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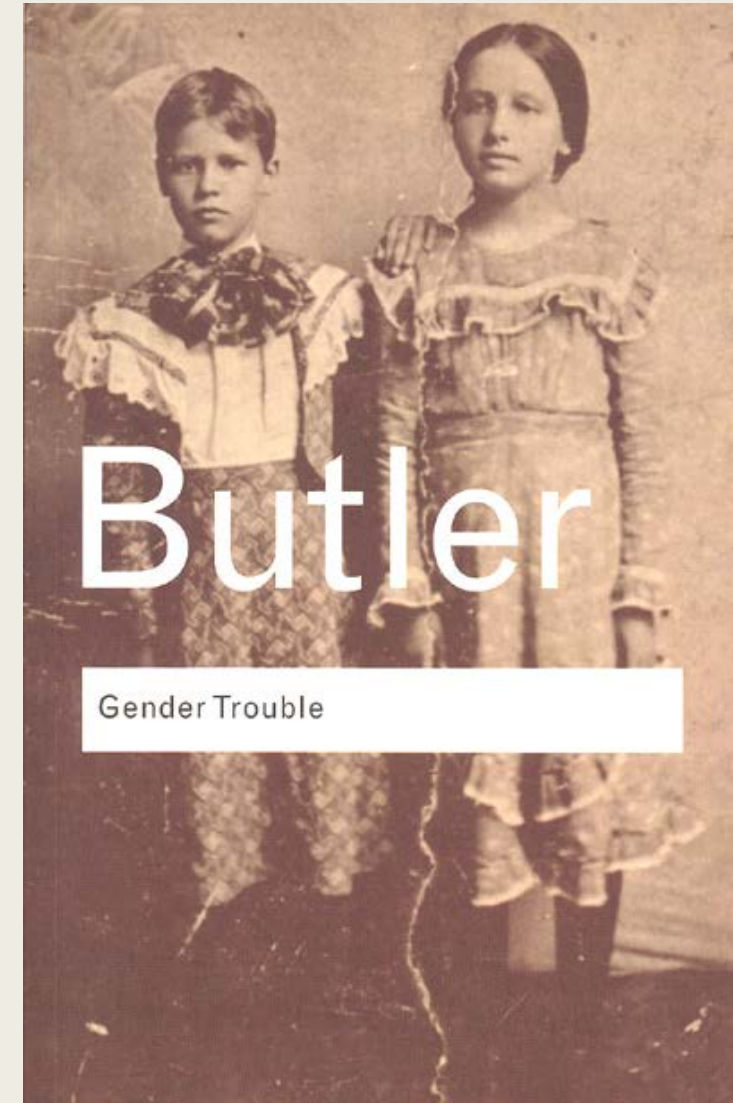
DEFINING GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Defining gender and sexuality

- Gender is...
- Sexuality is...
- Queering gender and sexuality

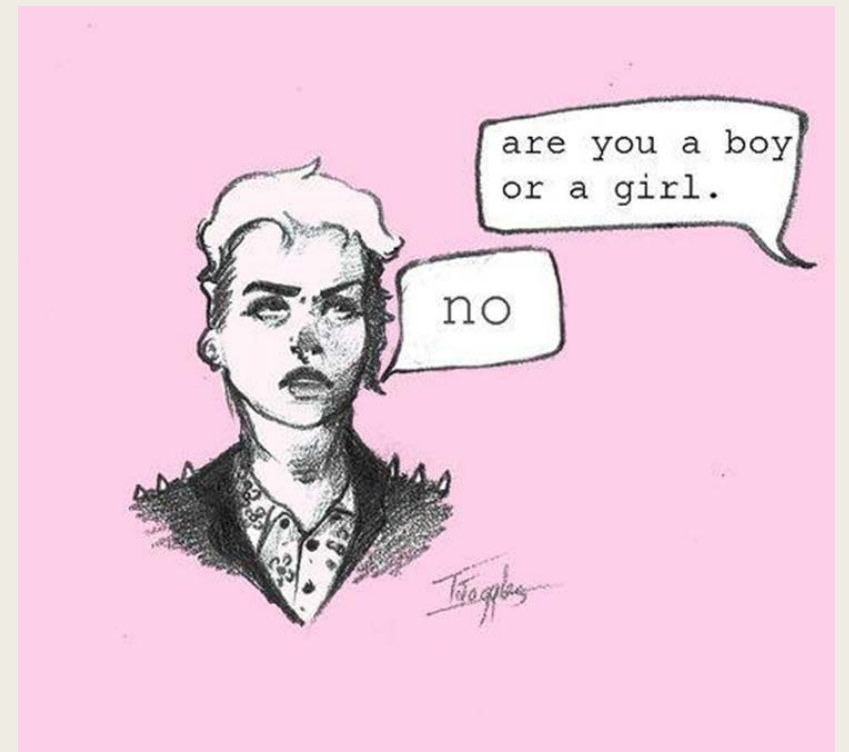
What is queer theory?

- The term queer theory is credited to Teresa de Lauretis, “Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities,” special issue of *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 3 (1991).
- Developed from feminist studies, gender studies and lesbian and gay studies of the 1970s and 1980s that began to question the notion of gender and sexuality as fixed entities.
- Seminal work published in 1990, Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble*.



QUEER THEORY

- Insists that traditional binaries of gender and sexuality are not 'fixed' stable categories of identity, but always shifting and changing across time and space.
- Challenges heterosexuality as the standard by which all sexual identities are 'measured'.
- Also considers other social identity markers, e.g. race, class.
- Binaries/categories are not 'benign, but determine allocations of social power and authority – who has power and who is marginalized.





I am born with a fixed sex



My sex determines my gender



I have desire for the opposite
sex



I am born with a body

I am assigned a sex and gender

I am taught to perform an identity

I may have desires



Gender norms change over time and space



**MEN
WOULDN'T
LOOK AT ME
WHEN I WAS
SKINNY**

but...

**Since I Gained 10 Pounds
This New, Easy Way
I Have All the Dates I Want**

NOW there's no need to be "skinny" and friendless, even if you never could gain an ounce before. Here's a new, easy treatment that is giving thousands attractive flesh—in just a few weeks!

Doctors for years have prescribed yeast to build up health. But now, with this new yeast discovery in little tablets, you can get far greater tonic results—regain health, and also put on pounds of firm flesh, enticing curves—and in a far shorter time.

Not only are thousands quickly gaining beauty-bringing pounds, but also clear skin, freedom from indigestion and constipation, new pep.

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No matter how skinny and weak you may be, or how long you have been that way, this marvelous new Ironized Yeast should build you up in a few short weeks as it has thousands. If you are not delighted with the results of the very first package, your money will be instantly refunded.

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To start you building up your health right away, we make this absolutely FREE offer. Purchase a package of Ironized Yeast tablets at once, cut out the seal on the box and mail it to us with a clipping of this paragraph. We will send you a fascinating new book on health, "New Facts About Your Body," by a well-known authority. Remember, results are guaranteed with the very first package—or money refunded. At all druggists, Ironized Yeast Co., Inc., Dept. 284, Atlanta, Ga.

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Gender is performative







Defining gender in the OED

- Feminine: 'having qualities or an appearance traditionally associated with women, especially delicacy and prettiness'. E.g. *'these flowers add a feminine touch to the table'*.
- Masculine: 'having qualities or an appearance traditionally associated with men'. E.g. *he is outstandingly handsome and robust, very masculine'*.

Defining gender (from Thesaurus.com)

■ Masculine is...

Manly
Muscular
Brave
Adult
Honourable
Powerful
Strong
Virile
Red-blooded

Male is...

Masculine, macho, potent, virile

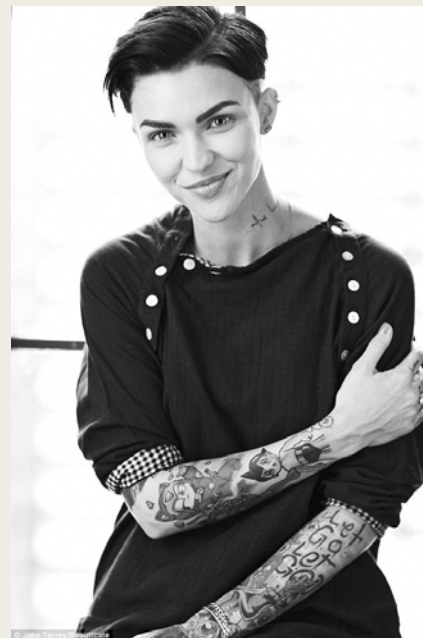
■ Feminine is...

Ladylike
Soft
Dainty
Female
Tender
Womanly
Modest
Gentle
Womanish
Effeminate

Female is...

Feminine, fertile, maternal

Gender trouble



Queer theory breaks the connection between sex, gender and sexuality



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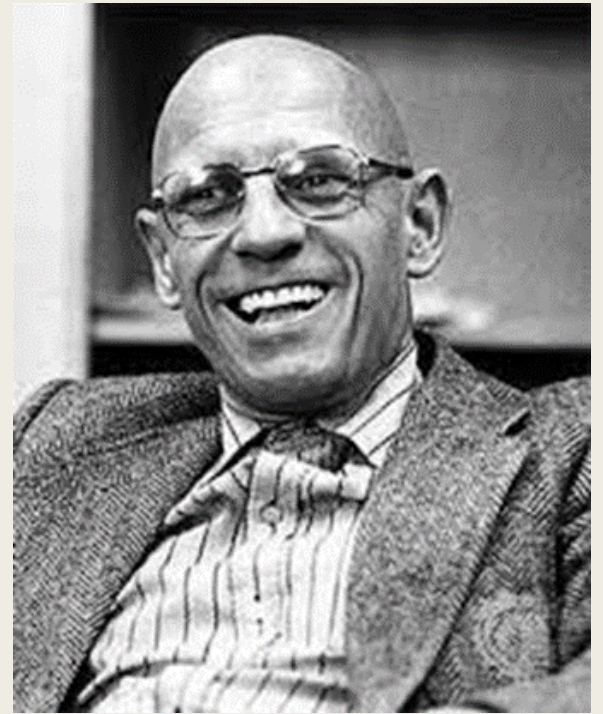
Coming out of the closet

Key thinkers in queer sexualities: Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) and Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (1976)

We live according to a set of sexual 'scripts' – these are not fixed or natural, but socially-constructed.

Scripts and discourses change over time – Foucault refers to sexuality as a 'historical construct'.

Our sexuality is not dependent on our sex or gender identity.



Heteronormativity

- Coined by Michael Warner (1991)
- The 'normal' pattern of attraction is one man and one woman who embody conventional gender roles.
- Other forms of sexuality, gender and desire are treated as less 'normal' or natural.
- Straight privilege





Heteronormative social forces ‘pull a cloak of virtue around themselves by manufacturing a deviant other into which a great many people can be dumped and dismissed’ (Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemologies of the Closet*).

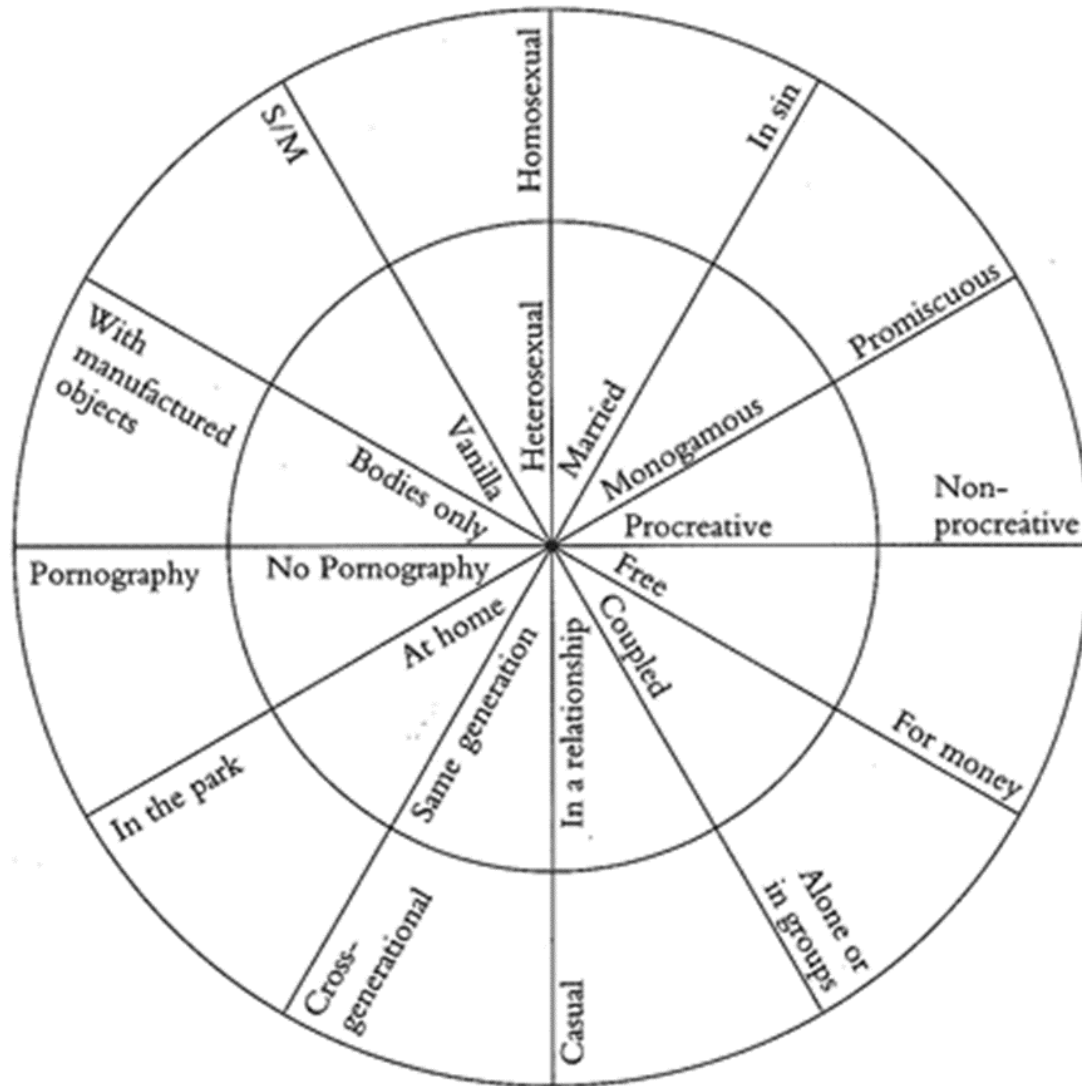


Cisnormativity

- The belief that people naturally or normally continue to identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.
- Marginalization of trans-identifying people as ‘abnormal’ or a threat.
- “When trans people can’t access public bathrooms we can’t go to school effectively, go to work effectively, access health-care facilities — it’s about us existing in public space...It’s really about us not existing — about erasing trans people.” Laverne Cox, 2017.



Other normativities

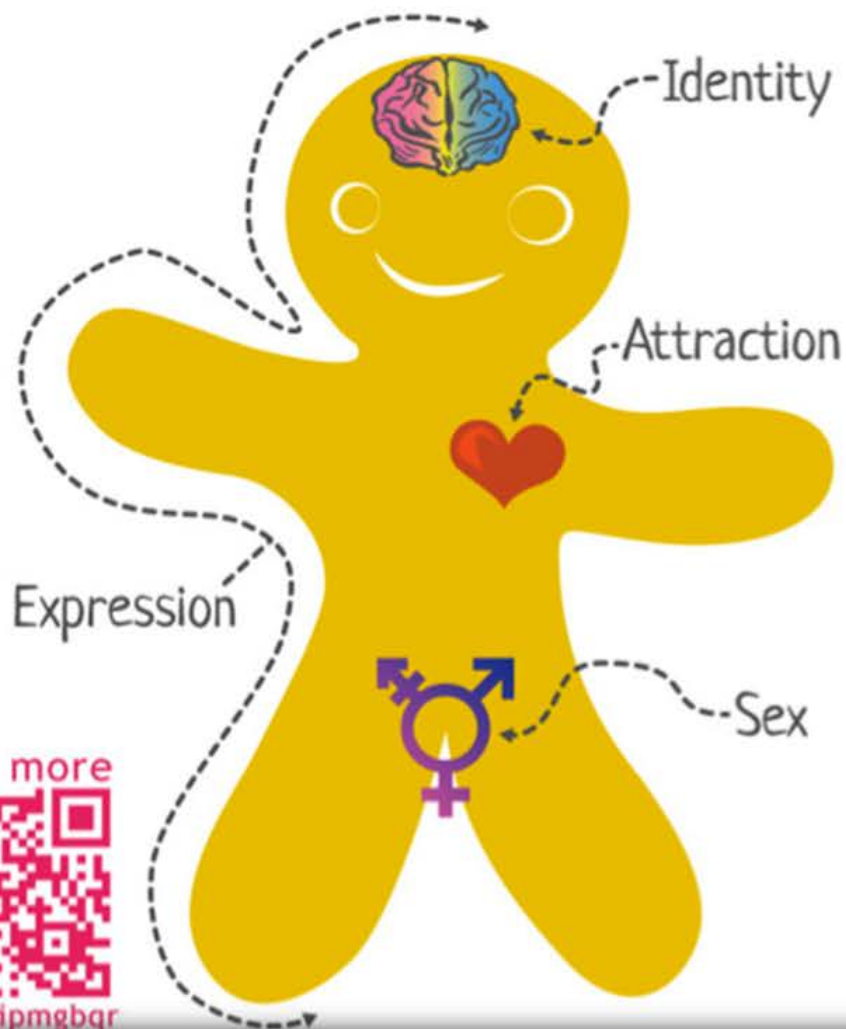


Gayle Rubin's 'charmed circle' of sexual preferences and desires (from *Thinking Sex*, 1984)

The Genderbread Person v2.0

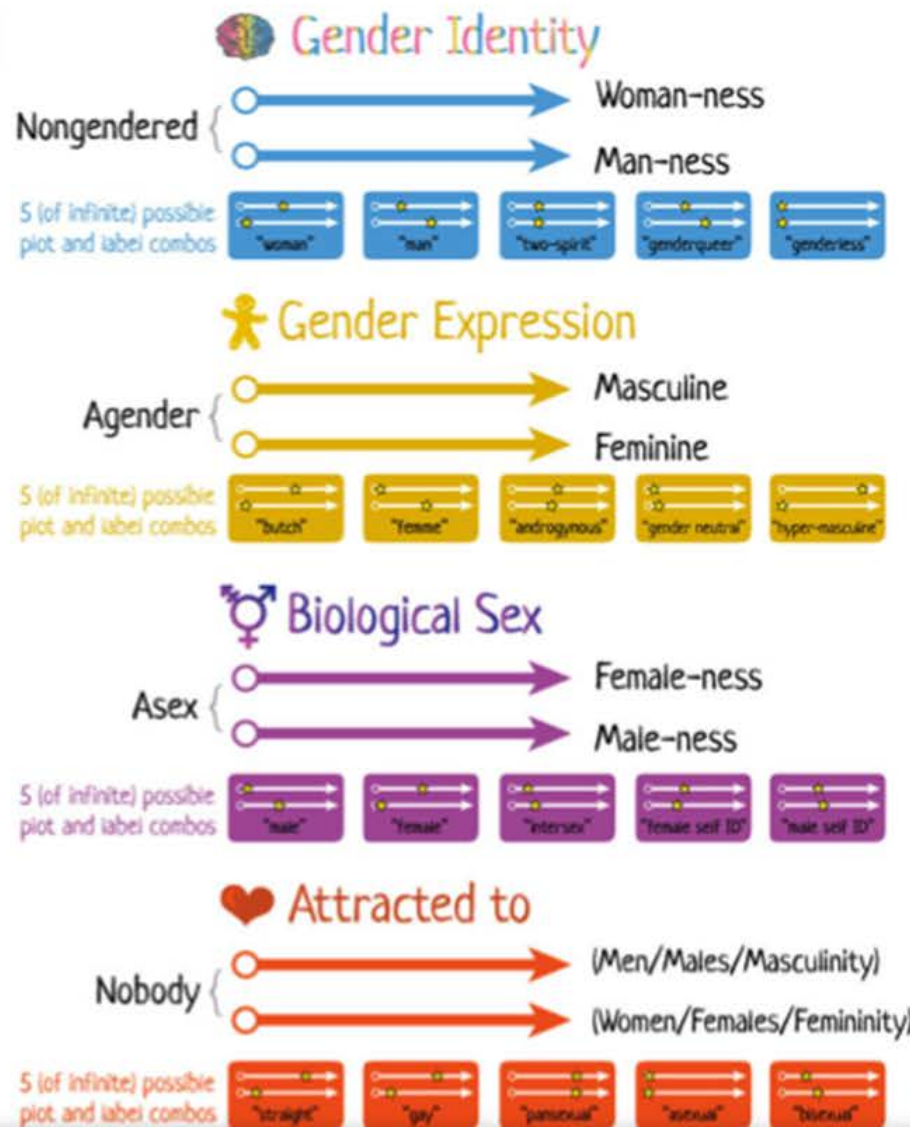
by its pronounced **METROsexual**.com

Gender is one of those things everyone thinks they understand, but most people don't. Like *Inception*. Gender isn't binary. It's not either/or. In many cases it's both/and. A bit of this, a dash of that. This tasty little guide is meant to be an appetizer for understanding. It's okay if you're hungry for more.



read more

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In this course



Queer theory vs. identity politics



Intersectionality

- Kimberlé Crenshaw: focussing on either race or sex does not fully capture the experiences of marginalized women who are at caught at the intersection, simultaneously experiencing multiple forms of discrimination.
- Criticism of second wave feminism – white, middle-class, heterosexual
 - ‘Dominant conceptions of discrimination condition us to think about subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis...[This] marginalizes those who are multiply-burdened and obscures claims that cannot be understood as resulting from discrete sources of discrimination’ (Crenshaw, ‘Demarginalizing’, 140)*

Other categories of identity : gender, ethnicity, religion, class/socio-economic status, sexuality, age, disability, nationality, etc...



What makes me who I am?

