LGBTQ community. The theme of this issue, “LGBTQ & Psychology”, invites us to reflect on the development we have made in this area & barriers that we still need to break.

Now is the time we celebrate the researchers & clinicians who have pioneered in this area & made substantial strides towards advocating a more nuanced & empathetic understanding of LGBTQ community. Their contributions have led to the development & availability of queer affirmative therapeutic practices, reduction of stigma associated & better comprehension of diverse experiences amongst this community.

The most critically impacted & also one of the most researched areas in LGBTQ psychology is mental health. High rate of depression, anxiety & suicidal thoughts have been reported due to homophobia, social stigma & discriminatory practices. As psychologists, it becomes our responsibility to employ evidence-based intervention that fit predominantly to address the unique issues of LGBTQ community. Competent & compassionate care along with strong advocacy for social changes is the need of the hour.

Another essential point that needs attention is the intersectionality within the LGBTQ community. It's important to recognize that factors such as caste, class, race, disability & socioeconomic status, along with factors intersect with sexual orientation & gender identity. It creates a layered experience of marginalization. When we understand this nexus of multiple factors & their intersection, it allows us to offer a holistic support system.

In this issue, you will find articles that explore various dimensions of LGBTQ community through the window of psychology. From pop queer culture to understanding & breaking stereotypes, from queer relationships to gaining an insight into pronouns, this issue has it all. This issue is an ongoing effort to improve the mental health of LGBTQ community. This issue aims to honor & celebrate the differences.



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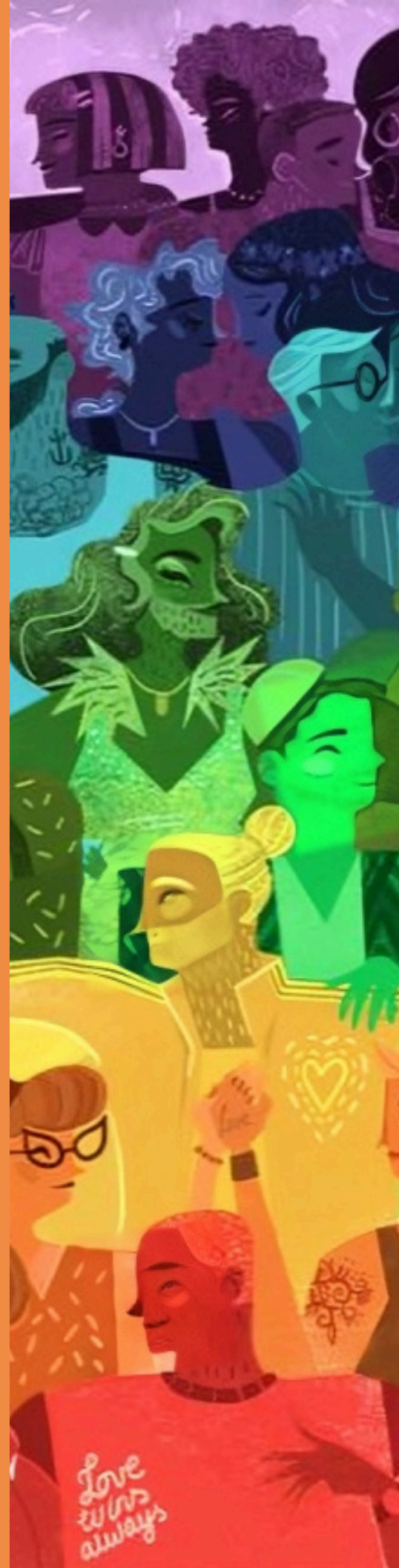
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Psychologist of the Month

EVELYN HOOKER: PIONEERING ADVOCATE FOR LGBTQ+ RIGHTS IN PSYCHOLOGY

By Ashmeet Kaur Gandhi



In the mid-20th century Evelyn Hooker, a psychologist, made immense contributions that led to the change in attitudes toward homosexuality. Through her studies, she questioned beliefs that viewed homosexuality as a mental illness, leading to increased awareness and tolerance, in both psychology and society.

Born in Nebraska on September 2, 1907, Hooker initially pursued a career in music before discovering her passion for psychology. She obtained her Ph.D. in psychology from Johns Hopkins University in 1932, a time when men mostly dominated the field. Despite facing obstacles due to her gender, Hooker's perseverance and intelligence propelled her to the forefront of research.

In the 1950s, Hooker began work that challenged the prevailing view that labeled homosexuality as a pathological condition. Motivated by her interactions with LGBTQ+ individuals, including friends and colleagues, she began to question the accuracy of these classifications. Her groundbreaking study aimed to challenge the biases of her era.

In 1957 Hooker conducted a research project comparing the profiles of homosexual and heterosexual men. Unlike studies that focused on limited populations, she recruited a diverse range of participants from the community for a more inclusive sample. Her assessments discovered no notable differences in mental health between homosexual and heterosexual men.

Hooker's findings debunked the notion that homosexuality was inherently pathological. Her research revealed that being homosexual did not equate to illness-challenging practices against LGBTQ+ individuals. Her work acted as a catalyst for change by prompting a reevaluation of standards and treatment methods.



In 1956 Hooker shared her discoveries, with the American Psychological Association (APA) urging them to rethink their views on homosexuality. Despite doubts, her research gained recognition and praise, ultimately influencing the APAs decision to exclude homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in 1973.

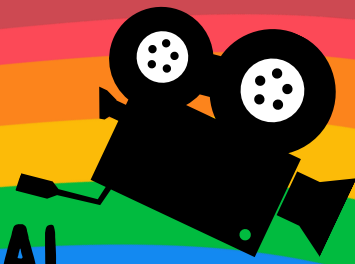
Hooker's activism went beyond academia. She became an advocate for LGBTQ+ rights pushing for legal changes to fight discrimination and advance equality. Her efforts laid the groundwork for the LGBTQ+ rights movement, inspiring psychologists and activists to challenge bias and promote fairness.

Throughout her career, Hooker received awards for her contributions to psychology and LGBTQ+ advocacy. In 1992 she was honored with the American Psychological Foundation Gold Medal Award for Lifetime Achievement in Psychological Science. Her impact endures in psychology circles, where she is lauded as a trailblazer who dared to question norms and stood up for marginalized communities.

Evelyn Hookers pioneering research and unwavering commitment to justice have made an impression on psychology. Her bold actions paved the way, for increased acceptance and understanding of LGBTQ+ individuals showcasing how scientific inquiry and advocacy can drive equality and human dignity forward. When we look back, her impact reminds us how crucial empathy, inclusivity, and unwavering dedication to truth are in shaping a fairer and kinder community.



Pop Culture



MORE THAN A RAINBOW: INTERSECTIONAL REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA.

By Netra Shah

Pop queer culture, through influential movies and singers, has played a significant role in shaping societal attitudes and individual identities. This article explores how iconic queer movies and singers connect to psychological concepts, highlighting their impact on mental health, identity formation, and social attitudes. providing representation, challenging heteronormative norms, and fostering a sense of community, these cultural artifacts play a crucial role in enhancing mental health, validating identities, and promoting social acceptance. Understanding these dynamics underscores the importance of continued support for queer voices in media.



Call Me by Your Name: (2017), Directed by Luca Guadagnino, this coming-of-age romance between two young men in Italy explores themes of first love, desire, and heartbreak. The film's sensitive portrayal of a same-sex relationship provides a narrative that challenges heteronormative frameworks. Psychology studies show that such positive representations can enhance self-esteem and reduce internalized homophobia among LGBTQ+ individuals. Lady Gaga, known for her advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights and her own bisexual identity, Lady Gaga has used her platform to champion acceptance and equality. Lady Gaga's visibility and vocal support for the LGBTQ+ community have provided a sense of validation and empowerment. Her music and public persona encourage self-expression and combat stigma, contributing to better mental health outcomes for her fans. Lady Gaga's music often explores themes of self-empowerment, acceptance, and love, resonating strongly with the LGBTQ+ community.

Songs like "Born This Way" have become anthems for queer pride and acceptance. Lady Gaga is a vocal advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. She has used her platform to support various causes, including the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," and she established the Born This Way Foundation to promote mental health and combat bullying among young people, particularly within the LGBTQ+ community.

Queer pop culture, through iconic movies and influential singers, profoundly impacts both individual psychology and broader societal attitudes. By providing representation, challenging norms, and fostering a sense of community, these cultural artifacts play a crucial role in shaping a more inclusive and accepting world. Understanding these dynamics highlights the importance of continued representation and support for queer voices in media. The intersection of queer pop culture with psychological concepts underscores the importance of representation and advocacy. Movies like "Call Me by Your Name" and figures like Lady Gaga not only provide visibility but also foster acceptance, challenge harmful norms, and support mental health. Their impact is far-reaching, contributing to a more inclusive and accepting world where individuals are free to explore and embrace their identities without fear. Understanding these dynamics highlights the necessity of continued support for queer voices in media, ensuring that their positive influence persists and grows.



LGBTQIA+



**WE SERVE
ALL WHO SERVED**

What's up in queer psychology

EMBRACING INTERSECTIONALITY: UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY IN QUEER PSYCHOLOGY



By Komal Shelar

The rich diversity of LGBTQ identities is woven into the vibrant tapestry of human experience, with striking variations. However, we must acknowledge that people's experiences are not only characterized by their gender identity or sexual orientation if we are to fully comprehend and support the individuals within the community. Rather, individuals navigate through an intricate network of intersecting identities, each of which has a major impact on their mental well-being. This is the essence of queer psychology's intersectionality, an approach that aims to respect the complexity of the human existence.

In recent times, intersectionality has been a crucial conceptual framework for comprehending the diverse experiences of individuals who belong to the LGBTQ+ community. Intersectionality recognizes that individuals hold multiple social identities, including ability, class, gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity, which intersect and interact to influence how people live their lives. Accepting intersectionality in the field of queer psychology is pivotal to advancing inclusivity, acknowledging privilege and oppression, and comprehending the intricate interactions between identity characteristics and how they affect mental health outcomes.

Intersectionality emphasizes how different identity characteristics are interconnected and how this affects psychological health. For instance, a gay person of color may experience escalated difficulties because of racism and homophobia, which can intensify feelings of exclusion and prejudice. Similarly, it can be difficult for an LGBTQ+ person with a disability to get affirming medical care and other support services, which can increase stress and feelings of loneliness.



Researchers in queer psychology, particularly intersectional research examine how various identity aspects interact to affect mental health outcomes.

Studies have investigated issues like the resilience of LGBTQ+ people from marginalized communities, the experiences of LGBTQ+ immigrants, and the differences in mental health among transgender people of color. Researchers who prioritize intersectionality are better able to understand the various requirements and strengths of the LGBTQ+ community.

In clinical practice, providing LGBTQ+ clients with affirming and culturally competent care requires an understanding of intersectionality. Therapists must be aware of their clients' intersecting identities and consider how these things could affect their experiences, values, and treatment objectives. Establishing and valuing a client's identity in all its forms through affirmative treatment techniques helps foster trust and promote healing. Therapists also need to be mindful of their background and privilege to prevent causing harm or strengthening oppressive dynamics.

Advocacy initiatives that support LGBTQ+ people's social justice and equity are informed by intersectionality. Advocates acknowledge that addressing one type of oppression in isolation will not lead to liberation; rather, a comprehensive understanding of the interlocking systems of privilege and power is necessary. By elevating the voices and experiences of those most affected, activists seek to destroy oppressive systems that disproportionately hurt marginalized communities.

Despite its significance, intersectionality in queer psychology is beset by difficulties such as the underrepresentation of marginalized voices in clinical and research contexts and reluctance to acknowledge privilege and address structural injustice. To effectively address these difficulties going ahead, the field will need to prioritize intersectional approaches, emphasize diverse viewpoints, and engage in critical self-reflection.

An essential aspect of queer psychology, intersectionality informs advocacy, therapeutic practice, research, and social justice initiatives. Intending to create a more inclusive environment, it offers a deeper understanding of the variety of experiences within the LGBTQ+ community.



Psychology in Action

TIPS AND TRICKS ON HOW NOT TO BE AN ALLY: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO MESS UP ALLYSHIP AND MAKE NOT ONLY ALL THE QUEERS CRINGE BUT ALL HUMANS HATE YOU.

By Kshitij and Riya Pote

- Make it all about YOU: you are the centre of your universe, hence you should be the centre of everyone's universe, even if it's not yours. Most importantly you are doing such a huge favour to the gays, the queers, the world by supporting them, the biggest contribution they could ask for, they get, without them even asking!!
- Make 'but I am an ALLY' your catchphrase: if anyone accuses you of being homophobic or transphobic or calls you out for being insensitive, get defensive and play the mighty card 'but I am an ALLY' (in case this does not suffice, always have 'I have gay friends' ready for backup).
- Make fun of and ridicule individuals who don't stick to traditional ways of life. Maybe they dress differently? Speak differently? DISGUSTING! Banish and marginalise these humans from society because they choose to live a different life.
- Make mistakes in labelling queers: anyways what's in a name, right? Bisexual and pansexuals are the same, whether they like bikes and pans, they are all the same. Like when you are craving oranges you always go for apples because, what's in a name? And bonus points for when someone chooses not to label themselves, but you insist you know their sexual orientation, because, of course you know what the best for everyone is, it's because you are an ALLY!!!
- Assume that all LGBT individuals are the same, overly sexual, provocative, and colourful. Individual differences are not real, all of them belong from the same community, hence they are all the exact same by nature, treat them all the same.
- Demand for a straight pride month: why do the gays get so much recognition and celebration, straight (heterosexuals) people also deserve to

HOW NOT TO?



HOW NOT TO?

be appreciated and uplifted, Life is as hard for heterosexuals as compared to an LGBT individual.

- Make no effort to learn and respect an individual's preferred pronouns: it's just a cry for help, a way to make oneself more relevant. An identity is what you decide it should be because you are an ally and there is not one identical to you.
- Normalise Anti LGBT slurs and Language: they are just bad words, no history of oppression and inequality linked to them at all. Continue to actively use these words on 'different' people.
- Blue is for boys and Pink is for girls: Even if you want to dress differently, it is not allowed, free will is not real, you can only wear masculine (dull and boring) clothes if you are a man and feminine clothes if you are a woman. Shame and disrespect anyone who does anything differently.
- Be Accepting to only some LGBT communities: for example, Bisexuals are comparatively less gay than other gays, so make an exception only for them, since they are less gay its ok to treat them equally, Transexuals are just too different and weird to handle am I right?
- Make queer friends as means to check something off the list: the troupe is the main girl always has a gay guy best friend, so indeed if you are a girl and you want to be the main character, you need a gay best friend for the plot. That's what friends are for anyways, to check things off the bucket list and commence the plot. (And to make step 2 more solid).
- Make allyship an open relationship on your terms: be an ally only when it is convenient for you, only when it makes your portfolio, your social media, and your social status better. It is about the ease and the comfort, after all, what is more important than your time. If it gets tough, too much criticism that is hard to deal with, like a relationship, it can always end, just quit it. Calling out regressive behaviour does not cut it, not like the massive paycheck you might be able to cut by showing off your allyship.



UNDERSTANDING NONBINARY IDENTITIES AND A GUIDE TO PRONOUNS

By Nehal Kujur

In recent years, conversations around gender identity have become more prominent, highlighting the diverse ways people understand and express their gender. Central to this discussion is the concept of nonbinary identity, which challenges the traditional binary notion of gender as strictly male or female. This article aims to shed light on what it means to be nonbinary and provides a guide to using pronouns respectfully and appropriately.

What Does It Mean to Be Nonbinary?

Nonbinary is an umbrella term for gender identities that are not exclusively male or female. Nonbinary individuals may feel that their gender identity can't be fully captured by the terms "man" or "woman." Instead, their gender might blend elements of both, shift over time, or they might not identify with any conventional gender at all. Importantly, being nonbinary is not a fashion or trend but a genuine expression of one's identity.

The Importance of Pronouns

Pronouns are how we identify and refer to people without using their names. In English, the most common pronouns are he/him, she/her, and they/them. Nonbinary individuals might prefer "they/them" pronouns as these are neutral and do not imply a male or female gender. However, some nonbinary people might use neopronouns such as "ze/hir" or even fluctuate between pronouns based on their gender expression at any given time.

A Guide to Using Pronouns

- **Ask and Listen:** The simplest way to know someone's pronouns is to ask. You can introduce your own pronouns when meeting someone new as a way of normalizing this exchange. For example, "Hi, I'm Pavil and I use he/him pronouns. How about you?"
- **Use and Respect:** Once someone has shared their pronouns with you, use them consistently and correctly. If you make a mistake, apologize quickly, correct yourself, and move on without making a lengthy show of your error.



· Advocate: In spaces where people might not be aware of the importance of pronouns, be an advocate for their use. This can involve including pronouns in your email signature or during introductions at meetings.

Critique of Pronoun Usage

While the movement towards recognizing diverse pronouns is largely seen as progressive and respectful, there are critiques worth mentioning. Some argue that the focus on pronouns can lead

to an overemphasis on labels, potentially overshadowing other aspects of a person's identity or experiences. Others suggest that the insistence on pronoun accuracy can sometimes feel performative or burdensome, particularly in professional or formal settings where frequent introductions are common.

Despite these critiques, the push for pronoun recognition is often rooted in a deeper need for respect and validation. For many nonbinary and transgender people, being referred to by their chosen pronouns is not merely a preference but a crucial affirmation of their identity.

Understanding nonbinary identities and the correct use of pronouns are integral to fostering an inclusive society. By educating ourselves and others, we can contribute to a culture that respects and celebrates the diversity of gender expressions. This journey is not just about language but about extending dignity and acknowledgment to everyone, regardless of their gender.



Queer Affirmative Therapy

AS SOCIETY EVOLVES, DAY BY DAY, IT SEEMS AS IF IT KEEPS BECOMING MORE INCLUSIVE. BUT IS THAT THE CASE?

By Arshiya Kamal



In the landscape of mental health care and acceptance, society has been proven to adapt and change because of the pandemic, but it has not been inclusive as such. Inclusivity is achieved when every person in society feels recognized, respected, listened to, cared for, and valued. A community that has been trying to make itself “known” but has not achieved much in doing so is the LGBTQ community. About 20 percent of India's population claims to be “queer”, or a part of the “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning persons or the community”. These 20 percent are just the people who confirm in public, there are certainly many others who could be confused or in need of guidance to understand why they feel different. Queer narrative therapy helps individuals understand their difficulties and narratives. It recognizes that the traditional methods of therapy might not fit that well for this community. Using traditional methods of therapy for individuals who require a different kind of therapy is like prescribing the wrong meds to an individual which subsequently makes their health worse.

For years the acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community itself has been hard, especially in reserved societies. It is salient to acknowledge that these individuals require a “different kind of care” because they have “different problems” and not “special care” or “special treatment”. After all, they are still humans.

Queer affirmative therapy is an important aspect of a healthy happy society. It aims to create a supportive empowering environment where the clients can explore their identities, let go of doubts and confusions, and understand themselves better.



Stereotypes about these therapies like they are only for “queer” people and that “it could make matters complicated”, conceal the truth is that these therapies are necessary not just for the queers, but also for individuals who are not sure of themselves. These therapies help individuals feel whole. Affirmative therapies are like person-centered therapies suggested by Carl Rogers. It focuses on creating a non-judgmental and empathetic platform for the individual to feel comfortable in their skin. It focuses on understanding sexual orientation as well, such therapies can avoid sensitive conditions like vaginismus in women. What are issues that queers face that traditional therapies can't seem to address. Most common issues faced are:

- Stigma and discrimination
- Internalized homophobia, biphobia or transphobia
- Identity exploration and development
- Substance abuse, anxiety, depression, loneliness

The wrong mode of help could make their situation worse.

While society strives for more equality and greater inclusivity, 3 out of every 15 patients seek therapies that would help them gain self-assurance and make them sure of themselves. The true progress of society requires a genuine commitment to recognition, respect, and understanding of diverse expectations not just surface-level acknowledgments.

It's essential to strive for such changes to make an actual change and debunk stereotypes surrounding queer affirmative therapy.

Mental health is a basic need that should be for all. Making it more flexible and available is what will make the world a better place for everyone to live in.



EMBRACING DIVERSITY: NAVIGATING QUEER LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS IN TODAY'S SOCIETY

By Ridhi Gangwal



Queer love and relationships encompass a diverse scope of romantic connections between individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and more). In today's evolving societal landscape, there is increasing recognition and acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. However, challenges faced by people such as - discrimination, lack of legal recognition, and societal stigma. Despite these obstacles, queer individuals continue to form meaningful and fulfilling relationships, navigating their unique journeys of love and connection. One of the defining aspects of queer love and relationships is the celebration of authenticity and individuality. Queer individuals go against the societal norms and expectations, embracing their true selves and forming relationships based on mutual respect, understanding, and acceptance. These relationships can be characterized by resilience and strength in the face of adversity, as queer individuals navigate societal prejudices and work to build supportive communities where they can express their love openly. Communication and understanding are vital components of queer relationships, as partners cross not only their own identities and desires but also the complexities of societal attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals. Building trust and fostering open dialogue are essential for navigating challenges and fostering intimacy in queer relationships.



Psychologists are professionals who specialize in understanding human behaviour, thoughts, and emotions. They play a crucial role in supporting LGBTQ+ individuals in facing the challenges that they may experience in their relationships and personal identity journeys. Attachment theory, which was developed by John Bowlby and expanded upon by Mary Ainsworth, is one psychological framework that psychologists utilize to understand how people form and maintain intimate connections. By applying this theory, psychologists can explore how LGBTQ+ individuals navigate their relationships, including factors like trust, communication, and emotional bonding. Additionally, Erik Erikson's theory of identity development offers valuable insights into how individuals, including those in the LGBTQ+ community, come to understand and accept themselves.

This theory emphasizes the importance of exploring one's identity and resolving conflicts related to personal identity, such as societal expectations and internalized stigma.

Psychologists use Erikson's framework to help LGBTQ+ individuals embrace their authentic selves and navigate the process of self-discovery and acceptance. By applying these psychological theories, we can provide LGBTQ+ individuals with tools and insights to better understand themselves and their queer love and relationships. This understanding can lead to increased self-awareness, resilience, and confidence, ultimately fostering healthier and more fulfilling connections with others.

In conclusion, the acceptance and celebration of queer love and relationships serve as a moral imperative for society. By embracing diversity and fostering inclusivity, we not only honor the fundamental rights of LGBTQ+ individuals but also enrich our collective human experience. Through empathy, understanding, and support, we can create communities where love knows no bounds, where all individuals continue to increase their love and find fulfillment in genuine connections. It is through this acceptance and celebration of diversity that we truly embody the principles of equality and compassion, building a brighter and more inclusive future for generations to come

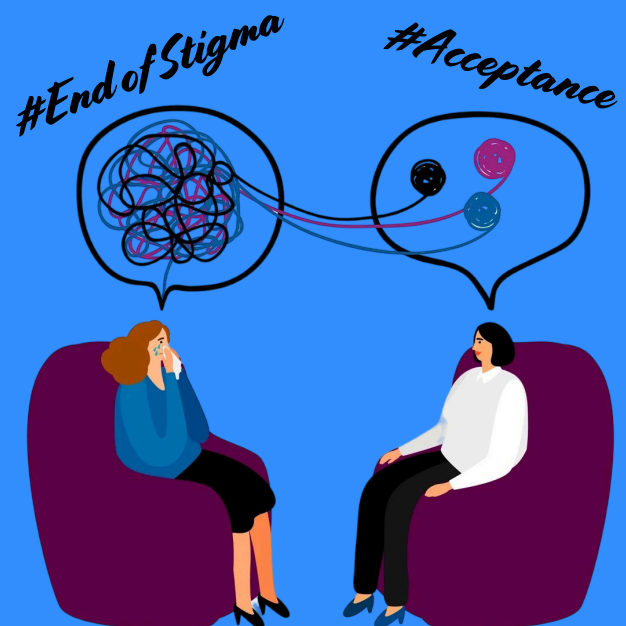


Regrettably, internalized homophobia and stigmas prevalent in society are also associated with thoughts and attempts of suicide. Research has found out that, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual and queer (LGBTQ+) youths experience higher levels of suicide risk if they have higher levels of internalized homophobia in them compared to youths who do not have this feeling in them (Meyer, 2003). There can be many ways to reduce and address the adverse effects of Internalized Homophobia and Stigma, some of them can be Therapeutic Interventions such as Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) has been effective in helping individuals challenge and change the negative beliefs associated with internalized homophobia. Therapy can provide a safe space for individuals to explore their feelings and develop healthier self-beliefs.

Having strong and positive supports in one's life, both gay/queer or straight, can help counteract internalized homophobia. They provide acceptance, which is a valuable component of mental health that cannot be obtained from friends and family.

Prevention and awareness campaigns to decrease the prevalence of homonegativity can help increase acceptance of the LGBTQ+ population. Community education programs and anti-stigma policies can combat prejudice and decrease the rate of stigmatization. They should also engage in affirmative practices that acknowledge the worth of the queer individuals. This approach can make people feel that they are valued, and this can improve their mental health.

In conclusion, Internalized homophobia and societal stigma are some of the main factors that affect the mental health of LGBTQ+ persons significantly. To solve these problems, use of therapy, networks of support, information, and advocacy are the main solutions. By fostering a more inclusive and accepting society one can address the negative consequences of internalized homophobia/stigma and provide the population with better mental health.



ECHOES OF RESILIENCE

By Parijat Joshi & Lehar Dani



Blue, pink, and white, the colours of the transgender flag narrate stories of not just the mere presence of a thriving transgender community but also sheds light on the struggles and resilience of their members. Looking beyond the colours of the community's flag, we find individuals who have established themselves by actively supporting and embracing their own gender identity. One such influential figure is Ella D. Verma, who is known for advocating for queer rights and visibility. Born as Dev Verma to a small family, she has now made a successful career as a social media influencer, model, artist, and content developer. Adored by a fan following of 314k on Instagram and 51.4k subscribers on YouTube, she uses this platform to talk about her experience with gender discrimination and gender dysphoria in India.

In today's world gender discrimination is quite talked about but unfortunately, it also overshadows the conversations surrounding the topic of gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria is the psychological distress that is experienced by an individual when they feel a disconnect between their sex assigned at birth and the gender they personally identify with. One can encounter dysphoria even during childhood, and so was the case with Ella D. Verma. She knew that physically she was a boy, but she never saw herself in a future like that.

She enjoyed doing things that were considered to be more feminine, and growing up this made her feel confused about her gender identity. Such problems intensified with puberty, where she was expecting to grow more lady-like features but rather, she ended up growing a moustache and experiencing male puberty.

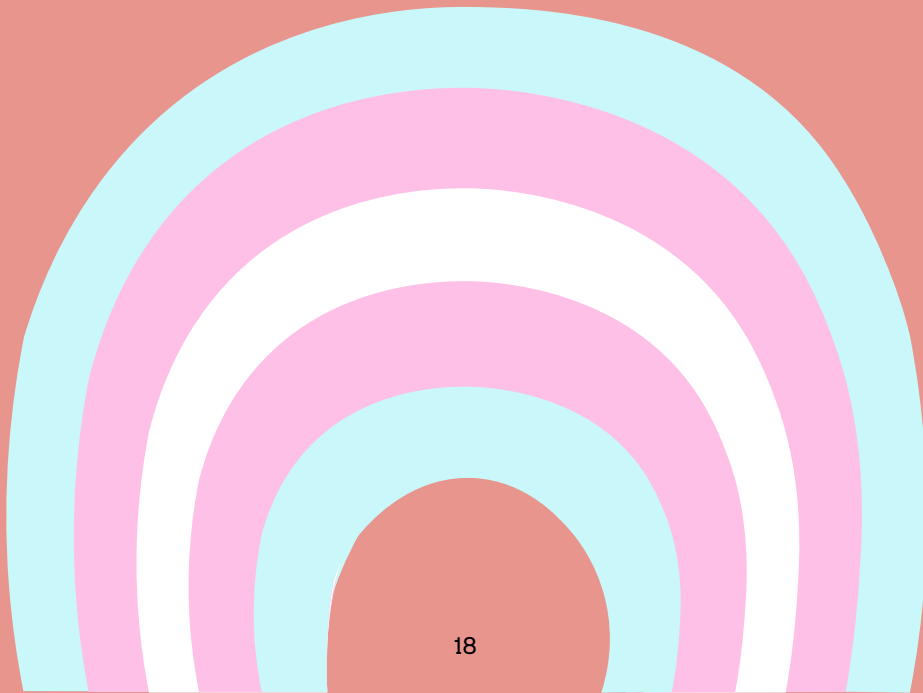
This new bodily transformation made her uneasy, so she started to shave more than twice a day, wore excruciatingly tight underpants, and tried to speak in a higher pitch.



All these things affected her negatively. Even today Ella finds it difficult to speak about her dysphoria as often her talk is met with disbelief, because all people see is a bold, young, and confident woman.

Thankfully for her, she has started with gender-affirming care via hormonal injections and gender change surgery. These gender-affirming changes have immensely helped her to gain more confidence and acceptance for her new life. Along with these elements, there are laws that provide the people of the transgender community with much-needed legal protection. The Transgender person (Protection of Rights) Bill of 2019 affirms their right to self-identify their gender and includes provisions for obtaining a certificate of identity indicating transgender status, with the possibility of updating this certificate after their gender affirming surgery.

Such laws help us build more inclusive societies where individuals feel seen and heard without feeling the need to change themselves in any manner. It is about time that we push away the stigmas that accompany any discussion on gender and embrace the goodness of every individual. And Monica Helms, the creator of the transgender flag, once beautifully highlighted the importance of symmetry in the flag. She said that the flag's pattern is such that in whichever way you fly it, it shall be correct signifying that eventually we all end up finding the correctness in our lives, just like Ella did in hers!



STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION AND ITS EFFECT ON MENTAL HEALTH FOR QUEERS

By Nainika Ann Mann & Rishvita Karanam

Stigma and discrimination surrounding mental health are pervasive issues within queer communities. Discrimination is the unfair or unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on some aspect of their identities, whereas stigma refers to negative attitudes, beliefs, or stereotypes that lead to discrimination and marginalization against individuals or groups based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, or mental health status. This is manifested in various forms, including exclusion, harassment, denial of opportunities, rights, or resources.

Despite progress in LGBTQ+ rights, individuals still encounter challenges tied to sexual orientation, gender identity, and mental well-being, which are compounded by existing societal prejudices. Throughout history, the LGBTQ+ community has faced prejudice, persecution, and violence. In many cultures, homosexuality and gender nonconformity were considered and are still considered sinful, deviant, or criminal behaviors. Laws criminalizing same-sex relationships were widespread, and subsequently, LGBTQ+ individuals were subjected to violence, harassment, and discrimination. The legacy of this history is still felt today, as they continue to battle against stigma and discrimination in many parts of the world, facing societal rejection and isolation, prejudice, familial estrangement, and internalized homophobia or transphobia.

Dr. Ilan Meyer, a leading researcher on the mental health of LGBTQ+ individuals, focused on the concept of minority stress and showed that the stigma and discrimination experienced by queer individuals contribute to poor mental health outcomes, leading to higher rates of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicide.

Stigma, shame, lack of competent and knowledgeable mental health providers, limited LGBTQ+-inclusive policies, confidentiality concerns, and fear of discrimination in healthcare settings lead to reluctance in seeking treatment, delays in receiving treatment, or inadequate care.



Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the interaction between personal factors, environmental influences, and behaviors, suggests that stigma and discrimination arise from societal attitudes and beliefs about sexual orientation and gender identity. This theory can be used to develop interventions that focus on changing societal attitudes and creating supportive environments and empowering queer individuals to challenge stereotypes and developing coping strategies. Understanding and addressing the cognitive and social processes involved in stigma and discrimination can effectively work towards reducing their impact on the mental health of queer individuals.



Creating inclusive environments, breaking down stigma, providing access to resources and raising awareness are vital in challenging stereotypes and promoting understanding of queers' mental health issues. To improve access to mental health care, implementing LGBTQ+-inclusive policies in healthcare settings, training healthcare providers in culturally competent practices is essential, including understanding unique experiences, using affirming language, and providing referrals to LGBTQ+-affirming services. Community-based initiatives and support groups are crucial for fostering resilience and connectedness, combating isolation, and empowering individuals to seek help.

Overall, stigma and discrimination of queer individuals is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires a comprehensive and intersectional approach to address. By challenging harmful stereotypes, fostering cultural competency, advocating for systemic change, we need to create a more inclusive and affirming environment. It is essential that mental health professionals, policymakers, and communities work together to dismantle stigma and discrimination and create a more equitable and supportive environment for queer individuals.

PSYCHOANALYSING QUEER REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA

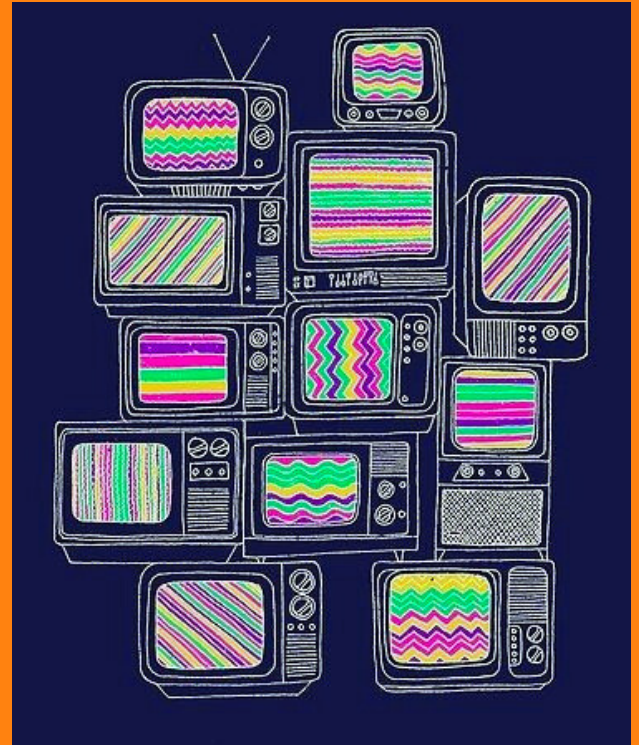
By Ishani Mahato

Present-day media includes LGBTQ+ characters in literature, TV series, movies, and other media. But have you ever considered what it signifies and why they are there? Let's explore it with basic language. At present when we discuss "psychoanalyzing" LGBTQ+ representation, we do so from a psychological perspective. We are interested in discovering underlying meanings of LGBTQ+ characters in the media.

Psychoanalysis clarifies the reasons behind these damaging representations. It demonstrates the ways in which preconceptions and biases in society can affect the media. A key idea in psychoanalysis is "identification."

Indicating identifying with the characters they follow. Positive and approachable figures on TV can be immensely affirming for LGBTQ+ individuals and makes them feel validated. Psychoanalyzing LGBTQ+ representation in the media demonstrates how media may influence how we feel and think about LGBTQ+ persons. The media can aid in dispelling prejudices and fostering acceptance by presenting realistic and positive images. On the other hand, it's critical to identify and refute damaging representations when we come across them. Through this we can develop a media environment that supports and embraces LGBTQ+ individuals in general.

Psychoanalysis's fundamental goal is to examine how the unconscious mind influences both social systems and individual behavior. This creates a useful tool for analyzing complex relationships between characters, stories, and viewers in LGBT representation in the media.



Psychoanalyzing includes looking at the stereotypes and tropes that are frequently connected to LGBTQ+ characters. These characters have historically been portrayed as tragic people or as comic relief, representing the discomfiture or marginalization of non-normative genders and sexualities in society. Through Psychoanalysis, it becomes clear how these representations fueled prejudice and helped marginalize LGBTQ+ people.

However, LGBT representation in the media has changed along with changes in cultural attitudes.

Characters now slowly represent a wider range of queer experiences and are more sophisticated and diverse. It examines the reasons behind character growth and story decisions, which aids in the interpretation of these representations.



For instance, when a queer character navigates social expectations and internalized shame, their journey of self-discovery may resemble the psychoanalytic theory's process of individuation. To perpetuate prevailing narratives of desire and objectification, queer characters are frequently the focus of the male gaze or sexualized.

On the other hand, queer people may recover their agency back by subverting or resisting traditional norms and claiming their identities according to their own terms. Because of their gender identity or sexual orientation, many LGBTQ+ people face violence, rejection, and prejudice; as a result, they frequently suffer psychological traumas that are portrayed in media. The depictions can be examined from a psychoanalytic perspective, focusing on themes of catharsis, displacement, and repression. In the process of coming to terms with past traumas and reassembling the pieces of their identity, a gay character may have to face prior traumas. The interaction between conscious and unconscious impulses in media consumption is emphasized by Psychoanalysis, which is significant.

Ultimately, the examination of queer representation in media through psychoanalysis reveals the concealed relationships between power, identity, and desire inside stories and characters. Through an analysis of archetypes, power structures, trauma, and audience reaction, we may better comprehend how media influences and mirrors social perspectives on gender and sexual diversity. In the end, this analysis is a call to action for more inclusive, genuine, and nuanced media portrayals of LGBTQ+ people.

Breaking Stereotypes

DISMANTLING STEREOTYPES: CHALLENGING MISCONCEPTIONS IN THE INDIAN LGBT COMMUNITY

By Kshitij

The stereotypical image of the Indian LGBT community is a part of socially established norms, people's perception of culture, and multi-century traditions. Stereotypes are based on a combination of colonial influence, religious beliefs, and defined gender roles. Recognized standards imply an assessment of being on patience, accusing LGBT people of immorality, mental disorders, or promiscuous relationships. In addition, society is confused about the expression of gender, which is fueled by myths about non-heterosexual orientation; for example, a feminine man should be homosexual and transgender, is insecure about identity, which is completely untrue. Another reason why these stereotypes must be broken is that they create the foundation for the discrimination and bias of LGBT people. As a consequence of the stereotypes, LGBT people become actively marginalized and harassed which, in the worst cases, reaches violence against them. Furthermore, this negative perception has a great negative effect on the mental health of LGBT people multitude of them suffer depression, anxiety, and have suicidal thoughts. In addition to this, the stereotypes also create obstacles for LGBT people to be involve in numerous spheres of life, including education, workplaces, and healthcare.

When people are taught to believe that only one appropriate expression of gender or sexuality is allowed, they are thwarting their genuine selves and potentially promoting self-censorship and shame within the LGBT community. India has to work on several fronts to eradicate such stigma and eliminate existing biases.

Firstly, education and awareness, which will help dispel popular myths, and foster compassion and acceptance. It includes the integration of LGBT-related topics into the curriculum, organization of corresponding seminars for specialists, as well as interaction with religious and local leaders to establish dialogue. The representation of LGBT communities in the media also determines how other people view and understand the sexual orientations.



NOW, I PRESENT MY THOUGHTS ON
SOME COMMON LGBT STEREOTYPES :

1 All gays are obsessed with fashion: obviously when you spend most of your life away from people because you don't feel relatable or comfortable enough and with all the time in the closet, someone has to look great while literally everyone walks around in skinny jeans and a button down.

2 All Gays want to be or act like the opposite gender: Oh, absolutely! Because who wouldn't want to swap their entire gender identity just because they're attracted to the same sex? Clearly, loving someone of the same gender means you must want to be them. Makes perfect sense no.

3 Gays are attracted to and want to convert any and all heterosexual men: This one is just shocking; you'd be surprised how handsomely the LGBT headquarters pay gays to convert heterosexuals.

4 Gays are all pedophiles: Data and statistics absolutely don't indicate that majority of registered pedophiles are Heterosexual.

5 Gays are feminine and lesbians are masculine: if your thought process to this was "Because I personally know maybe one Gay person and seen plenty of gay people in Bollywood movies hence I can safely say the above" then I suggest you rethink your entire life because nothing is as it seems.

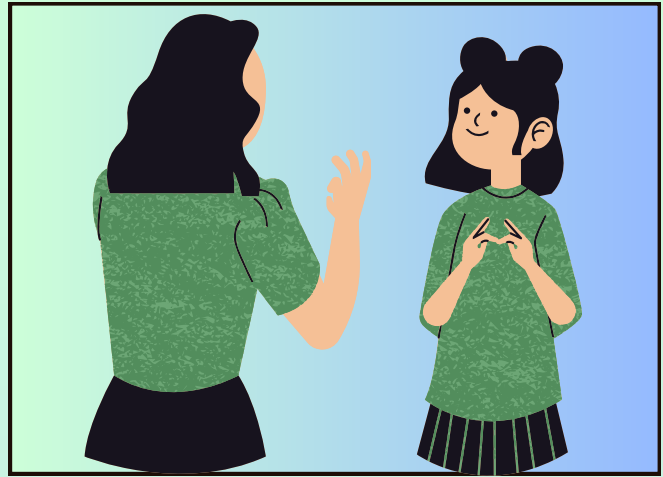
To conclude, addressing stereotypes about people within the Indian LGBT community is a challenging and multidimensional task that should assume cooperation and the active position of each member of society. By debunking delusions, focusing on education, and fighting for their rights and a better future, we may live in a society where any person, disregarding sexual and gender choices, will receive respect and equal treatment.



Queer Identity Development

Amidst Societal Norms

By Anima Sharma



01

Awareness and Exploration: Queer individuals begin to recognize and question their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, often feeling confused or isolated. They seek information and support to understand themselves better.



02

Internalized Stigma and Shame: Queer individuals may internalize negative beliefs about their identities, leading to feelings of shame and self-doubt about their identities.



Coming Out: Coming out is a significant step for many queer individuals, involving disclosing their identities to others.

03

This is often influenced by safety concerns, social support, and cultural factors. Regardless of the outcome, coming out represents an act of self-authenticity and empowerment.



04

Integration and Affirmation: Queer individuals strive to integrate and affirm their identities authentically. This involves cultivating pride, belonging, and self-acceptance within LGBTQ+ communities and beyond.

Faculty

Dr. Vineetha Sivakumar
Dr. Apoorva Adhikari

Editorial Team

Riya Pote
Kshitij

Contributors

Ashmeet Kaur Gandhi
Arshiya Kamal
Anima Sharma
Nehal Kujur
Lehar Dani
Parijat Joshi
Riya Pote

Komal Shelar
Keya Ghosal
Kshitij
Nainika Ann Mann
Rishvita Karanam
Ridhi Gangwal
Ishani Mahato
Netra Shah

Design Team

Komal Shelar
Mansi Sharma

Credits for the Cover Page

Created by Steve Aparicio | <https://www.behance.net/gallery/67024351/Pride>



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