

In this day and age, with an ever-growing number of cultures and sub-cultures - and even communities - words and vocabulary are developing to accommodate these ideas at a rapid pace, of which it is often hard to keep track of their actual meanings. One of these words in particular is heteronormativity. In this article, I will be discussing its meaning, and why I believe we need it.

So, what does heteronormativity mean? To put it in simple terms, heteronormativity is the belief, or perhaps attitude, that heterosexuality is the only normal, or natural, sexuality. Now, many will see the immediate problem: this mind set is very destructive. A lot of the time, it isolates any non-cishets (cisgendered heterosexuals) in a community as they feel that their identity may even be viewed as wrong because it is seen as "abnormal" and "unusual" in their immediate social group.

Why do people assume that others are straight, though? Is it because they, themselves, are straight? Or is it because they have been raised in a dominantly heteronormative society, and that is all they have ever known? I'm personally leaning towards the latter. Our society has the power to shape an entire generation, and yet they insist upon keeping them in the dark about things that are, objectively, perfectly okay for them to be aware of.

But, if they're keeping children in the dark about something, then there must be a reasonable explanation for it, right? Not exactly. Many claim to not expose their children to the LGBT+ community because they do not consider it "family friendly".

The term "family friendly" is often portrayed as topics and other things that are suitable for children. Why, then, is this seemingly harmless community not considered "family friendly" to some? Are they, perhaps, sexualising the LGBT+ community? LGBT+ identities are usually represented in a stereotyped or over-sexualised manner in the media, which many feel are directly stigmatising or creating messages that support homophobic, biphobic, transphobic or sexist attitudes. This gives the general public the idea that this community is, therefore, not "family friendly".

So, now that we know where this issue comes from, how can we resolve it? It's not a change that can happen overnight - there's no switch we can flick or button we can press to make everyone suddenly have the same mind set about these things. That doesn't make change impossible, though. Even if it's just correcting your peers when they say something incorrect about it, or sharing your thoughts and getting your ideas out there for people to see and hear. People can't go about their lives being misinformed like this.

Luckily, the media is slowly realising its mistake and trying to make amends for its past misdeeds. There is more representation than there has ever been, and although the majority fall into the GBF (gay best friend) stereotype, LGBT+ people are no longer being over-sexualised, and whilst where we are now is not ideal, it's most definitely a start, and we ought to be grateful.

This brings me onto my final point: why do we need this word in the first place? What is the point in making an entire new word for an issue that is resolving itself? Well, not much of this would have happened if it were not for a simple word. By giving it a name, by objectifying this atrocity, this flaw in society, we're pointing it out as a problem that needs to be resolved. If it was not given a name, it may have never been noticed as an issue; an issue that we are still fighting for to this day. It may not have begun to resolve itself - in fact, I imagine that it would get worse.

However, before I take my leave, I have a small query for anyone reading this: what comes next? Of course, we still have a long way to go before the LGBT+ community can be seen without discrimination from anyone, but who will be next? I feel as if humans will always find something to

discriminate each other by. Whether it be your class, race, religion, gender, sexuality, there will always be something. If we continue like this, we're going to tear each other into pieces.

I just hope that we'll live to see a world that will be free of all discrimination.

However, sometimes I find it doubtful that one will ever exist.

Written by Grace Alston between 23:24 and 23:56 on 7th March 2018