

# Authenticity and Complex Identity: Sex, Gender, Orientation, Relationships, and Sexual Behavior

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*When a baby is born, we lift them up and declare “it’s a boy” or “it’s a girl.” With one fell swoop a child’s gender identity, orientation, life experience, sexual behaviors and social interactions have been painted upon them... but we are more complex than that. In this class we will examine homosocial behavior, transgender issues, heterosexuality, chromosomes beyond xx/xy, and the cultures that affect our assumptions. From gender roles to colonized language, academic theory to personal experience, let’s look at humanity through a broader lens! Buckle up for a wild ride through the diversity of the human experience.*

Sex – Gender – Orientation – Sexual Behavior – Intimacy – Relationships

We often assume that these things line up in the way we expect, however...

- Sex is the body we have
- Assigned gender is what we were told we were at birth
- Gendered behavior is the things we do
- Perceived gender is how other people see us
- Legal gender is what the government says we are
- Gender identity is how we see ourselves
- Orientation is who we are attracted to
- Sexual behavior is what we do with our bodies

## Sex

- Aka Gender of Anatomy, Biological Sex of anatomy
- Chromosomes
  - Expected: XX, XY
- But there are so many other possibilities
  - XXY
  - Intersex conditions / Disorders of Sex Development (DSDs)
  - Chimaerism (mixture of two fertilized eggs)
  - Mosaicism (patchwork of cells)
  - ...and more <http://www.nature.com/news/sex-redefined-1.16943>
- Hormones
  - Estrogen, Progesterone; Testosterone... everyone has all of these

## Primary Sex Traits

	Female	Male
Gonads	Ovaries	Testes
Traits	Clitoral Crura, Vagina, Uterus, Fallopian Tubes; Labia, Vulva, Glans Clitoridis, Clitoral Hood, Perineal Urethra, Gräfenberg Spot, Skene’s Gland, Bartholin’s Glands	Corpora Cavernosa, Urethra, Prostate, Seminal Vesicles; Glans Penis, Scrotum, Phallus, Foreskin, Fused Perineum, Epididymis, Bulbourethral Glands

- Privilege of language for genitals for children
  - Boys get a penis/pee-pee, girls get a “down there”
  - Girls not shown it is okay to touch “down there,” expected for boys

## Secondary Sex Traits

	Breasts, menstrual cycle, hourglass form, shorter height, more body fat	Facial and body hair, triangular form, higher height, less body fat
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- Differences of “norm” based on ethnic and familial diversity
- Stereotypes as to what is considered “girly” or “boyish” based on a specific ethnic or cultural experience

## Assigned Gender

- Aka Gender of Assignment
- Gender assigned based on biological expression (at birth or pre-natal; often “best guess”)
- Based on Expected Genders
  - It’s a Boy! It’s a Girl!
  - Intersexed and mixed gonadal dysgenesis (hermaphroditism)
  - Parental and medical community discomforts and reactions (1 in 5,000 hesitation, 1 in 20,000 drawn out process due to ambiguity)
  - Surgeries and interventions
  - Legalities of being assigned only male or female at birth
- Cultural meaning of what that gender “means” for the rest of their lives
- Most often aligns with Gender of Rearing
  - Challenges raising children beyond binary if only 2 “options” exist

## But Genders Can Be More Complex!

- Agender, Intersex, Bigender, MtF, Male-to-Female, FtM, Female-to-Male, Genderfluid, Gender Neutral, GenderQueer, Man, Woman, Womyn, Third Gendered, Boi, Grrl, Pangender, Omnigender, Gender Variant, Trans\*, Demi-Girl, Demi-Boy, NonBinary, Non-Gendered, Genderfuck, Transman, Transwoman, Trans Man; Trans Woman; Woman, Man, Andro, Gender Non-Conforming, Womyn, Boy, Girl, Butch, Femme, Other, Andro, Multigendered, Gender-Bender, Androgynous, Transsexual, Transgender, Cis-Gender
- Activities or Genders? Transvestite, Crossdresser, Drag King, Drag Queen
- Descriptors within gender, or Genders? Butch, Femme, Genderqueer, Androgynous

## Other Terms & Cultural Appropriation

- Akava’ine (Cook Islands Māori); Ashtime (Maale, Southern Ethiopia); Bianxing (China); Bajasa (Celebes); Baklâ (Philippines); Bantut (Toasug of Philippines); Bayot (Cebuano/Philippines); Bissu (Indonesia); Biza’ah (Teotilán); Burrnesha/Virjinesha (aka Sworn Virgins, Balkans); Ergi (Norse); Fa’afafine (Samoa); Fakaleiti (Tongan); Femminiello (Napoleonic France); Hijra (India, Bangladesh and Pakistan); Kathoey (Thailand); Khawaja Sara (Pakistan); Lakin-on (Philippines); Machi (Mapuche of Chile); Māhū (Polynesia); Mahu Wahine (Hawai’ian); Maknyah (Malaysia) Mangaiko (Mbo of Democratic Republic of Congo); Mashoga (Kenya); Mollies (England 18<sup>th</sup> Century); Mukhannathun (Middle East); Muxe (Mexico); Sādhin (India); Takatāpui (Māori); Travestí/y (Brazil); Tritiya-prakriti (India); Two-Spirit (North America); Uranian (England 19<sup>th</sup> Century); Waria (Indonesia); Whakawahine (Māori of New Zealand); X-Jendā (Japan)
- Slurs or reclaimed language in any given culture (Bakla v. Ladyboy, Hijra as slur but also accurate term, so khawaja sara has come into popularity)
- Gender v. orientation is not always a simple line
- Use in culture or origin v. cultural appropriation (Two-Spirit outside of Aboriginal population)

## Colonization & Gender Language

- “Trans” makes an assumption of “Across” in a binary
- Forcing use of language or expectations is neither useful nor kind

- Much of this terminology is discussed and crafted by a predominantly affluent (and/or access to computer), Caucasian, Western, educated group and later imposing on other populations
- Binary expectations for medical and legal transition
  - Dressing as the “opposite” gender (invalidation of trouser-clad women and dandy men)
  - Creating a vision of a “real man/woman” invalidating all men and women
  - Orientation requirements for transition
  - State to state, country to country legal differences (if possible at all)
  - Access to care
  - Sexual Reassignment Surgery v. Gender Affirming Medical Procedures – Have you had “the surgery” to make one “real”
  - Invalidation of men who small penises, erectile dysfunction et al as being “real men” by the same logic; or women who have had hysterectomies or are infertile as not being “real women” in culture – the capacity for breeding and/or penis-in-vagina sexual contact as the validity of gender
- Safety, “passing” and privilege
  - What matters more? – Safety, Family, Personal Expression, Community, Culture, Religion, Individual Identity
  - Access to money and care
  - Race – Black and Latina Transwomen at higher risk of STDs, homelessness, violence
  - What does a person have to “lose”?

## Gendered Behavior

- Aka Gender Role, Gender Stereotypes
  - ✓ Wardrobe
  - ✓ Career
  - ✓ Housework
  - ✓ Decision Making
  - ✓ Childcare and education
  - ✓ Communication style
  - ✓ Sexuality
- All based on a cultural context
- “Masculinizing” women for feminism vs. Empowering femininity
  - Women in suits sexy, men in dresses weak
  - Disempowering the color pink

## Layers of Gender

- Gender Identity
  - Fixed and acknowledged identities ; Transient and shifting identities
  - Generational and cultural language
    - Trans\* v. Crossdresser (generational)
    - Butch Dyke v. Aggressive (Caucasian v. African American)
- Perceived Gender
  - Cultural context (e.g. heteronormative spaces v. queer spaces)
  - Who is the viewer?
  - Gender Privilege (or loss thereof)
- Expected Gender
  - Expected binaries; fear and/or discrimination based on ambiguity or uncertainty
  - Gendering of base tongue in Latin languages: e.g. la manzana, el gato
  - Gender expected based on who you are within a heteronormative culture
- Legal Gender

## Sexual Orientation

- Homosexual, Heterosexual, Bisexual, Asexual, Demisexual, Nonsexual, Pansexual, Omnisexual, Sapiosexual
- Bisensual, Heteroflexible, Homoflexible, BiCurious, Questioning
- Straight, Gay, Lesbian, Queer, Dyke, Fag
- MSM, On The Down Low, Aggressive, Str8, Stone, Same Gender Loving
- Androphilia, Gynephilia, Kinky

## Orientation Labels & Categorization

- Who are you attracted to?
- More than an attraction, a Culture (Gay, Lesbian, Queer)
  - Survivor triggers for those who were beaten/oppressed using those terms
- Labels from outside, labels from inside: who do these labels “help”?
- Splits in communities (e.g. IaoPoC MtF/Crossdressers in gay rights movement later marginalized out of their own work due to not “really being gay.”)

## Sexual Behavior

- How does each person define “sex”?
- MSM, On the Down Low (behavioral vs. identity)
- Sapiosexual, Kinky, Leather, Fetish, Power Exchange as sexual identity/gender/leading behavior
- Behaviors based on situation: Prison, out at sea, college experimentation – while maintaining base/core identity (e.g. not gay unless on the bottom)

## Layers of Orientation

- Personal Sexual Identity
- Perceived Orientation and Identity
  - Cultural context (e.g. heteronormative spaces v. queer spaces)
  - Who is the viewer?
  - Privilege “passing” as heterosexual
    - Femme Lesbian, “Bro” Gay Men, Str8
  - Invisibility and loss of privilege for “passing”
    - Excluded for being seen as Straight person/couple
    - Pros/Cons of Being in the closet
  - Queer
    - Queer as Slang for Gay/Lesbian
    - Politically Queer
    - Queer as Queering expectation
    - Heterosexual Queer as Sexual Orientation
- Legality of Orientations
  - In Iran, being transgender is legal, but being homosexual is not
- Expected Orientations, Identities and Labels
  - Homosexual was not a word in use until 1868
  - Sapphism, Sodomite, Tribadism, Pogue, Fairy, Sexual Inverts, Confirmed Bachelor, Temperamental, Horatian, Pederasty [originally just adolescent boys, 19th century all homosexuals], The Crime That Cannot Be Spoken
  - Interestingly, Sappho had relations with both men and women, and woman to woman relations were not mentioned in bible

## **Intimacy & Connection**

What is intimate to each person?

- Sex
- Friendship
- Romance
- Courtship

## **Friendship**

- Homosocial, Heterosocial, Bisocial, Pan/Omnisocial, Asocial, Sapiosocial
- Before “homosexual” was a word, physical affection far more common between men in the Western world (transplanted homophobia)
  - Separate homosocial worlds is still the norm in most parts of the world
  - Men holding hands in many parts of the middle east is seen as normal without an automatic overlay of sexual assumption
- Dating on the “hunt” while valuing the emotions of your friends
- Friendship behaviors – What does friendship “look like”?
- Expected friendships based on culture

## **Romance & Courtship**

- Romantic Orientation & Identity
  - Who do you want to date?
  - Homoromantic, Heteroromantic, Biromantic, Aromantic, Pan/Omniromantic, Sapioromantic
- Romantic Behaviors
  - 5 Love Languages – Touch, Quality Time, Gifts, Words of Affirmation, Acts of Service
- Perceived Romantic Connections
- Expected Romantic Connections
  - Courtly Love
  - Arranged Marriage may or may not have romance or love

## **Relationship Styles**

- Monogamy
- Non-Monogamy
- Non-Partnered
- Blended, Complex & Extended Families

## **Monogamy**

- Sexual Monogamy
  - What counts as sex?
- Social Monogamy
  - Who knows about details of a relationship
- Emotional Monogamy
  - Monogamy v. Monoamory
- Serial Monogamy
  - Often not mentioned because it has become the “norm”
  - If any “alternative” relationship were the “norm,” would we even mention it?

## **Non-Monogamy**

- Polygamy, Polyandry, Polygyny and Group Marriage
- Polyamory (+/- = marriage or fidelity)
  - Different shapes and structures
    - Circles, Triangles, Wheel Spokes, Polycules
    - Hierarchy, Egalitarian
- Non-Monogamy
  - Outside exceptions, Open Marriage and Swinging
    - Not everyone agrees on Polyamory v. Swinging definitions; Polyfuckery
    - What stays “just ours?”
  - Don’t Ask Don’t Tell
  - Monogamish (e.g. shared threesomes)
  - Legalities: Gay Marriage, Group Marriage, Domestic Partnerships
- Race, class and gender biases:
  - Polyamory/open love vs. baby-mama
    - Polyamory initially as language represented by Caucasian middle-class and upper-middle class voices
    - Bias of government services, one is “alternative” and the other is “amoral”
  - Ethical Sluts v. Players
  - Consent of all partners
- Emotional Non-Monogamy
  - Widowhood/Widowerhood
  - Child rearing structures and co-parenting
  - Complex families, Extended families
  - Blended families

## **Layers of Relationships**

- Personal Relationship Identity
  - May or may not match behaviors (e.g. Polyamory identity, monogamy as behavior)
- Perceived Relationship
  - Relationship behaviors, does it look like it “should”
- Legality of Relationship
  - Interracial, gay and group marriages
  - “Beards” and other tools to masquerade relationships
- Expected Relationships, Identities and Labels
  - Dictates and expectations of culture, religion, upbringing
  - Culture affecting religion, religion affecting culture, all 3 affecting gender, intimacy, sexual behavior, orientation and relationship styles

## **Authenticity and Complex Identity**

Sex – Gender – Orientation – Sexual Behavior – Intimacy – Relationships...

What it looks like to you isn’t what it looks like to anyone else.

Such is the beauty of the multitude of humanity.