

ARE YOU ACTUALLY
ATTRACTED TO
MEN, OR DO YOU
JUST GRAVE THEIR
VALIDATION
BECAUSE YOU LIVE IN
A PATRIARCHAL
SOCIETY?

TURNS OUT I WAS A LESBIAN
ALL ALONG
(AND YOU MIGHT BE TOO!)

my name is alexa sorensen, and i'm a lesbian. i have always been a lesbian, but when i first came out, i identified as bisexual. i genuinely thought i was attracted to men, but with some further interrogation of my own personal internalized homophobia and misogyny, i realized that i just wanted male validation, not actual intimacy with men. though this isn't the experience of everyone that identifies as bisexual, it's not surprising in a society that tells girls from a young age that their worth is tied up in whether or not men find them attractive. it took a lot of unlearning to decide that "lesbian" was the right label for me, and i'm hoping that if you have similar questions about your attraction to men, this zine can be helpful to you in some way:)

i want to be very clear about the fact that my goal here isn't to convince you that you're a lesbian, or to make bisexual or pansexual people feel that their attraction to men isn't valid. i am completely in support of any orientation, label, or identity that feels like home to you! this zine is for women and non-binary people that *don't* feel at home with the label they use right now, and specifically want to question their attraction to men. we live in a society that is obsessed with men, shames women, and pushes heterosexuality onto everyone, so being confused about how you *actually* feel about men vs. what you were *indoctrinated* to feel about men is tricky.

this zine is designed to be a more nuanced and helpful version of the "am i gay?" quizzes that i'm sure you've searched google for at some point during your life;) i'll pose questions for you, and then share a few thoughts about my own experience, or experiences that i've heard from other lesbians, in the hopes that they can help you think through your own feelings and experiences. of course, these experiences are not universal among all lesbians. at the end, i won't churn out a "you're a lesbian!" or "you're straight!" or "you're somewhere in between!" answer, because that's not something that i can decide for you!

no matter what you decide to identify as, i'm proud of you for asking questions and interrogating the cis-het-patriarchal system that we all live in. coming to terms with attraction to any gender besides cis-men in a society that worships cis-men is hard work, and i admire you for engaging in that process<3

if you're not familiar with the concepts of internalized misogyny, compulsory heterosexuality, and internalized homophobia, take a moment to learn about them. unfortunately, these things often go hand in hand and have big effects on how we understand our sexuality. if you're a non-man questioning your attraction to men, here's how they might crop up:

internalized homophobia and compulsory heterosexuality might be holding you back from definitively stating that you aren't attracted to men, because you subconsciously believe that heterosexuality is "right" and better than being "completely gay." since we are raised to believe that heterosexuality is the norm, it's scary to step out of that and decide to be a woman/nb person that doesn't want to be sexually or romantically involved with men at all.

internalized misogyny might be holding you back from saying that you are *only* interested in women/nb people, because in doing so, you would be swearing off future validation from potential male suitors. since we are raised to value the opinions of men over everyone else, it's scary to think about having our most intimate connections be with women/nb people, who we might subconsciously think aren't as important or impressive as men.

this is a lot to work through! let yourself sit with all of this for a minute, and go easy on yourself as you're figuring it out:)



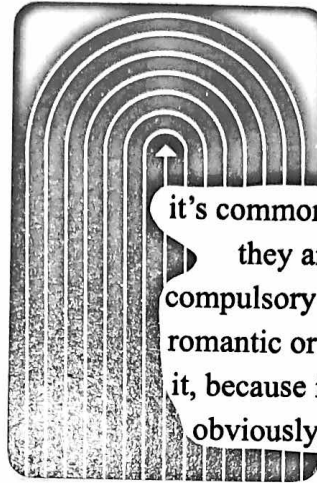
My Wife (Karin in the Studio), 1912



QUIZ TIME!

think about going on a date or hooking up with a man.

WOULD YOU STILL WANT TO DO IT IF NOBODY KNEW?



it's common for lesbians to only want to do things with men if they are very visible. this desire is usually linked to compulsory heterosexuality; i only ever wanted to do anything romantic or sexual with a man if other people found out about it, because i felt the need to prove that i was attracted to men. obviously, acting like you like men doesn't make it a fact.

in relationships that involve mutual attraction, people usually want to share their experiences with others because they're genuinely excited about them, not because they feel the need to prove anything to themselves and those around them. if you never feel satisfied when doing something with a male partner without it affecting your public image, you may want to question why you have no desire to simply enjoy time with them.

the right label for you will be one that fits right, without you feeling like you have to defend and prove it by telling people what you are doing and with whom.



when/if you fantasize about men (sexually or romantically),



WHAT DO YOU
IMAGINE?

if you dream up a man that is perfect in every way, and bears very little resemblance to any real man you've actually met, you might be a lesbian. you might be creating an image in your head of a man that you would actually be interested in, even

though such a man doesn't exist. then, instead of admitting you aren't attracted to men, you can just say that you have high standards and haven't met a man that meets them.

keep your high standards, babe, but also recognize that usually people that are attracted to men can think of one they actually know when they want to get off.

ARE YOU ATTRACTED TO MALE CELEBRITIES?

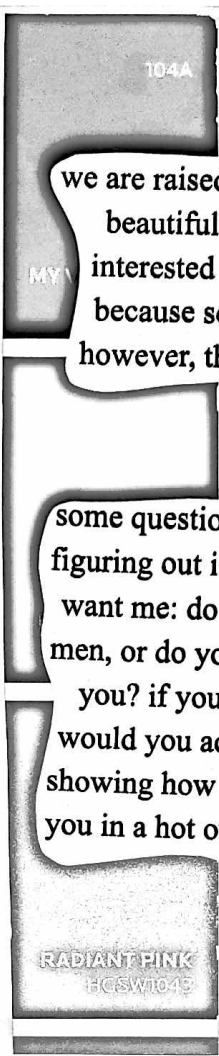
if i had a dollar for every time i've heard the phrase "i think i'm a lesbian, but i would definitely fuck harry styles if i had the chance so.... maybe not," then i'd have about \$50. the first thing i would argue is that we're all attracted to harry styles because he looks like a woman, but i could write a whole other zine about that...



we live in a society that worships men, so it's completely normal for people to believe that male celebrities are attractive; we have put them on a pedestal and been told that they are the pinnacle of beauty. being attracted to male celebrities doesn't mean that you're not allowed to be a lesbian! instead of discrediting yourself by thinking about male celebrities that you know nothing about, think about men you know in real life. if you can't think of multiple men that you actually know and want to be with, take that as a sign. any "attraction" you feel to men might be more of a cultural phenomenon than a biological urge.

think about a man that you find attractive.

DO YOU PERSONALLY WANT HIM AND HIS BODY, OR DO YOU JUST WANT HIM TO WANT YOUR BODY?



we are raised to believe that the only way to be successful and beautiful is to get a conventionally attractive man to be interested in us. it's normal to want to be wanted by men, because society tells us that our worth is tied up in them. however, that's not attraction, it's just a natural response to patriarchy.

some questions/scenarios that i found helpful when it came to figuring out if i actually wanted men or if i just wanted men to want me: do you actually feel the urge to flirt with or pursue men, or do you just like playing along so that they will pursue you? if you stopped having sexual experiences with men, would you actually miss those experiences, or just miss men showing how much they're into you? you want men to look at you in a hot outfit and be drawn to you, but have you ever felt that way about one of them?

DO YOU EVER FEEL JEALOUS WHEN YOU SEE A GUY INTERESTED IN ANOTHER GIRL?

lesbians often think that jealousy means they are interested in the guy that they feel it around, but in retrospect realize that they were either

1) into the girl and felt like they had to compete with the guy for her attention



2) jealous that she was getting male validation and they weren't

IF YOU'VE HAD A SEXUAL EXPERIENCE WITH A MAN, WHAT DID YOU FEEL DURING IT?

IF YOU'VE HAD A SEXUAL EXPERIENCE WITH A MAN, WHAT DID YOU FEEL AFTER IT?

dissociating (feeling like you aren't really *in* your body)

being bored with sex with men, but doing it anyway because it's just what people do

common lesbian experiences (not universal, not exhaustive):

spending the whole time trying to look or sound hot, instead of enjoying yourself

just wanting to please the man, but not really wanting him to please you

sex gets a lot of hype. it's common for lesbians to have sex with a man and leave thinking something along the lines of, "is that really what everyone's talking about?" sometimes, two people simply aren't sexually compatible, but if you are consistently unimpressed by the men in your head or your physical bed, that may be a sign that you're not really attracted to them.

while this might seem like a no-brainer, it's not always immediately obvious if you're into sex with men or not - i had it for years before i looked back and realized a pattern of discomfort and displeasure. the power of compulsory heterosexuality is real: it can be hard to weed out your true feelings amongst the score of institutions telling you that you're into men.

the right label for you will be one that involves sexual experiences that make you understand why everyone thinks sex is so awesome.

think about the possibility of living with a man for decades,
perhaps as his wife.

DOES THAT EXCITE YOU?

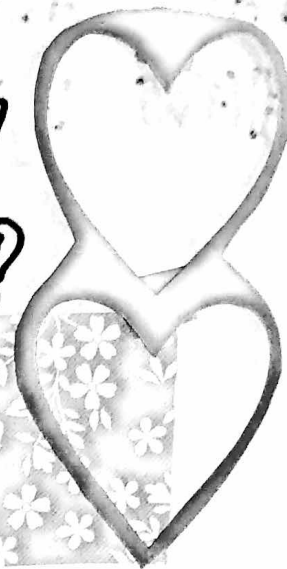
a few common lesbian experiences: feeling that it is inevitable that you will marry a man, but dreading it. thinking that you're just commitment-phobic and don't want a male partner, but having it feel very natural to quickly progress in relationships with women/nb people. feeling like you *have* to escalate relationships with men to a new level because you've been together for a certain amount of time, but having natural, exciting escalation with women/nb people.



mutual attraction involves excitement to spend time together, and possibly build a home life together (though not all couples wish to do so). if you find the idea of being a man's long-term partner more repulsive than romantic, remind yourself that the right label for you will allow you to be in relationships that you're *excited* to invest in.

think about men that you've had "crushes" on.

HOW DID THEY MAKE YOU FEEL?



stick with me through this very specific experience that i hope is helpful and relatable, but may only be something that happened to me: whenever i had "crushes" on men, and anything they did wasn't as perfect as i wanted it to be, or didn't go according to my plan to naturally escalate our relationship, i got really mad at them. when i was mad, i took that as a sign that i was really *into* them, because i believed that love involved passionate cycles of highs and lows (intense anger would eventually lead to intense love).

the media tells us that all passionate, loving relationships involve screaming and crying and kissing in the rain, and that roller coaster emotions are part of any great love story. in reality, a healthy relationship should make us feel supported happy, and safe to be vulnerable. of course, arguments are normal, but if you are angry at the people you're "romantically interested in" more often than not, it may be a sign that you're trying to make a certain shoe fit, when it was never meant for your foot.

the right label for you will allow you to be in relationships that you don't have to force yourself to find enjoyment in.

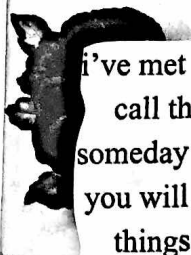
THINK ABOUT CALLING YOUR

HOW DOES THAT ♡ ♡

SELF A LESBIAN RIGHT NOW...

♡ ♡ MAKE YOU FEEL???

PANSY



i've met quite a few lesbians that at one point didn't want to call themselves that, because they worried that perhaps someday they *might* like a man. and maybe they will! maybe you will too. as we have new experiences, we discover new things about ourselves, and a new label to describe our attraction might come along with those realizations. right now, however, you shouldn't hold yourself back from choosing something that feels right to you just because you think that what feels "right" might eventually change.

LAVENDER

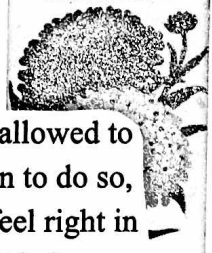


MOON FLOWER

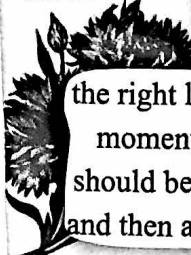


labels and identities are constantly in flux. you are allowed to change!! if all you've been waiting for is permission to do so, consider this it. the label you choose now may not feel right in another 2, 5, 10, or 20 years, but if in this moment, it helps you feel understood, seen, and part of a loving community, use it. allow yourself to redefine yourself whenever and however you need to in order to feel those things.

CANDYTUFT

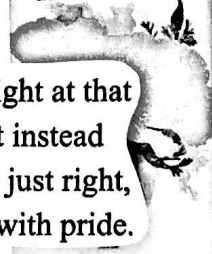


BACHELOR'S BUTTON

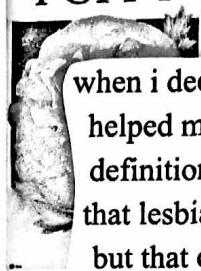


the right label for you is whatever feels like home right at that moment. this should not be chosen out of fear, but instead should be a process of trying things on until they fit just right, and then allowing yourself to wear that identity out with pride.

CALIFORNIA POPPY



POPPY



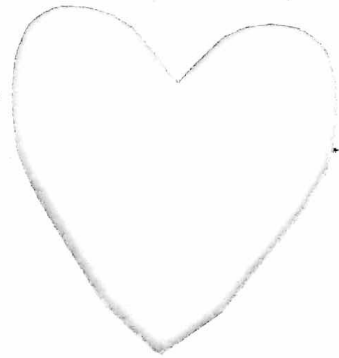
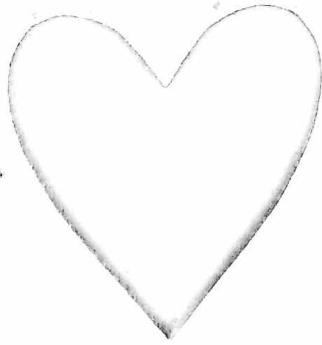
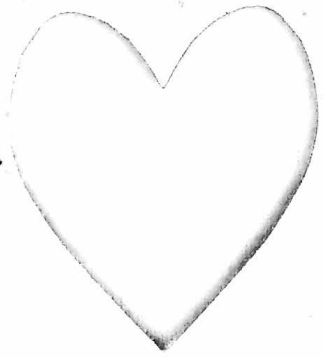
when i decided to use the label "lesbian," something that really helped me was reminding myself that i get to create my own definition for that word. a simple google search will tell you that lesbians are "women who are attracted to other women," but that definition doesn't encompass all that i want it to. to me, being a lesbian is about the beauty of pushing back against male-centered narratives to create my own with other people that identify as women/nb. it's about honoring the lesbians and trans-women that came before me, who made such a counter-culture love a possibility. it's about celebrating femininity in all its forms. i hope that you feel free to craft your own identity as well.

CANTERBURY BELLS



we love to make it hard for ourselves to just do what we want. we put up a lot of barriers and gate-keep ourselves from identities that we really want to be a part of. and for what? you think you can't be lesbian, bi, pan, gay, or any other queer identity because it's taken you this long to figure it out? have some forgiveness for yourself, babe. coming into your queerness is hard when there are loads of forces telling you that it's abnormal. give yourself permission to choose whatever label feels right to you, without having to justify it. you deserve that.

♡ alexa :)



a resource that i found very helpful when i was questioning my attraction to men was tumblr user *that diabolical feminist's* post "common experiences of lesbians that don't know they're lesbians yet." you can check it out here:

<https://thatdiabolicalfeminist.tumblr.com/post/164526814159/common-experiences-of-lesbians-who-dont-know>

zines are meant to be shared! after you've read this one, pass it on to a friend, and tell them to do the same:)

my name is alexa sorensen, and i wrote this zine. i am a 20 year old artist from minnesota, and i aim to create things that encourage people to question why they do the things they do. you can find out more about me at alexasorensen.com or

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