

Challenging the Status Quo in Everyday Life



Book Two from
**2SLGBTQ+ Community & Life During a Global Pandemic:
A Resistance Based Photovoice Collective**

By

Christine Wildman, the 2SLGBTQ+
Communities of Brantford and the
County of Brant, and The Bridge



This digital book is the second in a series of five books.

This book examines the second theme in a larger photovoice research project that investigated the experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ people with community during the COVID-19 pandemic. As community engaged research, the photographers who submitted images acted as participant researchers, which means that they both submitted images as participants in the study as well as contributed to the thematic analysis of the images as researchers during Community Cafés (small group online meetings).



(stock image)

A Society Not Made By or For Us

The first book in this series examined the many ways that the participant researchers noted they are affected by cis-heteronormativity.

2SLGBTQ+ people face systematic exclusion because society is set up in a way that naturalizes, normalizes, and values heterosexuality and binary (man/woman) genders. The participant researchers' photos depicted experiences of bias, discrimination, and systematic and systemic institutional exclusion. However, these experiences were not seen as individual instances of violence or harm; they were seen as intentional, systematic, and systemic, which means that they are purposeful and operating through all aspects of life.

Challenging Cis-heteronormativity

This book will look at resiliency and how the participant researchers challenge cis-heteronormativity within society.

Photographers discussed the many ways that they challenge cis-heteronormativity in their daily lives, from simply existing as an act of resistance to cis-heteronormative society to loving whom they love and unapologetically being their authentic selves. Some use unique ways of displaying pride and symbols to make themselves visible as 2SLGBTQ+ people. Some identify outside the gender binary, and some do not abide by feminine/masculine gender rules and instead challenge them. Participant researchers also expressed that education about 2SLGBTQ+ populations is challenging cis-heteronormativity too.

What I Put Out There

Charlene shared this photo representing how she communicates or displays her identity as a lesbian by using symbols such as her pride bracelet.

Charlene said, "it's hard to know if people are gay and this can make it feel lonely but having the symbols helps you feel less alone."



(Photo by Charlene Ayres, 2020).

Because we live in a cis-heteronormative society, 2SLGBTQ+ people are often invisible within the larger Brantford and County of Brant communities. While being invisible to others, we are also often invisible to each other. Thus, symbols can be used to make ourselves visible. Some people may choose subtle symbols and others, like Charlene, may be more visible or explicit.

Mother's Little Helper, Discussion Board



(Photo by Monica Pierce, 2020).

Monica said: "This is just one small part of my mother's office, which she has covered in Marxist feminist décor. Slogans like what are displayed on the buttons aren't often seen in Mount Pleasant or even in a small city like Brantford. Growing up in a house where queer imagery is so prevalent is something I recognize I was lucky to experience. Safe spaces can be difficult to find in a culture that treats queerness as something that should be kept private. I use this image to empower others to display their own boards of inclusivity, whether they are at home or in an office; it would help bring visibility to the queer community. We can encourage the narrative that queerness does not contradict professionalism. It is not inappropriate to display 2SLGBTQ+ swag."

This World Has So Many More Possibilities



(Photo by Mabe Kyle, 2020).

Mabe submitted two different photo series challenging cis-heteronormativity and the gender binary, stating: “the gender binary is harmful to everyone.” Mabe wanted people to understand that 2SLGBTQ+ communities are not binary and are not a colour gradient but rather a spectrum, meaning that man and woman are not the only options or are not at two separate ends with others only existing in between.

Existence is Resistance

Further, in their photo trilogy captioned, “Existence is Resistance,” Mabe challenged society’s norms that deem body hair and femininity as mutually exclusive. Mabe explained that their whole life their body hair has been policed, and they discussed the fact that body hair is natural and no one should have to remove it to abide by harmful beauty standards.



(Photo by Mabe Kyle, 2020).

The Beach at Home



When you can't go to the beach, you can bring the beach to you.

(Photo by Willow Curry and Courtney Curry, 2020).

Willow and Courtney challenged cis-heteronormative ideals that do not make attending certain spaces safe for them as trans women by creating spaces that are safe for themselves.

Willow and Courtney stated: "Being queer can add plenty of obstacles to prevent us from feeling our best and taking care of ourselves. As trans women specifically, the thought of tanning at a beach in a bikini can be quite uncomfortable due to possible mistreatment, ridicule, or outright harassment from other beach goers."

They discussed the need for people to be educated to help them understand that "trans women's bodies are not wrong, fetishistic, or less worthy of wearing a bikini and getting some sun." Due to COVID-19 restrictions and possible mistreatment from others at beaches, the pair decided to create a beach vibe on their balcony to enjoy the sun, tan, relax, and feel safe.

It's Not All Rainbows and Unicorns, Learn to Love



(Photo by Pandora, 2020).

Pandora challenges cis-heteronormativity by being compassionate and caring and not believing stereotypes. Pandora said she took this photo with feelings of happiness, love, colours, and rainbows, but it's deeper when thinking about what her friends have endured in life just to be who they are.

Pandora expressed feeling sad and hurt because everyone deserves love. She discussed being taught to love based on the inside, not based on what the body displays. She said: "I can't comprehend what some of my friends have seen. It breaks my heart. I try to use the love instead of stereotypes."

Pandora believes the media have a lot to do with homophobia, biphobia and transphobia and that hate is the root cause. She said: "don't judge a book by it's cover. Just love one another. Remain open minded and accept everyone's journey."

Conclusion

While 2SLGBTQ+ people should not be in the position of having to challenge cis-heteronormativity, we are because society is set up in a way that excludes our populations and then tells us we are flaunting when we take up space.

Though participant researchers were constrained by the cis-heteronormative structure of society and dominant norms, they were also resistant and resilient – they utilized their agency to challenge dominant norms through being visible, challenging the gender binary, creating safer spaces for themselves, and being their authentic selves in a society that actively promotes and enforces the gender binary and heterosexuality.

How can you challenge cis-heteronormativity?

- Educate yourself on some of the ways that cis-heteronormativity is ingrained in society (e.g. gendered toys; fields on forms, surveys or applications; labelled washrooms).
- Reflect on the ways you may be complacent in upholding the cis-heteronormative structure of society and what you can do to change that.
- Be open and accepting of the fact that not all people are inherently heterosexual and/or cisgender. Use language that is neutral and ask how people identify rather than assuming they are cisgender or heterosexual.
- Think about the way your space is set up – is it inclusive of 2SLGBTQ+ people?

If you are 2SLGBTQ+, continue to be you: being your authentic self is an act of resistance!

Local Community Resources

The Bridge Brant

- Web: www.thebridgebrant.com
- Email: thebridgebrant@gmail.com

Social:

- [https://www.facebook.com/
TheBridgeBrantford](https://www.facebook.com/TheBridgeBrantford)

WorQshop: Building Safer Spaces

- Web: www.worqshop.ca
- Email: info@worqshop.ca

Social:

- [https://www.facebook.com/WorQshop-
Building-Safer-Spaces](https://www.facebook.com/WorQshop-Building-Safer-Spaces)
- [https://www.instagram.com/worqshopb
uildingsaferspaces/](https://www.instagram.com/worqshopbuildingsaferspaces/)

Brantford, Ontario LGBTQ+ Community Facebook Group:

- [https://www.facebook.com/groups/
379313486333504](https://www.facebook.com/groups/379313486333504)

Brantford Pride

- Web: www.brantfordpride.ca
- Email: brantfordpride@gmail.com

Social:

- www.facebook.com/BtfdPride/
- [https://www.instagram.com/
brantfordpride/](https://www.instagram.com/brantfordpride/)

County of Brant Pride

Social:

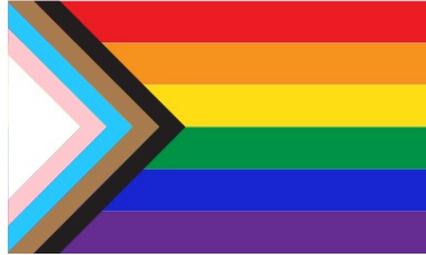
- [https://www.facebook.com/groups
/ 816583548754351](https://www.facebook.com/groups/816583548754351)

Laurier Brantford Queer Sphere

- Email: queersphere@wlu.ca

Social:

- [https://www.facebook.com/Queer
Sphere](https://www.facebook.com/QueerSphere)



Challenging the Status Quo in Everyday Life

(c) 2022

Christine Wildman, the 2SLGBTQ+ Communities of
Brantford and the County of Brant, and The Bridge

Cover photo by Christine Wildman

