

Welcome

This journal represents a comprehensive summary of the concepts covered in ANTH 768: Human Sexuality in the Spring semester of 2024. My approach to this is writings of my broad thoughts of subjects derived from the concepts in headings, some personal interpretations based on my own experiences, and collage art throughout. Please keep in mind there are several biases at play here as I am a white, cis-passing queer woman. Each concept will be presented as a 'chapter' which are outlined in the contents section.

Audrey Smith

Contents

GENDER & SEX:

1. as constructs and patriarchy 1
 with art 8-9
2. and capitalism 11
 with art 15-17
3. and race 19
4. and film 25

1

GENDER & SEX

or CONSTRUCTS and
PATRIARCHY



In your high school biology classes - perhaps even in university biology classes - you likely learned that an x chromosome and an x chromosome equals ♀ and an x chromosome and a Y chromosome equals ♂. That these chromosomal sex determinations are differentiated following fertilization. That the ♂ fertilizes, and the ♀ carries the egg. That a ♂ has a penis and testicles. That a ♀ has a vagina and a uterus. Maybe you didn't get too detailed in Sex Ed, but surely you know that to reproduce the ♂ penis and the ♀ vagina interlock and sometimes sperm meets ovary and a pregnancy begins. These ♂s and ♀s become a defining feature of all our lives before we even reach sentience, before our very conception.

In the scope of biology, of science, for the sake of order and categorization, we have convinced ourselves that sex is

bound. Sex is gender and so there must be two groupings. This is the way. This is right. This is 'God'. Adam and Eve. This is law. Defy the law and be labeled deviant. Go straight to jail - do not pass go. Face the gallows. Please accept this mercy killing. Sex is a precise interlocking system and so gender must be as well. Puzzle pieces that cannot fit together how they are intended, must not be together.

As a species, we humans have constantly evolved ^{main-} a deep-rooted fear of Entropy. We exhibit a lust for order - a satisfaction in patterns. So, we implement structure in our daily lives: three meals a day, sleep when dark and wake when light, brush your teeth, shower daily, wash your clothes.

BIOLOGICAL DETERMINISM

↳ belief that human behavior is controlled by an individual's genes or some component of their physiology and is completely devoid of environmental or outside influence.

perhaps the greatest areas where we attempt to establish order is within society itself. Our entire world is compartmentalized between land and water. Every thing must have a name - and every thought too - and every emotion - and every action. We are people within cities within states within countries within continents on planet Earth of the Milky Way galaxy. Plus, these people - they're ♀ or ♂.

What's so ironic about the endless efforts of humans to define, is that what we are so obsessed with defining is itself undefinable. Society is one of the most complex - undeniably chaotic - concepts that we have created around us. Our interactions with our own conspecifics is infinitely entropic, which I surmise is why society

⁴ tends to frustrate us so astro-

nomically.

What's more, our system of definition, 'science', is even more unpredictable. Nature in particular continues to defy the attributes we assign it. How can you declare an entire community of transgender individuals as 'unnatural' when it is the exact nature of some organisms to transform their biological sex at will?

It is becoming abundantly clear that the constraints we inflict upon the chaos that we find absurd are what's truly absurd. What's infinitely more baffling is that somewhere in these lineages of definitions humans decided that $X+X = ♀$, $X+Y = ♂$, and that $♀ < ♂$. For some reason these equations have become very important to humans across thousands of years and through hundreds of civilizations.

George Orwell's 1984 proved that the

equations of society are constantly altered by societal pressures, thus we get $2+2=5$. These equations are the same, simply constructs of society thought up and perpetuated by humans.

This module calls to mind Middlesex by Jeffrey Eugenides which is a story about an intersex person and their experiences with the binary. The above passage is very much a theoretical response of how I feel about the binary. As someone who has worked in the healthcare industry, even now as a bioanthropologist, the binary is consistently referenced almost as if it is desperately needed to keep society functioning. How do we make ourselves realize that it is not?

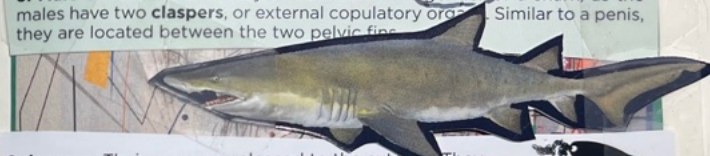
I do believe that the gender binary is further perpetuated by the patriarchy. That is not to say perpetuated by men, but by the entire social system that decided on the equations I provided beforehand. In my life, I have found it very difficult to explain this to the people I love - probably because they exist immersed in the patriarchy themselves. Unfortunately, I think a lot of men tend to dismiss the idea that they are also affected by the system because they fail to see the ways it controls them too. It may be a cliché to say that most men in our lives cannot show emotion because of the constraints of perceived masculinity, but it is true. I've known at least 3 men in my life who have committed suicide, but you'd have never known that could happen beforehand. As much as I feel the pressures of the paternal society I live in, I've realized it will never change unless we can show the people around us who are 'untouched' by it, that it's all around THEM too.



It is easy to determine



3. Male or female? It is easy to determine the gender of a shark, as the males have two **claspers**, or external copulatory organs. Similar to a penis, they are located between the two pelvic fins.



Oviparous. Their eggs are released to the exterior. They are large, well-protected eggs. They often have tendrils for attaching themselves to seaweed or gorgonians.

Ovoviviparous. Their eggs develop in the internal body cavity.

Viviparous. The young are born live, attached to the mother's placenta.



the gender of a shark

2

GENDER & SEX

and
CAPITALISM



Where the patriarchy courts the binary, it is fully in bed with capitalism. Funnily enough, this relationship still caters to the σ 's of this world - or should we say: this workforce. Unfortunately, the professions that are celebrated in most countries are the big-wig ones of corporations. Not the teaching ones, not the ones in healthcare, or even research. I have found especially in healthcare, the closer you work to saving lives, the less you make. What's more, the patriarchy expects women to fill these roles as teachers, nurses, nannies and babysitters. Makes sense, right? Women are nurturing figures are meant to fill these roles, they shouldn't be paid for what they're meant for. Alternatively, men who fill these roles are looked down on, often labelled gay - they aren't taken seriously. When did financial analysts become more pertinent to society than doctors and nurses? Likely when patriarchy and capitalism ¹² started sleeping together.

As a young girl, I would learn about how women struggle in the work force simply because of biases against them, however I never thought any of that applied to me. Maybe that was because I was young, I wasn't working yet, I didn't (and still don't sometimes) see myself as any different than a man, than a normal person. Now that I am older and have begun to enter what they call womanhood, I understand what it is like to work as a woman.

As an emergency medical technician, there was never a day I wasn't eyed or even blatantly hit on by patients, bystanders, and my coworkers! These were things I expected I may encounter, but by no means did I think it would really happen.

When I began my research, I had countless men (and some women) look me in the face and tell me my work was pointless and so is academia, ¹³

just to turn around a claim some of the most famous academic men were their heroes. It was absurd and felt like a slight on me because I was only a woman. Men flirt with me by offering to pay my rent; they say "date me and you'll want for nothing" then complain about 'gold digger' women while simultaneously being disgusted by the thought of an independent woman.

How are we supposed to win in a game with these parameters? If productivity and wealth is prioritized by the elites of this country, but the productivity and wealth of women is discouraged what remains is a system oppressive towards gender identity. Now, my experiences are not comprehensive of queer or racially diverse experiences because I am white and closeted in the workforce (more on this in Chapter 3).





3

GENDER & SEX
and
RACE



It is tricky to consider the complex structure of gender, if we are to consider it a construct and remove the binary. When we talk about identity politics, of course, this does not just include gender - it also includes race, sexuality, socio-economic status, etc. Plus, it is extremely important to discuss when the reality is certain groups are disenfranchized for these reasons.

Women, particularly women of color, experience bias every day. It's such a shame most of my encounters with these types of issues were during my time working in health care, but these are the realities of the system, especially in the USA. All of the people we picked up in the ambulance were low-income residents of the greater Pittsburgh region, and many of them were African-American. Both of the only pregnancy labor transport calls I rode on were both

black females. The first was a black woman being escorted to the hospital from Allegheny County Jail because she was going into labor. Not only was this woman restrained hands and feet, but the things the male (white) prison guard said to her were disgusting, calling her girl, telling her to shut up, telling her 'it's not that bad, she's faking'. It was all the more enraging knowing when she gave birth it would be white chained to a bed and afterwards, her child would be taken from her. When I rode with her in the back, I tried my hardest to be aware of the fact that I was probably the first woman she'd come into contact with since she'd started going into labor. She was annoyed that I couldn't give her anything for the pain, but otherwise relaxed a bit once it was just us. I suppose that's what they mean when they say women are naturally nurturing. 21

However, I think it's more that men are naturally threatening. That is a whole different thought however. After we dropped her off, I thought about the trip in silence for a good while, while my male partner sang to a rap song on the radio.

The other time we brought a pregnant woman to the hospital she was also black, low-income, and a single-mother. As she was going into labor, she managed to walk down 3 flights of her apartment, out to the truck, and climbed in herself. She told me: "You don't have to time my contractions - I've done this three times before. I know this baby is coming". We went to a hospital downtown because she worked there. When we went up in the elevator, she even saw someone she worked with and had a chat as we went up to maternity ward. Once we got up there, it was an entirely different story. The nurses

just looked at us as we stood waiting for a room assignment. So finally we just picked one and got our patient situated. One of the ward nurses walked in and when I began to give her report she said, "oh honey, you can practice giving me report if you want, but I'm not gonna use any of it". She then proceeded to tell our patient she came in too early, the baby wasn't coming. She provided no other services, then left. With nothing else we could do, we said 'best of luck' and on the way out passed a gaggle of nurses complaining about the 'girl' we brought in. Then we went back to base. When I came in the next day I learned the same nurses had sent our patient home at midnight. By 1 AM, one of our paramedics was back on site at her home and delivered the baby girl on her living room floor. The

entire ordeal was so shocking to me because this woman worked at that hospital and they still were horrible to her. I have no doubts that race and socio-economics were a factor in this behavior because of what I've seen in that field. Also because black women have been discouraged and shamed for having children since colonial times. Not only this, they have been sterilized without consent, raped, abused, and separated from their children throughout history and still to this day. In a world where $\varphi < \theta$, black women and other women of color are even less than. Simply because of their race.