

Photo of the Day | The snow is finally starting to melt a little



Students make their way through the snow on a pleasantly warm February day. UConn's first full week of school during the spring semester is officially under way. PHOTO BY ALEXANDER RENZULLI, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Lesbians don't owe you an explanation

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Lesbian normalization has been progressing for decades. It moves alongside queer movements like the Stonewall uprising and the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights to work towards a more inclusive society. Working towards equality is never-ending, though. While progress is more often associated with more substantial acts of activism, smaller acts also shape norms, and not all in the right direction. They may quietly amplify discrimination, building on sexism and pushing “heteronorms” to the forefront of queer visibility. As acceptance in the lesbian community has shifted throughout time, one standard has remained the same: a masculine and feminine woman make a lesbian relationship. The idealization of certain dynamics reveals the deep-rooted misogyny that still runs rampant regarding relationships that don’t center men.

The greater society still believes in traditional gender roles and the appearance of such, no matter the relationship. These expectations don’t escape lesbians, for which these gender roles mimic masculine and feminine roles. But what defines being “masc” or “femme”? To many, a masculine woman is expected to uphold traditional “male” roles. This consists of a less feminine clothing style: swapping a dress for a suit, short-shorts for longer jorts, or shopping in the men’s section. For a femme, society’s expectations are to play the same role in a lesbian relationship as in a straight one, following traditional “female” gender roles. “Lipstick lesbian” is a derogatory term often associated with these women, explained as “a lesbian with a female gender expression... who is seen as automatically passing for heterosexual.” This follows femme lesbians everywhere they go, and a woman who strays from such norms is seen as less of a woman by

the heterosexual population. But what about androgynous women? An androgynous lesbian woman is often seen as being unable to fulfill either “requirement.”

Lesbians are expected to be hyper-feminine or hyper-masculine because our heter-

familiar and “normal.” Furthermore, these standards make it easier for society to dismiss relationships that do not closely follow them. A relationship between two masculine presenting women may be seen as uncomfortable or unnatural. Similarly,

acknowledged by heterosexuals as legitimate. Even so, the masc-femme dynamic doesn’t come without issues; it allows for homophobic, or even just unassuming people, to ask questions like “so who’s the boyfriend?”

The concept of being expected

from tradition. Why is this? After all, a masc-femme relationship, in the eyes of heterosexuals, is the closest thing to a straight relationship – that’s the only reason it’s more accepted.

What isn’t acknowledged is that despite appearing more “heterosexual”, the dynamic is not even remotely similar to that of a woman and a man in a relationship. Both women, no matter if femme-femme, masc-femme, masc-masc, or let alone anything or anyone in between, break from the “norm” of traditional female roles. This patriarchal need to visually maintain masculinity proves that society cannot yet interpret women without men.

This misogyny doubles as an act of homophobia. Though not as intense as some examples of queer hate, it allows for the smaller instances, the ones that lead people to believe homophobia acceptable, to slip through the cracks. Something as simple as having a “standardized” lesbian relationship harms all lesbians. Those who fit into the dynamic may feel trapped, and those who do not feel locked out. Extending acceptance to only straight-resembling couples is not progressive; it’s crushing progress from the inside out.

Although there should be a push for acceptance of all variations of lesbian relationships, there’s nothing wrong with a masculine woman being attracted to a feminine woman, or vice-versa. Claiming that this dynamic is less-than would create the same setbacks that are being argued against. But that’s the whole point. What’s wrong is the internalized need to conform to a society that does not accept queerness to begin with. No relationship should be judged based on its resemblance to a straight couple. It’s not “only acceptable” when a masculine and feminine woman are present.

All lesbian relationships are worthy of the same level of respect, and a step towards seeing all relationships as equal is a step away from expecting heteronormativity.



Two people holding a banner that says “A DAY WITHOUT LESBIANS IS LIKE A DAY WITHOUT SUNSHINE,” on Gay Freedom Day, San Francisco, June 1979. Same-sex marriage bans were struck down by the Supreme Court in June of 2015. PHOTO COURTESY OF @LGBT_HISTORY ON INSTAGRAM

normative society still relies heavily on gender roles to legitimize relationships. These extremes exist to push one person to act as “the man” and the other as “the woman” in an attempt to make the relationship seem more

a relationship between two feminine appearing women is observed as less than a relationship, or even just a close friendship. A relationship between a masc and femme woman is the “ideal” lesbian relationship and is the most

to both follow and break gender roles in a relationship that breaks them in every other instance is just another form of misogyny; a method of controlling women. Society in general is uncomfortable with the idea of women being able to stray