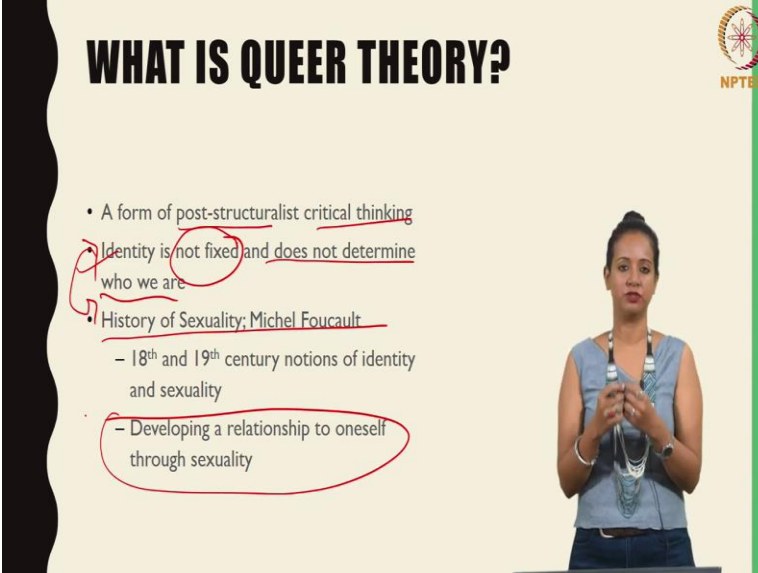


Feminism: Concepts and Theories
Dr. Mathangi Krishnamurthy
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras

Introduction to Queer Theory - II

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WHAT IS QUEER THEORY?

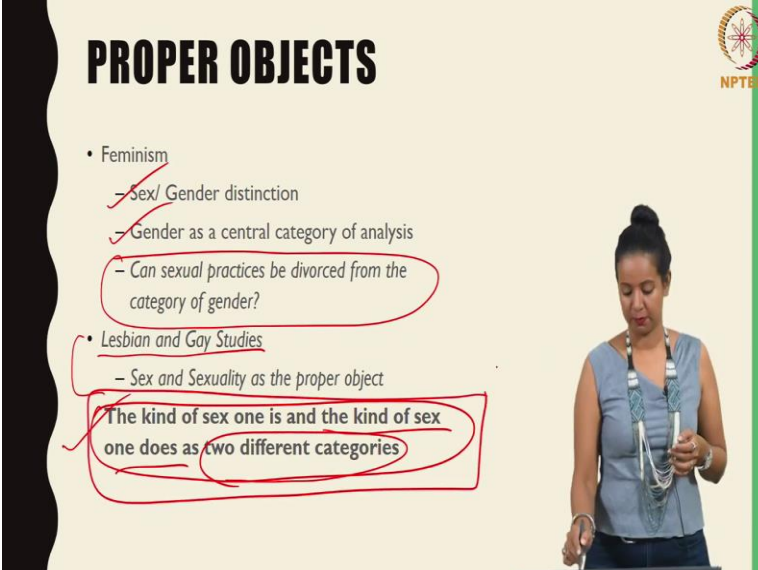
- A form of post-structuralist critical thinking
- Identity is not fixed and does not determine who we are
- History of Sexuality; Michel Foucault
 - 18th and 19th century notions of identity and sexuality
 - Developing a relationship to oneself through sexuality

So broadly, what is queer theory? It is a form of post-structuralist critical thinking. Post-structuralist, therefore invested in deconstruction, in asking the question about forms of knowledge; where gender is clearly a form of knowledge about self. It is a process of critical thinking; it thinks in order to break something down. It is not merely an analysis; it also suggests that new things must come in lieu of what has been deconstructed. Its cornerstone is located in this understanding that identity is a) not fixed; therefore, it is something that is changeable and mutable and dynamic; b) it does not determine who we are; which of course begs the question, who are we? And in many ways post-structuralist thinking believes in a non-essential self, in a non-deterministic self; in the idea that it is not important to ask who we are, instead it is important to ask as to how the ways in which we think about who we are, are determined by particular forms of historical power-laden logics. Therefore, in order to be able to escape power, we need to first deconstruct those logics.

A seminal figure for post-structuralist critical thinking in relation to gender, sex, and sexuality is Michel Foucault, and his series of works on the history of sexuality, which explored eighteenth and nineteenth century notions of identity and sexuality, and ask the important question as to what are the ways in which sexuality came to be central to the question of identity in eighteenth and nineteenth century, Europe. Now, the critiques of *History of Sexuality* are many; therefore, I do not want to suggest that this is the only work that allows us to think in this fashion.

But it offers a really thorough template to understand the ways in which we should investigate the relationship between identity and sexuality. And Foucault therefore asks the question, as to how is it that we are able to develop a relationship to ourselves through these forms of sexuality. And why is it that the state is invested in these relationships and developments of self.

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The slide is titled "PROPER OBJECTS" in bold black text. It features a list of topics with handwritten red annotations. The topics are:

- Feminism
 - ~~Sex/~~ Gender distinction
 - Gender as a central category of analysis
 - Can sexual practices be divorced from the category of gender?
- Lesbian and Gay Studies
 - Sex and Sexuality as the proper object
 - The kind of sex one is and the kind of sex one does as two different categories

A presenter, a woman with dark hair in a bun, is standing on the right side of the slide, looking down at a device in her hands. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner.


Therefore, for the purpose of our lecture and for our course on Feminism: Concepts and Theories, let us ask where to locate queer theory? Where to locate studies of sex and sexuality? And many have argued that even as the sex/gender distinction is the object proper of feminism, feminism studies the ways in which the sex / gender distinction or the sex - gender continuity is maintained; and even as gender is a central category of analysis and feminist theory has questioned the idea of sex or biological sex as a given in recent times, and therefore, asks the question, can sexual practices be divorced from the category of gender? Can we take it away

from gender? Can we then say that sex and sexuality could be studied in a different discipline? Feminism is only interested in disrupting gender.

Lesbian and gay studies argues for sex and sexuality to be its proper object. In many ways, sex and sexuality, are at the center of identity for lesbian and gay studies. In these understandings, and these debates are ongoing there is no kind of territorialization of studies proper, but one has to ask the question whether feminist theory has the kind of the theoretical repertoire to be able to understand new formations of sex and sexuality. Whether we need inter-disciplinary, trans-disciplinary thinking, to be able to apprehend forms of life in the world.

Only one thing to remember here, that here the kind of sex one is, biological sex – one identifies as particular kinds of sexed bodies, and the kind of sex one does, the capacity for sexual desire, the capacity for sexual intercourse with differently sexed bodies are being treated as two different categories. In other words, biological sex and sexual activity need not be a predictable continuum; there are ways to think about all of these as combinations. And this is the object proper of queer theory.

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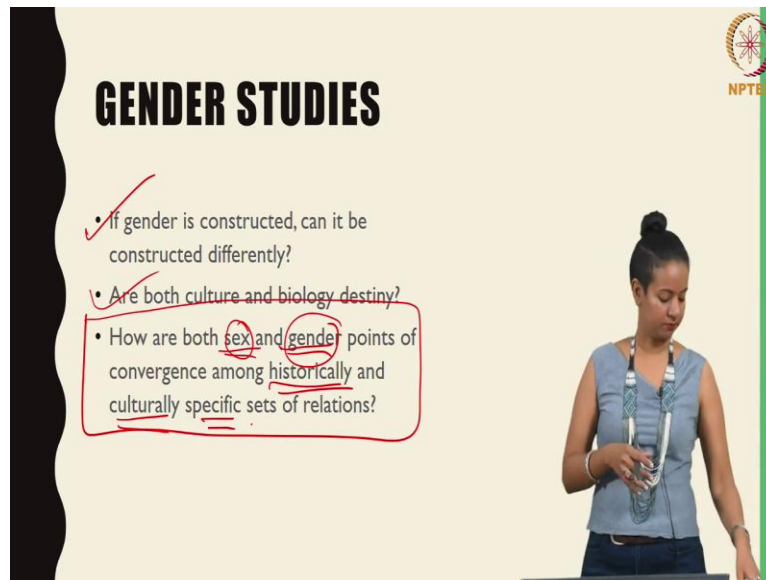
INTERSEXED

- One whose biology includes an identifiable mixture of male and female characteristics, regardless of the appearance of the genitalia at birth'
- Diamond 2004; *Pediatric Management of Ambiguous and Traumatized Genitalia*. *Contemporary Sexuality* 38: 9: i-viii.

Let me add another word into the mix, which is very much about questioning the first – biological sex itself as conforming to easily identifiable, easily namable, recognizable categories of male and female. Intersexed for example, is defined in the *Pediatric Management of Ambiguous and Traumatized Genitalia* as one whose biology includes an identifiable mixture of

male and female characteristics, regardless of the appearance of the genitalia at birth. In many ways the body itself is shown here to be a multiply located object across the male and the female, and not necessarily easily locatable on a binary.

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Therefore, for gender studies we can now expand our questions to say, if gender is constructed, can it be constructed differently? The object proper of feminism, or feminist studies, “Are both culture and biology destiny?”; now we are pushing the boundaries and saying, is sex itself destiny? Is it given that you have a particular kind of biological body, means biologically or sexually it can only act in particular ways? And then we come to the important post-structural critical-thinking question: How are both sex and gender points of convergence among historically and culturally specific sets of relations? Let us spend a moment there.

Here, we are breaking down both sex and gender; we are deconstructing them to say that the meanings are accruing to sex as well as gender and we have already seen this in relation to feminist theory, but let us extend that to sex also, to say that these are points of convergence where different bodies of knowledge come together to make something seem natural, to make something seem like it is the truth of the situation. In other words, not that the idea of the male sex or the female sex are false. But the ways in which we understand them, the epistemology of sex is solidified through multiple bodies of knowledge that are historically and culturally specific. And disciplines like anthropology will do this all the time where they tell you as to how

the ways in which we name bodies as biologically sexed in particular ways, may differ across cultures, in meaning as much as in name. To this extent for the remaining part of this lecture, I now want to discuss an important text by Judith Butler, called *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.

I find that *Gender Trouble* lays out most clearly the terrain within which to understand these kinds of formations of gender. It is in many ways a work of literary criticism, literary theory; but it also lays out possibilities for play, and brings into vocabulary one of the most important terms for queer theory itself which is “performativity,” not performance, but performativity.

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The slide is a presentation slide with a light beige background. On the left is a book cover for 'Gender Trouble' by Judith Butler, showing two children in historical clothing. The title 'Butler' is prominently displayed in white, and 'Gender Trouble' is in a smaller font below it. To the right of the book cover, the text reads: 'Judith Butler – 1990', 'Canonical text of queer theory', and 'Derives methodology from Foucaultian genealogy'. Below this, a red circle highlights the question: 'How can one trouble the category of gender through performance?'. On the right side of the slide, a woman with dark hair, wearing a blue sleeveless top and a necklace, is speaking. In the top right corner, there is a small circular logo with the text 'NPTEL' below it.

This is a text from 1990 and is a canonical text of queer theory which why I also think you have to have familiarity with it. This is not to say that the text is beyond critique or that we have not moved in different directions since then. But, this establishes a template for forms of thought in queer theory. It derives methodology from Foucaultian genealogy, and I will speak about that in just a bit and ask the question, how can one trouble the category of gender through performance? I very much like this idea of “troubling,” well, hence, the title of the book *Gender Trouble*. How can one trouble the category of gender through performance? How can one poke at it? How can one make it uncomfortable? Think about how many of us as children or even now, may have bothered people in our family, in our community, among our friends who seem too certain about something. They say this is the way it is and then you say but what about that? But is not this

also true? How about if I do this? Think about the old game when someone says something with great certainty and the child or otherwise responds but why, again and again and again in a most irritating fashion. And this is a kind of template within which I like to think about gender trouble.

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VOCABULARY

- Queer Theory
 - Identities are not fixed and do not determine us
 - Categories are unstable and have to be established through varied performances
 - Things themselves are not queer; rather, what is queer is the certainty by which we label things normal and abnormal, decent and obscene, gay and straight.

VOCABULARY

- Genealogy
 - Historical/Philosophical Technique
 - On the Genealogy of Morals – Nietzsche
 - Genealogy, History – Michel Foucault
 - An investigation into those elements that seem to be without history
 - Genealogy investigates the truth-status of truth

Let me go through some of the vocabulary of gender trouble. Queer theory says, like I mentioned before, that identities are not fixed and do not determine us. There are possibilities for escape that we should inhabit. Categories are unstable; here is another important concept and have to be established through varied performances. Here, just to be clear, let us think about categories of gender itself: if we say male, female, each of these queer theory argues, gender trouble argues,

are not stable categories. And therefore, we are always worried that somebody is going to destabilize these categories. That is why all these strictures on men, and women, and children especially, to behave in particular fashion. Boys will be boys, act like a girl, walk like a girl, why are you talking like a girl when said to a boy, boys do not cry, women are emotional. All of these are constant performances meant to stabilize the category of gender or of boy and girl or of man and woman.

And hark back to some of our earliest lectures, when we were establishing the sex gender distinction. And very, very importantly, here is why we speak about this as queer theory, as strange theory. Things themselves are not queer, nothing is strange in itself. How could anything be strange if it lives in the world? How could it be out of the norm when the norm is a cultural category? Things themselves are not queer; rather, what is queer, what is really strange is the certainty by which we label things normal and abnormal, decent and obscene, gay and straight.

Think about how it is bringing us right back to the first slide of this lecture, which was about dualisms. Here, queer theory is making the arguments that things by themselves do not have the capacity to be strange. They are not strange; you are strange. You are strange in your resolute insistence that you know exactly what is what; that you know that something is gay and something is straight; where straight is the norm. Where you label things as normal and abnormal and affect people's chances of being able to live in the world, you drunk on power, drunk on certainty, you are the strange one. And therefore, this body of theory proudly takes on the mantle of being called queer theory.

As I had mentioned earlier, the methods in *Gender Trouble* derive from something called "genealogy," which is a historical and philosophical technique, which you see in Nietzsche's seminal work on the *Genealogy of Morals*. Michel Foucault, uses a similar genealogical technique in investigating history. And asks the important deconstructive question, what are those elements that seem to be without history? How come something appears in the world as if it is truthful; as if it is a given that this is the truth of the world? Where does its history disappears?

And in many ways Foucault asking the ideological question? When something appears natural, it means that it has masked its origins. It has successfully hidden where it came from, in order to

appear as being absolutely truthful just on its own. And therefore, genealogy investigates the truth-status of truth. In other words, if gender is established through varied performances and is actually unstable but appears stable, a genealogical investigation will then attempt to find these varied performances, and in many ways expose them or speak about them as performances and as not truth, thereby, challenging the idea that gender itself is truthful.

For those interested in Foucault, a good work to examine would be *Discipline and Punish*, which asks a very important question; it asks as to how in European-Sovereign rule, where torture was a very popular form of punishment, how is it that in the matter of a few hundred years it disappears from sovereign practice? It disappears into a system that now privileges imprisonment over torture and death and what are the forms of power that changed during this time? Where in a particular time torture, public torture, was the necessary thing to do, whereas in another time it is necessary to imprison people. How is it that human's changed so drastically in such a short period of time, how is it that notions of human rights, or torture is being bad, came to be understood, as the truth necessary for the situation one. And two, what are the ways in which imprisonment or incarceration then was based upon a new series of truths that masked its origin.

And Foucault investigates these origins in trying to understand the genealogy of discipline and punishment. Think about that as just a curiosity to indulge if you will; but I also think it is an important set of texts to investigate if you really want to understand the genealogical method.

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The slide features the title "JUDITH BUTLER AND QUEER THEORY" in bold black letters. Below the title, the words "Sex", "Sexuality", and "Gender" are circled in red and connected by a bracket. A list of bullet points is on the left, with several items circled in red: "Feminist literary theory", "Critiques received notions of masculinity and femininity", "Binary theory is replaced by a proliferation of non-hierarchical differences", and "Gender does not express anything fundamental about men and women: It is fluid and performative". The last bullet point is followed by the example "- E.g Drag". On the right side of the slide, a woman is shown from the waist up, wearing a blue sleeveless top and a necklace, gesturing with her hands as if presenting. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner.

JUDITH BUTLER AND QUEER THEORY

Sex | Sexuality | Gender

- Feminist literary theory
- Critiques received notions of masculinity and femininity
- Binary theory is replaced by a proliferation of non-hierarchical differences
- Gender does not express anything fundamental about men and women: It is fluid and performative
– E.g Drag

In relation to Judith Butler's use of genealogy and deconstruction; Butler's origins are in feminist literary theory and she critiques, as can be expected, received notions of masculinity and femininity. Neither the masculine nor feminine is privileged; there is no location in one set of truths over another. Instead, binary theory based on the male and the female is replaced by a proliferation of non-hierarchical differences.

Think about this in this fashion: there is biological sex, there is sexuality in terms of the sex that one does, and then there is gender. Replacing it by a proliferation of non-hierarchical differences means that, you can occupy multiple options in all of these in any combination. And these are in a non-hierarchical relationship with one another; there is no norm, there is no set of strictures or suggestions on how best to form a combination of all of the above. No doubt a utopian project, but also located in some very real-life possibilities for people already occupying such proliferations.

And Butler argues that gender does not express anything fundamental about men and women; it is fluid, it is performative. In other words, we are coming back to the word I had highlighted earlier performativity, which means that gender being performative does not mean that you or I are performing it intentionally. It means that the nature of gender is not fundamental; it does not come from within us it only comes into being through performances and therefore it is

performative. These performances are neither intentional nor are they produced at the moment, it is something that we learn since birth in a way that we do not even know, that we are learning it.

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JUDITH BUTLER: QUEER THEORY

- Kafka's "Before the Law"
- The anticipation conjures its object
 - An expectation that produced the very phenomenon it anticipates
- Performativity works by anticipating a gendered essence and is repeated over time to solidify into identity
- A so-called internal feature is produced through bodily acts
- Caveats: Not voluntary and does not take away from questions of agency

The slide features a photograph of a woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing a blue sleeveless top and a necklace, standing and looking down at her hands. The slide has a yellow background with a green vertical bar on the right and a black wavy shape on the left. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner.

Perhaps a text that can illustrate to you the way in which this works, the ways in which performances are apprehended is Kafka's *Before the Law*, where the law is this kind of floating ether like force that only become apparent to you through anticipation. And this is typified by theorist such as Althusser, who speaks about the ways in which the state works. The state writ large is not necessarily a physical entity but if you walking down the street and a policeman yells, "Hey you!" you naturally turn; you are interpellated by the state in that moment thereby solidifying the power of the state in that performance; in that moment of performance that you did not even know was going to happen; neither did the policemen but both of you know it is intricate choreography. The policemen calls, you turn. And this is what is also seen in text like, *Before the Law* where we are constantly fearful that the law is going to find us; we are constantly anticipating the law interpellating us. Think about how people sit in the police station or in the court of law; or for that matter in a hospital.

Anticipating ourselves as state subjects, as being interpellated by the court, interpellated by the police, or in the case of the hospital; interpellated by the medical sciences as a body in need of treatment. Therefore, Butler is using the idea that the anticipation itself conjures its object. There is no object prior to anticipation; there is no object before that then comes into being; the

anticipation itself is the object. An expectation that produces the very phenomenon it anticipates. In other words, in common-sensical language, we call it as self-fulfilling prophecy.

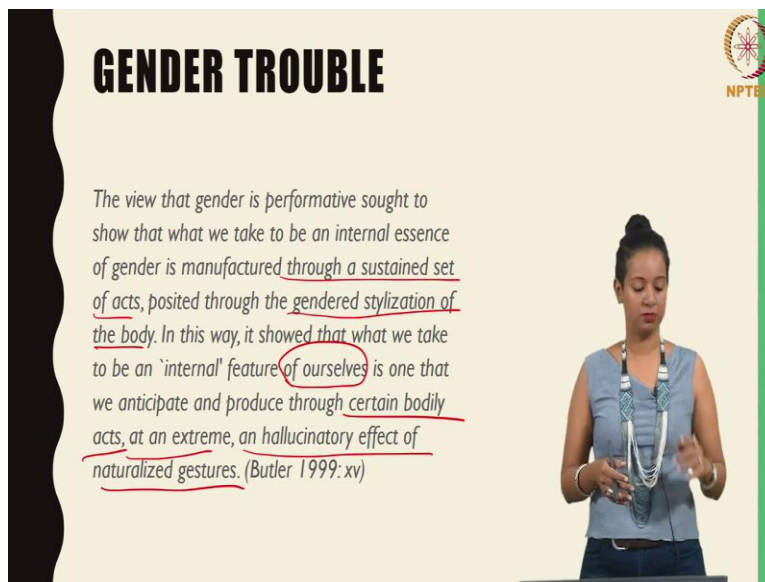
And this is part of common wisdom where people say, think positively and positive things will happen or this happened because you are expecting it to happen, you made it appear. Butler is suggesting that, performativity works by anticipating a gendered essence and is repeated over time to solidify into identity. Spend a quick second over this because this is not easy. Performativity works by anticipating a gendered essence; I behave like a woman because I anticipate something called a woman. By performing it, I am creating that very woman. I wear jewelry, I grow my hair because I think that these are marks of a woman that is already existing. But, unless I grow my hair, and unless I wear jewelry, and unless I behave like a woman; there is no woman to be brought into being. And I do it again and again and again over time; where it solidifies into my own sense of self as a woman. Therefore, a so-called internal feature; something that is supposed to come from within this idea of me being a woman has produced by many years through my own bodily acts. Can you pause for a moment and think about how radical and revolutionary that thought is?

And, let me emphasize like I did before, that this is not voluntary, I did not wake up one day and say well, let me be a woman today or let me start behaving in a fashion; where I become a woman at some point of time.

At the same time, it does not take away from questions of agency. I am also choosing to do this, growing my hair also gives me pleasure, wearing jewelry also gives me pleasure. So, it is not non-agentive; it is not being imposed upon me but all of these are discursive constructions. I have in me desires that have been produced through the edifice of gender, which is a societal construct that works through me.

I am not going to suggest that any of this is easy, so please take your time to comprehend this. Please go over this lecture again, if it seems to be completely out of whack. But I will say that *Gender Trouble* itself is worth reading to be able to understand this in its entirety.

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GENDER TROUBLE

The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body. In this way, it showed that what we take to be an 'internal' feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts, at an extreme, an hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures. (Butler 1999: xv)

The slide includes a video of a woman in a blue top and dark pants, performing a series of gestures. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner.

Let me read to you a quick quote from the text. “The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body.” The body is greatly important to both queer theory and Butler’s theorization of performativity. It is only through the body that we are able to solidify ideas of gender into the truth value of gender.

“In this way, it showed that what we take to be an ‘internal’ feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts, at an extreme, a hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures.” Do not be thrown by word hallucination, it does not mean that we are all inhabiting some kind of dream adult universe. It just means that, these structures that we take to be certain may well be hallucinations. May well be products of a collectively hallucinating society; that has based its truth value upon certain bodily acts produced again and again and again; that manufacture the very thing that the claim to get their truth from.

And *Gender Trouble* will tell you therefore, that the only way to be able to counter such hallucination, to be able to disturb the status quo of male and female that seems to be based on so many collective fantasies of normal, hetero-normative bodies is through play; is through a different series of bodily acts meant to disturb our certainties and meant to disturb our hallucination. The idea is that you move your body to act differently and then you will start thinking differently about this idea of gender.

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So, gender trouble also then analyzes performances like drag. And on the screen, you see an image from an iconic film 1994, *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*; where you have three male actors playing drag performers; going through elaborate machinations to be able to embody womanhood glamorous, playful, performative womanhood in an excessive campy fashion that seeks to bring to light the very idea of gender as a series of elaborate performances that can be taken to their logical extreme, while at the same time, taking great pleasure in such a performance without it being in other words, quote, unquote forgive the pun, a drag. Drag need not be a drag. It means that you are really playing with the idea of gender. You are not throwing it out along with your, you are not throwing it out in service to your critical faculty, instead you are illuminating through pleasure, through enjoyment the idea of gender itself as a series of performances, dependent upon performativity. To a large extent this is also something that queer theory bears in common with a lot of fourth wave feminism; which is dependent upon experimentation and play. But queer theory is much more politically radical and interventionist in its efforts. For many people queer theory is perhaps some of the most radical theory there is and also, some of the most promising.

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A RETURN TO PHENOMENOLOGY




- Feminist theorists of the body, working with the notion of the bodily imaginary, therefore see creative acts directed at alterations in our mode of perceiving bodies, as central to the process of political and social transformation. (Lennon 2004).




And here you also see the possibility of a return to phenomenology, where creative acts directed at alterations in our mode of perceiving bodies, are seen as central to the process of political and social transformation. There is a return to the body proper in the moment, and any kind of creative acts seeking to alter these bodily inhabitations are important to political and social transformation. Let me follow this up with a couple of questions, so that we understand, what are the stakes in this project.

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WHY DOES IT MATTER?



- How is the body fragmented or deconstructed?
The body may be fragmented both metaphorically and literally through language, visual imaging, or the actual surgical reconstruction, removal, or replacement of specific parts.
- What do such (de)constructions say about body boundaries, the integrity of the self, and the shifting social worth of human beings?

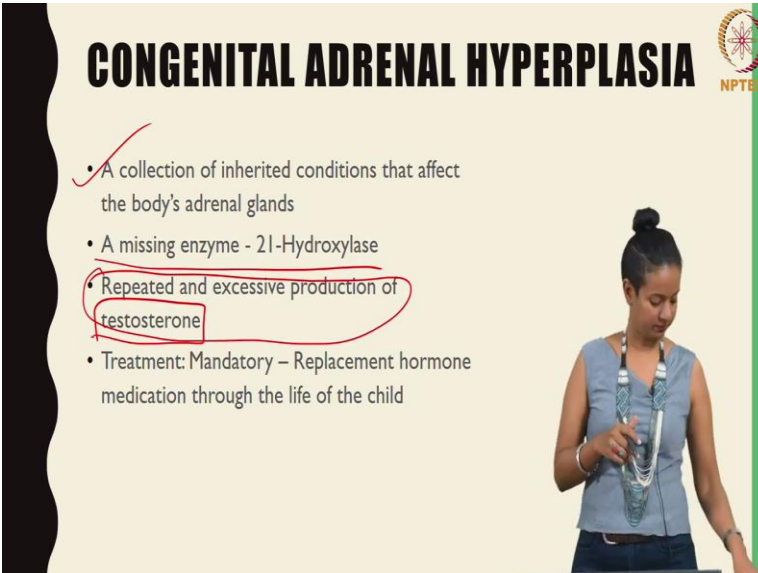


We are interested in queer theory as much as in feminist theory in the idea of the body; and therefore, we ask how is the body fragmented or deconstructed. When we bring to bear upon our efforts, the idea of body itself in bodily transformations in relation to sex, sexuality, and gender, we also ask questions about its fragmentation, deconstruction, sex reassignment, so on and so forth, and argue that it may be fragmented metaphorically and literally through language, visual imaging, or the actual surgical reconstruction, removal, or replacement of specific parts.

Think about the Ship of Theseus argument, where a ship is taken apart, part by part by part and then you ask, is it the same ship? Is there an essence to self? Is there an essence to gender? When you change something, what is left? Is there something truthful about gender, if at all? And it matters because then we have to ask the question, what do such deconstructions say about boundaries, body boundaries. Are we unitary selves? Are we attached to other people? What kind of gendered beings float around in the world? How do we relate to one another? Is there unitary separate self?

The integrity of the self, and the shifting social worth of human beings through which we apprehend the world and each other. In relation to this question of why does it matter, I want to end today's lecture by speaking about something slightly different, especially in relation to debates in intersex. One of these is my own research on a condition called Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia.

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CONGENITAL ADRENAL HYPERPLASIA

- A collection of inherited conditions that affect the body's adrenal glands
- A missing enzyme - 21-Hydroxylase
- Repeated and excessive production of testosterone
- Treatment: Mandatory – Replacement hormone medication through the life of the child

The slide features a video inset on the right showing a woman in a blue top and dark pants, holding a glass and looking down. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner.

Do not be daunted by this seeming technicality of the words. Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia is a collection of inherited conditions that affect the body's adrenal glands. Bodies are missing a crucial enzyme- 21 Hydroxylase and this leads to repeat an excessive production of testosterone. Now in this research, I was greatly interested in the question of where sex is located. How is it that given new forms of endocrinology, new forms of genetic knowledge. How is it that we now understand even biological sex; where is it located? What is the element that will tell us, what is male, and what is female?

In other words, if we look at endocrinology or medical sciences as the bodies of knowledge; that continue to contribute to this idea of a gender binary in society where do they now locate biological sex? And here we are interested in what happens to bodies that have excessive testosterone. The treatment for this condition is replacement hormone medication through the life of the child, which is not merely cosmetic, it is meant to address some very important life functions. And such an arena disturbs much like queer theory, the idea of biological sex itself as being a binary in a wide variety of bodies.

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REGIMES OF CARE

- How do new technologies provide new ways of knowing sex and gender, especially in newborn children?
- How is ambiguity diagnosed and conceptualized?
- How do different forms of medical knowledge cohere in providing a clear diagnosis?


The slide features a logo in the top right corner that reads 'NPTEL'. A woman is standing in front of the slide, holding a microphone.

In my research I ask the question, how do new technologies provide new ways of knowing sex and gender, especially in newborn children? And this is the basic question asked of the doctors once the child is born. Is it a boy or a girl? It is a basic clarification meant to almost determine fate in multiple ways. And therefore, in the interest of extending projects that are suggested in

queer theory, I was asking the question, how is ambiguity diagnosed and conceptualized? How do doctors, parents, relatives, family, society make sense of ambiguity. Is it cured? Is it addressed? Is it tucked away? Is it hidden?

What are the ways in which we can understand forms of exclusion, even in medical sciences. And therefore, I located my own research in this question of the diagnosis. What is considered as necessary to be treated?

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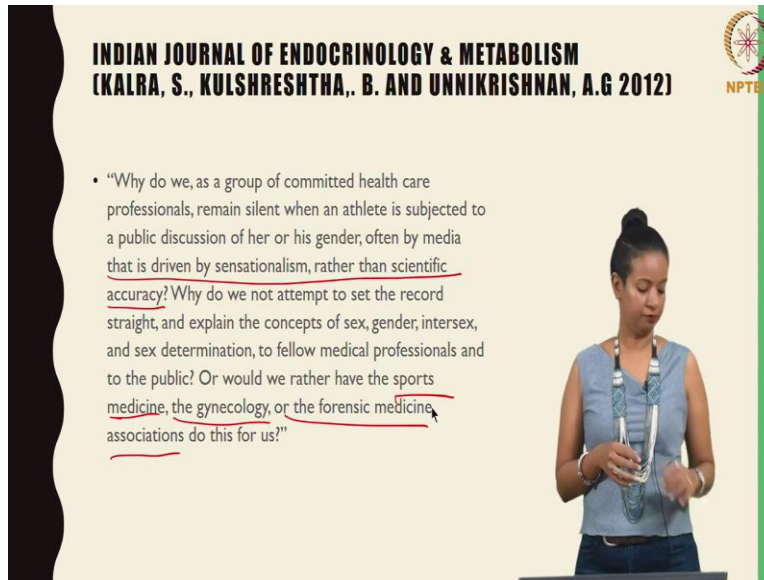
REGIMES OF CARE

- How do medical practitioners imagine the information needs of patients and caregivers?
- How do they provide assurance and how do they seek to produce clarity?

I was also arguing for research to look into both, information needs of patients and caregivers, since the actual patient is child, but also, the question of assurance and clarity. You can see in this lecture and queer theory itself, as to how complicated and complex the terrain is. But you take this theory onto something that is perceived as an urgent need: a newborn child, and how is it that you bridge the radical possibilities that theory brings, and the fear, and trepidation of parents who only want their child to have a “normal life”.

How is it that in queer theory, or in feminist theory, we can begin to address these questions? And in asking these questions therefore, we are also addressing the question of why does it matter and arguing for a politics of praxis where we look at radical theory as a necessary to the life chances of multiple populations, including newborn infants. Another set of populations part of which I have already gestured to in relation to this lecture are sports women; women who are questioned in relation to their sex.

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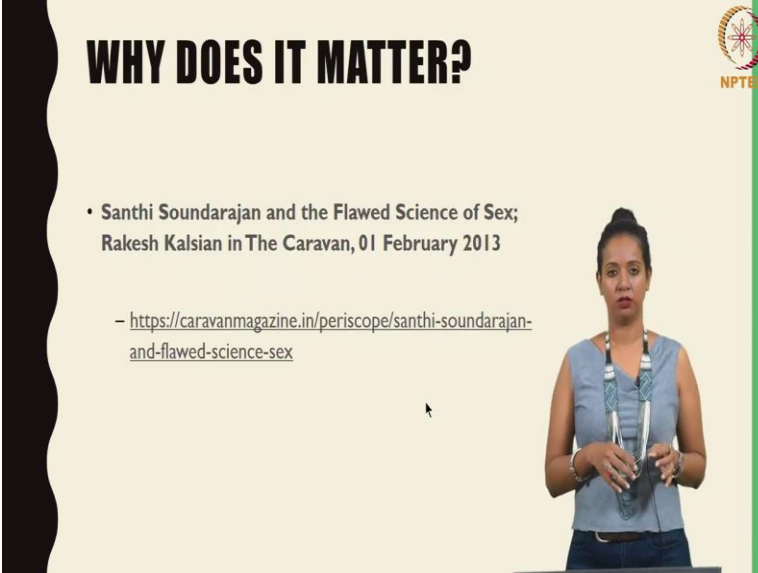


INDIAN JOURNAL OF ENDOCRINOLOGY & METABOLISM
(KALRA, S., KULSHRESHTHA, B. AND UNNIKRISHNAN, A.G 2012)

• “Why do we, as a group of committed health care professionals, remain silent when an athlete is subjected to a public discussion of her or his gender, often by media that is driven by sensationalism, rather than scientific accuracy? Why do we not attempt to set the record straight, and explain the concepts of sex, gender, intersex, and sex determination, to fellow medical professionals and to the public? Or would we rather have the sports medicine, the gynecology, or the forensic medicine, associations do this for us?”

In the Indian journal of endocrinology and metabolism, authors similarly argue for medical sciences to get involved in these debates; to speak about sex and sexuality as a spectrum rather than as a binary of man and woman. To argue for the rights of multiply sexed bodies to exist in society and lead healthy fulfilled lives. They say “why do we, as a group of committed health care professionals, remain silent when an athlete is subjected to a public discussion of her or his gender,” more often than not her, “often by media that is driven by sensationalism, rather than scientific accuracy? Why do we not attempt to set the record straight and explain the concept of” gender, “and explain the concepts of sex, gender, intersex, and sex determination, to fellow medical professionals and to the public? And here they are locating sex very much in the hormonal world or in hormonal knowledge. Or would we rather have the sports medicine,” where sex is located in body, “the gynecology” where sex is located in the reproductive system or lack thereof, “or the forensic medicine associations do this for us?” Here you can see the conflict in the medical sciences themselves between their various branches, in trying to figure out where sexuality and sex can be located.

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WHY DOES IT MATTER?

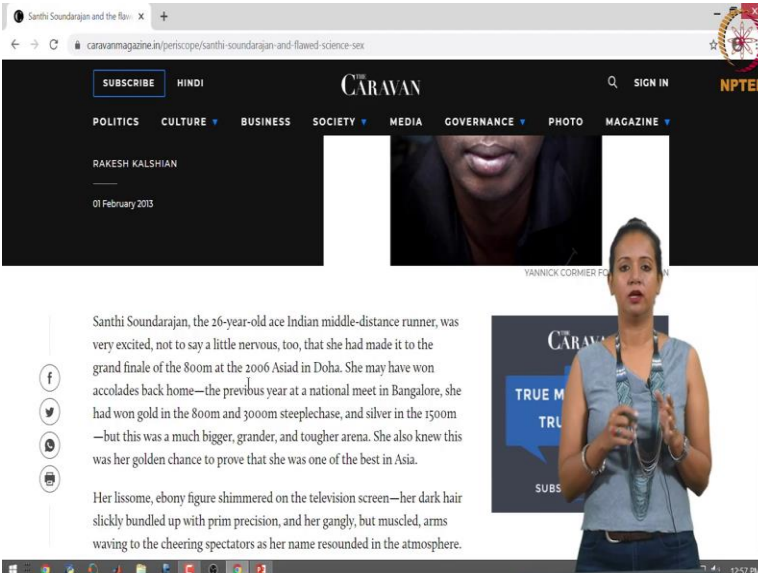
- Santhi Soundarajan and the Flawed Science of Sex;
Rakesh Kalsian in The Caravan, 01 February 2013

– <https://caravanmagazine.in/periscope/santhi-soundarajan-and-flawed-science-sex>

The slide features a presenter on the right side. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner.

In relation to such a pronouncement, let us briefly look at the case of Santhi Soundarajan. And here, I want to take you through an article that was published in the Caravan, in 2013 by Rakesh Kalsian.

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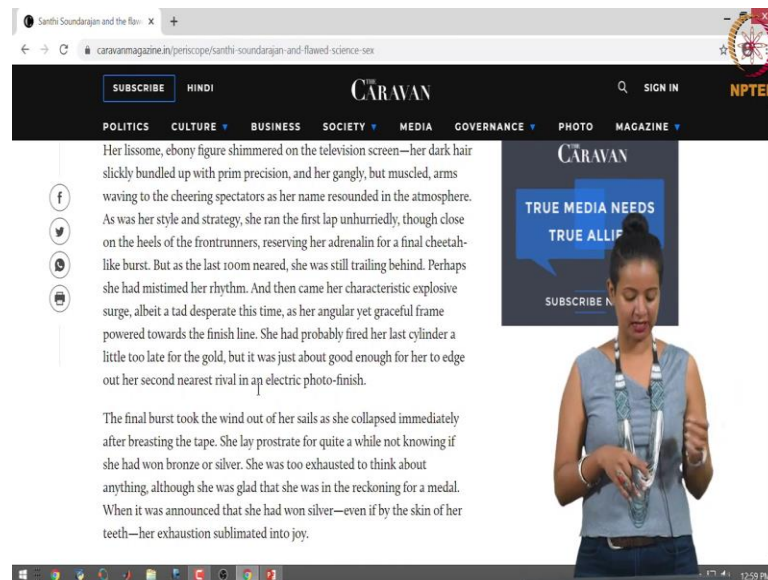


The screenshot shows the Caravan magazine website. The article title is "Santhi Soundarajan and the Flawed Science of Sex" by Rakesh Kalsian, dated 01 February 2013. The article text is visible, starting with "Santhi Soundarajan, the 26-year-old ace Indian middle-distance runner, was very excited, not to say a little nervous, too, that she had made it to the grand finale of the 800m at the 2006 Asiad in Doha." The presenter is visible on the right side of the screenshot.

Read through the article with me and then perhaps the stakes in these questions will become a little clearer. Santhi Soundarajan, the 26-year-old ace Indian middle-distance runner, was very excited, not to say a little nervous too, that she had made it to the grand finale of the 800 meters, at the 2006 Asiad, in Doha.

She may have won accolades back home, the previous year at a national meet in Bangalore; she had won gold in the 800 meters and 3000 meters steeplechase, and silver in the 1500 meters. But this was a much bigger, grander, and tougher arena. She also knew this was her golden chance to prove that she was one of the best in Asia.

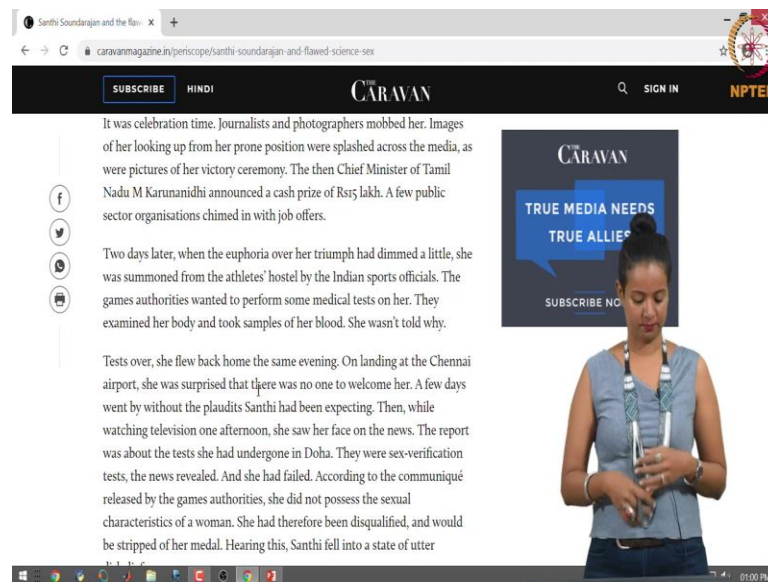
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Her lissome, ebony figure shimmered on the television screen. Her dark hair slickly bundled up with prim precision and her gangly, but muscled arms waving to the cheering spectators, as her name resounded in the atmosphere. Pay attention to the description of body; as was her style and strategy she ran the first lap unhurriedly. Though close on the heels of the front runners reserving her adrenaline for a final cheetah-like burst.

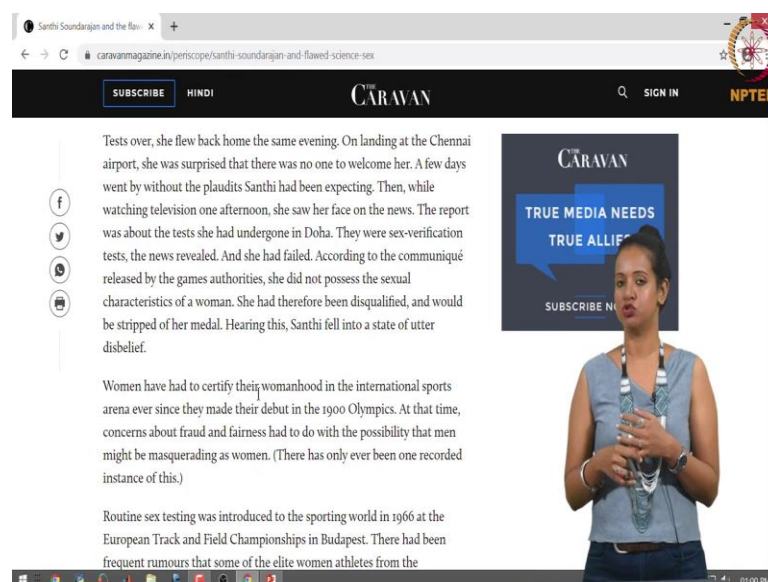
But as the last hundred meters neared, she was still trailing behind. Perhaps she had mistimed her rhythm and then came her characteristics explosive surge, albeit a tad desperate this time, as her angular yet graceful frame powered towards the finished line. She had probably fired her last cylinder a little too late for the gold, but it was just about good enough for her to edge out her second nearest rival in an electric photo finish.

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The article goes on to say, it was celebration time. Journalists and photographers mobbed her. Images of her looking up from her prone position were splashed across the media. The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M Karunanidhi announced a cash prize of rupees 15 lakh. A few public sector organizations chimed in with job offers. Two days later, when the euphoria over her triumph had dimmed a little, she was summoned from the athletes' hostel by the Indian sports officials. The games authorities wanted to perform some medical tests on her. They examined her body and took samples of her blood. She was not told why.

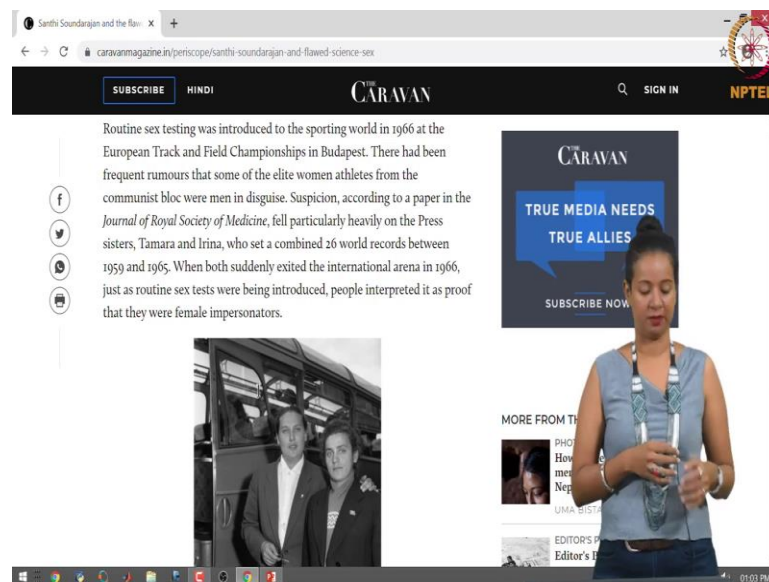
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Tests over, she flew back home in the same evening. On landing at the Chennai airport, she was surprised that there was no one to welcome her. A few days went by without the plaudits Santhi had been expecting. While watching television one afternoon, she saw her face on the news. The news was about the tests she had undergone in Doha. They were sex-verification tests, the news revealed. And she had failed. And according to the communique released by the game's authorities, she did not possess the sexual characteristics of a woman.

She had therefore been disqualified, would be stripped of her medal. Hearing this, She fell into a state of utter disbelief. Women have had to certify their womanhood in the international sports arena ever since they made their debut in the 1900 Olympics. At that time, concerns about fraud and fairness had to do with the possibility that men might be masquerading as women. There has only ever been one recorded instance of this.

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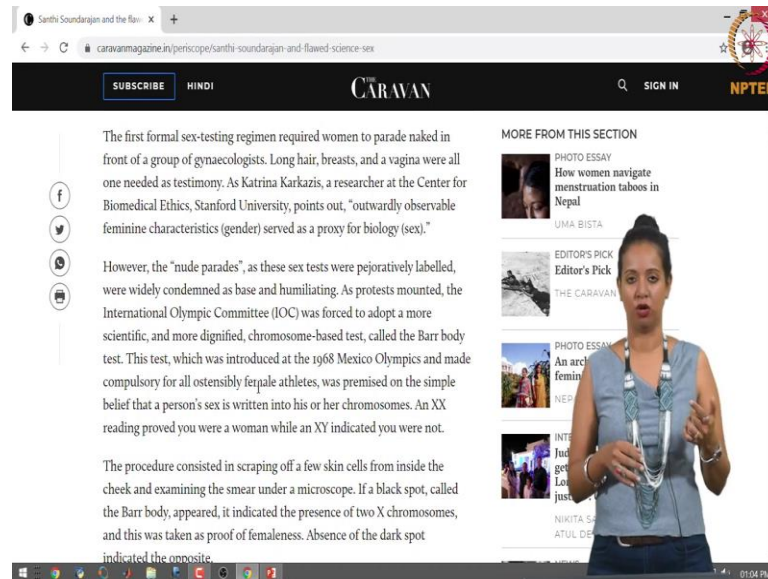


Routine sex testing was introduced to the sporting world in 1966 at the European Track and Field Championships in Budapest. There had been frequent rumors that some of the elite women athletes from the communist bloc were men in disguise.

Suspicion, according to a paper in the Journal of Royal Society of Medicine, fell particularly heavily on the Press sisters, Tamara and Irina, who set a combined 26 world records between 1959 and 1965. When both suddenly exited the international arena in 1966, just as routine sex tests were being introduced; people interpreted it as proof that they were female impersonators.

Remember our discussion on female impersonators, here you see a radically different power dynamic at play.

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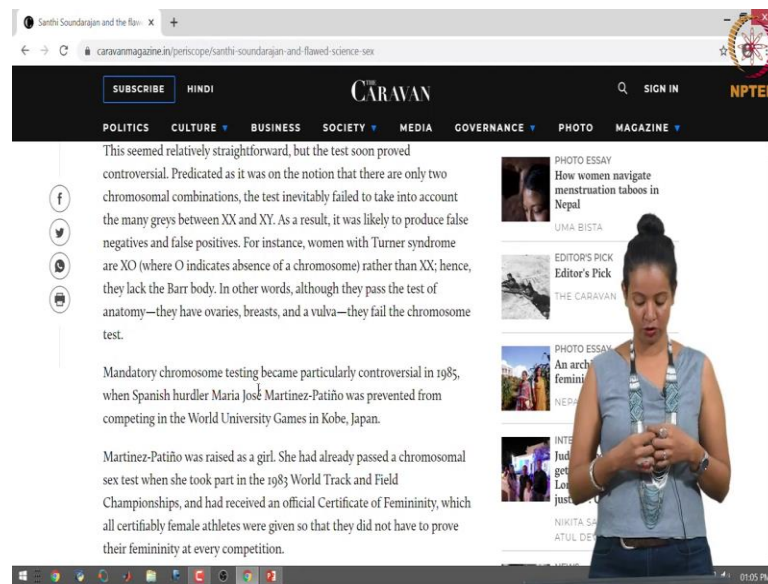


And then the article goes on to detail the kinds of humiliations for athletes that had to be tested for sex. The first formal sex-testing regimen required women to parade naked in front of a group of gynecologists. Long hair, breasts, and a vagina were all one needed as testimony. As Katrina Karkazis, a researcher at the Center for Biomedical Ethics, Stanford University, points out, "outwardly observable feminine characteristics, gender served as a proxy for biology, sex". However, the "nude parades", as these sex tests were pejoratively labelled, were widely condemned as base and humiliating.

As protests mounted, the International Olympic Committee was forced to adopt a more scientific, and more dignified, chromosome-based test, called the Barr body test. This test, which was introduced at the 1968, Mexico Olympics and made compulsory for all ostensibly female athletes, was premised on the simple belief that a person's sex is written into his or her chromosomes. An XX reading proved you were a woman, while an XY indicated you were not.

Think about the ways in which the location of sex itself moves from the outward body to the chromosomal body, much like the ways in which we were discussing in the testimony of the endocrinologist.

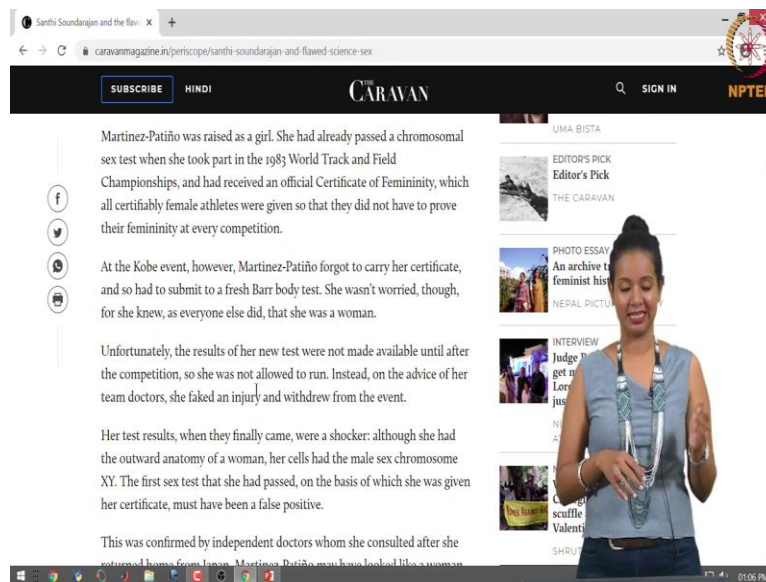
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Now comes the interesting part of this article. This seemed relatively straightforward, but the test soon proved controversial. Predicated as it was on the notion that there are only two chromosomal combinations, the test inevitably failed to take into account the many greys between XX and XY. As a result, it was likely to produce false negatives and false positives. For instance, women with Turner syndrome are XO, where O indicates absence of a chromosome rather than XX; hence, they lack the kind of typical body of the Barr test.

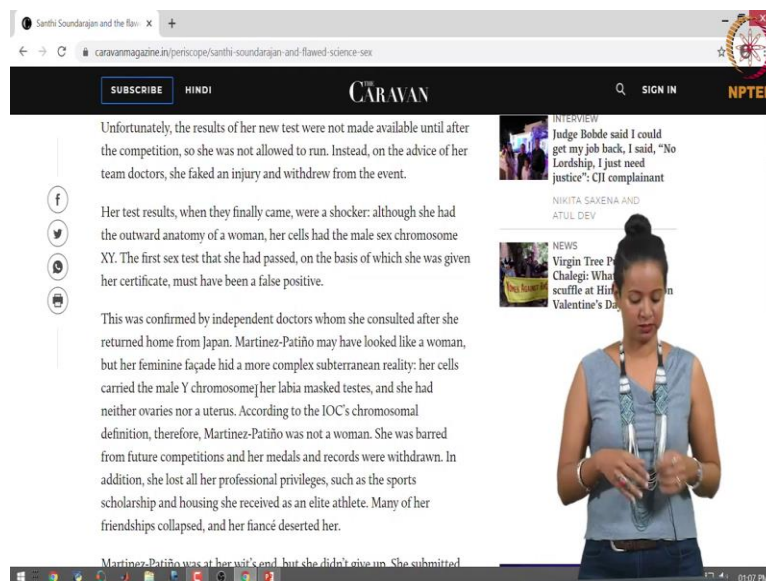
In other words, although they pass the test of anatomy, ovaries, breasts, and a vulva; they fail the chromosome test. Mandatory chromosome testing became particularly controversial in 1985, when Spanish hurdler, Maria Jose Martinez-Patino was prevented from competing in the World University Games in Kobe, Japan.

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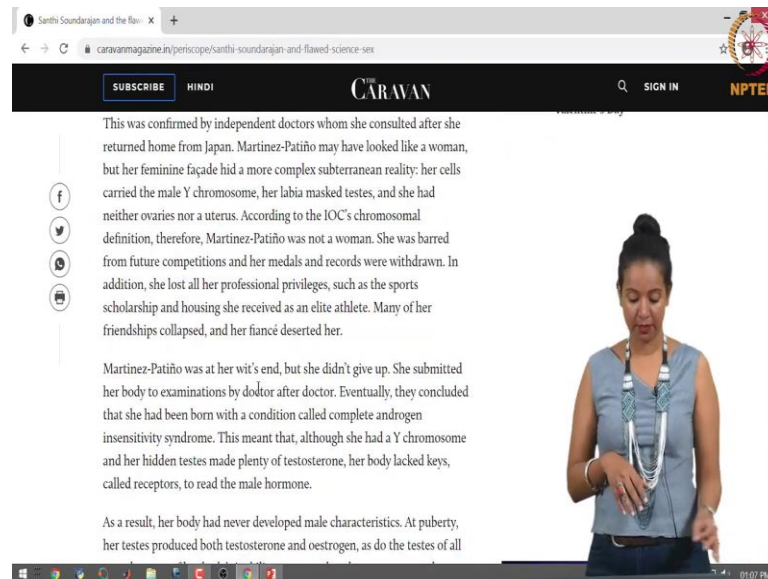
Martinez-Patino was raised as a girl. She had already passed a chromosomal sex test when she took part in the 1983 World Track and Field Championships. And had received an official Certificate of Femininity, which all certifiably female athletes were given, so that they did not have to prove their femininity at every competition. At the Kobe event, however, Martinez-Patino forgot to carry her certificate, and had to submit to a fresh test. She was not worried, for she knew, as everyone else did, that she was a woman.

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The results of a new test were not made available until after the competition, so she was not allowed to run. On the advice of her team doctors, she faked an injury and withdrew from the event. Her test results, when they came, were a shocker. She had the outward anatomy of a woman; her cells had the male sex chromosome XY. The first sex test that she had passed must have been a false positive.

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This was confirmed by independent doctors whom she consulted. She may have looked like a woman, but her feminine facade hid a more complex subterranean reality, her cells carried the male Y chromosome. According to this chromosomal definition Martinez-Patino was not a woman. She lost her professional privileges, such as the sports scholarship and housing she received as an elite athlete. Many of her friendships collapsed, and her fiance deserted her. She was at her wit's end but did not give up. Eventually, they concluded that she had been born with a condition called complete androgen insensitivity syndrome. This meant, that although she had a Y chromosome and her testes made plenty of testosterone, her body lacked keys, called receptors, to read the male hormone.

I hope by now, you are suitably confused, and are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that bodies hide multiple possibilities; that gender, male, and female are very, very limited descriptors of a wide variety of sexed bodies. I would encourage you to read the rest of the

article; but I want to bring to discussion this sense of a plethora of sexed and gendered bodies, as the revolutionary possibility towards which queer theory aims.

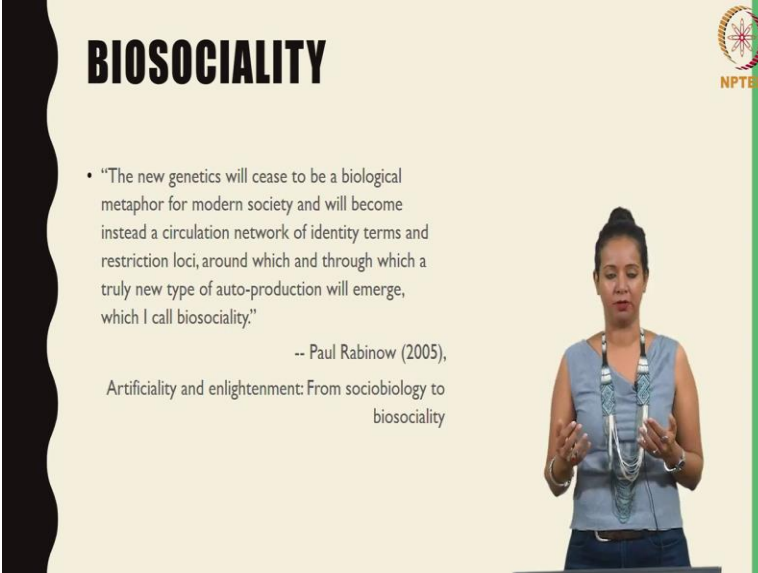
Again, another body of theory within which these questions are investigated is very much of feminist science and technology studies, which looks at the ways in which technology itself can be both harnessed, but can also be complicit in society's maintenance of the gender binary.

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And therefore, from the learning's of this article, let us perhaps suggest another new form of thinking about gendered and sexed bodies.

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BIOSOCIALITY

- "The new genetics will cease to be a biological metaphor for modern society and will become instead a circulation network of identity terms and restriction loci, around which and through which a truly new type of auto-production will emerge, which I call biosociality."

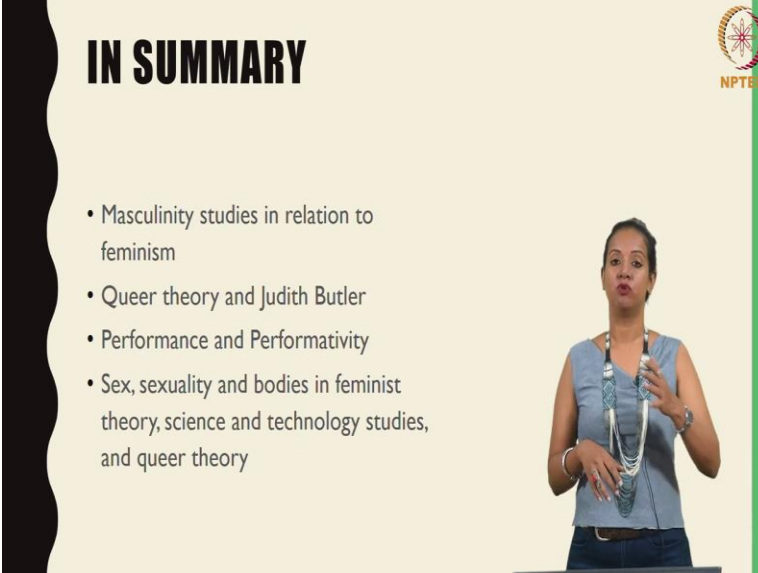
-- Paul Rabinow (2005),
Artificiality and enlightenment: From sociobiology to biosociality

The slide features a video inset of a woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a light blue sleeveless top and a necklace, gesturing with her hands as she speaks. The slide has a light beige background with a dark wavy border on the left and a green vertical bar on the right. The NPTEL logo is in the top right corner.

And here is a possible term, Paul Rabinow suggested in 2005, in relation to genetics and bodies the following: "The new genetics will cease to be a biological metaphor for modern society and will become instead a circulation network of identity terms and restriction loci, around which and through which, a truly new type of auto-production will emerge, which I call bio-sociality." Which is socialization or sociality is dependant on wide variety of categories of similarly sexed bodies, similarly described bodies that can form agglomerations and alliances, depending on their particular needs and they need not be attached either to identity or hierarchy.

Rabinow is not suggesting that, but could we think of a world where we think it through bio sociality, through the socialization between particular kinds of bodies and not through the hierarchy of male and female or normal and abnormal.

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IN SUMMARY

- Masculinity studies in relation to feminism
- Queer theory and Judith Butler
- Performance and Performativity
- Sex, sexuality and bodies in feminist theory, science and technology studies, and queer theory

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That brings us to the end of what I imagine has been a bit of a whirlwind of a lecture. To briefly summarize, in today's lecture we spoke about masculinity studies in relation to feminism. We discussed queer theory and Judith Butler. We discussed the relationship and the difference between performance and performativity. And lastly, we looked at sex, sexuality and bodies in feminist theory, science and technology studies, and queer theory, all together. I hope this has been interesting as much as it's been complex.

This brings us to the end of the large terrain we needed to cover with feminism concepts and theories. Let me restate again that this is not all encompassing, and these are only a set of suggestions as introductions to feminism concepts and theories. Please do go ahead and explore as many of these that interest you on your own. Until next lecture and your exams, please do go through all of this material and send any questions and concerns that you may have our way. Thank you.