What is Heteronormativity. Beci8Cruel and Calum McSwiggan: Childline

Interviewed by Teoh

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Teoh | This week on the Childline YouTube channel we are taking about Heteronormativity |
| Teoh | Heteronormativity. Bit of a hard thing to get your head around but what does it mean to you? |
| Calum | I think first off, it’s a really difficult word to say. Society as a whole see’s heterosexuality as the norm. So whenever you look to the media, your favourite movie or favourite TV show, whatever it might be, you’re always seeing two straight people on screen, as the romance and that goes into magazines, it goes into everyday life… |
| Beckii | It’s something that a lot of people don’t actually think about as well it because it is the norm you know and people who maybe don’t have issues with their sexuality who’ve out really thought outside (air quotes) “the norm”… |
| Teoh | So, if a guy is a little bit effeminate and for girls who are a little bit masculine. They can be affected by heteronormativity or cisgender normativity because it affects their world as well. |
| Calum | We’re brought up into a society where you are kind of expected to be cisgender, you are expected to be heterosexual and I think for the people who do identify in these ways they may not realise it’s an issue. |
| Beckii | But when you’re young boys aren’t allowed to sleep over but girls are but that just speaks to how deep-rooted heteronormativity is |
| Calum | The easiest way I always find to understand it is if you think of like children’s movies. Oh, Look the Prince marries the Princess and suddenly you think “oh, but I don’t want to marry a princess maybe I want to marry a prince and then you feel just completely ostracised. |
| Beckii | Its just the little things…yeah that’s so true. It relates to coming out as well like why people have to come out because not being straight is other. Its kind of a straight until proven otherwise world. |
| Teoh | Yeah, people do need to come out to feel the acceptance they want but for us to get to a place where coming out isn’t an issue heteronormativity needs to be challenged. |
| Beckii | Definitely |
| Teoh | A lot of people are ignorant to it and only through talking about it do people realise that. “Oh God sometimes I do think of things in a heteronormative way”! |
| Beckii | I think it’s a process that you have to kind of unlearn a lot of that behaviour |
| Teoh | So how can we challenge heteronormativity in our day to day lives |
| Beckii | We can’t assume anything about anyone’s sexuality or gender based on how they look. What you are making is just assumptions based on your kind of (Air quotes”), what you perceive as normal. |
| Teoh | It seems really obvious: try not assuming things about other people. But its not your fault, if you do, cos it’s so ingrained in us… |
| Beckii | That’s it |
| Teoh | It’s not a matter of “oh you’re a bad person “it’s more about going “I don’t know yet we haven’t had this discussion and keeping yourself in check. |
| Calum | Because you can’t figure out if somebody is gay by the way they walk, the way they talk, the way they act. Your sexuality simply means like the person you are attracted to. |
| Teoh | Even gay people, even LGBTQ should challenge their own thought processes |
| Beckii | Exactly |
| Calum | Absolutely. I was at a party recently and I remember I was talking to a girl, and I remember asking her. “Oh do you have a boyfriend” and it didn’t occur to me to say “do you have a boyfriend or a girlfriend” .So, even as a gay man I have like a heteronormative way of thinking |
| Teoh | Its also really important that you can get to a point where you feel brave enough to challenge people outside cos that’s the only way other people are going to learn |
| Calum | If you’re amongst friends and you hear people saying “Oh, that’s so gay or something like that. It’s important to challenge that. But it’s also important to never put yourself in a place of risk. |
| Beckii | It doesn’t have to be aggressive either you can very kindly say these things. You know a lot of people don’t even realise they are doing it |
| Teoh | The playground thing of “you are so gay”. We can talk about it being used as homophobic bullying, but a lot of young people use it just out of ignorance and not even thinking |
| Beckii | Maybe you can suggest a better word which fits that situation |
| Teoh | Another thing that’s sort of really important is supporting media representation |
| Calum | It get so happy and excited whenever I see you know a gay person, a bisexual person, a transgender person. When I see them on screen? Yes, I love seeing them. This makes me feel great about myself, But then it so few and far between |
| Beckii | In recent kid’s shows like cartoons and things  actually they are being written by some really cool people and they’re writing in you know non-heteronormative roles and things like that |
| Teoh | It isn’t that there’s a character that is gay but there are no gender expectations on the character and there is no sexuality expectations and the story isn’t written that way and so, as a young person growing up its normalised |
| Becki | Something else really important to think about is there’s this kind of halfway representation. It’s almost like queerbaiting where you see these almost gay relationships, but they are never confirmed. |
| Calum | It’s like they don’t care about representation. They are just using it as a gimmick, just something that makes it a little bit more edgy |
| Teoh | And now we’d like to hear from you. How can be encourage better representation of a wider range of identities in the media and in society… |
|  | Goodbyes… |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |