

Expanding the Sexual Orientation Continuum

The new movie *Breakfast on Pluto* (no, it's not a sci-fi flick!) forced me to re-evaluate parts of my self-concept, more specifically that of my sexual orientation. Despite the numerous identity crises I've experienced since childhood, I believed I've at least managed to determine my sexual preference. At the start of my 23rd year of life, I never gave my heterosexuality a second thought. Until now, that is. My first encounter with Irish actor Cillian (the "C" is pronounced as a "K") Murphy occurred when *Batman Beings* opened in theatres. I greatly admired his acting skills as the devious Scarecrow, but I didn't consider him to be an attractive man. However, when my beguiled eyes fell on Kitten, his sweet-natured, male-to-female transvestite in *Breakfast on Pluto*, it was lust at first sight! Decked in a pink hat, curly blond wig, heavy mascara, cerise lipstick, coloured fingernails, dress and heels, I thought he was sizzlin' hot! Tssssss! (My friend and I even agree that Murphy is more sexy as a woman than we are!) The feminine mannerisms he adopted for the role added fire to his character's irresistible charm. Sheesh, no wonder it took so long for me to uncover this facet of myself. I rarely meet transgendered individuals (real or fictional) in my daily life, and Kitten is simply the first who happened to meet my standards of beauty.



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As I continued to watch the film, I thought, "Surely, it's not considered 'normal' by our society for a non-transgendered woman to find a male-to-female cross-dresser sexually attractive!" I'm quite certain that I've deviated from the heterosexual norm, but where exactly do I fit on the sexual continuum now? It's very unclear to me where my new position should be. I can't be a true bisexual because I possess no desire for the female body. The male morphology remains an absolute necessity; it's just that I can fall head over heels for an extremely feminine disposition (even to the point where the person identifies solely with the female gender).

I keep in touch with Prof. Olivia Jensen, whom many students are aware is a transgendered male-to-female in the Earth and Planetary Sciences department, and she told me once she found the sexual orientation continuum restricting because it made no distinction between an individual's sex and his/her gender. For instance, if a female-to-male transvestite found a man sexually attractive, is he homosexual because of his gender, or is she heterosexual because her sex?

I think I've found a way to remedy this problem. To borrow a term from particle physics, this is the social sciences' Standard Model for the sexual orientation continuum, which I consider to be incomplete:

← Homosexuality — Bisexuality — Heterosexuality →

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UPCOMING EVENTS

@ McGill:

Thursday, 2 Feb. 2006 • Leacock 232 • 4pm

"Women with Moustaches and Men Without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity"

Afsaneh Najmabadi

Professor of History and Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality
Harvard University

(Co-sponsored with the Department of History and the Institute of Islamic Studies)

Thursday, 16 Feb. 2006 • Morrice Hall 023 • 4pm

"Travelling Technology, Biopolitical Terrains, and a Device for Not Performing Abortions"

Michelle Murphy

Assistant Professor, Department of History
and the Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Studies
University of Toronto

(Co-sponsored with the Department of History)

More Info: <http://www.mcgill.ca/mcrtw/seminars/>

@ Concordia:

Thursday, 9 Feb. 2005 • Hall Bldg., Faculty Lounge • 9am

Sexy Religion - The Allure of the Transcendent

Grad Students' Interdisciplinary Conference

This year there will be thirty-two papers presented by graduate students from Concordia, McGill, Université de Montreal, Université de Quebec a Montreal, Université de Sherbrooke, Laval Université, McMaster, Ottawa and York.

The Conference theme focuses on the allure of religion. As our call for papers indicated, many are the reasons that people practice and celebrate their faith. Theologians, religionists, sociologists, historians, anthropologists, and countless others have struggled to illuminate and comprehend the enigmatic relationship between humans and their God/god/gods.

Registration and coffee begins at 9:00 a.m. There will be three sessions of three panels that begin at 9:30 a.m. and continue to 3:45 p.m. Lunch and refreshments will be served to all conference participants and attendees. The key-note address will occur from 4 to 5 p.m., followed by a wine and cheese reception.

More Info: <http://news.concordia.ca/studentlife/006109.shtml>

Nothing says 'romance' like a little...



Come have some pre-Valentine's Day fun at the SSA nachos and sangria night!

Monday, 13 February 2006
3-5pm
Leacock 819

Verstehen

Thanks to everybody who submitted a paper to Verstehen, the Journal of the Sociology Students' Association—we received over thirty!

The submission deadline has now passed, so it's too late to submit anything else for this year. But keep an eye out for the journal, which should be available in mid-March.

The SSA Symposium

We're still looking for Honours Sociology students who are interested in presenting some of their thesis research at our upcoming Symposium. If you're interested in giving a short talk on your work, e-mail as ASAP at: ssa.sociology@mail.mcgill.ca.

This year's Symposium will take place on Wednesday, 15 March 2006. It starts at 3pm and will be followed at 5pm by a wine and cheese reception. Look out for further information around the department as the semester goes on.

Joanne Terrasi

Undergraduate Program Coordinator

Joanne Terrasi is the Sociology Undergraduate Program Coordinator. You can find her from 8:30-4:30 on Mondays through Fridays in Leacock 712. As the Undergraduate Coordinator, Joanne is there to help undergrads with any questions they may have, to the best of her ability.

A typical day for Joanne entails doing the things she loves most about her job: helping students and knowing that her answers were able to make students less confused. However, Joanne's job is not always as pleasant as it could be. Sometimes, she encounters students who do not accept no for an answer. This is the hardest part about her job because no matter how badly she would like to help the student she can't. (Caution to all Sociology students: By trying to push for a yes when the answer was no the first time, you will not make it into Joanne's good book. Trust me, you want to be in her good book:).

Joanne began her career at McGill University fourteen years ago but has only been working for the Sociology office for about seven and a half years. She was a student in Vanier College's three year office systems technology program when she did her stage with the McGill Sociology office in 1992.

Shortly after her graduation from CEGEP, the McGill Sociology office called her and asked her to replace a woman who was on maternity leave, for two and half years. When that time was up, Joanne began looking for jobs with other departments. At first she worked as an administrative assistant for the Physics Department but after a few months she took a job as Chemical Engineering Department's office assistance.

In May 2001, due to a retirement by one of the staff, the Sociology Office offered her a job as the Sociology Undergraduate Program Coordinator. She accepted the job on May 14th 2001 and has been with us ever since.

In the foreseeable future Joanne sees herself staying with the McGill Sociology Department. She hopes that one day, the office staff will win the Super 7 jackpot and she will be able to retire.

Joanne would like all current and future sociology students to know that finishing university is not a race. What is important is how well you do. Nothing and nobody should make you feel pressure to rush through your three or four years as an undergrad.

The Sociology Students' Association would like to encourage everyone to go visit Joanne, when ever you are in need of help and she will do her best to solve the problem.

 Joelle Kelenson

Got questions for Marx? E-mail them to ssa.sociology@mail.mcgill.ca!

Dear
Marx...



I refused to see Peter Jackson's King Kong with my friend because I believe it both demonises and animalises the African male (who is subsequently killed for his desire for a Caucasian female). My friend believes that I'm totally overanalysing, proof that my sociology courses have finally "broken my brain". Who do you agree with?

—Fun Hater

Dear FH,

In a certain sense, you and your friend are both right. However, in another, more accurate sense, you are being a vainglorious douchebag. Though you may well be right that it demonises the African male, so what? Do you think my distaste for capitalism stopped me from buying Nike Air Pumps? Do you think Durkheim's negative theories about Protestantism stopped him from checking out Anglican chicks? Besides, what are you going to achieve by not seeing it? Do you think Peter Jackson will sob into his giant pile of money at night and vow never to make a representationally dubious film, ever again? Just see the damn movie.

∞

You are a stupid fathead and all your work is wrong about everything, so nyah on you.

—Max Weber

Dear MW,
Bite me.

Karl Marx

In margin note by Engels: "Indeed, Durkheim used to sit outside the local Anglican church with nothing but a telephoto lens and a trenchcoat."

...Continuum, from page 1

I believe it's far more accurate to use two scales, one for body type and one for temperament:

<—Female—Equal Preference for Both Sexes—Male—>

<—Feminine—Fully Androgynous Traits—Masculine—>

In the latter case, the sex of my potential partner must be male, so I guess I'm still fully "straight" on that dimension. However, when it comes to personality, my range is anywhere from fully androgynous (an equal mix of feminine and masculine traits) to completely feminine.

See, isn't my model more inclusive than the standard one? It removes any ambiguity for transgendered cases, and it demonstrates that sexual preference is more complex than merely which kind of body we go for. This is an important idea that should not be ignored, and I sincerely hope one of you dear readers will be inspired by my article to continue in sociology and research this subject further at one point during your career because, alas, I'll be moving on to physics after graduation!

(Speaking of physics, I will have quite a bit to say in next month's issue about how I'm treated by the males in that department relative to the ones that I've met in the social sciences, so stay tuned!)

Christina Doan

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3\$

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