



June: Exercise 2: Heteronormative Quiz

Questionnaire adapted from:

Rochlin, M (1995) 'The Language of Sex: The Heterosexual Questionnaire', in *Gender in the 1900s: Images, Realities, and Issues*, ed. Nelson, E.D. and Robinson, B. W. Nelson Canada: Toronto. Pp. 38-39.

Purpose:

1. Develop some insight into how subjective sexual orientation is.
2. Create greater understanding of heteronormativity, and how oppressive and discriminatory a 'straight' frame of reference can be to people of diverse sexual orientations.
3. To promote acceptance for all people irrespective of their sexual orientation.

Process:

Tell your work colleagues / friends / fellow practitioners that are not in the reading group that you would like them to answer a questionnaire about being heterosexual.

Tell them that it is ok if they are not heterosexual, but that they should answer it anyway. They do not have to disclose their sexual orientation to anyone to answer this questionnaire.

Tell them that the questionnaire is quite difficult, but that they should try to answer all questions. They will not be graded on their responses.

Hand a questionnaire to each participant. Allow 15-20 minutes to answer it. After completion of the questionnaire lead a discussion by asking:

- a. How did you feel about answering the questionnaire?
- b. Was it easy or difficult to fill out? Why?
- c. Which questions were the most difficult? Why?
- d. Did any of the questions sound familiar? Why? Where have you heard them before?
- e. What do you think the point of the questionnaire was?

Possible answers can include:

- ' I felt like I was being interrogated'
- 'Angry, that I had to explain myself'
- 'Confused about why I was being asked this personal information'
- 'Confused about what I was supposed to answer'
- 'Irritated that I was being asked such silly questions'

This exercise like this works best if it is carried out without an introduction to sexual orientation, heteronormativity and homophobia. It allows people to 'organically' identify and challenge their own biases.

Sexual orientation is a controversial topic and some people may feel uncomfortable talking about it. As a PIP community member, it is important that you create an environment of safety, respect and understanding. If you do not think your workplace or community is a safe environment to do this exercise, perhaps complete it yourself and take some time from reflection - answering the above questions yourself. Another option may be to do it with understanding friends over Skype, WhatsApp or email.

As you lead this activity, remember that there are probably people of diverse genders, sexualities and bodies who are questioning their orientation. It does not matter that this exercise is focused at people who identify as heterosexual.

It is important that you make people of diverse SOGIESC feel acknowledged and understood (whether they have 'come out' or not). You will not know the sexual orientation of every participant, so be very sure to use inclusive and affirming language. For example, say 'we,' 'all people,' and 'some people,' not 'they' or 'people like them.' Never ask participants to actually disclose their sexual orientation.

This exercise is intended to solicit learner's feelings about difference, stigmatisation and isolation, as the basis for further discussion.

Alternative Exercise: Guided Imagery: Imagine this!

Definition of heteronormative: of, relating to, or based on the attitude that heterosexuality is the only normal and natural expression of sexuality

The Heteronormative Questionnaire

1. What do you think caused you to be heterosexual?

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2. When and how did you first decide you were a heterosexual?

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3. Is it possible that your heterosexuality is just a phase you will out-grow?

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4. Is it possible that your heterosexuality stems from bad experiences with people of the same gender as you?

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5. If you've never been sexually or romantically involved with a person of the same gender, is it possible that all you need is a good same-gender partner?

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6. Do your parents know that you are straight? Do your friends know? How did they react?

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7. Why do you heterosexuals insist on flaunting your heterosexuality? Can't you just be what you are and keep it quiet? Is it really necessary to see heterosexuals on TV and in the media?

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8. Why do you heterosexuals feel compelled to recruit others into their lifestyle?

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9. Why do heterosexuals place so much emphasis on sex?

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10. Even with all the societal support marriage receives, the divorce rate is spiralling. Why are there so few stable relationships among heterosexuals?

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11. Would you want your children to be heterosexual, knowing the problems they'd face?

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Making the link with Gender and Violence

Think about those who are seen as 'different'. They are often more vulnerable to violence.

Think about how media objectifies women making it a 'norm' to perpetrate violence against them. Similarly, seeing people of diverse SOGiESC as 'others' or abnormal, makes them easier targets for violence. In order to curb violence against all vulnerable groups, we need to focus on what we have in common, and how we each have value, and how no person is less than another.