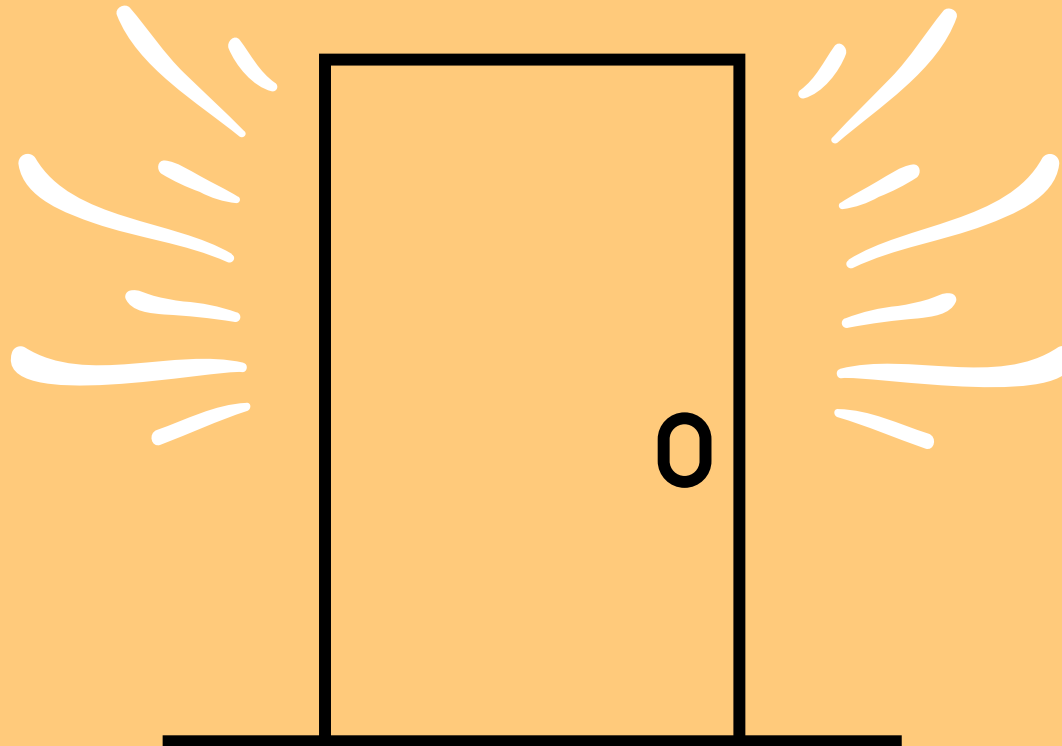


a queer sex ed community curriculum zine



Why do I have to come out?

A zine exploring the social historical context of "coming out."

- I. Vocabulary
- II. Why are people expected to come out?
- III. A (brief) history of coming out
- IV. Identity changes over time
- V. Why does identity change over time?
- VI. Shifting expectations about "coming out"
- VII. Being "out" is not a measure of queerness

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Vocabulary

"Coming out"

The act of claiming (often publically) a queer identity.

"Outing"

The non-consensual act of publically revealing someone's queer identity.

Heteronormativity

The societal assumption that people are heterosexual by default.

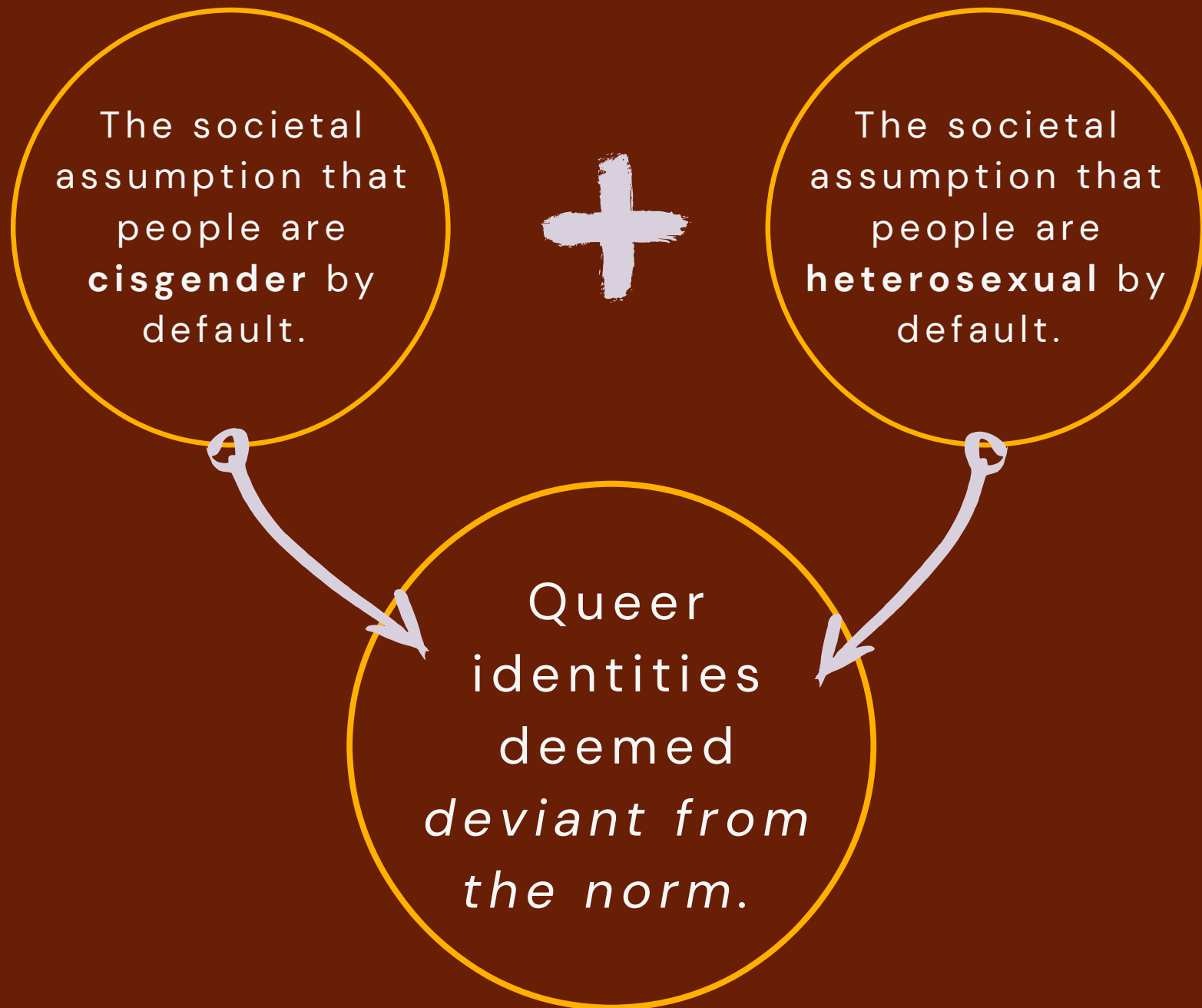
Cisnormativity

The societal assumption that people are cisgender by default.



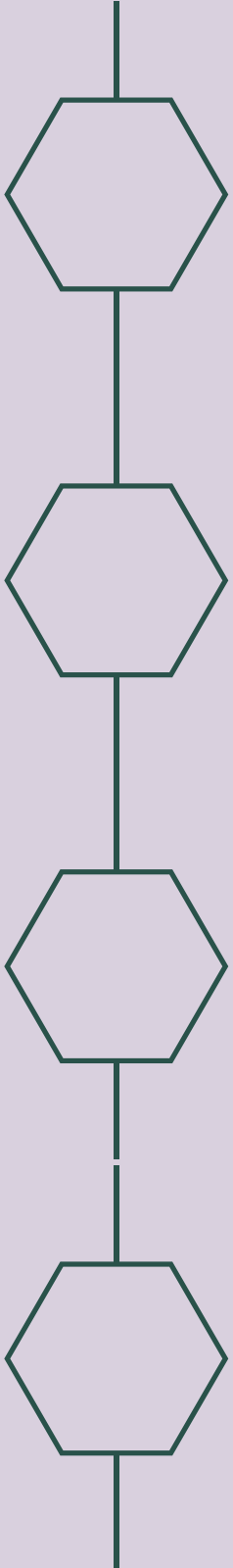
Why are people expected to come out?

Queer people are often expected to carry the burden of creating *space & recognition* of their identities, due to misinformed societal expectations.





A (brief) history of coming out:



For most of history (and in many places today) **coming out was not an option**: it was (and is) too life-threatening. Most people never came out in Western societies.

The terms **homosexuality** and **heterosexuality** weren't conceptualized until the *late 19th century*, where they were used primarily as a **medical diagnosis**. In other words, there was nothing to "come out" as.

"Coming out" became **popularized** in the late 20th century, as celebrities began to **publically "come out."** Queer identities became more visible in popular media, and "coming out" became a viable option for some people.

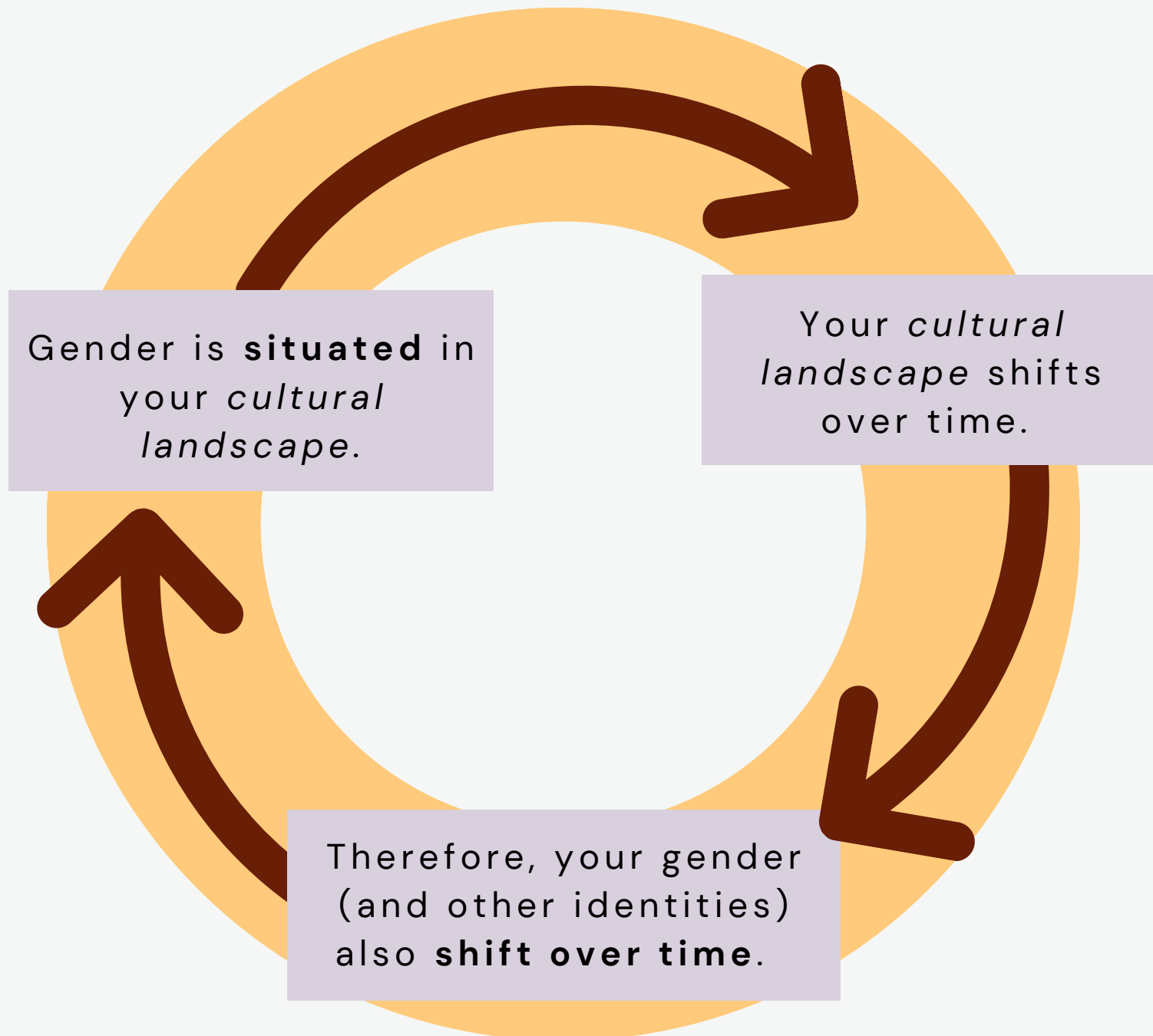
In Western societies today, there exists a **narrative** that "coming out" is *necessary to being queer*, or is an essential step in becoming confident or powerful while being queer. **This narrative can be harmful** to people who cannot or don't want to "come out" publically.



Identities change over time.

Gender and sexual orientation are not innate or **biological**. They are **fluid** and **situated**.

This means they can change over time.





Why does identity change over time?

All gender identities and sexual orientations are constructed. They are influenced by the culture someone grows up in.

As cultural ideas about gender and sexuality shift and change, the constructs of gender and sexuality change.

“

Gender is a location on an ever-changing landscape.

ANNE FAUSTO-STERLING

”

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Shifting expectations about "coming out."

- 1 Don't assume everyone is cis or straight. This is not the default or "natural" state.
- 2 Recognize that queer people are not the only people with gender, pronouns, and sexual orientation.
 - Cis people have a gender identity.
 - Straight people have a sexual orientation.
- 3 Validate and celebrate the fluidity of queer identities. Allow for and expect your identity to change as you change, and grow as you grow.
- 4 Don't "out" anybody. It's non-consensual and often traumatizing.



Being "out" is not a measure of your queerness.

Although "coming out" can be **liberating** for some folks, it can also be **violating** or potentially **dangerous**.

You can "*come out*" or "*stay in*" to your **comfort** level.

