

Facilitator Notes

**Straight Jacket – Overcoming Society’s Legacy of
Gay Shame**

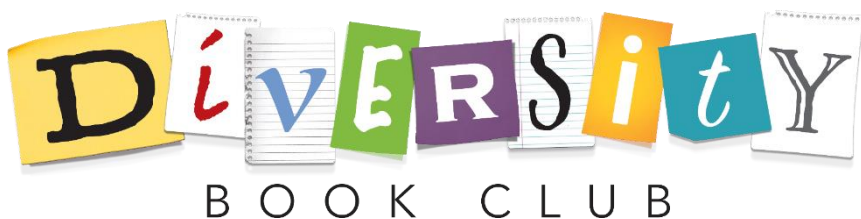
Part Two

By Matthew Todd

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**Exploring the Workplace for LGBT+ Physical
Scientists**

*A report by the Institute of Physics, Royal Astronomical Society
& Royal Society of Chemistry*



DISCUSSION BOOKLET 2 – CRIB SHEET

"All of us who are openly gay are living and writing the history of our movement. We are no more - and no less - heroic than the suffragists and abolitionists of the 19th century; and the labor organizers, Freedom Riders, Stonewall demonstrators, and environmentalists of the 20th century."

Tammy Baldwin, US Senator

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Thinking back - What challenged/surprised you from the chapters?

This could be something pertinent or something that really grabbed your attention and made you think twice.

This is an open question that we will likely use in some form in all the sessions. It is a good opportunity to gauge the feelings and understanding of the group.

Last session we discussed heteronormativity, the impact of slurs and discrimination on the LGBTQUA+ community and the lasting legacy of historical discrimination. We also considered how we, as a university and as individuals, can better support LGBTQUA+ students and colleagues.

This time we will be focusing on the personal consequences of the continued discrimination of the LGBTQUA+ community, as well as considering the objectification of the LGBTQUA+ community and why this occurs.

Discussion

What does Todd highlight as the consequences of chronic societal shaming and discrimination? *Re-read pages 108-9, 158 and 161*

"... if you are mugged every month or beaten up by your dad every Saturday night it begins to get under your skin and changes you as a person..."

Page 158

"Chronic recurrent humiliation is how a great many LGBT people experience childhood. Remember, I assert that we subconsciously perceive that we are fundamentally defective and develop extremely low self-worth, which in turn manifests as depression, suicide ideation and other negative feelings."

Page 109

Todd highlights;

1. On P108-9 that societal shaming leads to trauma
2. That the discrimination/trauma is internalised and changes the person
3. That the trauma can manifest in a variety of ways for example body dysmorphia (P161) and addiction
4. The person can start to believe that the abuse is warranted and can compartmentalise their experiences (P109)

What does the "Iceberg Model" tell us about addiction and mental health conditions? *Re-read pages 112-113*

The Iceberg Model illustrates how addiction is outwardly seen by society (above the surface) and inwardly felt by the individual (below the surface). It shows that addictions do not develop without a cause i.e. they grow out of self-hatred and fear, that can be caused by societal shaming for example.

Reflecting

In what ways do some members of the LGBTQUA+ community use escapism and why?

Re-read pages 133-136

"I had found a world where I got complimented on my appearance... where I felt happy with who I was. I didn't want to leave. I didn't want to go back to the real world where I felt I needed to be masculine to be safe."

Laura Kate Dale, Page 134

"I think queer audiences tend to like the horror film because they can and do easily identify with the monster who is out to topple white heteronormative culture"

Harry Benshoff, Page 133

While everyone uses escapism, some members of the LGBTQUA+ community use escapism as a refugee from the abuse and discrimination they face in the real world – unlike others who do not face this discrimination. This is because escapism for many provides a space to feel included, safe, and secure in oneself. This is particularly pertinent for members of a community that have often been cast out and shamed by society for being who they are. Furthermore, escapism provides many an opportunity to be who they want to be i.e. the gender you identify with in a video game, for example.

How does society objectify the LGBTQUA+ community? Re-read pages 163

To reiterate members of the LGBTQUA+ community do not have to share any lived experiences.

*"It is pretty intimidating being cornered and making homophobic comments.
"They wanted us to show them how lesbians have sex. They said 'show us' and I don't remember if it was on its own or part of a larger phrase but the words were said."
"They were being extremely aggressive verbally and then they made it physical."*

Christine Hannigan

(BBC News, London bus attack: Boys told couple 'to show how lesbians have sex')¹

Society objectifies the LGBTQUA+ community in a variety of ways, for example;
Gay men have often been stereotyped as "uniformly hot and available" P163
Women loving women (WLW) (bisexual, pansexual and lesbian women) are often sexualised, objectified and fetishized
Trans people are often negatively stereotyped and excluded from certain feminist movements
Asexual people are often stereotyped as "lacking libido"

Why does society objectify the LGBTQUA+ community?

The queer community have long been "othered", as community members do not conform to the heteronormative standards that society has deem acceptable. As the white straight man is the norm, anyone and anything deemed to be different is objectified. In the case of the LGBTQUA+ community, individuals are objectified as playthings, people to insult, degrade, and sexualise. For many, their only exposure to the queer community is through queer representation in the media, most of which is made by cis-heterosexual men, and rarely shows healthy representations of queer relationships. A key part of this is pornography, and other sexualised media which is often consumed fetishistically and leads to wider society seeing "fetish" and "queerness" as equivalent and is one reason why so many are uncomfortable with the idea of queer children.

But where does this othering come from? Religion plays a big part of it. In the 1940's we see the word homosexuality added to one of the more common translations of the bible in America, a word that was first coined in 1869. There is great debate about the verses used to defend homophobia as there is so much room for re/mis interpretation.

But why does this objectification persist?

When you are a white straight individual, your privileged gives you power – "othering" can then be used as a tactic to scapegoat and blame the "others" for the issues you face.

Application

How can we be more aware of the issues that face members of the LGBTQUA+ community? How can we better support LGBTQUA+ individuals in these areas?

This is an open question to the group to try and think about their own actions and knowledge around these issues.

Some examples of actions people could take are;

- Educating yourself on issues that affect the LGBTQUA+ community
- Considering the LGBTQUA+ community when implementing changes
- Consulting with members of the LGBTQUA+ community (for example when discussing mental wellbeing being aware of the specific issues that affect the LGBTQUA+ community).
- Also making sure to consult on broader issues too – by accepting that an ally is not as good as a member of the community who has lived experiences.
- When collecting data trying to be as inclusive as possible with terminology.

Additional Notes;

References;

- (1) BBC News. London bus attack: Boys told couple “to show how lesbians have sex.”