Welcome to the latest issue of [no definition], Cambridge University’s only LBGT magazine! We - that’s your new editors, James and Rory - are proud to be reporting for service with this, our first issue! And boy is it a cracker! We’ve got 32 whole pages of LBGT awesomeness for you to procrastinate away your term with!

In this issue we’ve got hot interviews with two of the most influential young LBGT activists, one a UK exclusive with America’s youngest civil rights hero and his family, Will Phillips, and the other with the Stonewall Young Campaigner of the Year, Daniel Fryer.

As a bit of light relief we’ve also taken a closer look at your brand-spanking new LBGT committee as we Prowled around Cambridge, and are proud to introduce a fun new feature, “Mystic Queer”, where you can peruse LBGT-themed predictions for the coming year.

Have a great read of these and everything else we’ve put together for you! Hope to see you at Rendez-vous, and best of luck for the rest of term!

James & Rory

If you want to subscribe to [no definition], please email editor@cusu-lbgt.com with your name, college and year of graduation (this is so we know when to stop sending you issues). Subscription is completely free and anonymous. All issues will be delivered to your college in plain CUSU envelopes. Also, if you have any contribution ideas - articles, creative writing, or letters - don’t hesitate to email us at the same address.
Hey everyone! I’m Beatrice, CUSU LBGT President!

Our amazing executive and I are already working on some very exciting plans for this term and we hope to see as many of you as possible as we reach out to the Cambridge LBGT scene and beyond.

Our main aims this term are to bring not only the same high level of commitment that you’d expect as standard, but also a healthy dollop of fun too in what is an inevitable return to studies!

On the campaigns front, we are launching two brand new campaigns: Firstly there’s “International LGBT Rights”, which aims to monitor the situation of our rights in other countries across the globe in order to reflect the views of all students, both international and domestic. Secondly, we’re launching our “Think Outside The Box” campaign to improve awareness of and accessibility for non-binary-gendered people throughout the University, including inclusive forms and providing unisex toilets.

For you party animals out there, you’ll be happy to hear that Rendezvous @ Revs has been increasingly successful and we are looking forward to building upon that success by organising a host of themed Monday night events at the brand new location The Cow. Also, Sunday Socials and Grad Events have been spectacularly busy, particularly in the last few weeks of term, so special thanks go to our Social and Grad Officers for that!

Remember, CUSU LBGT is a wonderful society thanks to all of you who make it so special, so we want to hear your voice. If you’ve ever a question or concern I’m only a quick email away at president@cusu-lbgt.com. So please do check out our website (www.lbgc.cusu.cam.ac.uk) which we are currently updating and integrating with the CUSU site. You can find details on the site about our mailing lists to make sure you’re kept in the know with what’s sure to be another great term!

Much Love,

Beatrice
**Taz Rasul**

How old were you when you realised you were queer? 12 or 13. If you could be someone for a day, who would it be? Fred Phelps. I want to know what he’s thinking; whether he genuinely believes his doctrines. Who’s your biggest hero of the noughties? Johann Hari – he writes my mind. ...and your biggest villain of the noughties? Tila Tequila – will someone save humanity from the curse of her unstoppable drivel? What’s your type? Bright but unconventional (so Cambridge should be my paradise). What can you see yourself doing 10 years from now? Working for educational reform, with a bit of journalism on the side, maybe. Hopefully professional Facebers will also exist by then. The best and worst things about the Cambridge LBGT scene...? Best – most of us are lovely. Worst – zillion:one guy:girl ratio. Biggest club anthem? Gaga. Always Gaga. Anything Gaga.

**Jack Davies**

How old were you when you realised you were queer? 19. If you could be someone for a day, who would it be? Dumbledore. Who’s your biggest hero of the noughties? Hugh Laurie, for his heroic aid with procrastination. ...and your biggest villain of the noughties? Lady Gaga. Just kidding, I just thought the reaction from this magazine’s target audience would be amusing. What’s your type? Usually Calibri or Palantino, but you can’t beat Zapfino for over the top elegance. What can you see yourself doing 10 years from now? Sitting in a physics lab, shooting lasers at stuff. Possibly cats. The best and worst things about the Cambridge LBGT scene...? Everyone’s very friendly. And knows everyone else. Which means things get very incestuous. Biggest club anthem? Anything with a beat, I don’t go to Revs for the quality of the music.

**Dan Green**

How old were you when you realised you were queer? 13 or 14. If you could be someone for a day, who would it be? Alan Turing – I might have a hope of passing my exams! Who’s your biggest hero of the noughties? Ellen DeGeneres – for just being totally amazing ...and your biggest villain of the noughties? George Bush – need I say more? What’s your type? Someone who can make me feel good about myself! What can you see yourself doing 10 years from now? Hopefully working for Google! The best and worst things about the Cambridge LBGT scene...? Best – seeing loads of my friends at Revs every Tuesday. Worst – not enough non-social stuff (watch this space though!) Biggest club anthem? Bad Romance.
This term, [no definition] got back on the prowl around the Cambridge LGBT scene and chose some vivacious individuals for you to get the low-down on.

**Will Morland**

How old were you when you realised you were queer? Around 11 years old. If you could be someone for a day, who would it be? Bernadette Peters, to have her voice. Who's your biggest hero of the noughties? Rufus Wainwright. Who's your biggest villain of the noughties? Dr Horrible (Neil Patrick Harris). What's your type? Geeky and devastatingly good looking. What can you see yourself doing 10 years from now? A workaholic programmer moonlighting as a cabaret singer. The best and worst things about the Cambridge LGBT scene...? Best: The crazy conversations. Worst: It can be inconveniently small. Biggest club anthem? Girls Just Wanna Have Fun - Cyndi Lauper!

**Beatrice da Vela**

How old were you when you realised you were queer? 12. I tried to kiss my best friend...and she slapped me in the face! If you could be someone for a day, who would it be? Bernadette Peters, to have her voice. Who's your biggest hero of the noughties? Rufus Wainwright. Who's your biggest villain of the noughties? Dr Horrible (Neil Patrick Harris). What's your type? Geeky and devastatingly good looking. What can you see yourself doing 10 years from now? Running 3 magazines on 2 continents. The best and worst things about the Cambridge LGBT scene...? Best: The amazing people you would have never met otherwise. Biggest club anthem? Girls Just Wanna Have Fun - Cyndi Lauper!

**Sven Palys**

How old were you when you realised you were queer? 19. If you could be someone for a day, who would it be? Tyler Brulé. Who's your biggest hero of the noughties? Madeleine Peyroux – her voice has been my companion through the hardest moments. Who's your biggest villain of the noughties? Tracey Emin – her art makes me angry. What's your type? Search ‘stevieproductions’ on youtube. What can you see yourself doing 10 years from now? Running 3 magazines on 2 continents. The best and worst things about the Cambridge LGBT scene...? Best: The ‘one-night-stand’ culture. Worst: The ‘one-night-stand’ culture. Best: The amazing people you would have never met otherwise. Biggest club anthem? Shakira – Eyes Like Yours.
How old were you when you realised you were queer? I don't think I really REALISED until the first girl I kissed at 22, but in hindsight it was bloody obvious. Everything worked out for the best though, if I’d started dating girls any earlier I probably wouldn't have gotten the grades to get into Cambridge. If you could be someone for a day, who would it be? For one day? Probably a professional sky diver... Who’s your biggest hero of the noughties? Rachel Maddow. ...and your biggest villain of the noughties? Bush-Cheney-Howard. I include Howard because I like to think Australia is important, even though that may be self-deception... What’s your type? Aware, adventurous and honest. What can you see yourself doing 10 years from now? Environmental policy or working for an NGO. The best and worst things about the Cambridge LBGT scene...? It's really big given the size of Cambridge, but people only seem to socialise in little sections of it. Biggest club anthem? ‘Dance Epidemic’ by Electric Six.

How old were you when you realised you were queer? Around 14, although I didn't admit it until I was 16. If you could be someone for a day, who would it be? Alice Pieszecki. Who’s your biggest hero of the noughties? Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir ...and your biggest villain of the noughties? Robert Mugabe What’s your type? My girlfriend. What can you see yourself doing 10 years from now? Dubiously ‘teaching English’ in various exotic locations. The best and worst things about the Cambridge LBGT scene...? The best: knowing everyone. The worst: everyone knowing you. Biggest club anthem? I’ve Gotta Feeling by the Black Eyed Peas.

How old were you when you realised you were queer? 12. My sister says she knew when I was 10, but I think she’s just showing off. If you could be someone for a day, who would it be? You! I bet you’re pretty cool. Who’s your biggest hero of the noughties? Neil Gaiman or Haruki Murakami. Not exactly queer icons, but they’d be my most satisfying finds of the last ten years. ...and your biggest villain of the noughties? Whoever it was that came up with the term “noughties”. It’s almost aggressively trendy. What’s your type? Milk, no sugar. What can you see yourself doing 10 years from now? Writing my epic masterpiece on the walls of the box I’m living in. The best and worst things about the Cambridge LBGT scene...? It gets too political at times. I’m pretty comfortable here, though; it’s easy to fit into once you’ve found it. Biggest club anthem? The Time Warp. But if I request it they just look at me.
No bull.

Straight talking from KPMG.

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01 Brokeback Mountain (2004) was by far the biggest film of the decade in the category. Ang Lee’s cowboy-love-drama went down exceptionally well amongst critics, making this the largest-grossing LGBT film to date. While it stirred up its fair share of controversy and criticism, including from within the queer community, it took an image of non-hetero love to the mass market like no other had done, which was remarkable in itself. Overrated, but it does the job.

02 Bad Education (2004) from Pedro Almodovar was his semi-autobiographical take on a set of twisted relationships in Franco-era Spain. Exploring themes of transsexuality, sexual abuse and drug abuse, the film examines the friendship between two schoolboys, and the lies that follow them into the grown-up world. Almodovar’s masterpiece has caused controversy for tying up its depiction of the Catholic Church so directly with pedophilia, which has been a slight mar on the film’s legacy, but has certainly not detracted from its greatness.

03 Milk (2008) was another Oscar favorite – a biographical film on the life of Harvey Milk, America’s first openly gay politician, exploring his rise to prominence and the sacrifices he made in the process. Despite offering an inspirational real life story, Milk received criticism for its lack of female representation, the film featuring a disap-
The noughties were undoubtedly a significant period for the queer movement in politics, society and culture, in which various media platforms, including cinema, each played their own role in supporting the LBGT cause. Although the nineties were a big decade to follow for noughtie filmmakers focusing on queer representations – the previous decade having given birth to such LBGT film classics as Philadelphia, Boys Don’t Cry, Beautiful Thing and The Opposite of Sex, to name a few – our noughtie film buffs stepped up to the challenge, and it seems that, in the past ten years, queer cinema has truly shed its niche image and broken into the mainstream.

With that in mind, [no definition] is proud to present a brief roundup of some of the top queer films that you couldn’t have missed in the last ten years:

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04 Shortbus (2006) was a slightly strange take on themes of sexual frustration and interconnected relationships in New York, boasting a cast of twelve ‘main’ characters, each in a state of confusion about their sexual preferences. Some critics branded Shortbus porn, in respect of its explicit, and seemingly endless, sex scenes, but the movie was able to distinguish itself from being another X-rated flick with its depth of storyline. Add to that an eclectic soundtrack and you have a true modern gem. Just one note: this isn’t one to watch with the parents.

05 Itty Bitty Titty Committee (2007), from Jamie Babbit (who also helmed ‘But I’m A Cheerleader’), was unique as being both a lesbian comedy and a top-quality piece of feminist cinema. Interestingly, everyone involved in the creation of the film – the cast, the production team, those in charge of the soundtrack... – was female, and identified either as lesbian or queer. Through this, the film was able to more accurately explore the radical feminist culture firsthand from the perspective of those on the frontline. An interesting take on a niche market.

06 Transamerica (2005) is undoubtedly the first patently transsexual film that springs to mind when looking back on the noughties. Following pre-op Bree (Felicity Huffman of Desperate Housewives fame) as she travels across America to complete the final stage of her transition to female, the film is more than just a documentation of her traversing the States and looks more deeply at the real journey of Bree confronting her true identity. What made Transamerica most touching was that it offered everyone an opportunity to relate with Bree as a person, irrespective of gender, especially through her struggles with parenthood and with her own parents themselves. Sweet and inspiring.

07 Angels in America (2003) is, in a single word, epic. Although not quite a film, this six-hour mini-series starring Meryl Streep and Al Pacino was groundbreaking in transforming Kushner’s original play to television and explores issues of race, sexuality, spirituality and politics in an AIDS-stricken 1980s New York. A modern masterpiece.

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As a special measure, the Rainbow Flag was flown on top of Guild Hall for the whole of LGBT History Month.

Nicola Clithero, featured in BBC’s ‘Real Britain’, speaks about what it’s like to be asexual.

‘Arco Iris’ samba band play in Market Square to celebrate the launch of Cambridgeshire’s LGBT History Month.

Miriam Lynn leads a dripping bunch of walkers around to explore Cambridge’s LGBT History.
AWARENESS WEEK 2010

Last term, in the first week of February, CUSU LGBT ran its annual Awareness Week. The week was jam-packed with LGBT-related events intended to increase awareness of queer issues amongst all Cambridge students, including a range of talks and social events. Now that it’s all over, [no definition] is proud to present its coverage of Awareness Week. First, we’ve an overview of the week in pictures (for which massive thanks go to photographer Liam Brierley!) and then we caught up with some of the students who took part in the various LGBT-related events to find out what they thought of it all.

Cambridge-based trans activist Sarah Brown talks about transgenderism.

CUSU LGBT and the Cambridge LGBT Staff Network’s stall at the History Month Launch.
CUSU LBGT Radio
by Marcus Buck

I don't actually remember agreeing to co-host the LBGT Radio Show to kick-off Awareness Week. I must have given my drunken consent one night in Revs on my way back from the bar. At the time, I probably had fizzy visions of presenting a hard-hitting, award-winning show, attracting thousands of listeners across East Anglia and beyond. The next day I would receive a call from the BBC making me an offer I couldn't refuse and I'd jump on the next train to London for a glittering career in broadcasting, leaving my History degree behind forever. Watch out Paxman.

As the day came closer, however, it began to dawn on me that two hours is an awfully long time to chat, even for a motor-mouth like me. I met my lovely co-host Katie Spenceley for a production meeting (i.e. coffee in Starbucks) and we began to thrash out ideas. By our second latté we began to get really excited about the show and what it could cover. What is unique about being gay in Cambridge? Are we having a better or worse time than our friends in other universities? And what issues remain relevant to LBGT students today? By openly debating such topics we hoped to engage people for the rest of Awareness Week and garner interest in all the other events CUSU LBGT had planned.

The show turned out to be an absolute pleasure to present. We managed to round up the latest international news from a gay perspective, gave tips about coming out, talked about the peculiarities of being gay in Cambridge, discussed whether lesbians were intrinsically self-hating (!), attempted to line up a blind date, and played an unnecessary amount of Lady Gaga. ...the highlight? Unintentionally offending a certain high profile local from the Cambridge gay scene, prompting him to threaten (on Facebook, obviously) to report me to Ofcom and sue for damages! At least I knew we had some listeners!

The drama having subsided, I'd like to thank Katie for being such a great co-host (and for knowing what to do with all the knobs!), as well as the guys at CUR 1350 for allowing us onto the airwaves. Thanks also if you tuned in, and apologies if I offended any more of you with my loose tongue! I'm still keeping my phone charged for that call from the BBC.

"Out in the Workplace"
by Sven Palys

Cambridge is perhaps one of the most tolerant places on the British Isles, if not in the whole of Europe. Many of us have gone through the 'coming out' process here, or, for those who feel they have always been 'out', the bubble has been a place of great acceptance. But what does life look like after Cambridge? Will I have to return to my proverbial closet once I have a job? Awareness Week kick-started this year's run of events with 'Out in the Workplace' to address exactly these anxieties.

The speakers represented some of the most sought-after sectors for graduates: managing consultancies, law firms, political work, government, technology, as well as a rather surprising addition of the Church of England. “Yes, there are difficulties,” the speaker from the managing consultancy said, “certain clients, for whatever reason, refuse to deal with someone who..."
is gay. In those rare instances, if I feel too uncomfortable, the company will back me and find someone else to take over the account.” Of course such circumstances are far from ideal, but in the end, he echoed much of the general opinion of the evening. Employers and colleges, especially in such highflying jobs, have changed their attitude towards LBGT immensely. “Most larger organisations have special networking events for members of the LBGT community to mingle,” expresses the representative from Google. However, whilst broad acceptance is close, there are still pockets of disdain to be found. The ex-clergyman from the Church of England told of a much more mixed life in office. “Being out in the church means,” he took a deep breath and continued, “everyone immediately thinks of you as some kind of kiddie-fiddler” and concluded with a pained smile. The room was swept by an awkward silence that soon broke with an anecdote about an old lady specifically inviting him and his boyfriend over for tea.

The Phillips family on “liberty and justice for all”

On 5 October 2009 a then ten-year old Will Phillips of West Fork, Arkansas, “the middle of the Bible belt”, refused to stand to recite the Pledge of Allegiance with his classmates. After four consecutive days of refusals, Will was threatened by his teacher with getting his parents involved, to which he replied, “With all due respect, ma’am, you can go and jump off a bridge.” By November Will’s scrupulous resistance to the Pledge was front-page news of The Huffington Post, an online newspaper ranked by The Observer as “the most powerful blog in the world”. Since then he has appeared, with his family, on The Advocate, The Daily Show with Jon Stewart and countless blogs. Membership of his Facebook groups and fan pages currently totals around 6500 people, and he even picked up a GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) Award in March for his segment ‘Why Will Won't Pledge Allegiance’ on CNN. Well, why won’t he pledge allegiance? Jay and Laura Phillips are comfortable with the term ‘straight allies’ and have identified with it for a very long time. When asked by their son, Will, whether reciting the Pledge of Allegiance is compulsory they told him that it wasn’t. So Will decided that, in accordance with his opinion that being “one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all” is an aspiration yet unrealised, he would stop following convention and start following his values. These observational skills, critical thought and strong moral compass are traits which can only be highly commended, from a highly intelligent fifth-grader. What strikes you about Will is, although he is not outspoken as one might expect such a person to be, he is plain-spoken and confident, without being rehearsed.
default family type. There are other family types, but they are aberrations. In the way that Jay and Laura are so open with their children it is clear they give due credit. “People think that kids don’t know what ‘gay’ is. Yes, they do! We have a lot of gay friends that spend a lot of time at our house, and Will has totally grown up knowing that sometimes you grow up to marry a girl and sometimes you grow up to marry a boy and whatever is okay; it doesn’t matter,” Laura tells me. And this, I suspect, is why Will hasn’t come prepared with an agenda. He has nothing against which to argue. There is no hypothetical conflict. A great thing about the Phillips family is that, because they have discussed these issues at great length with people that agree and disagree, they are not in an ideological bubble away from reality. Jay views the Pledge of Allegiance as “an expression of civic virtue or pride. Even though I don’t have to do it, I choose to do it because I love my community and like having a way to express that.” In explaining the Pledge of Allegiance to Will, he likened it to singing ‘Happy birthday’ at a party: “You have a right not to sing it, but if you don’t you’re gonna look like a jerk.” The stronger cultural emphasis on patriotism in America means that resistance and challenge are difficult. “I told [Will] that sometimes it’s easier to go with the flow and pick your battles.” Will replied to this word of caution that “sometimes it is easier… but then nothing changes.” And thus the tone of purity of the ‘struggle’ is set.

Another thing about which they’re grounded is the mixed reactions that they have, and continue to receive. Blogs and videos abound in support of Will’s actions, such as ‘Will Phillips Is My New Hero’ and ‘Will Phillips for President’; however, of course, there is opposition and scepticism, too. “People say we’re just using him to further our own politics” says Laura, Will’s mother. “At first it was like, ‘He’s doing it to defend his two mummies or his two daddies, ‘cause obviously no straight ten year old could understand the different aspects of human behaviour.’ Now, the idea some of these people have is that we’ve corrupted him, because we’ve been honest about human sexuality and differences with him. It just boggles the mind sometimes.” Will himself has stayed confident and strong through negative responses by peers and adults alike. More than homophobic insults, which can be regrettably expected, the issue in question is the Phillipse’s patriotism. “A lot of my friends were told not to talk to me because I was unpatriotic,” notes Will. “And do you think you are unpatriotic?” I ask. “I think I’m actually more patriotic, for standing up for what the Pledge of Allegiance represents, by not saying it.” Will and his mum press that they are staying true to the flag by deeply considering the values it represents – “liberty and justice for all” – and refusing to endorse those values until they have been realised. Furthermore, the Phillips family knows that the opposition they sometimes face is ephemeral in the grand picture. “As I keep telling Will,” Jay says, “we’re just tourists in the land of intolerance. And there are people who live this every day. People we know, people we love, people we care about. It’s just not fair.”

For us in the UK, hearing about the tribulations of high-school students Constance McMillen and Derrick Martin (LGBT students both banned from their proms), as well as the highly contentious Prop 8 gay
marriage trial in California, it sounds like the USA is in a gay rights low, and it is easy to feel angry about the continued intolerance and resistance of people towards equal LGBT rights. Laura herself describes the feeling for her and the LGBT community as “a really low point”. But this is a matter of perspectives. Jay, who “stay[s] pretty in touch with conservatives politically”, is sure that there are real signs of progress and hope, of a tipping point. “For the GLBT community, we’ve already won a battle. But there’s a lag. The reason things seem to be getting much uglier and much more partisan and bitter is that, culturally speaking, the social conservatives have got their backs to the wall. Every single year that passes, a year’s worth of the older generation dies off, and we replace them with people like us. It’s a slow, inexorable grind in our country. Progress has always been an incremental and constant force, and it may ebb and flow. You have action and reaction, but you keep watching that water marker, and the tide keeps rising, and that rising tide lifts all boats.” And the Phillipses know that a breakthrough is nigh. We are angry about Derrick, we are angry about Constance, we are angry about Prop 8, and we know that something is gathering momentum. “We’re coming to almost that head where it is another civil rights movement that’s about to take that next jump,” speculates Laura, “from just saying you believe in equality or holding a sign or signing a petition; to boots on the ground, direct action to get stuff done.” Will Phillips is the face of GetEqual.Org, what he describes as “a new grassroots campaign whose founders organised the National Equality March in Washington [last November]. It encourages direct action and non-violent civil disobedience.” As his father attests, “In this country, groups of people have only gotten their rights when they got loud about it; whenever they stopped being polite and made some noise.” There is no disputing that the Phillips family is doing just that.

“People think that kids don’t know what ‘gay’ is. Yes, they do!”
If there's any genre of music to which the gay community is invariably linked, it's pop. Madonna, Britney, Lady Gaga... some of the biggest "gay icons" of the past twenty years have been pop stars. Of course, this close, practically stereotypical, affiliation with the camp pop scene can prove to be polarising, even offensive. On one level it seems that pop music – with its throwaway lyrics and shallow celebrity culture – is all that we, as a gay community, can be expected to appreciate. Just in the hairdressers today, I heard a conversation which proved the point. The guy next to me was talking about a gay colleague of his at work: "...he's everything you'd expect a gay man to be. Funny, camp, a bit of a joker", he said with a smile, proud of his forward-thinking-ness. Yep, that's us – the gays: not really to be taken too seriously. How can our musical palette ever be expected to digest anything more taxing than pop? After all, we're not complex people like those straight folk. Heaven forbid we like music of any depth.

But for all the debate to be had, we shouldn't risk turning our anger inwards at one of the very institutions which has helped bring the discourse of gay rights to the mainstream. After all, it's not pop itself which has been responsible for perpetuating such homophobia, and with the preponderance of gay icons in pop in the last ten years, we should be supportive, not scornful, of the genre, even if the music itself is not always to our tastes.

That being said, isn't there something a little disconcerting about the term "gay icon"? In one sense, it may be that the whole concept of the "gay icon" is merely a stumbling block in the way of real equality, and one which we should now – in this, the second decade of the new millennium – discard. After all, if the term 'gay icon' becomes a term of exclusivity for an artist, to the extent that they become solely defined by their affiliation with their gay audience, then the risk is that gay and straight culture will only become further detached. And this, of course, risks undermining the very rights for which such artists have spoken out in support of. With this in mind, it seems that the most successful 'gay icons' have been those who have been able to cross communities gay and straight. It is only by their clear anchorage in the centre of mainstream pop culture that artists such as Madonna and Lady Gaga are consistently heralded as warriors of the gay community. By appealing to the their collective community of gay and straight fans, they have allowed their gay rights discourse to pervade the mainstream itself, which is where the heart of the prejudice lies, bringing the two cultures closer together, rather than pushing them apart. I saw a tweet by Lady Gaga the other day which made me think. It read: “isn't it interesting how one singing voice is either good or bad, but a CROWD of singing ALWAYS sounds beautiful?” She's right. And that's just the point. By conquering the mainstream and uniting their fans, regardless of age, nationality and colour, regardless of sexuality, pop artists can be catalysts for change and produce something which their fans, taken individually, struggle to achieve.

In this sense, there is still clearly a need for the "gay icon". However much the term itself may jar. But, apart from being able to exude appeal in both the gay and straight community, what exactly does it mean to be a successful "gay icon" in pop in the twenty-first century?

One thing that doesn't seemed to have changed as the nineties moved into the noughties is the almost exclusive hold that female popstars have over the gay icon mantra. Sure, some of the faces may have changed – the Spice Girls are now Girls Aloud, and Madonna is, well, still around – but being a gay icon seems to have remained largely a woman's job. On the surface,
this may seem arbitrary (even, for an audience of gay men in particular, counterintuitive), but in reality it makes perfect sense. The reason for the gay community’s affiliation with such strong independent women is because they represent the ideal: the ideal of a presupposed “weaker” party – women – prevailing in an oppressive, masculine world. And not just prevailing, but prevailing with style. It doesn’t matter that the majority of these so-called “gay” icons aren’t in fact gay at all: what they, and their success stories, represent goes beyond that. They represent that it’s possible: the fight can be won.

And this isn’t limited to rhetoric. A prevalent trait amongst artists idolised as “gay icons” is the fact that they themselves have, at one time or another, been famed for their personal struggles. Lady Gaga has made no secret of the fact that she was the outcast at school, Mariah Carey’s battled depression, Rihanna’s had Chris Brown and there was a point in the mid-2000s when you’d be forgiven for forgetting that Britney Spears was famous for being a pop star, rather than a one-woman headline generator. Much of the time, these personal struggles go above and beyond those faced by many even in the gay community today, but the point is that they allow such artists to exude a human character, and a human, victimless strength, to which many gay men and women can relate, and from which we can all, regardless of our sexuality, derive inspiration. Chris Crocker may have dramatised the point a little (or even a lot) when he demanded that people “LEAVE BRITNEY ALONE!”, but the core sentiment was the same. “It’s all about letting people who don’t fit in know that someone out there is fine with who they are”, Lady Gaga again says. “And that other people have gone through the same thing”.

Of course, we should not get carried away and forget the more direct contributions such artists have made to the gay community. In the past ten years, we’ve seen artists such as Kelly Osborne and Pete Wentz march against Proposition 8 in California, Gaga take to the podium in Washington to demand gay rights action from President Obama himself, and Britney Spears and Miley Cyrus, amongst others, daring to provoke Middle America by publicly speaking out in favour of gay marriage. It’s an affirming thing to see popstars putting their influence and coverage to such good use, especially when they, more so than anyone else, have the ability to shape the minds of the young generation. Because every decade will have its popstars. Let us not forget what “pop” is short for. So perhaps the day when the term “gay icon” becomes as much a misnomer as the term “straight icon” would be today is still a little far off, but it’s a goal we’ve got to strive for. And until that sunny day, the gay icon is a source of support that we cannot afford to shun.
Daniel Fryer, at age 18, is Stonewall's Young Campaigner of the Year. After becoming a Stonewall Youth Volunteer in February last year, he began his own program to support young victims of homophobia around Wolverhampton, delivering workshops centred on overcoming various forms of bullying. His short film about homophobia made it to the London LGBT Film Festival in March - you can view it at www.tinyurl.com/DanielFryer2010. [no definition] caught up with Daniel to get the inside scoop on his story.

So Daniel, how did you hear about Stonewall?

In the pretty homophobic area where I live, Stonewall plonked a huge ‘Some people are gay, get over it’ billboard on the main road that you couldn't miss. My best friend and I took a trip to go and see it. I just stood staring at it with a huge smile on my face, and then noticed the Stonewall logo at the bottom. The next stop was Google – straight onto the website and straight in with an application to join the Youth Volunteering Program!

Daniel Fryer, at age 18, is Stonewall's Young Campaigner of the Year.
Fryer, Stonewall Young Campaigner of the Year

What about yourself? What were your experiences surrounding your sexuality?

Is it wrong that I’m quite excited to finally talk about my coming out story in an interview? In terms of realising that you’re gay, I don’t think anyone really realises that they’re gay in the sense that they just think, “Oh, I must be gay.” I don’t think anyone labels themselves like that straight away; I think it’s more a realisation that you’re attracted to a particular sex, or at least it was for me. ‘The gay’ label didn’t come until quite a while after. For me, it wasn’t really a realisation; it was just a consistent fact that was always there. I put the label on it when I was about fourteen, and officially came out when I was sixteen. That’s when I told my mum.

What helped you in coming out?

I was lucky enough to have a few openly gay friends before I came out, and Brokeback Mountain and Queer as Folk helped quite a lot as well! One of my friends also threw me a ‘coming out’ party, which was amazing! Rainbow shots, cowboy hats and my very own Narnia at the back of the closet to burst out of!

After reading the recent pro/anti-LGBT campaign debate in The Cambridge Student, what are your thoughts on the role of LGBT organisations and societies?

I do not agree with the view that “LGBT doesn’t help gay integration”. LGBT organisations help so many people find and feel comfortable with their LGBT identities, and that should count for a lot. The ‘gay lifestyle’ isn’t about finding someone to take home at all; it’s about being somewhere that you can completely be yourself without fear or intimidation. We don’t yet have complete equality; there are still many people with homophobic attitudes and many people suffering abuse for it in the dark corners of society that go unnoticed, so why shouldn’t we be able to come together as a community under the title ‘LGBT’?Suggesting that LGBT is stopping gay integration is, in my opinion, simply suggesting that to be ‘integrated’ we must sit quietly and hope that nobody bothers us. ‘Integration’ is being accepted completely for every part of our gay identities and having the freedom to express them as overtly as we like, not simply being hushed so that nobody really minds that we’re there.

Do you think civil partnerships are good enough, or should we get the word ‘marriage’ as well, seeing as they’re almost equivalent in UK law?

Here’s a little story. My friend Laura has a son, Joel, who asked whether two women could get married. Laura said, “Yes, but we don’t call it ‘marriage’, we call it ‘civil partnership’.” He asked, “If they’re the same, why do we call it something different? That’s stupid.” If a four-year old can pick up on the exclusion of gay people by calling their marriages ‘civil partnerships’ and find it stupid, then why isn’t it obvious to adults?

This issue of [no definition] is about the last decade. What do you think of the LGBT movement in the noughties?

As someone who campaigns to tackle homophobia in schools specifically, the repeal of Section 28 (prohibiting “the teaching of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship”) in 2003 was one of the best parts of the noughties. That law made it difficult for LGB students to be supported in schools, and at the time I was one of them!

But the noughties are over! So where do you go from here?

I’ve completed my A levels and am currently on a gap year working as the world’s most overdressed GP’s receptionist. I’m doing so much with Stonewall that my head might explode! As well as my short anti-homophobia film [which got screened at the London LGBT Film Festival], I’ll be conducting a workshop at Stonewall’s ‘Education For All’ conference in July, and am currently planning the Stonewall Youth Event on 5th June. I’ll be moving to London in September to study English Language and Literature at King’s College, where I’ll continue to develop my campaigns workshops to a wider audience in London schools. Things change so often that I just like to grab every chance that comes my way. I’m happy with wherever I end up in ten years, as long as I know I haven’t let any opportunity pass me by.

Stonewall is one of the UK’s primary lesbian, gay and bisexual rights lobbying organisations. For more information, go to www.stonewall.org.uk.
When new Honduran President Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo took office on the 27th January this year, the world breathed a sigh of relief. From the earliest days after the coup of June 28th last year the international community, following the lead of the United States, had professed its desire to "normalise" the situation. Central America’s first military coup in two decades could only, after all, be a blip (and an embarrassment) in what was the otherwise steady march of development in the region.

The Guardian reported Lobo’s inauguration, along with ousted President Manuel Zelaya’s departure from his refuge in the Brazilian Embassy and from the country, as a “quiet end” to the turmoil in Honduras. Equally quietly, Honduras returned to its position internationally on the shelf of a "peaceful enough country somewhere in Latin America".

Unfortunately the reality in Honduras has been neither so simple, nor so quiet.

The Honduras Resistance to the coup, within the loose coalition of the Popular National Resistance Front (FNRP), remains a permanent pockmark in the hasty makeover efforts of the new administration. Accordingly the hundreds of thousands of Hondurans who make up the resistance have remained the targets of brutal state repression. In the final two weeks of March alone five journalists associated with speaking out against the oligarchy were murdered, the most recent in a string of assassinations since June.

Yet while the impacts of the coup have reverberated through every section of society, they have been most painfully pronounced within the country’s LGBT community. Since June 28th, 26 members of the LGBT community have been murdered.

APUVIMEH (an association for a better life for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS in Honduras) is an LGBT organisation based in Tegucigalpa that has experienced the violence firsthand. One of its core staff members and public human rights activists, 24 year old Walter Tróchez, was murdered in a brutal attack on the 13th December 2009 for his involvement in the national resistance movement. Five other members of the organisation have fled the country as a result of the political climate.

Ricardo Antonio Figueroa, ex-Director of Projects at APUVIMEH, has been the latest loss to the organisation, also leaving Honduras for political reasons: “The office of human rights which has reviewed my case told me that I have to make the decision to continue living in Honduras how it is now or, if I want emotional stability, to live outside the country, because here it is certain I will live with the psychological and emotional damage which drives the repression.”

Ricardo Antonio’s entire life changed after the coup. He was targeted in his neighbourhood, followed home by unlicensed motorbikes and vans, and lived with the constant terror of being “disappeared” in the streets as so many other members of the resistance have been. The sad reality is that in a country where human rights have become synonymous with resistance, this is the life of many in the LGBT community who are simply working to create a society free from homophobia and discrimination.
What is more, it is not only LGBT activists in Honduras who have felt the socio-political impacts of the coup. Of the 26 deaths in the past 8 months, less than a quarter are suspected political assassinations of resistance members. The majority of what LGBT organisation Arco Iris has called the post-coup “surge” of violence against the gay community is actually an increase in general homophobia and hate crimes. Indeed, the combination of instability with a major political shift to the right has been taken as a green light to would-be homophobes in an already deeply homophobic country. Lobo’s new government has done nothing to correct the assumption, making no arrests in any of the 26 cases of murder against gays and transsexuals.

“They are going to legalise discrimination of gays” argues Ricardo Antonio. President Porfirio “Pepe” Lobo is the same man who, as previous head of the National Congress, changed an Article in the Constitution to unequivocally condemn the legitimacy of same-sex marriages, where previously the wording had been ambiguous. He is also the same man who ran his electoral campaign with the slogan “Zero Tolerance”. More concerning still is the role of fundamentalist religious groups whose great influence within the elite interests behind the coup remain potent despite efforts of the new administration to transform its image into that of a legitimately elected government. These are the same groups who openly incite homophobia and denounce homosexuality as a sickness and a sin.

While violence against the LGBT community in Honduras has been a clear and consistent problem for years, with activists suspecting that three LGBT murders go unreported for every one that is documented, the position of the new government has sent a message to the country that violence against the gay community will go unpunished. The fear that institutional discrimination will be next, in the shape of policy and legislative changes, hangs equally heavily in the air for organisations such as APUVIMEH.

Despite the climate of homophobia and political censorship that currently sits over Honduras, the coup has at least reinvigorated and unified LGBT campaigning. On the 7th March, APUVIMEH, Renacer, and newly-created youth group Youth Leaders in Action joined a wider resistance demonstration outside the National Congress to publically denounce the murders of gays and transsexuals that have occurred since the coup. The teenagers released their own press statement and read it to a crowd of thousands demanding that the President and new Minister of Security Oscar Alvarez implement justice and security for the LGBT community.

“I do believe we have a positive future in this country” asserts 16 year old transsexual Amanda, a youth member of Renacer. “We will continue to demand change and the fulfillment of our rights until we can end this discrimination that we face”.

It seems a fragile hope when set against the barbaric murder of 20 year old transsexual Debora on the 25th March, but it is young people such as Amanda, mobilised by the open persecution they have faced since June, that will be able to make the change.
With over four decades of LBGT equality legislation in Britain, and strong LBGT student support here in Cambridge, it’s easy for us to think that the execution of gay people is a regrettable relic from the times of Henry VIII. This year, however, the nation of Uganda is on track to join at least seven other countries which still regularly execute their own citizens for being gay. David Bahati, MP of the National Resistance Movement (NRM), Uganda’s governing party, has introduced legislation which is being dubbed by Western media as the “Kill the Gays” bill. Already Ugandan law proscribes a prison sentence of up to fourteen years for “carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature,” but apparently that’s not enough. Mr Bahati, who (shockingly) was educated at the University of Wales, has explained the object of the legislation is to protect children from being “recruited” to homosexuality... by killing gay people. The bill currently recommends life imprisonment to anyone convicted of homosexuality, which includes oral and anal sex between people of the same gender, including through the use of sexual organs or “any other sexual contraption.” Furthermore, a person can be found guilty if he or she “touches another person with the intention of committing the act of homosexuality.” Yes, gay hugs can get you locked away for life. Bahati’s bill has gained notoriety outside Africa, particularly for its provisions which prescribe the death penalty to any Ugandan convicted of “aggravated homosexuality.” This includes homosexual sexual acts with people who are HIV positive, disabled or under eighteen. Furthermore, “serial offenders” of homosexual acts, as well as those who procure sex using any “drug, matter, or stupefying thing” will be put to death. In February, David Kato of Sexual Minorities Uganda was invited by the Centre for Gender Studies to speak at Jesus College on the legislation, as well as on the broader situation for gays and lesbians in his country. Kato explained that this bill, whether it passes or not, will be taken as further confirmation that it is acceptable to attack and even kill LBGT people by an increasingly hostile and homophobic Ugandan population. Kato himself is no stranger to this brutality. He has been physically attacked on four separate occasions, arrested twice, and fired from his teaching job due to his sexual orientation. During his discussion at Jesus, he explained one such incident. The police entered a bar in which he was sharing a drink with a man, arrested him, and led him to prison. While in prison, Kato was subjected to the taunt-
ing of the prison guards, who dared him to demonstrate how he engaged in sexual acts with men. According to Africa News, human rights organisations have documented numerous cases of torture or other ill-treatment against lesbians and gay men in detention because of their sexual orientation. Kato also shared stories of lesbian friends of his who have been subjected to “corrective rapes.” Some Ugandan men violently sexually assault lesbians in an effort to “teach” them how to engage in “good” and “moral” sexual behaviour – rape is now a family value, apparently. The tragedy of the Ugandan “Kill the Gays” legislation is, unfortunately, not an isolated one. It reflects a growing trend throughout the African continent, prompted by increasingly radicalised branches of Christianity and Islam, including the Pentecostal and Sharia law movements. Currently, the governments of at least three African nations (Sudan, Mauritania, and the northern provinces of Nigeria under Sharia law) regularly execute gay people. This legalised and institutionalised homophobia is only a manifestation of larger cultural trends in Africa. Even in South Africa, the only country in the continent to recognise same-sex marriages, “corrective rapes” of lesbians have been known to happen. Notably, in 2008, there was a high-profile case where a 19-year-old lesbian athlete was gang-raped, tortured and murdered. When asked what we, as Cambridge students, can do to work against this legislation, Kato’s response was sobering. He acknowledged the enormous difficulties in overcoming the religious and cultural mores which have fostered homophobia in Uganda. He emphasised that this is a movement which is going to have to occur principally within Uganda. Most Ugandans believe that homosexuality is an import from the West. The Huffington Post quoted a Ugandan teacher who explained, “The youths in secondary schools copy everything from the Western world and America. A good number of students have been converted into gays. We hear there are groups of people given money by some gay organisations in developed countries to recruit youth into gay activities.” Attitudes of this kind run throughout Uganda, high into the political establishment, and make it difficult for non-Ugandans to influence the democratically elected leaders of that country from passing legislation which sadly reflects the viewpoints of many of their constituents. Ugandan Ethics and Integrity Minister Dr James Nsaba Buturu remarked that he was “not paying attention to them - the foreigners and the so-called rights activists or watch dogs. We are really getting tired of this phrase ‘human rights.’ It is being abused... if you in your countries have chosen to promote anal sex, that is your business. Leave us alone.” The real challenge comes to groups within Uganda, such as Kato’s Sexual Minorities Uganda, to work against this ostensibly impenetrable wall of bigotry. In spite of all the challenges, Kato’s spirit appeared unbreakable, and his strident conviction in upholding the human rights of LGBT Ugandans was inspiring. His visit was a poignant reminder that the fight for LGBT equality is far from over. We may be able to live our lives unreservedly here in Cambridge, but we should not take this for granted, simply out of respect for the millions of LGBT people around the globe who cannot.

“[Kato] has been physically attacked on four separate occasions, arrested twice, and fired from his teaching job due to his sexual orientation.”

Images
01: Homosexuality is illegal in almost every African country. Sudan, Nigeria and Somalia all impose the death penalty for homosexuality, and now Uganda has a bill pending that would lead to the same outcome. Civil rights worker David Kato has experienced for himself the brutality of homophobia in Uganda.

02: Kato has been physically attacked on four separate occasions, arrested twice, and fired from his teaching job due to his sexual orientation.
Passing the baton of female bisexuality

Taz Rasul studies the difficulties of being bisexual in the twenty-first century and explains why she thinks it’s about time that real bisexuals should give up the “b” label altogether.

I have never been comfortable self-defining. I would much prefer to do what the Greeks did: love and fuck who I want for who they are, disregarding the genitalia that they possess. The Greeks did not understand the concept of a ‘homosexual’ or a ‘heterosexual’, because the person with whom you had sex did not anchor you to your sexuality. With regards to sexual orientation, you did what you did, and you were who you were, and one was not a reflection of the other. I like that system very much. But let’s not dwell on the (ancient) past. In the here and now I have just about overcome feeling fraudulent because I am neither L, B, G nor T. For a short time in secondary school, if people asked, I’d say I was ‘pansexual’. This seemed most fitting, but it also invited antagonism from those (many) friends of mine ignorant enough to think that straying outside of the ‘traditional categories’ was an attempt to politicise my entire existence. I got around the nomenclatural problem by answering “I’m… just… whatever”, which seemed to get across a similar message without making me look militant. It seems that putting a fancy word to something necessarily politicises it. Thus, in actuality, I have never thought of myself as a bisexual, although I may seem it to you, because I am attracted to men and I am attracted to women. But why do I renounce bisexuality? Firstly, in what I would like to be a non-political, uncontroversial way (but what, in 2010, is not), I support the assertion that there are more than two genders. Although there seems to be a clear distinction between XX and XY chromosomes, these do not correspond uniformly to the appearance, personality, tone of voice, facial bone structure, stance or attitude of a person demarcated by this biological dichotomy - something we might describe in terms of masculinity and femininity. Endless studies of trans and intersex people have demonstrated that even chromosomal differences are not clear-cut. I limit myself in talking about this because I don’t want to preach to the choir, and because I’m certainly no so-
The term “bisexual” is a problematic intersection between sexual orientation and gender, because beliefs on the verity of gender categories are undergoing change. As people come to recognise the difficulty of classifying genders within the binary model then maybe former “bisexuals” will automatically start to refer to themselves as “pansexuals” or “omnisexuals” without feeling as though they have fundamentally changed. It will be the social perception of gender that has changed, and not people’s sexualities. So I am sceptical about the gender assumptions upon which “bisexuality” is based. Second is the point that the dictionary definition of bisexuality and its cultural understanding no longer coincide. They barely even overlap. And this is very pertinent. My ubiquitous friends at AskOxford.com define a bisexual as “a person who is sexually attracted to both men and women”. Ignoring the gender binary for the moment, this definition does not favour one or another sex. But the word “bisexuality” has been engulfed by a patriarchal culture of sexualisation to an extent that is unsalvageable by the very people who are “sexually attracted to both men and women”. I have given up on reclaiming “my” sexuality because I feel that people like me have been given up on by our own mascots. Today it must start even younger: the first bisexuals to whom we are likely to be exposed are those like T.A.T.U., like Megan Fox and like Katy Perry. The bisexuals most accessible to us are pumped full of fame, full of silicon, full of heroin, and full of male fantasy. The women at the forefront of bisexuality seem to degrade themselves by exploiting the women-desiring parts of themselves, for the lustful and onanistic purposes of lads’ mag subscribers. After seeing this self-degradation, I am more than fine with alienating myself from this conception of bisexuality. Further down the line, what seems like the majority of bisexuals I saw at secondary school level were the ones who had noted from Katy Perry exactly how to titillate boys by titillating girls. These girls would profess their bisexuality right into the arms of a successive string of males, and males almost exclusively. I do not dismiss this behaviour as ‘inferior’ in any way to how I behave sexually; for, after all, there are no grounds on which to declaim this as any less legitimate. As a friend of mine recently expressed, “These girls appreciate the beauty of females and consider themselves bisexuals. I am bisexual because when I see a woman who’s beautiful, I want to fuck her.” In my eyes, these are the female bisexuals that “bisexuality” has disowned. When I am attracted to a girl, I am also attracted to her in private. When I am attracted to a girl, I want to have sex with her alone. When I have sex with a girl, there is nothing in me that feels at loss without a boy. I suppose one could call me an “old-school bisexual” with no twenty-first century cultural overtones. There is a place for the term ‘bisexuality’. It does denote a real phenomenon and is a legitimate umbrella term. But just not for people who love, and make love to, people indiscriminately of gender. Times change and meanings shift. In the field of gender and sexuality, the signifier and signified rarely match up sans complications. In our psychosocial need to decipher people’s ‘essences’ from their repertoires of actions, and in our cultural drive to classify phenomena regardless of their suitability for classification, we are in a constant effort to label and relabel a spectrum of behaviours and types. The time has come when the ‘old-school bisexuals’ must let go of ‘bisexuality’, a label exhausted of its erstwhile meaning. Until the gender binary is addressed and this cultural rut is recognised, we are the nameless. Ironically enough, to be emancipated from classification is the aim I have wanted all along.
In a society bent on classification and labels, the term “queer” has the potential to transcend such rigid taxonomy. Yet even today there are those who don’t know what the term means, or think it’s pejorative. Jack Davies attempts to lift the lid on the issue and presents his take on...

The Case for

“Why Queer? Ah, do we really have to use that word? It’s trouble. Every gay person has his or her own take on it. For some it means strange and eccentric and kind of mysterious. That’s okay, we like that. But some gay girls and boys don’t. They think they’re more normal than strange. And for others “queer” conjures up those awful memories of adolescent suffering. Queer. It’s forcibly bittersweet and quaint at best --- weakening and painful at worst. Couldn’t we just use “gay” instead? It’s a much brighter word and isn’t it synonymous with “happy?” When will you militants grow up and get over the novelty of being different?

Well, yes, “gay ” is great. It has its place. But when a lot of lesbians and gay men wake up in the morning we feel angry and disgrusted, not gay. So we’re chosen to call ourselves queer. Using “queer” is a way of reminding us how we are perceived by the rest of the world. It’s a way of telling ourselves we don’t have to be witty and charming people who keep our lives discreet and marginalised in the straight world. We use queer as gay men loving lesbians and lesbians loving being queer. Queer, unlike GAY, doesn’t mean MALE. And when spoken to other gays and lesbians it’s a way of suggesting we close ranks, and forget (temporarily) our individual differences because we face a more insidious common enemy. Yeah, QUEER can be a rough word but it is also a sly and ironic weapon we can steal from the homophobe’s hands and use against him.”

- “QUEERS READ THIS”

A leaflet distributed at pride march in NYC, June 1990.

This was one of the first attempts to reclaim queer as a positive word. Twenty years later, we have Queer Studies departments in major universities and national groups like Queer Youth UK. Despite this, it’s still a word that many think has negative connotations. That doesn’t have to be so - queer is positive, it’s inclusive, and it’s unifying.

The LGBT movement isn’t just about LGBT. Heresy. But it isn’t. The issues we face, the discrimination and the fear, aren’t about how we identify ourselves, but how others think about us. Does it matter to a bigot that transgenderism is a biological, not an orientation, issue? No. The reason why they hate us is because we are not straight. Not even just ‘not straight’ - we don’t conform to their ideas of gender, or sex, or life in any way, and that’s terrifying. We are the other, the unusual, the queer.

So why lie down and accept this word? Surely it’d be better not to be queer, if that’s what they want us to be. It’s a negative definition - queer is not normal. The words gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender -
they're our words. We made them ours and we kinda like them. Well, sure, if you take a very narrow definition of 'we' - a Western, class informed definition. There are still types of non-typical behaviour; the butch lesbian, the flaming gay, the promiscuous bisexual. These are obviously not universally true, but I’m sure you know someone who fits that niche, either through personal preference or because it’s easier to act a role than write one.

But these types are Western types: compare with the two-spirited in Native American culture, the Katheoy in Thailand or the Hijra in South Asia to pick just three examples. They don’t have an easy analog in the West - there is no one-to-one mapping between cultures, as anyone familiar with translation will recognise. And this reflects the fact that gender and sexuality are complicated issues, not butterflies to be pinned onto a board, labelled, classified and then sealed forever behind glass.

These types also relate to class. The mean income for gay men is 10% lower on average than straight men [1]. A shockingly disproportionate 42% of the homeless youths in NYC are queer [2], on the streets thanks to the attitudes of their parents, or society, towards them. The stereotypical gay has a well paying job in graphic design, with a nice flat, some gym equipment and a Mac. When we say ‘gay’, this is the guy we think of - but he is not the identity of most queers, and neither is the lesbian mechanic or the bisexual pop star.

Queer doesn't care about your race. It doesn't care about your class. It doesn't care how you see yourself, or how you see others. Queer welcomes everyone. It's a statement against normative behaviour, sure. But it's more than just a negation. It's a statement for the realisation that we are not three, or four, or five or even umpteen identities with a common goal; but that we are people who live, who love, and who will not be marginalised for the sake of an easy life or a niche to call our own.

Judith Butler, a philosopher and queer theorist makes the term even broader: “My understanding of queer is a term that desires that you don’t have to present an identity card before entering a meeting. Heterosexuals can join the queer movement. Bisexuals can join the queer movement. Queer is not being lesbian. Queer is not being gay. It is an argument against lesbian specificity: that if I am a lesbian I have to desire in a certain way. Or if I am a gay I have to desire in a certain way. Queer is an argument against certain normativity, what a proper lesbian or gay identity is.”[3]

I’m going to depart from the more orthodox train of thought, and say that ‘LGBT’ is a damaging term. It stems from the very human desire to categorise things or people, from the four elements to star signs. ‘LGBTQ’ is even worse because it’s non-sensical - why add a blanket term to a list of other terms? Every letter you add to that acronym, be it ‘A’ for asexual or ‘U’

...gender and sexuality are complicated issues, not butterflies to be pinned onto a board, labelled, classified and then sealed forever behind glass.

for undefined, is another group implicitly rejected (however, at least inclusion would give us vowels - it’s hell trying to make LGBT snappy, but AUTBOLG at least sounds fun). It's saying “Your sexuality, your identity, you yourself - you are not important to us. We care about the L, the G, the B and the T.” Any arguments for leaving it as ‘LGBT’ out of tradition are absurd, and completely betray the desire for change that created this movement. It's pandering to the very status quo from which we have always wanted to be free.

Why do we have to insist that those outside our club have to conform to our rules, our definition? That you must be L,G,B or T? How is this any different from the rejection we face from heterosexual society, which says in turn that we must conform to their rules, their definitions? I can not comprehend why we sit here, feeling smug about the rights we’ve won, when there is still so far to go. Why sit when we could be standing, standing united, standing queer?

If you have got an opinion on what it means to be “queer”, Jack can be contacted at jd437@cam.ac.uk.
“What makes people gay?” It’s the age old question that everyone from Sigmund Freud to John Barrowman has tried to answer. Attempting to clear things up, Orlando de Lange is here with a brief runthrough of science’s most popular and wacky gay theories.

**Freud made me Gay!**

Homosexuality was struck from the ‘pathologies’ list in 1973 (in America, at least) but it is still fair game for study. The basic idea invariably revolves around stress in early childhood. These sort of explanations seem to have declined in popularity recently, but maybe that means they’re due a comeback. I’m no psychoanalyst, but I think my early childhood stress was when my best friend stole my Barbies. B***h.

**Genes made me Gay!**

While the tabloid approach that our genome is just a string of ‘genes for’ any social interaction imaginable has little to do with reality, something’s definitely going on with our DNA. So far four ‘genes’ (actually loci, for any Natscis out there!) have been identified as linked to gayism. And good old twin studies have found that yes, you can inherit homosexuality!

**The womb made me Gay!**

…or hormones in the womb did, at least. One rather neat theory for male homosexuality was that mothers produce antibodies in response to signals from the Y-chromosome and that these attack male fetuses, impacting on normal sexual development. This effect would increase with continued exposure to the Y-chromosome, explaining why the number of older brothers (but not sisters) an individual has correlates with their chance of being homosexual. Although the recent papers seem to demolish this theory, don’t give up on it quite yet. One jolly lot decided to study gay rams (which constitute 8% of all rams, apparently) and discovered brain structures correlated to homosexuality controlled by fetal hormone levels. The moral of the story? Make sure to eat plenty of testosterone if you want straight babies!

**Giant sperm made me Gay!**

This one beggars belief a little. First, a little background. In biology isogamy is when sex cells are the same size and any individual can mate with any other. Anisogamy is when these cells are different sizes and in general the big one (egg) has to go with a little one (sperm). Reed (2010) suggests that homosexuals may have bigger sperm than heterosexuals, making them closer in size to eggs, which somehow makes gay guys act, sexually, as if they had eggs. He also suggests that species with big differences between sex cell sizes are less likely to show homosexuality. Since a duck egg is about a billion times bigger than a duck sperm (or thereabouts), and we all know about these notorious homos, I’m thinking his theory may be a few semen short of a navy!

In the midst of a discussion on the explanations of gayism, a friend once suggested that he would ban study into the question, suggesting that any knowledge of ‘why’ people are gay would inevitably be used to control and persecute the homosexual masses. While he may have a point, I still maintain that, try as you might, you’re not going to stop people being curious. My struggle through the literature also yielded an essay suggesting that there is a correlation between belief that homosexuality is innate and support for gay rights (Lewis, 2009). So if we can just persuade them that we can’t help it, then maybe they’ll help us. Some Westerners might call it pandering to the homophobes, but it’s pretty relevant stuff considering that homosexuality is illegal, with penalties including death, in most of Africa and central Asia/Middle-East, and only sixteen countries have any sort of legal recognition of gay couples. Homosexuality became legal in India just last year, and Uganda is proposing to introduce the death penalty for it. Gay rights may have been secured here in the UK in the last decade, but the battlefield for the next decade is the wider world; and the scientists, with their weird and wonderful theories, just might be some of our strongest allies.
be scratching your head wondering how the hell a gay gene could be ‘naturally selected’ with its tendency to foil plans of procreation. Well, scientists have thought on that little puzzler too. Explanations range from ‘gays help raise siblings, thus making up for it’, ‘Genes made me Gay!’

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Prediction 1: Straights
Straight people will continue to be just as boring as ever. Sure, stuff’s going to happen, but it just won’t be as interesting. Naaaaaah.

Prediction 2: Science
Later on in the decade there’ll be a big surprise (or not so big now I’ve told you!) for the world, when geneticists discover that lesbians share fewer genes in common with chimpanzees than most people, and are therefore more evolved. With all their probing into what makes us human, they also find that people who watch X-Factor share more genes in common and are conversely less highly evolved. Lesbians who watch X-Factor are somewhere in between or something. LOL.

Prediction 3: Media
The release of the sequel "Brokeback Mountain 2: Camp In Tents" is going to be a big media controversy frenzy thing, and everyone’s going to get their knickers in a right twist, as usual. The hoo-ha won’t come from the CGI re-animation of Heath Ledger’s corpse, but from a scene in which the two boys re-enact the online viral video ”2 Guys 1 Horse”. It’ll all end in tears... and a lawsuit by PETA.

Prediction 4: Politics
Following a tragic car crash Barack Obama will be left wheelchair-bound but with a new, gay perspective on life. This will make him the first American president to hold the Triforce: black, gay and disabled. With this power he will become an unstoppable force for good. Like Bill Gates, but hotter.
Prediction 5: Choices
Hard-line American Christian scientists will develop a "cure" for homosexuality. But the treatment comes with an unexpected side-effect: X-men-like superpowers! Gay people will thus have to make a difficult choice, as not all of the superpowers are as super cool as Cyclops' LASER eyes. You might just turn into one of those rubbish mutants like the one that can change the TV channel with his eyes. And you wouldn't be watching the L Word, because you'd be straight. Triple whammy!

Prediction 6: Religion
Ooh, I've got much more exciting news on the God front! In their attempts to elucidate the workings of the universe, scientists at the Large Hadron Collider (basically a giant bondage toy) in Switzerland will discover that God does exist and is actually a male-to-female post-op transgender who goes by the name of "Trisha Silverton". She will reveal that Jesus was in fact the world's first baby conceived by IVF and the Holy Grail was the test tube vessel for her inter-dimensional seminal fluids. Gross out!

Prediction 7: Travel
The end of the decade will see the world's very first Gay Space Cruise. 1000 gay men packed into a giant phallic object and sent into orbit around Uranus? Make your own jokes. Although apparently sex in space isn't as good as sex on Earth; you need gravity to mediate things.

Prediction 8: Weather
This one was easy! Having consulted my 2010 Men in Uniform calendar, I can tell you that global warming must be taking effect, because it's going to be hot all year! Except October, which may get a bit hairy. Good for some, bad for others. Personally I've always preferred nectarines over peaches.

Prediction 9: Lizards
In 2016, Nick Griffin and Jan Moir's skin will peel off, revealing to the world that they are in fact both lizards. Lizards with body odour. Whatever next, eh?
STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY

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To find out more, come to our events on campus:
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Main presentation - 2 November, 2010
LGBT reception - 4 November, 2010

Application deadlines:
Full time 7 November, 2010 and Internship 30 January, 2011
For further events, please see http://www.bcg.com/join_bcg/oncampus/cambridge.aspx

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