

**Contextualizing Gender**  
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**Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee**

**Lecture - 16**  
**Introduction to Queer Theory**


Welcome dear participants to this week. In the previous module, we have looked at Teresa de Lauretis' understanding of technology of gender, as well as the concept of gender blurring in writers like bell hooks, Audre Lorde and Toni Morrison whose critical reflection on gender, race and sexuality pointed towards the domain of queer theory. In this module we shall introduce the Queer Theory.

The origin of queer theory is not easy to define since it came from multiple critical and cultural context, including feminism, poststructuralist theory, post colonialism, radical movements of people of colour, the gay and lesbian movements, AIDS activism, several sexual sub cultural practices such as sadomasochism. Primarily, queer theory as an academic tool came about in part from gender and sexuality studies that in turn had their origin from lesbian and gay studies and feminist theory.


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### Queer Theory

- The term “queer theory” itself came from Teresa de Lauretis’ 1991 work published in the feminist cultural studies journal *differences* titled “Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities.”
- She signifies that there are at least three interrelated projects at play within this theory:
  - refusing heterosexuality as the benchmark for sexual formations,
  - a challenge to the belief that lesbian and gay studies is one single entity, and
  - a strong focus on the multiple ways that race shapes sexual bias.



Source: Charlie West, Cherwell

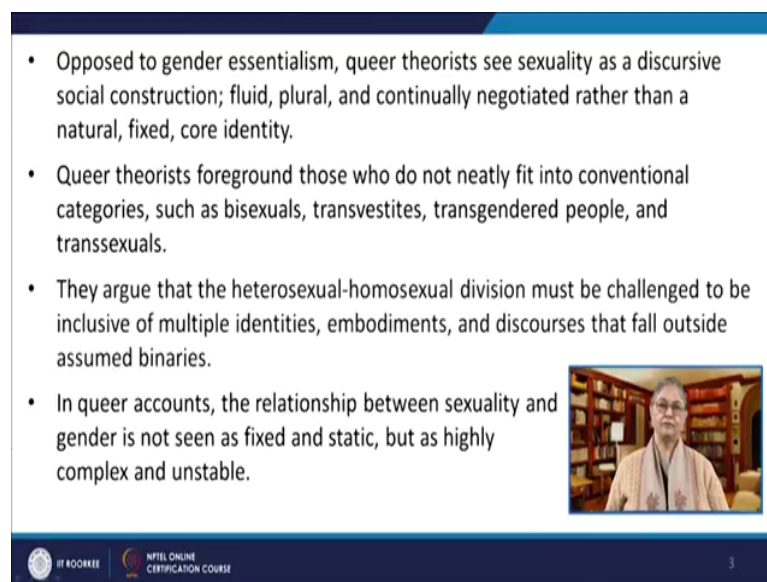


The term “queer theory” itself came from a 1991 work of Teresa de Lauretis, which was published in the feminist cultural studies journal ‘Differences’. The title of this essay was

“Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities”. Teresa de Lauretis signifies that there are at least three interrelated projects at play within this theory.

Firstly, refusing heterosexuality as the benchmark for sexual formations. Secondly, a challenge to the belief that lesbian and gay studies are one single entity. And thirdly, a strong focus on the multiple ways that race shapes sexual bias. Lauretis proposes that queer theory could represent all of these critics together and make it possible to rethink everything about sexuality.

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- Opposed to gender essentialism, queer theorists see sexuality as a discursive social construction; fluid, plural, and continually negotiated rather than a natural, fixed, core identity.
- Queer theorists foreground those who do not neatly fit into conventional categories, such as bisexuals, transvestites, transgendered people, and transsexuals.
- They argue that the heterosexual-homosexual division must be challenged to be inclusive of multiple identities, embodiments, and discourses that fall outside assumed binaries.
- In queer accounts, the relationship between sexuality and gender is not seen as fixed and static, but as highly complex and unstable.

Oppose to gender essentialism, queer theorists see sexuality as a discursive social construction; fluid, plural and continually negotiated rather than a natural, fixed, core identity. Queer theorists’ foreground those who do not nearly fit into conventional categories, such as bisexuals, transvestites, transgendered people and transsexuals. They argue that the heterosexual-homosexual division must be challenged to be inclusive of multiple identities, embodiments and discourses that fall outside assumed binaries.

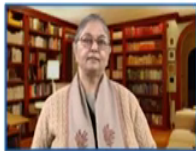
In queer accounts, the relationship between sexuality and gender is not seen as fixed and static, but as highly complex and unstable. Queer theory is associated with post-structuralist, post-modern approaches to sexuality and gender and also with a critique of feminist’s theories of sexuality that are seen as limited by an emphasis on gender. Various writers associated with queer theory have put forward arguments for theorizing sexuality independently from gender.

American cultural anthropologist Gayle Rubin has been influential in the development of such arguments. We shall discuss Gayle Rubin and also Eve Sedgwick extensively in the coming modules.

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- Modernist understandings of gender and sexuality as fixed, coherent and stable; have been challenged by post-structuralist accounts that conceptualise these categories as plural, provisional and situated.
- If there are multiple genders and multiple sexualities, then it is also likely that there will be multiple relationships between these categories.
- The first wave of LGBTQI liberation movements from the 1970s contributed to anti-essentialist theoretical analyses of feminism by focusing on the social institutionalization of heteronormativity.\*
- Michel Foucault's historical analysis of dominant medical, psychological, legal practices and ideologies that aimed to invest normative heterosexuality with social dominance was most influential in LGBTQI sexuality studies.

\* Richardson, D. (2020). *Introducing Gender and Women's Studies*. Bloomsbury Publishing.




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- Certain queer critical approaches are continuing Foucault's project by exploring diverse formations of different sexual identities, past and present.
- Notable examples are David Halperin's studies of sexuality in classical Greece, Gayle Rubin's ongoing study of the gay male leather community in San Francisco, and Martha Vicinius' work on lesbian identities.
- Queer theory reinforces its focus on homophobic discourses and constructions through the works of thinkers such as Cindy Patton and Simon Watney.



David Halperin  
Source: James Steakley

Martha Vicinius  
Source: James Steakley



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Certain queer critical approaches are continuing Foucault's project by exploring diverse formations of different sexual identities, past and present. Notable examples are David Halperin's studies of sexuality in classical Greece, Gayle Rubin's ongoing study of the gay male leather community in San Francisco and Martha Vicinius' work on lesbian identities. Queer theory reinforces its focus on homophobic discourses and constructions through the works of thinkers such as Cindy Patton and Simon Watney.

Queer studies also focus on the relationships between gay, lesbian and dissident sexualities and cultural production. Those working in this field include Joseph Bristow, Ed Cohen, Michael Warner, Jonathan Dollimore, Lee Edelman and Alan Sinfield among others.


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- Alan Sinfield explored the intricate and often perverse intersections of sexuality with other power relations – age, race, gender and, above all, class.
- *The Wilde Century* (1994), for example, explores how notions of “queerness” are closely linked to upper-class effeminacy through much of the 20th century, which were shaped by Wilde’s position as a scandalous celebrity.\*
- He contrasts this with very different expressions of same-sex desire in the Renaissance and the 18th century.
- Sinfield showed how shared identities are formed within queer subcultures by appropriating and transforming widely circulating stories, plays, songs and images.

\* Taylor, J (2017) Alan Sinfield. *The Guardian*. [www.theguardian.com/books/2017/dec/15/alan-sinfield-2017](http://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/dec/15/alan-sinfield-2017)



Alan Sinfield  
Source: The Times



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Alan Sinfield explored the intricate and often perverse intersections of sexuality with other power relations namely age, race, gender and above all, class. His book “The Wilde Century” published in 1994, for example, explores how notions of “queerness” are closely linked to upper class effeminacy through much of the 20th century, which were shaped by Wilde’s position as a scandalous celebrity.

He contrasts this with very different expressions of same-sex desire in the renaissance in the 18th century. Sinfield showed how shared identities are formed within queer subcultures by appropriating and transforming widely circulating stories, plays, songs and images. The number of queer texts and authors have increased dramatically through the 1990s, so have university courses on queer theory.

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- Michael Warner is an English professor and leading figure in the study of sex and sexuality in American culture. Currently, he is the Seymour H. Knox Professor of English Literature and American Studies at Yale University.
- His book, *The Trouble with Normal* (1999), has been very influential in the discussion of issues such as gay marriage, queer culture, and the politics of shame.
- Warner's argument is that American culture creates a hierarchy in which non-normative sex is shamed and stigmatized.



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Michael Warner is a leading figure in the study of sex and sexuality in American culture. His book, “The Trouble with Normal” published in 1999 has been very influential in the discussion of issues such as gay marriage, queer culture and the politics of shame. Warner’s argument is that the American culture creates a hierarchy in which non-normative sex is shamed and stigmatized.

Warner notes that sometimes gay and lesbian rights organizations actually contribute to this shaming rather than to its transformation. Queer theory with its radical nature of theoretical approach consists many of the discourses of established fields. It challenges the notion of defined and finite identity categories as well as the norms that create a binary of good versus bad sexualities. Now, we shall look at a video where people belonging to different gender identities describe what it means to be queer for them.



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WHAT DOES QUEER REALLY MEAN?

What Does Queer Really Mean?

- In this video, queer is perceived as an umbrella term -- which many other sexualities/identities can fall under.

Source: Seventeen <a href="https://youtu.be/58od0R8lly">https://youtu.be/58od0R8lly</a>

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This video perceives queer as an umbrella term, which many other sexualities and identities can fall under.

I can exist in the gray areas. I can be undefined and that is ok.

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ROWAN HEPPS KEENEY

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- In this video, queer is perceived as an umbrella term -- which many other sexualities/identities can fall under.

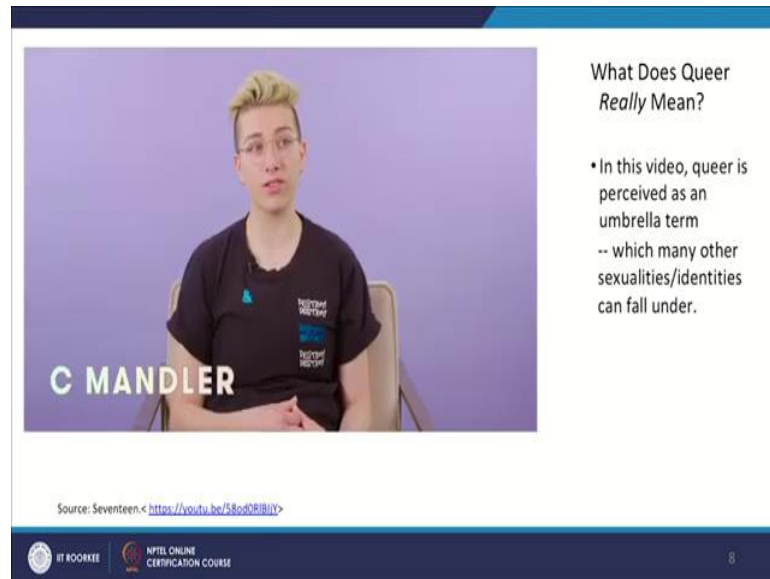
Source: Seventeen <a href="https://youtu.be/58od0R8lly">https://youtu.be/58od0R8lly</a>

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I think probably the hardest thing from me when I came out in high school was not knowing what label to use. I thought that my confusion with my presentation it was just me trying to fit into one of those boxes. Butch versus femme versus lipstick. I was experiencing really deep dysphoria that was more related to my gender than my

sexuality. Knowing that ultimately being a part of the queer community means more than any other label would have really helped me a lot in high school.

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- In this video, queer is perceived as an umbrella term -- which many other sexualities/identities can fall under.

Source: Seventeen < <https://youtu.be/58od081811Y> >

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There are a lot of connotations surrounding what it means to be trans; do you have to have hormone replacement therapy, do you have to have surgery, do you have to change your name. There is no right or wrong way to be trans. That is the hardest part of my identity to come to terms with because I have people all the time telling me you are not this. How would you know? Only I can really know exactly who or what I am.

We all had that experience in high school. We were like so desperately wanted a community to identify with and so much of that was finding a label that fit perfectly.

Growing up I hated my name Joon. I thought it was just so Korean and for me was like such a source of bullying. And so, I was really trying to desperately search for a different name and then of course, as I kind of grew into who I was. I started really embracing my Korean-American identity. And also realized that I am gender queer and I really like Joon because it sounds very androgynous and you know I just think it really captures who I am. So, Joon.

The more that we realized that gender and sexuality are all pretty much made up and a lie, we are just kind of like none of these words really fits. So, we are just going to go



under this umbrella of queer and like anyone who wants to know more. We can talk about that, but there is really a word for it.

The cool thing about being queer is it is an umbrella term. You can embrace the ambiguity and fluidity of sexuality. You do not have to know exactly who or what you are and that is ok.

Queer here focuses on the potential for the transgression and subversion of dominant forms of knowledge. Queer theorists attest that there is no fixed set of rules that determine normality, but there are only changing norms that people may or may not fit into. Queer theorists therefore, primarily aim at disrupting binaries in the hope that this will destroy stereotypical homogeneity as well as instances of inequality.

Now, we will look at some of the key terms that will help us to understand the queer theory better. We have already discussed certain terms like drag, cross dressing and gender blurring in previous modules.

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**Heteronormativity**

- Heteronormativity is a worldview that promotes heterosexuality as the normal and/or preferred sexual orientation.
- It is reinforced in society through the institutions of marriage, taxes, employment, and adoption rights, among many others. \*
- Heteronormativity is also related to “the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent—that is, organized as a sexuality—but also privileged” (Berlant, 1998).

\*Background - Queer Theory - LibGuides at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

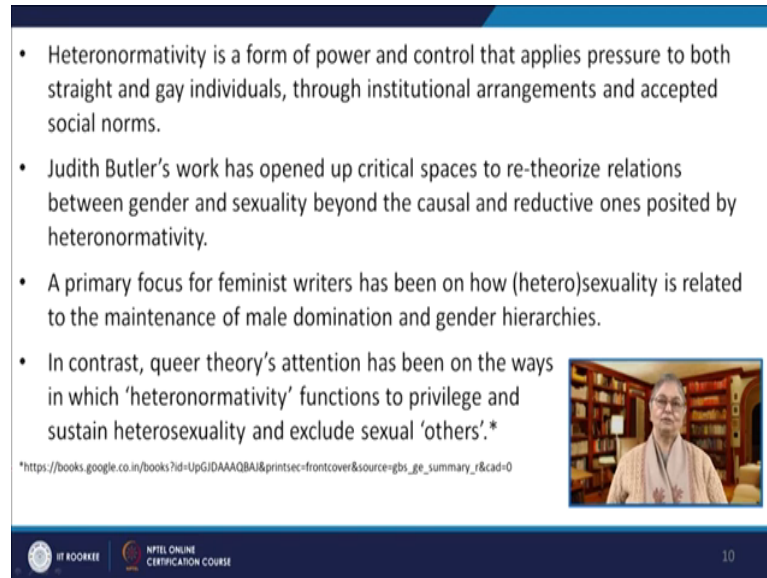
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The slide contains three small images: a person in a top hat, a word cloud with 'HETERONORMATIVITY' in large letters, and a person speaking in a video call window.

The first term we take up is heteronormativity. Heteronormativity is the worldview that promotes heterosexuality as the normal and or preferred sexual orientation. It is reinforced in society through the institutions of marriage, taxes, employment, education and adoption rights among many others.

Heteronormativity is also related to the institutions and structures of understanding and practical orientations that make heteronormativity seem not only coherent that is organized as a sexuality but also privileged.

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- Heteronormativity is a form of power and control that applies pressure to both straight and gay individuals, through institutional arrangements and accepted social norms.
- Judith Butler's work has opened up critical spaces to re-theorize relations between gender and sexuality beyond the causal and reductive ones posited by heteronormativity.
- A primary focus for feminist writers has been on how (hetero)sexuality is related to the maintenance of male domination and gender hierarchies.
- In contrast, queer theory's attention has been on the ways in which 'heteronormativity' functions to privilege and sustain heterosexuality and exclude sexual 'others'.\*

\*[https://books.google.co.in/books?id=UpGjDAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0](https://books.google.co.in/books?id=UpGjDAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0)

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It is a form of power and control that applies pressure to both straight and gay individuals, through institutional arrangements and accepted social norms. Judith Butler's work has opened up critical spaces to re-theorize relations between gender and sexuality beyond the causal and reductive ones posited by heteronormativity.

A primary focus for feminist writers has been on how heterosexuality or sexuality as such is related to the maintenance of male domination and gender hierarchies. In contrast, the attention of the queer theory has been on the ways in which heteronormativity functions to privilege and sustain heterosexuality and exclude sexual other.


We shall explore this concept in detail with relation to Gayle Rubin in the next module. Another term used by queer theorists is transgender.

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## Transgender

- Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression varies from that traditionally associated with their apparent biological sex at birth.\*
- It has come to designate persons whose gender identities incorporate behaviours and traits traditionally associated with the opposite sex.
- Transgender persons may thus include transsexuals, transgenderists (persons who gender-identify with the opposite sex but who choose not to undergo sex-reassignment surgery or hormone treatments), and androgynes among other groups.

\*Transgender | gender identity | Britannica



Source: Healthline



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Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and or gender expression varies from that traditionally associated with their apparent biological sex at birth. It has come to designate persons whose gender identities incorporate behaviours and traits traditionally associated with the opposite sex.


Transgender persons thus include transsexuals, transgenderists that is persons who gender identify with the opposite sex but who choose not to undergo sex reassignment surgery or hormone treatments, and androgynes among other groups. Trans-people and their willingness to demonstrate the reality of trans dressing, gender boundaries challenge the limitations of law.

Exploring their experiences through the media, transgender groups created an awareness of the fluidity of socially constructed gender boundaries. Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally or surgically. Transgender persons face many unique challenges in life including stigma, discrimination, harassment and violence.

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- They often do not feel comfortable in the gender role they were attributed with at birth, or are at odds with the labels “man” or “woman” credited to them by family or formal authorities. \*
- Their identity can cover a variety of experiences. It can encompass discomfort with role expectations, being queer, occasional or more frequent cross-dressing, accessing major health interventions such as hormonal therapy and surgical reassignment procedures.
- Psychiatrist John F. Oliven of Columbia University coined the term *transgender* in his 1965 reference work *Sexual Hygiene and Pathology*.
- He used the term as a way to distinguish between people who crossed a point from “transvestite” to “transsexual”.

\*Stryker, S. (2006). *The Transgender Studies Reader*. Taylor and Francis.



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They often do not feel comfortable in the gender role that they were attributed with at birth or may also be at odds with the labels “man” or “woman” credited to them by family or formal authorities. Their identity can cover a variety of experiences. It can encompass discomfort with role expectations, being queer, occasional or more frequent cross dressing, accessing major health interventions such as hormonal therapy and surgical reassignment procedures.


Psychiatrist John F. Oliven of Columbia University had coined the term transgender in a 1965 reference work “Sexual Hygiene and Pathology”. He used the term as a way to distinguish between people who crossed a point from “transvestite” to “transsexual”. Transvestite is a word which had been used for a person who derives pleasure from dressing in clothes primarily associated with the opposite sex.

Transsexual on the other hand is a medical term used for a person who emotionally and psychologically feels that they belong to the sex opposite to that they were recorded as oven born. Both terms are now generally considered to be outdated and are often viewed as offensive.


Even during the 1960s, critical books on homosexuality often referred to it as a depravity or mental abnormality which could be medically cured. The word trans referring to a transwoman or transmen is a very recent take on the umbrella term transgender.

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- In 1994, gender theorist Susan Stryker defined *transgender* as encompassing:
  - All identities or practices that cross over, cut across, move between, or otherwise queer socially constructed sex/gender boundaries, including, but not limited to, transsexuality, heterosexual transvestism, gay drag, butch lesbianism, and non-European identities such as the Native American berdache or the Indian Hijra. (Stryker, 1994)



Susan Stryker  
Source: Pax Ahimsa Gethen



\* Qtd. in Currah, P., Juang, R. M., & Minter, S. (2006). *Transgender rights*. University of Minnesota Press.

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In 1994, gender theorist Susan Stryker defined transgender as encompassing. And I quote, “all identities or practices that crossover cut across move between or otherwise queer socially constructed sex or gender boundaries, including, but not limited to transsexuality, heterosexual transvestism, gay drag, butch lesbianism and non-European identities such as the Native American berdache or the Indian Hijra” unquote.

The primary terms use under transgender were “female to male” (FtM), for men who transition from female, and “male to female that is (MtF), for women who transition from male sex. These terms have now been superseded by “trans man” and “trans woman” respectively. Now, we shall look at the term gender transitioning.

Gender identity and sexual orientation are different facets of identity. People may have a gender identity or could be gender nonconforming. Also, one’s gender does not determine their sexual orientation. For instance, transgender people may identify as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual or none of these.

People who feel that their gender assigned at birth does not line up with a gender they identify with may experience gender dysphoria. They may be uncomfortable because society genders them incorrectly because of their body type and appearance. Therefore, some trans individuals undergo gender transitioning.

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## Gender Transitioning

- Gender transitioning is the process of changing one's gender presentation or sex characteristics to accord with one's internal sense of gender identity.\*
- For transgender and transsexual people, this process commonly involves reassignment therapy, which may include hormone replacement therapy or sex reassignment surgery.
- Cross-dressers, drag queens, and drag kings tend not to transition, since their variant gender presentations are usually only adopted temporarily.

\* Brown, M. L. & Rounsley, C. A. (1996) *True Selves: Understanding Transsexualism - For Families, Friends, Coworkers, and Helping Professionals*. Jossey-Bass



Jamie Raines, 21, snapped selfies during his three-year transition of becoming a male.  
Source: abc News



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Gender transitioning is the process of changing one's gender presentation or sex characteristics to accord with one's internal sense of gender identity. For transgender and transsexual people, this process commonly involves reassignment therapy which may include hormone replacement therapy or sex reassignment surgery.

Cross-dressers, drag queen and drag kings tend not to transition, since their variant gender presentations are usually only adopted in a temporary manner. One of the most common parts of transitioning is Coming Out for the first time. Transitioning is a process that can take anywhere between several months to several years.




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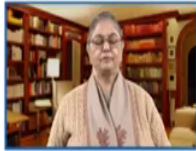
## Coming Out

- Coming out is a process of understanding, accepting, and valuing one's sexual orientation/gender identity.
  - It includes acknowledging to oneself or disclosing to others something that is not readily apparent or understood about their identity.
- Coming out as trans or gender-nonconforming is a lengthy, individual process, often messy and sometimes traumatic, but it can also be affirming, liberating, and positive.\*
- The Cass Theory, developed by Vivian Cass (1979) is a six stage model that describes the developmental process individuals go through as they consider, and then acquire, a homosexual identity.

\*Trans Bodies, Trans Selves - Laura Erickson-Schroth - Oxford University Press (oup.com)



Source: The Conversation



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Coming out is a process of understanding, accepting and valuing one's sexual orientation or gender identity. It involves acknowledging to oneself or also disclosing to others something, that is not either readily apparent or understood about their own identity. Coming out as trans or gender-nonconforming is a lengthy individual process often messy and sometimes traumatic, but it can also be affirming, liberating and positive.

The Cass Theory, developed by Vivian Cass in 1979 is a six-stage model that describes the developmental process individuals go through as they consider and then acquire a homosexual identity. The Cass Identity model is one of the fundamental theories of LGBT identity development. It was developed in 1979 by Vivienne Cass, a clinical psychologist and sexual therapist. Her theory continues to be used by researchers, educators, therapists and health professionals.


It was one of the first theories to treat LGBT people as normal in a heterosexual society and in a climate of homophobia and biophobia instead of treating homosexuality and bisexuality themselves as problems. It is a six-stage process for "coming out". It describes the stages that an individual may go through as they come to terms with their sexuality both internally and externally.

Cass described a process of six stages of LGBT identity development. While these stages are normally sequential, some people might revisit stages at different points in their lives.


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### The Six Stages to Coming Out

- Stage 1 – Identity Confusion: Generally, people assume their identity with the heterosexual or gender-conforming majority. However, as people try to fit in society's standards, the identity comes into question through thoughts, emotions, physical reactions, and other experiences that question their identity as heterosexuals.
- Stage 2 – Identity Comparison: Stage 1 doesn't usually end with denial or avoidance. Most of the time, it continues to identity comparison. Stage 2 includes social alienation, a feeling of being out of place or difference.



Vivian Cass  
Source: Student  
Development Theory



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The 1st stage is known as Identity Confusion. Generally, people assume their identity in line with a heterosexual gender-conforming majority view. However, as they try to fit in the social standards, the identity comes into questions through thoughts, emotions, physical reactions and other experiences that question their identity as heterosexual . The 2nd stage is known as identity comparison. Stage 1 does not usually end either with denial or avoidance. Most of the time, it continues to Identity Comparison.

Stage 2 include social alienation, a feeling of being out of place or different. During this stage, people start to accept that they are different from others or sometimes they also inhibit who they genuinely are in order to avoid social scrutiny.

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- Stage 3 – Identity Tolerance: The acceptance of one’s homosexuality increases, and people begin to tolerate their identity. Although confusion and distress concerning one’s sexual orientation decreases, there is increased isolation and alienation as the individual identity becomes increasingly different from society’s expectation of the person. In this stage, people make contact with members of the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Stage 4 – Identity Acceptance: A sign of identity acceptance is when the person feels more connected around people from the LGBTQIA+ community and prefers being with them more than cisgenderers. During this stage, people start to disclose who they are to people close to them or to allies that will keep their identity a secret.\*

\*Out of the Closet: The 6-Stage Model of Coming Out: Thriving Center of Psychology: Psychologists

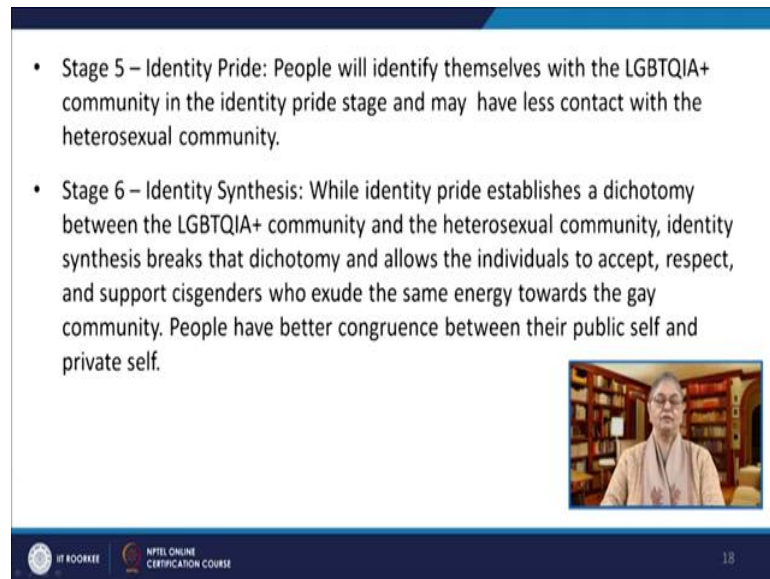


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Stage 3 is known as Identity Tolerance. The acceptance of one’s homosexuality increases and people begin to tolerate their genuine identity. Although confusion and distress concerning one’s sexual orientation decreases, there is increased isolation and alienation as the individual identity becomes increasingly different from society’s expectations of the person. In this stage, people make contact with members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Stage 4 is Identity Acceptance. It is a sign of identity acceptance when the person feels more connected with people from the LGBTQIA+ community and prefers being with them more than cisgenderers. During this stage, people start to disclose who they are to people close to them or to allies that will keep their identity a secret.

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- Stage 5 – Identity Pride: People will identify themselves with the LGBTQIA+ community in the identity pride stage and may have less contact with the heterosexual community.
- Stage 6 – Identity Synthesis: While identity pride establishes a dichotomy between the LGBTQIA+ community and the heterosexual community, identity synthesis breaks that dichotomy and allows the individuals to accept, respect, and support cisgenderers who exude the same energy towards the gay community. People have better congruence between their public self and private self.

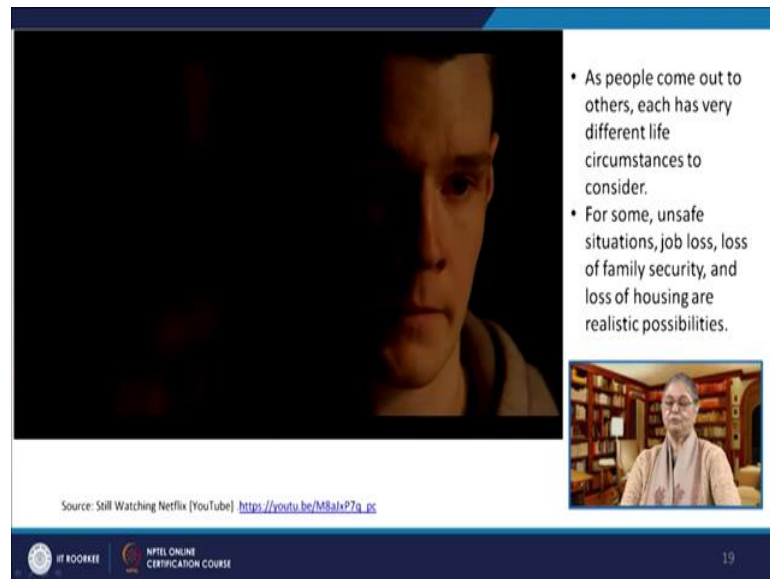


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The 5th stage is that of Identity Pride. When people identify themselves with the LGBTQIA+ community and would have less contact with the heterosexual community. The last stage the 6th stage is known as identity synthesis. While identity pride establishes a dichotomy between the LGBTQIA+ community and the heterosexual community, identity synthesis breaks that dichotomy and allows the individuals to accept, respect and support cisgenderers, who exude the same energy towards the gay community.

People have better congruence between their public self and their private self. In the next slide we have a video clipping from a popular Netflix series Sex Education, in which Adam Groff who is one of the main characters in the series is coming out.

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- As people come out to others, each has very different life circumstances to consider.
- For some, unsafe situations, job loss, loss of family security, and loss of housing are realistic possibilities.

Source: Still Watching Netflix (YouTube) [https://youtu.be/M8aixP7a\\_gc](https://youtu.be/M8aixP7a_gc)

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As people come out to others, each has very different life circumstances to consider. For some, unsafe situations, job loss, loss of family security and loss of housing are realistic possibilities.

And I think I am bisexual.

I am trans.

I am gay.


I am bisexual.

I am gay.

I think I am asexual.

I do drink red wine, but I also drink white wine.

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THE BEST  
COMING OUT SCENES

- As people come out to others, each has very different life circumstances to consider.
- For some, unsafe situations, job loss, loss of family security, and loss of housing are realistic possibilities.


Source: Still Watching Netflix [YouTube] [https://youtu.be/M8aIxP7a\\_gc](https://youtu.be/M8aIxP7a_gc)

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Yeah, I am a gay man.

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Adam  
Sex Education

- As people come out to others, each has very different life circumstances to consider.
- For some, unsafe situations, job loss, loss of family security, and loss of housing are realistic possibilities.

Source: Still Watching Netflix [YouTube] [https://youtu.be/M8aIxP7a\\_gc](https://youtu.be/M8aIxP7a_gc)

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You stopped coming to the window.

Yeah, I did.

What did I do wrong?



You bullied me for years Adam. You made me feel unsafe for years. You were one of the main reasons I was not kind to myself. And I am supposed to believe that you have suddenly changed. You are full of shame man and you know I cannot be in that place anymore. I have had to work really hard to love myself and I will not go back to hiding things about me again.

I am scared and I think I am bisexual.

Are you alright? You cannot even hold my hand? Rahim can hold my hand.

I feel like everyone hates me.

Well, it is kind of hard to like someone who does not like themselves.

People who are coming out, could be haunted by their fears which are rooted in shame or guilt. Prior to coming out to anyone many people live in fear of others reactions.

(Refer Slide Time: 27:20)

**Cisgender**

- The antonym of the word *transgender* is *cisgender*, which describes persons whose gender identity matches their assigned sex.
- The prefixes 'cis' and 'trans' both come from Latin: 'cis' means "this side of", and 'trans' means "the other side of". For some people, their gender and sex are on "the same side" and for others, their gender and sex are not aligned. \*
- Cisgender refers to people who feel there is a match between their assigned sex and the gender they feel themselves to be.

\* Will 'Cisgender' Survive? - The Atlantic

Source: Jonathan Jarry, McGill University

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Now, we will look at the term cisgender. The antonym of the word transgender is cisgender, which describes persons whose gender identity matches their assigned sex. The prefixes 'cis' and 'trans' both come from Latin. 'Cis' means "this side of" and 'trans' means "the other side of". For some, people their gender and sex are on the same side and for others their gender and sex are not aligned.

Cisgender refers to people who feel there is a match between their assigned sex and the gender they feel themselves to be. You are cisgender, if your birth certificate says you are a male and you identify yourself as a man or if your birth certificate says that you are a female and you also identify as a woman. Transgender is referred to as a third gender. It is also a social category present in societies that recognize three or more genders. The term third is usually understood to mean other.

(Refer Slide Time: 28:31)



**Third Gender**

- Gender variant people have existed throughout the world and across time, celebrated in some cultures, denigrated in others.
  - Some societies recognized people who embodied a gender identity beyond the binary, for example, *hijra* communities in South Asia, two-spirit people among some Native American cultures, *waria* in Southeast Asia and *Fa'afafine* in Pacific Islander communities.\*
- People whose identities do not fit into a rigid female/male gender binary have, in many countries, been on a years-long quest to obtain official documents that reflect their identities.

\*Transgender, Third Gender, No Gender: Part II | Human Rights Watch (hrw.org)

Source: Global Citizen

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Gender variant people have existed throughout the world and a cross time, celebrated in some cultures, denigrated in others. Some societies recognized people who embodied a gender identity beyond the binary. For example, the hijra communities in South Asia, two-spirit people among some Native American cultures, waria in Southeast Asia and Fa'afafine in Pacific Islander communities.


People whose identities do not fit into a rigid female male gender binary have in many countries been on a years-long quest to obtain official documents that reflect their identities. While the third gender includes a few different groups in South Asia, the most common are known as the hijras.

(Refer Slide Time: 29:27)

- *Hijras* are often born male but look and dress in traditionally feminine ways.
- Often called transgender by outsiders, Indian society and most hijras consider themselves to be third gender—neither male nor female, not transitioning. They are a different gender altogether.
- However, hijra identity is complex, and recently, some have identified as transgender and sought gender reassignment procedures.\*
- While hijras have been treated with both fear and respect for thousands of years, much of this respect did not survive their encounter with colonialism.



A group of hijra in Bangladesh in 2010, by USAID Bangladesh, Wikimedia Commons: <http://bit.ly/2w0PINE>



\*The Third Gender and Hijras | Religion and Public Life at Harvard Divinity School

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Hijras are often born male, but look and dress in traditionally feminine ways. Often called transgender by outsiders, Indian society and most hijras consider themselves to be the third gender - neither male nor female, not transitioning. They are a different gender altogether. However, hijra identity is complex and recently some have identified as transgender and sought gender reassignment procedures.

While hijras have been treated with both fear and respect for thousands of years, much of this respect did not survive their encounter with colonialism. The British colonized most of South Asia in the 19th and 20th centuries and were shocked by the third gender people. Recently, the hijras have regained some of the rights and freedoms which they have been denied.


By 2014, India, Nepal and Bangladesh had all officially recognized third gender people as citizens deserving of equal rights. The Supreme Court of India is stated that it is the right of every human being to choose their gender and that recognition of the group is not a social or medical issue, but a human rights issue. Another term used by queer theorists is non-binary gender.

(Refer Slide Time: 31:00)


### Non-binary gender/Genderqueer

- Non-binary or Genderqueer is an umbrella term used to describe people who feel their gender cannot be defined within the margins of gender binary. Instead, they understand their gender in a way that goes beyond simply identifying as either a man or woman.\*
- Most people – including most transgender people – are either male or female. But some people don't neatly fit into the categories of "man" or "woman," or "male" or "female." For example, some people have a gender that blends elements of being a man or a woman, or a gender that is different than either male or female. Some people don't identify with any gender and some people's gender changes over time.

\*LGBT Foundation - Non-Binary Inclusion



Source: National Center for Institutional Diversity



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Non-binary or genderqueer is an umbrella term used to describe people who feel their gender cannot be defined within the margins of gender binary. Instead, they understand their gender in a way that goes simply beyond identifying as either a man or a woman. Most people including most transgender people are either male or female. But some people do not neatly fit into the categories of man or woman or male or female.

For example, some people have a gender that blends elements of being a man or a woman or a gender that is different than either male or female. Some people do not identify with any gender and some people's gender may change over time.

(Refer Slide Time: 31:55)

- They may feel their gender is fluid can change and fluctuate. Some examples of terms commonly used by non-binary people include genderqueer, agender, gender-fluid, bigender and third gender.\*
- Being non-binary is not the same thing as being intersex.
- Intersex people have anatomy or genes that don't fit typical definitions of male and female. Most intersex people identify as either men or women.
- Non-binary people are usually not intersex: they're usually born with bodies that may fit typical definitions of male and female, but their innate gender identity is something other than male or female.

\*Understanding Non-Binary People: How to Be Respectful and Supportive | National Center for Transgender Equality (transequality.org)




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They may feel their gender is fluid can change and fluctuate. Some examples of terms commonly used by non-binary people include genderqueer, agender, gender-fluid, bigender and third gender. Being non-binary is not the same thing however as being intersex.

Intersex people have anatomy or genes that do not fit typical definitions of male or female. Most intersex people identify as either men or women. Non-binary people are usually not intersex, they are usually born with bodies that may fit typical definitions of male and female, but their innate gender identity is something other than male or female.

Genderqueer is often used to self identify by people, who challenge binary social constructions of gender. In the next slide, we have a video where non-binary people explained what the term non-binary means to them.

(Refer Slide Time: 33:03)



**JAMES**  
NON-BINARY

Nonbinary

- Nonbinary is a term that describes someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman.
- Instead, a nonbinary person may define their gender identity and experience outside of these binary terms.

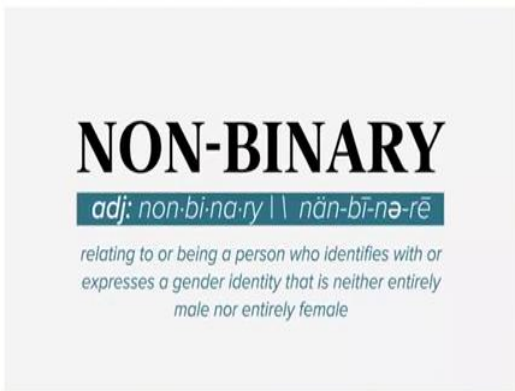
Video: Tinder [https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH\\_IU](https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH_IU)

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There is a whole variety of experiences that people have that cause them to question like, hey maybe I do not actually fit into the definition of you know man or a woman and that there is something else.

(Refer Slide Time: 33:20)



**NON-BINARY**

*adj:* **non-bi-nə-ry** | \ nān-bī-nə-rē

*relating to or being a person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that is neither entirely male nor entirely female*

- Nonbinary is a term that describes someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman.
- Instead, a nonbinary person may define their gender identity and experience outside of these binary terms.


Video: Tinder [https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH\\_IU](https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH_IU)

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(Refer Slide Time: 33:28)



DANI  
NON-BINARY

- Nonbinary is a term that describes someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman.
- Instead, a nonbinary person may define their gender identity and experience outside of these binary terms.


Video: Tinder [https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH\\_IU](https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH_IU)

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25

Hi, I am Dani and I identify as non-binary.

(Refer Slide Time: 33:34)



LINDSEY  
NON-BINARY

- Nonbinary is a term that describes someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman.
- Instead, a nonbinary person may define their gender identity and experience outside of these binary terms.


Video: Tinder [https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH\\_IU](https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH_IU)

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25

I am Lindsey and I identify as non-binary.

(Refer Slide Time: 33:35)



FENG  
NON-GENDERED PERSON

Nonbinary

- Nonbinary is a term that describes someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman.
- Instead, a nonbinary person may define their gender identity and experience outside of these binary terms.


Video: Tinder [https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH\\_IU](https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH_IU)

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My name is Feng. I identify as non-gendered person.

(Refer Slide Time: 33:38)



FRANCOIS  
GENDERQUEER

Nonbinary

- Nonbinary is a term that describes someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman.
- Instead, a nonbinary person may define their gender identity and experience outside of these binary terms.

Video: Tinder [https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH\\_IU](https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH_IU)

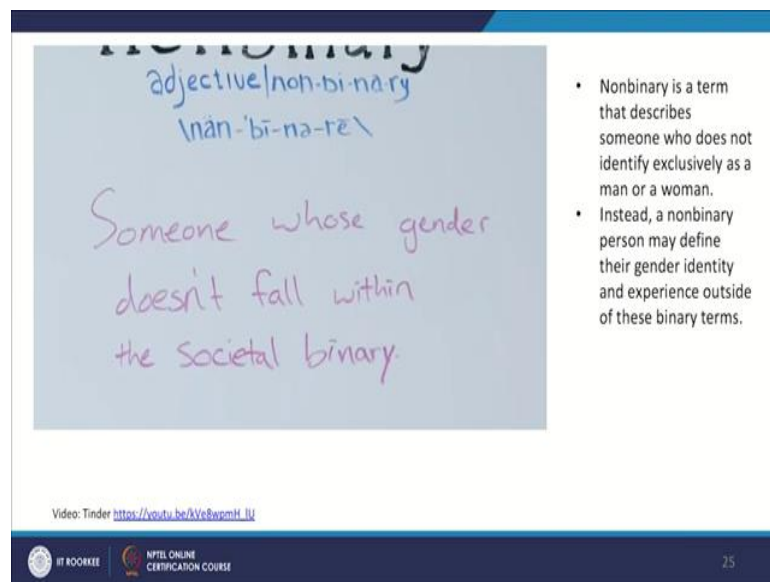
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25

I am Francois. I identify as genderqueer.

My name is James and I identify as non-binary.

(Refer Slide Time: 33:46)



The slide features a central image of a whiteboard with handwritten text. At the top, the word 'nonbinary' is partially visible. Below it, 'adjective/non-binary' and 'nan-bi-na-ri' are written. The main text reads: 'Someone whose gender doesn't fall within the societal binary.' To the right of the whiteboard, there is a bulleted list. At the bottom of the slide, there is a video source link, the IIT ROORKEE logo, the NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE logo, and the number 25.

adjective/non-binary  
nan-bi-na-ri

Someone whose gender  
doesn't fall within  
the societal binary.

- Nonbinary is a term that describes someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman.
- Instead, a nonbinary person may define their gender identity and experience outside of these binary terms.

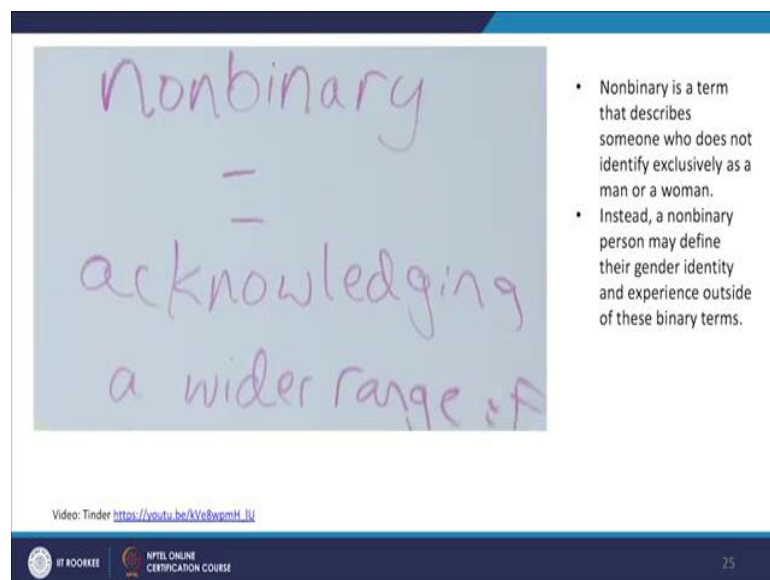
Video: Tinder [https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH\\_IU](https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH_IU)

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Non-binary, someone whose gender does not fall within the context of the binary that we set up in society.

I am not male, I am not female, I am somewhere floating around in there.

(Refer Slide Time: 34:00)



The slide features a central image of a whiteboard with handwritten text. The word 'nonbinary' is written at the top, followed by an equals sign and the phrase 'acknowledging a wider range of'. To the right of the whiteboard, there is a bulleted list. At the bottom of the slide, there is a video source link, the IIT ROORKEE logo, the NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE logo, and the number 25.

nonbinary  
=  
acknowledging  
a wider range of

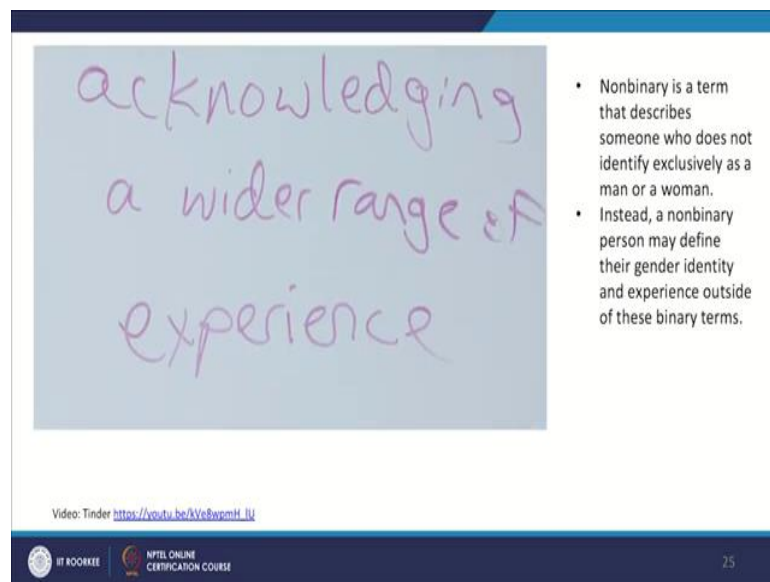
- Nonbinary is a term that describes someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman.
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Video: Tinder [https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH\\_IU](https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH_IU)

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Non-binary means acknowledging a wider range of experience.

(Refer Slide Time: 34:01)



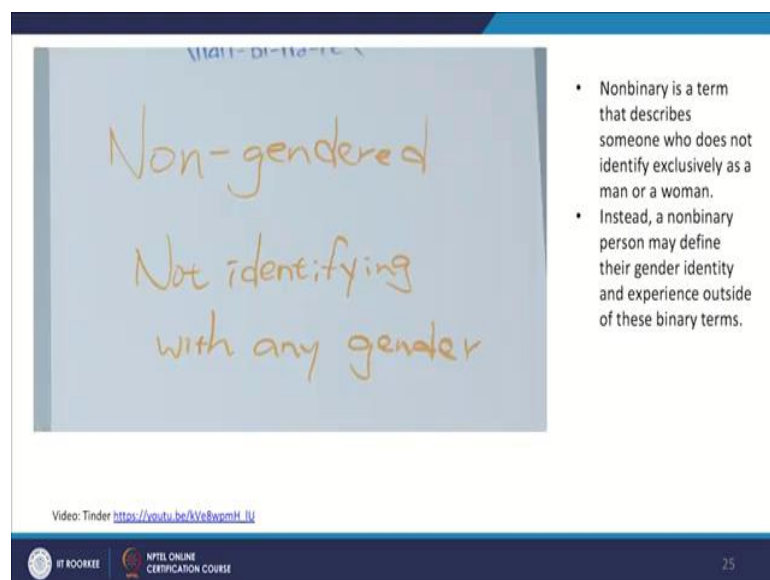
A slide from an NPTEL online certification course. The main content is a handwritten note in purple ink on a light blue background that reads "acknowledging a wider range of experience". To the right of the note is a bulleted list defining nonbinary. At the bottom, there is a video source link, the IIT Roorkee logo, the NPTEL Online Certification Course logo, and the slide number 25.

- Nonbinary is a term that describes someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman.
- Instead, a nonbinary person may define their gender identity and experience outside of these binary terms.

Video: Tinder [https://youtu.be/VVe8wpmH\\_IU](https://youtu.be/VVe8wpmH_IU)

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(Refer Slide Time: 34:06)



A slide from an NPTEL online certification course. The main content is a handwritten note in orange ink on a light blue background that reads "Non-gendered Not identifying with any gender". To the right of the note is a bulleted list defining nonbinary. At the bottom, there is a video source link, the IIT Roorkee logo, the NPTEL Online Certification Course logo, and the slide number 25.

- Nonbinary is a term that describes someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman.
- Instead, a nonbinary person may define their gender identity and experience outside of these binary terms.

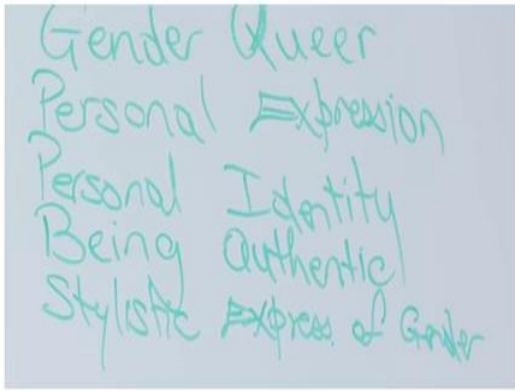
Video: Tinder [https://youtu.be/VVe8wpmH\\_IU](https://youtu.be/VVe8wpmH_IU)

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For me, it means that I am not identified with any specific gender; like male, female or other things.

It is part of a larger kind of goal of questioning these assumptions about gender and questioning why they are only need to be two.

(Refer Slide Time: 34:18)



Gender Queer  
Personal Expression  
Personal Identity  
Being Authentic  
Stylistic Express. of Gender


- Nonbinary is a term that describes someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman.
- Instead, a nonbinary person may define their gender identity and experience outside of these binary terms.

Video: Tinder [https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH\\_IU](https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH_IU)

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It gives me the freedom to express myself. If I wake up one day and I want to spike my hair and do punk rock makeup, I can do it.

(Refer Slide Time: 34:26)



Nonbinary  
Not Binary = Freedom

- Nonbinary is a term that describes someone who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman.
- Instead, a nonbinary person may define their gender identity and experience outside of these binary terms.

Video: Tinder [https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH\\_IU](https://youtu.be/AVe8wpmH_IU)

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Every couple of decades some designer decides that men shorts are you know suddenly the five inches shorter or five inches longer in the 70s if you look at. What men were wearing they were like rockettes like shorts are up to here and now it is like get it you know downs in the knee.

Non-binary is freedom from that whole game. It is like I do not care what the men's department at Marshalls suddenly has decided that like men need to wear I am going to I am going to go for what makes me feel more authentic.

I tends to say gender is dependent on context and point of view.

To me it just makes me comfortable that I can just be this body that I have.

(Refer Slide Time: 35:11)

- It is important to use people's preferred pronouns (in addition to names and terms for gender).
- Some non-binary people use they/their/them/themselves or an explicitly developed term such as xe/xyr/xem/xyrself rather than he/his/him/himself or she/her/her/herself.
- With all these aspects, 'ask' etiquette is appropriate (Richards & Barker, 2013) which simply involves asking what terminology people prefer and how they experience their gender. \*

\*Richards, C. (2018). Non-binary or genderqueer genders. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 28(1), 95-102 | 10.3109/09540261.2015.1106446

Source: Getty Image

It is also important to use peoples preferred pronouns in addition to names and terms for gender. Some non-binary people use they, their, them, themselves or as an explicitly developed term such as xe, xyr, xem, xyrself rather than he, his, him, himself or she, her, her, herself. With all these aspects, 'ask' etiquette is appropriate which simply involves asking what terminology people prefer and how they experience their gender.

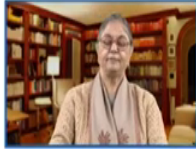
It is also invoked to incorporate the preferred pronoun in our email signatures. This move towards the more accepting and accommodating approach towards non-binary and genderqueer people was initially mirrored in online and youth-oriented media.

(Refer Slide Time: 36:08)

### Developments in LGBTQI Studies

- Early gay and lesbian theories converged with feminist critiques of patriarchy as heteronormative, creating a social stigma towards non-heterosexual behaviours and identities.
- Foucauldian analysis extended this social constructionist critique using the concept of power/knowledge, arguing that modern sexological knowledges operated as a form of power to create dominant and deviant sexual identities such as 'the homosexual'.\*
- Queer theory extends this analysis to deconstruct forms of sexual identity based on the categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual.

\*Introducing Gender and Women's Studies : Diane Richardson: Red Globe Press (bloomsbury.com)



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Early gay and lesbian theories converged with feminist critiques of patriarchy as heteronormative, creating a social stigma towards non heterosexual behaviours and identities. Foucauldian analysis extended this social constructionist critique using the concept of power and knowledge, arguing that modern sexological knowledges operated as a form of power to create dominant and deviant sexual identities such as the homosexual.

Queer theory extends this analysis to deconstruct forms of sexual identity based on the categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual. Contemporary research on same sex behavior's supports the fundamental Foucauldian and social constructionist idea that sexuality is not always indicative of a sexual identity.



(Refer Slide Time: 37:11)

- It can be said that the Queer theorists focused on the idea of resistance to power, seeking to deconstruct any essentialized identity. They broadly argued that we may inhabit such identities at a given socio-historical cultural moment.
- Their aim is to de-legitimize the regulatory operations of power as knowledge that produce these identity frameworks in the first place.
- Queer theory offers a significant avenue through which to deconstruct and then reconstruct established concepts and theories.
- It questions socially established norms and dualistic categories with a special focus on challenging binary classifications – in terms of sex (heterosexual/homosexual), gender (male/female), class (rich/poor), and race (white/non-white).



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It can be said that the queer theorists focused on the idea of resistance to power, seeking to deconstruct any essentialized identity. They broadly argued that we may inhabit such identities at a given socio-historical cultural movement. Their aim is to de-legitimize the regulatory operations of power as knowledge that produce these identity frameworks in the first place.

Queer theory offers a significant avenue through which to deconstruct and then reconstruct established concepts and theories. It questions socially established norms and dualistic categories with a special focus on challenging binary classifications in terms of sex that is heterosexual or homosexual, gender - male or female, class - rich or poor and race - white and non-white.

In conclusion, we can say that there is a need to understand the larger scale theories and concepts that will help us to understand the ways in which cultural and political meanings of sexuality are socially structured. There is a necessity to reverse the essentialist logic that prioritizes biological function.

Instead, we should ask how people use cultural and political meanings of sex and sexuality to learn and develop one's identity and understanding of one's body. The key terms and concepts that we discussed in this module will be helpful for understanding queer theorists whom we shall examine in detail in the coming modules. We will analyze

some of the foundational philosophers of queer theory like Gayle Rubin and Eve Sedgwick.

Thank you.

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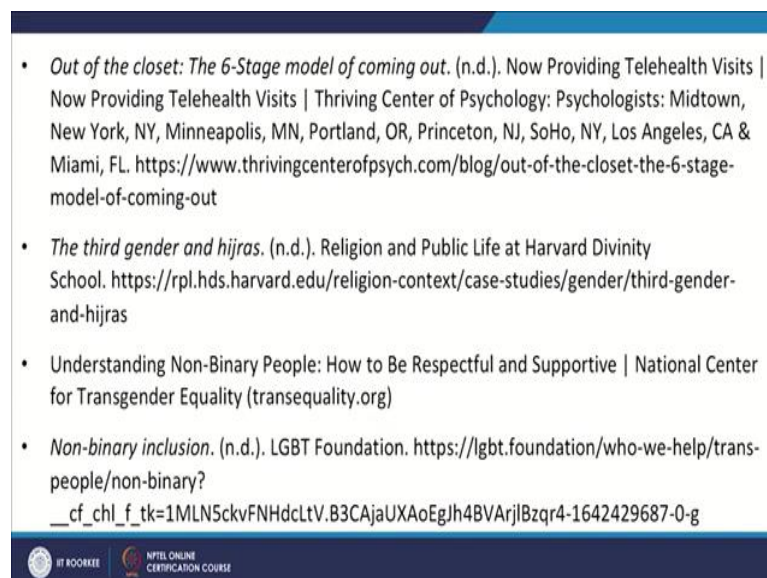


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(Refer Slide Time: 39:26)

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