Guest lecture:

Gender & Sexuality in Contemporary Society

Prof. Caleigh Windolf

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People are inherently uncomfortable talking about **sex and sexuality**.
Why the discomfort?

What factors make sex and sexuality so uncomfortable and awkward to discuss openly?
So, what happens?

Lack of education → Ignorance → Intolerance

**Intolerance** = ignorance + lack of empathy

→ Bigotry
→ Homophobia/transphobia
→ Shame, stigma
→ Sham/forced relationships or marriages
→ Mental health issues
→ Bullying, harassment, violence
→ Death (murder, suicide)
Think/Pair/Share: Part I

Instructions
- Take out a piece of paper. Write down thoughtful responses to the following:

1. What is gender?
2. What is sex?
3. How are the two terms similar or different?
Think/Pair/Share: Part II

Instructions:
- Share, compare and discuss your answers with a partner.
- Observe the similarities and/or differences between your responses.

Why am I having you do this?

To emphasize that our understandings of gender, sexuality and identity are fluid. To point out that sexual orientation and gender identity are separate concepts.
Gender and Sexuality: separate concepts

- The terms Gender and Sexuality are often conflated

- Gender and sexuality are not mutually deterministic identities. (ie- one does not determine the other)

- Most people exist along a gender continuum as well as a sexuality continuum (as opposed to fitting into rigid stereotypes)
Basic Terminology

- **Gender**: How a person identifies along a spectrum of male→female based on internal awareness (aka: gender identity; see below)
  
  *culturally based*

- **Sex**: Biological differences (sexual organs, chromosomes, hormonal profiles) which determine whether a person is male, female or intersex
  
  *biologically based*

- **Gender Identity**: A person’s sense of their own gender (“Do I feel I am male or female, neither, or something in between?”)
Basic Terminology cont’d

- **Gay and Lesbian**: People who identify as lesbian or gay have (or desire to have) an intimate relationship with individuals of the same gender.

- **Bisexual**: People who identify as bisexual have (or desire to have) an intimate relationship with individuals of the same or different gender.

- **Asexual**: People who identify as asexual do not desire to have sexually intimate relationships altogether.
Basic Terminology cont’d

- **Transgender**: A term for people whose gender identity does not match their birth sex; also used to describe people who define their gender outside of the ‘either/or’ male/female construct (ex: having no gender or multiple genders)

- **Cisgender**: A term for people whose gender identity matches their birth sex

- **Transsexual**: A *medical* term for people who transition from one recognizable sex to another through the use of hormones and/or surgical procedures

- **Transvestite**: An *obsolete* term for a cross-dresser (someone who dresses in clothing presumed by the dominant culture to be that of the opposite sex)
Basic Terminology cont’d

- **GenderQueer (aka- Gender Fluid, Gender Non-Binary)**: A term used to refer to individuals who do not have a fixed gender or who choose to not define themselves in strict gender categories.

- **LGBTQ**: Abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Transgender and Queer/Questioning.

- **Intersex**: A term used to refer to individuals born with a variety of conditions involving anomalies of the sex chromosomes, reproductive ducts and genitalia (often resulting in ambiguous genitalia).
Intersexuality In Nature
Social/Sexual Deviance...

- Although, in contemporary Western society, we are progressing more and more, heterosexuality still remains the general ‘norm’.

- Social/sexual deviancy = anything that deviates outside of the ‘norm’ (majority rule)

- Trans individuals are particularly prone to misunderstandings and, often, purposeful misrepresentation (transphobia)

- How does society react to perceived social or sexual deviance?
Misunderstanding & Misinformation in Mainstream Society
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Transgender people barred from driving in Russia

New Russian road safety regulations bar transsexuals, transvestites and others with sexual "disorders" from driving, ostensibly for medical reasons.
Reactions to Deviance in Mainstream Society

- Before coming out as a trans woman, Bruce Jenner (now Caitlyn Jenner) endured months of transphobic bullying.
- Here, he is (badly) photoshopped as woman in a U.S. tabloid:
Reactions to Deviance in Mainstream Society

- Even after coming out and transitioning, Caitlyn Jenner still faced transphobic rumors (which were reported as news) about ‘detransitioning’ (which is used to diminish and dismiss the trans experience)

- Notably, CBS News and The Washington Post reported the rumors as news, treating them as fact (and relevant journalism) – also reported as fact by Fox News, The Daily Mail (UK)

http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/05/12/why-was-the-media-so-quick-to-accept-caitlyn-jenner-detransition-rumors.html

- Is sexual orientation determined by biology/genes (nature) or by society and culture (nurture)?
  - Internal factors = nature
  - External factors = nurture
Nature vs. Nurture: Consensus?

- Strongest current scientific consensus: Sexual orientation seems to be influenced by biology (specifically chromosomal region $Xq28$ in males)

- Largest study of its kind (male only): *Molecular Genetic Study of Sexual Orientation*, at Chicago University, under the direction of Dr. Alan R. Sanders.
  - More than 800 gay brothers studied from 2003-2014
“Sexual orientation has nothing to do with choice. We found evidence for two sets [of genes] that affect whether a man is gay or straight. But it is not completely determinative; there are certainly... environmental factors involved.”

-Dr. Michael Bailey, study spokesperson