



# Love in Every Form

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN SEXUALITY AND GENDER IDENTITY

# What we'll be covering:

- ▶ Sexual orientation
- ▶ LGBTQ social stigma
- ▶ Nature V. Nurture debate
- ▶ The role of love and relationships
- ▶ Biological sex V. Gender
- ▶ Gender development and identity
- ▶ The Transgender community



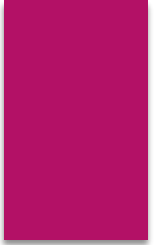
**L** Lesbian - a woman who's enduring attraction is to other women.

**G** Gay - a man who's enduring attraction is to other men. Some lesbian women prefer the term "gay".

**B** Bisexual - a person who's enduring attraction is to both men and women.

**T** Transgender – an umbrella term used for people who's gender identity differs from the gender they were assigned at birth.

**Q** Questioning – a person who is questioning their sexual orientation



Our goal tonight is to understand **sexual orientation** and **gender identity**. It is not required of you to change your beliefs on these concepts. It is your choice and your right to believe how you want. I will present, in an unbiased way, information about sex and gender from a psychological and sociological viewpoint. It is entirely up to you on how you interpret this information. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, you are free to leave. We will leave enough time to answer questions at the end.

# Craig: A Gay Man in a Straight World

- ▶ 30-year-old African American male
- ▶ Came to therapy experiencing anxiety and depression

- ▶ Graduated from a Christian college
- ▶ Played basketball and football
- ▶ Missionary work after college
- ▶ Relationship with dad
- ▶ **What might it feel like to be a gay man in a straight world?**



# Craig's Identity Crisis

Craig's biggest struggle throughout his life was trying to reconcile what he thought were the two sides of himself

## Self 1

- ▶ Loved his family and friends
- ▶ Strong member of his church and community
- ▶ Successful athlete
- ▶ Masculine persona

## Self 2

- ▶ Felt like he was living a sinful life
- ▶ Pressured himself not to act on his urges
- ▶ Felt like a failure
- ▶ Developed debilitating anxiety & depression in late adolescence

# Craig's Treatment

- ▶ Craig ended up leaving his church and disconnecting with his friends after college
- ▶ He attempted suicide multiple times throughout his 20's
- ▶ Started therapy when he was 30-years-old
- ▶ Treatment included helping Craig realize that those two different people (i.e. self 1 and self 2) were really the same person
- ▶ He found acceptance in who he was, and was able to release the guilt, shame, and embarrassment of his gay identity
- ▶ **How would you have helped Craig?**

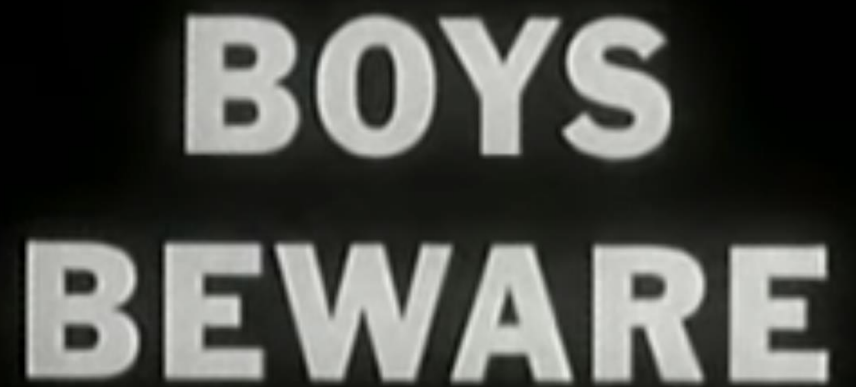
# Sexual Orientation

- ▶ **Sexual Orientation** – a physical, emotional, and/or romantic attraction to someone of the opposite sex (*heterosexuality*), someone of the same sex (*homosexuality*), or someone from either sex (*bisexuality*)
- ▶ Variations in sexual orientation are present in nearly every culture around the world, have existed throughout human history, and can be found in many species
- ▶ **How was homosexuality viewed in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?**
- ▶ **How was sexuality viewed in, for example, the 1950's?**



# Homosexuality: A Social Stigma

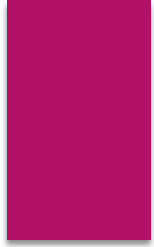
- ▶ Throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, homosexual behavior was seen as a “sickness of the mind”
- ▶ All homosexuals were assumed to be pedophiles and predators
- ▶ Gay and lesbian people lived a closeted life – **why?**
- ▶ Even the psychology community saw homosexuality as a mental disorder and was treated with psychotherapy, aversion therapy, and electroconvulsive therapy (electric shocks)



**BOYS  
BEWARE**

# Dr. Anonymous

- ▶ John E. Fryer, MD (Dr. Anonymous) was a psychiatrist and professor at Temple University from 1967 – 2000
- ▶ 1972 – at a meeting of the American Psychiatric Association, Dr. Fryer gave a speech about being a gay psychiatrist
- ▶ The meeting was called “Psychiatry: Friend or Foe to the Homosexual; A Dialogue”
- ▶ Homosexuality was removed as a mental disorder from the DSM
- ▶ Today, one major requirement for a mental disorder diagnosis is that the disorder causes distress in the patient



# Sexual Orientation: The Either-Or Dilemma

- ▶ One major contributor to our understanding of sexual orientation was Dr. Alfred Kinsey (1894 – 1956) – an American biologist who conducted over 18,000 face-to-face interviews with volunteers on their sexual histories and preferences
- ▶ Kinsey discovered that many sexual behaviors that were considered deviant were actually quite common
- ▶ Dr. Kinsey argued that sexual behavior falls along a continuum of expression, instead of the either-or (dichotomous) model of sexual orientation



# Sexual Orientation: Nature or Nurture?

- ▶ **Is sexual orientation something we are born with or does it develop from how we are raised?**
- ▶ WE DON'T KNOW!
- ▶ More research findings suggest there is a genetic factor in sexual orientation development (Bailey & Pillard, 1991)
  - ▶ They found that if one identical twin was gay, 52% of the time the other was also gay; the figure was 22% for fraternal twins, and only 5% for nonrelated adopted brothers
- ▶ Fraternal Birth Order effect – Blanchard & Bogaert's (1996) theory that having older brothers increases the likelihood that the youngest brother will develop a homosexual sexual orientation
- ▶ Genetic-based theories do not explain other types of sexual preferences

# Conversion Therapy

- ▶ Conversion, or reparative, therapy is a type of therapy aimed at changing the sexual orientation of homosexual or bisexual individuals
- ▶ These therapies often utilize techniques developed when homosexuality was still considered a mental disorder
- ▶ Other techniques/programs have no basis in scientific methodology at all
- ▶ A 2007 review of the lit. published by the APA found that conversion therapy often caused more harm by increasing depression and suicide rates, substance use, anxiety, etc.
  - ▶ Majority of cases – there was no change in sexual orientation

# Troubling Statistics

- ▶ 53% of LGBTQ individuals reside in a state that does not prohibit employment discrimination based on sexual orientation (movement Advancement Project, 2017a)
- ▶ Gay, lesbian, and bisexual teens are 5 times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts (Hatzenbuehler, 2011)
- ▶ In a national online poll of 1,197 LGBTQ individuals, 39% were rejected by a family member or close friend, 37% reported being physically attacked, 29% reported being made to feel unwelcome in a place of worship, 58% reported being a target of anti-gay slurs (Pew Research Center's Social and Demographic Trends, 2013)

# The Love Factor

- ▶ It's difficult to study love from a scientific standpoint, but what we do know is:
  - ▶ Love may be the most important emotion we have throughout our lives
  - ▶ Baby and parent attachment → relationship in late adulthood



- ▶ Regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, human beings want to give love and receive love
- ▶ Self-love is an incredibly important trait to have
- ▶ Loving oneself helps combat the internal critic which feeds depressive and anxious thoughts



“

Being gay or lesbian is about sexual orientation. Being transgendered is about identity.

”

*SHE'S NOT THERE: A LIFE IN TWO GENDERS – JENNIFER FINNEY BOYLAN*

# The Development of Gender Identity

# Sex Vs. Gender

- ▶ **Sex** – your biological status of female or male, based on genetic and anatomical factors
- ▶ **Gender** – cultural expectations about what it means to be male or female



# Biological Sex is Determined by...

- ▶ The presence or absence of the Y chromosome
  - ▶ Women: XX sex chromosome
  - ▶ Men: XY sex chromosome
- ▶ The type of gonad (sex gland)
  - ▶ Male gonad: testicle
  - ▶ Female gonad: ovary
- ▶ Sex hormones
  - ▶ Males – Testosterone
  - ▶ Females – Estrogen and Testosterone
- ▶ Genitalia

- King Louis XIV of France
  - (1638 – 1715)



# Defining Gender

- ▶ Gender is a social construct → gender is a concept that was created by humans and exists because humans agree that it exists
  - ▶ Other examples of social constructs: race, money, and deviance
- ▶ Gender relates to femininity and masculinity
- ▶ Physical, behavioral, and personality traits that represent the social norms of what is masculine or feminine
- ▶ What is considered acceptable or appropriate gender behavior varies across cultures and time periods



# Gender Socialization

- Decorating the baby's room, buying clothes/toys, picking out names – these are all ways we create a gender environment for our future babies to learn in
- “It’s a boy!” → at 17 weeks, many parents opt to have an ultrasound to identify the sex of the baby
  - The rest of that baby’s development is spent preparing for a boy or girl
- The parents set the stage and others follow – think about strangers interacting with a baby



# Gender Identity

- ▶ Gender identity may be the beginning of identity formation
- ▶ Sense of identity develops throughout the lifespan, with major “self” milestones in childhood and adolescence
- ▶ Young children learn “I am a boy, which is different than being a girl”
  - ▶ “Mommy does this and daddy does that”
- ▶ While it might feel natural for girls to play with dolls, practice playing house, wear pink, etc., these are all cultural examples of femininity





# Challenging the Binary

- ▶ Push for gender identity that falls outside of the male/female dichotomous model
- ▶ **Gender Binary** – the idea that gender is an either-or option of male or female
- ▶ We are seeing more gender expression and fluidity
- ▶ The Transgender community, made up of roughly 1.4 mil. in the U.S., is made up of individuals whose gender identity falls outside of traditional gender norms
- ▶ Contrary to popular opinion, nonbinary gender expression is not new



Boy George



David Bowie



Prince

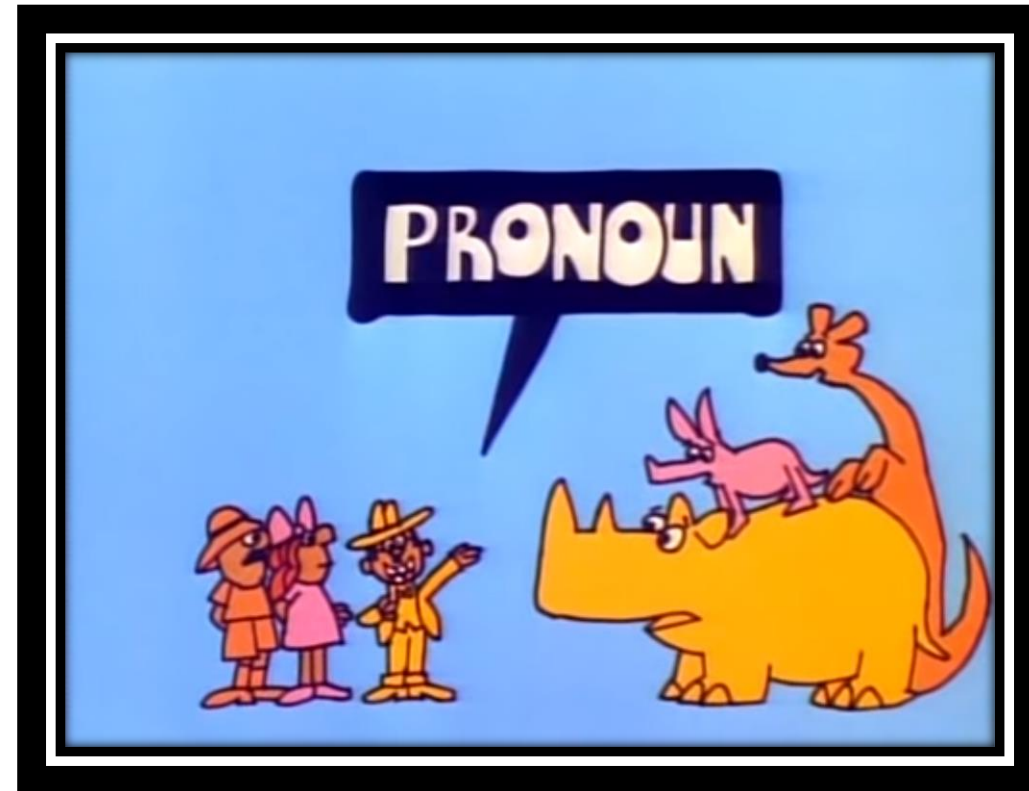
# The Transgender Movement

- ▶ The Trans community is actively trying to change laws and social norms, which is no easy feat
- ▶ They hope, among other things, to gain civil rights protecting them from discrimination in employment, housing, medical care, and accessibility to public accommodations
- ▶ Social attitudes are beginning to change, but the trans community still faces backlash from many Americans



# Pronouns

- ▶ He, him, his
- ▶ She, her, hers
- ▶ They, them, theirs
- ▶ For those in the trans community, pronouns are like an extension of their identity
- ▶ Trans allies are encouraged to ask people, what are your pronouns?



# “How can I help?”

1. You are not required to join the LGBTQ movement, but keeping an open mind about LGBTQ people could be helpful.
2. Support anti-discrimination legislature and politicians who support the LGBTQ community.
3. Challenge others when they use discriminatory or stereotyping language, which will help decrease the social stigma.
4. Provide emotional support to friends or family who are struggling with their sexual orientation or gender identity.

KNOWLEDGE  
IS POWER!



# Suggested Readings

- ▶ *Boy Erased: A Memoir* by Garrard Conley
- ▶ *She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders* by Jennifer Finney Boylan
- ▶ *Tomorrow will be Different* by Sarah McBride
- ▶ *Call Me By Your Name* by Andre Aciman
- ▶ *Transgender 101: A Simple Guide to a Complex Issue* by Nicholas Teich
- ▶ Other suggested readings can be found at <http://www.pflagnyc.org/support/suggestedreading>

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