

Instructor's Manual
for
**Sex Matters:
The Sexuality and Society Reader**

Fifth Edition

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Introduction

We revised this Instructor's Manual specifically for the fifth edition of *Sex Matters*. It contains new material to guide instructors in teaching about sexuality. We have provided resources for each chapter topic and the individual readings within the chapters. Our objective in designing this manual is to provide instructors with options and flexibility in teaching. The suggestions we included in the manual reflect this goal, and offer a wide range of activities to suit different styles of teaching. Additionally, we assembled this manual to emphasize the central themes of social construction and social control that the book highlights. We anticipate that every instructor who uses this manual will find something useful to incorporate into her classroom.

Teaching a course on sexuality can be challenging.¹ It is inevitable that some subjects will be unfamiliar and uncomfortable for some students. Some students find sexuality extremely hard to discuss, while others seem to have few boundaries in revealing personal experiences with sex. These divergent comfort zones necessitate some ground rules useful in any class that engages students in sensitive, provocative, and controversial topics. We recommend including a policy on classroom environment in your syllabus and reviewing this policy carefully during the first week of class. Discuss the importance of creating a safe place to discuss sexuality topics in a nonjudgmental and respectful manner. Encourage students to use “I” statements” in relaying their experiences to dissuade broad generalizations across groups of people (e.g., “When I was in high school, I saw a lot of teen girls having sex with lots of guys” versus “Teen girls are sluts”). It is also important to emphasize that students should not assume who is or is not around them. For example, just because it might seem that no one in the class is a lesbian (based on stereotypes of what lesbians look like), it does not mean that there are really no lesbians present, that no one is questioning their sexuality, or that students do not have lesbian mothers, sisters, friends, teachers, or bosses. For this reason, students should refrain from making comments that demean people or can come across as racist, sexist, homophobic, etc. Of course, students will

¹ For an excellent article on the challenges in teaching sexuality, see Nancy J. Davis,, “Taking Sex Seriously: Challenges in Teaching about Sexuality,” *Teaching Sociology*, 33 (2005):16–31.

occasionally make insensitive or disrespectful comments in class, so it is imperative that you have a policy in place to refer to, should such behavior warrant action.

Teaching about sexuality can also, at times, cause discomfort for instructors. We encourage you to think about your own boundaries and comfort levels, what you are willing to share in the classroom, and how you will mediate your own discomfort. Students will take their cues from you, and self-reflection about teaching sexuality will go a long way toward creating a supportive classroom atmosphere.

Overall, we have found that teaching sexuality is a joy. Students enter the classroom with different expectations, but all leave the course with new knowledge about the social aspects of sex. The activities and exercises we provide in this manual will help foster students' sociological understanding of sexuality.

Structure of the Manual

The manual is clearly structured to facilitate ease in use. We present individual readings as they exist within the ten chapters.

Chapter Readings

For each chapter, we have provided information on the individual readings. We included summaries, discussion questions, and exam questions. The summaries are brief and are designed to reorient instructors with the main idea of each reading. Each reading has at least three discussion questions designed to get students to think critically about the information presented. We also included multiple-choice exam questions for each reading. These are designed for an upper-level course, and are appropriate for college juniors and seniors. When discussing individual readings in class, you may find that some of our proposed activities and exercises for the chapter may be suitable. So, we recommend reviewing those suggestions to make discussions even more interesting.

Chapter Activities and Exercises

For each of the ten chapters in *Sex Matters*, we have provided a range of classroom activities and exercises. These resources relate directly to the chapter's central focus, but many can be altered to suit additional chapter themes as well.

- Large Group Discussions

Each chapter contains suggestions for large group discussions. These activities are designed to stimulate classroom discussion. They offer the entire class the opportunity to engage in sexuality topics in creative ways.

- Small Group Exercises

Each chapter contains suggestions for small group exercises. These exercises are designed for groups of about four, but can be adapted according to your class size. These resources usually

task small groups with performing a section of a larger group exercise appropriate for the whole class. These small group exercises allow students to connect with each other and help establish an engaging classroom atmosphere.

- Writing Exercises

Each chapter contains different writing exercises. Unlike essay questions students might expect to find on exams, these writing exercises allow students to respond freely to different topics and are more reflexive in style. The recommended exercises allow students the freedom to articulate their opinions privately, without worrying about spelling and grammar. They should last from ten to fifteen minutes. Instructors may opt to include these responsive exercises as part of their evaluation criteria. We have found that writing exercises provide students with a less stressful way to practice writing skills. Additionally, they give instructors insight into how students are progressing through the material and allow us to get to know students more personally.

- Films

Each chapter contains a range of films related to the material in the chapter, including its individual readings. These films vary in topic, genre, length, and production year. Many are documentaries that provide students with “real life” portrayals of sexuality. Others are fictional accounts that highlight dynamics of sexuality. For the sake of brevity, we listed films once in the chapter that best reflected their content, but many films contain elements that overlap with issues presented in other chapters. All of the films provide ample opportunities for classroom discussion. When using these films, we strongly recommend previewing them prior to screening them in your classroom. Some of the films contain sensitive imagery and language (i.e., profanity, nudity, sexual assault, etc.) and may warrant careful introductions to establish a safer learning environment. In addition, we have not viewed all of these films personally and thus cannot guarantee the usefulness of each individual film suggestion. Instead, we thought it more important to include plentiful diverse options that allow instructors the freedom to select what they find most interesting. We also recommend that you select films to screen in advance so that you have time to rent or purchase them for yourself or your university library.

- Online Resources

Each chapter provides a short list of potential online resources applicable to the content within that section.

- Craft Projects

A few of the chapter exercises include craft projects. We included these activities where we felt they enhanced the themes of the chapter. These projects may work better in smaller class sizes where collecting materials is not cost prohibitive.

- Boxed Inserts

Throughout *Sex Matters*, there are a series of short essays, or boxed inserts. We do not address these in our chapter suggestions, but we value their contribution to the text. We have found that when reading their assigned articles, students will often read the boxed inserts simply because they are interesting and brief. Instructors might connect the information presented in these boxes with their discussions of other related readings, or in their class lectures. They can also be used as an in-class reading activity and coupled with small group discussions and exercises.

- Crumple Surveys

Crumple surveys are a favorite classroom activity for both instructors and students. They allow you to conduct your own “sex research” in the classroom. They are designed to open discussion based on the experiences of everyone in the class. Each chapter could feature its own crumple survey, but we think they work best in Chapters 1 (Categorizing Sex), 4 (Learning about Sex), and 6 (Sexual Practices). These chapters discuss issues related to sexual attitudes and behaviors, which can be uncomfortable or inappropriate for students to reveal aloud, but can generate interesting large group discussions. In addition, the different sexual attitudes and behaviors among students in the class tend to vary and thus surprise many students in debunking their assumptions about the ideas of those around them. Here’s how crumple surveys work:

1. First, create a cover sheet that will be used to facilitate privacy in responding to the questions on the survey. On the cover sheet, write “CRUMPLE SURVEY COVER SHEET” across the top of the page. Then include instructions beneath the heading [amend for your class as appropriate]: “Answer the following questions about yourself.

Be as honest as possible. Do NOT put your name or anything else that can identify who you are on the survey. Do not look at anyone's survey but your own. Use this cover sheet to protect your privacy by guiding it over the survey as you answer each question. When you are finished, separate the survey from the cover sheet and crumple up the survey into a ball. Do not crumple the cover sheet—you will put your name on this and turn it in for class participation credit. When you have finished your survey, please look straight ahead to indicate your completion.”

2. Second, design a survey to measure sexual attitudes and behaviors. It is best for the questions or statements to be answered with simple “yes” or “no” choices.
3. Instruct the class on what they are being asked to do. Explain the survey's objective, and instruct them how to use the cover sheet for privacy.
4. Distribute pencils, cover sheets, and surveys to the students in your class, and instruct them to begin.
5. Once all of the students have crumpled their surveys and are looking straight ahead, announce that it is time to collect the surveys. For fun, bring in a mail bin or other large box for collecting the crumpled wads and tell students to pitch them in the basket (preferably held by the instructor, whose body may become a rebound board). Students usually like throwing paper wads at the instructor, and this creates a fun environment.
6. After each crumpled survey has been tossed in the bin, shuffle and mix up the balls. Then, enact revenge by tossing them back out to the students. Instruct them to not open the crumpled surveys until you ensure that everyone has a survey.
7. Have each student open their returned surveys. Students will likely get someone else's survey, but in case a student gets his own, tell the class beforehand to keep silent if they get their own back because no one will know that they have their own survey except for that individual student. Inform students that they will stand to represent the survey they have.
8. Read through each question and get students to stand for each answer on the survey they are holding. This exercise provides students with a visual indication of the variety (or non-variety) in fellow classmates' sexual behavior and attitudes. On certain questions, you may want to ask what gender is being represented to demonstrate gender dynamics at work in sex.

9. After you go through the survey results, ask students to discuss them. How did they feel standing and representing another student? What was surprising, not surprising? How might the demographics of the classroom affect the results? How might more diverse samples affect the results (e.g., including elderly people, people with physical disabilities, conservative Christians, etc.)? How effective was this sex research in measuring what it set out to?
10. Collect the students' surveys and trash them. Collect the cover sheets for crediting students, or reuse them for the next crumple survey.

NOTE: For small class sizes, consider revising or removing some questions that may single out individual students and compromise their anonymous participation (e.g., if there is one lesbian student in the class, her answers may become identifiable to the person who reads from her survey). Add, modify, and delete questions depending on the demographics of your students. For this manual, we have provided one sample crumple survey (featured below).

SAMPLE CRUMPLE SURVEY

Do not look at anyone else. Use your cover sheet to conceal your answers as you go down the list of questions. When finished, crumple this survey only.

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Have you ever had sex? | Yes | No |
| 2. Have you ever performed oral sex? | Yes | No |
| 3. Have you ever received oral sex? | Yes | No |
| 4. Have you ever penetrated a partner anally? | Yes | No |
| 5. Have you ever been penetrated anally by a partner? | Yes | No |
| 6. Have you ever had sex in public? | Yes | No |
| 7. Have you ever had sex while intoxicated? | Yes | No |
| 8. Have you ever had a threesome (you with two partners at once)? | Yes | No |
| 9. Have you ever had group sex? | Yes | No |
| 10. Have you ever fantasized about having sex with a person of the same sex? | Yes | No |
| 11. Have you ever had sex with a person of the same sex? | Yes | No |
| 12. Have you ever fantasized about forcing someone to have sex? | Yes | No |
| 13. Have you ever forced someone to have sex? | Yes | No |
| 14. Have you ever been forced to have sex? | Yes | No |
| 15. Have you ever had sex with a relative? | Yes | No |
| 16. Did you ever have consensual sexual activity as a child under 12? | Yes | No |
| 17. Have you ever had sex with a teacher, boss, or other superior? | Yes | No |
| 18. Have you ever used bondage or restraints during sex? | Yes | No |
| 19. Have you ever had an orgasm? | Yes | No |
| 20. Have you ever had multiple orgasms in one sexual session? | Yes | No |

You are finished! Crumple this survey now and then look straight ahead.

CHAPTER 1 | CATEGORIZING SEX

Readings 1–6

Reading 1

Are We Having Sex Now or What?

—Greta Christina

Summary

In this thought-provoking essay, Christina exposes the complications with classifying what counts as sex. Through exploring issues related to fantasy, sensuality, gender, pleasure, consent, and play, Christina concludes that the definition of sex is impossible to ascertain.

Discussion Questions

- What is the importance of penetration in defining sex?
- How did having sex with women complicate her classification process?
- How does consent factor into defining sex? How might receiving or giving consent impact one's virgin status (e.g., is a virgin who was raped still a virgin)?
- What are the implications for more expansive classifications of sex?
- How do you define sex?

Exam Questions

1. In “Are We Having Sex Now or What?,” Greta Christina concludes that
 - a. sex is defined as direct genital contact.
 - b. sex is always penile-vaginal sex and other activities are merely foreplay.
 - c. oral sex should not count as sex.
 - d. it's not possible to conclusively determine what counts as sex.
 - e. there is no such thing as “real” sex.

ANS: d

2. When Greta Christina, author of “Are We Having Sex Now or What?,” started having sex with women, she

- a. identified as bisexual.
- b. came out as a lesbian.
- c. experienced an identity crisis.
- d. enjoyed sex more than she ever did with men.
- e. decided the binary system of classifying sex was too simplistic.

ANS: e

Reading 2

“Bringing Intersex Back”? Intersexuals and Sexual Satisfaction

—Georgiann Davis

Summary

Rather than accept intersex persons as a legitimate challenge to the prevailing two-sex system, the medical community has historically viewed intersexuality as an abnormality to be corrected, thus reinforcing the heteronormative frameworks on which our dichotomous sex, gender, and sexuality systems are based. Davis analyzes the role of medical terminology and treatments in shaping sexual dis/satisfaction among intersex people. Recently, the medical community has shifted away from using intersex terminology in favor of “disorders of sex development” language, which takes a very heteronormative stance on intersexuality. Regardless of surgical history, all respondents report experiencing some form of sexual anxiety. However, those respondents who accepted medical DSD language were more likely to feel shame and anxiety, whereas those embracing intersex language were more confident and liberated. In response to sexual struggles, intersex people tend to either avoid sexual intimacy altogether, seek out heterosexual encounters, or reject medicalization.

Discussion Questions

- In what ways do intersex people challenge heteronormative understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality?
- Should parents continue to have the right to consent on behalf of their intersex children for extensive surgeries and hormonal treatments (without the child’s knowledge)? Why or why not? What would you do if you had a child who was intersex?
- How would you feel if you were intersex and you received the standard treatment carried out by the medical profession?
- Should we continue to ask intersex persons to choose one of the designated sex options (male or female) or should we create alternative categories? What sort of issues (if any) might there be if we created a third or alternative sex designation in our society?

Exam Questions

3. Which of the following is NOT argued by Georgiann Davis in “Bringing Intersexy Back”?
- a. The medical profession has historically embraced intersexuality as a challenge to the sex binary and as evidence of the naturally occurring sexual variability that exists.
 - b. Intersexuality has primarily been viewed as an abnormality within the medical community that needs to be surgically corrected.
 - c. Recently, the medical community has argued for a shift away from intersex and sex reversal terminology in favor of new “disorders of sexual development” language.
 - d. All respondents, regardless of their association with intersex or DSD language, reported sexual struggles at some point in their lives.
 - e. Most respondents went through genital surgery as children, which left them emotionally and physically scarred.

ANS: a

4. As discussed by Georgiann Davis in “Bringing Intersexy Back,” in response to sexual struggles, intersex people strategize by
- a. seeking out only homosexual encounters.
 - b. avoiding sexual intimacy altogether.
 - c. accepting medical models and frames of thinking.
 - d. having sex with many partners.
 - e. telling each sexual partner about their intersexuality.

ANS: b

Reading 3

The Perils and Pleasures of Sex for Trans People

—Harper Jean Tobin

Summary

In this brief essay, Tobin highlights the various physical and emotional struggles that must be navigated by those who are living with bodies and identities that do not conform to traditional heteronormative ideologies. Tobin takes a sex-positive stance, arguing that every person and every *body* is entitled to respectful and healthy sexual relationships and desires. The essay offers further advice on how to approach sex with a trans person so as to meet those criteria.

Discussion Questions

- How do trans bodies and identities complicate the ways we typically think about sex, gender, and sexual identity?
- In what ways do transgender persons both challenge and reify essentialist and social constructionist theories?
- What sort of identity issues might arise for a cisgender person intimately involved with someone who is trans or genderqueer? How do these issues reflect heteronormative assumptions?
- What are your thoughts on the advice offered by Tobin on how to have sex with a (trans) person? How are these suggestions important for sexual intimacy among all communities? Based on Tobin's overall comments, how might these suggestions function differently for persons with trans bodies and identities?

Exam Questions

5. Which of the following is advised by Harper Jean Tobin in “The Perils and Pleasures of Sex for Trans People”?
- a. That trans people should engage in sex only with other trans or genderqueer persons.
 - b. Trans and genderqueer people should emphasize a life of asexuality to avoid problematic situations and potential heartbreak.

- c. While it is important to be creative and have fun, always be sure to openly communicate with your partner about personal desires and preferred terminology.
- d. Heteronormative assumptions can assist in navigating personal boundaries, especially in terms of how to touch one another.
- e. All people, including trans persons, experience sexuality as fixed, finite aspects of themselves.

ANS: c

6. In “The Perils and Pleasures of Sex for Trans People,” individuals who “describe their gender identity as being a combination of female and male; as neither female nor male but as a different gender altogether; or as somewhere ‘in between’ female and male” are referred to as

- a. heteroflexible.
- b. genderqueer.
- c. transitioning.
- d. cisgender.
- e. pansexual.

ANS: b

Reading 4

I Am Gay – But I Wasn't Born This Way

—Brandon Ambrosino

Summary

In this essay, Ambrosino reflects on his own experience with his sexual identity as he discusses the intricacies of nature versus nurture. He focuses on “born this way” rhetoric and queer politics to illustrate that it is difficult to scientifically determine the origins of sexual orientation. Our cultural fixations on finding a gay gene, asserting whether heterosexuality is natural, and determining whether sexual desire is innate leave little room for cultivating and labeling our own sexual desires in agentic ways. Ultimately, Ambrosino argues that we must step outside our limited perspectives concerning sexualities to understand and encourage more nuanced sexual narratives and identities.

Discussion Questions

- How does Ambrosino's argument relate to essentialist and social constructionist theories of sexual identity?
- What impact has the “born this way” narrative had on activism and political rights for the LGBTQIA+ community?
- What are the differences between sexual desire, behavior, and identity? Must they all align for an individual's sexuality? Why or why not? What factors might impact one's sexual desire, behavior, and identity?
- Why is coming out an important process for many who identify as LGBTQIA+?

Exam Questions

7. In “I Am Gay—But I Wasn't Born This Way,” Brandon Ambrosino argues that
- a. the gay gene is essential in proving that homosexuality is natural.
 - b. there is a heterosexual gene that ensures people procreate.
 - c. sexual desire is partially cultivated by one's own experiences.
 - d. sexuality is completely socially constructed.
 - e. finding a bisexual gene should be our next scientific focus.

ANS: c

8. According to Brandon Ambrosino's essay "I Am Gay—But I Wasn't Born This Way," growing public support for gays and lesbians is most related to

- a. believing that people are born homosexual or heterosexual.
- b. one's own same-gender sexual experience(s).
- c. the increase in gay and lesbian characters on television.
- d. knowing someone who is gay.
- e. attending a queer activist event.

ANS: d

Reading 5

Bud-Sex: Constructing Normative Masculinity among Rural Straight Men That Have Sex with Men

—Toni Silva

Summary

Silva's article explores how rural men who have secretive sexual encounters with other men situate their gender and sexual identities. Drawing on 19 semistructured interviews with men gathered from posts on Craigslist and Grindr, Silva examines how participants understand their gender, select male sexual partners, and frame their sexual encounters with other men. Using the term *bud-sex*, Silva finds that rural men who have sex with other men embody conventional masculinity; prefer to have sex with men similar in masculinity, race, and sexual identity; prefer secretive, nonromantic same-sex sex; and want to maintain their marriages. Data illustrate the complexities of straight masculinities open to same-sex desire and encounters, noting how bud-sex perpetuates masculine privilege and reinforces heteronormativity in rural contexts.

Discussion Questions

- How is bud-sex different from dude-sex? What are the key ingredients for bud-sex?
- What impact might a rural context have on men's masculinities and sexualities?
- Why is secrecy important for certain men who in engage in bud-sex?
- How does Silva's research contribute to dialogues concerning congruence between sexual desire, behavior, and identity?

Exam Questions

9. In Toni Silva's article "Bud-Sex," many of the married participants
- a. did not consider having sex with other men as cheating on their wives.
 - b. wanted open relationships so they could be honest with their wives.
 - c. took off their wedding rings during sexual encounters with men.
 - d. wanted their wives to participate in group sex.
 - e. described their marriages as unhappy.

ANS: a

10. According to Toni Silva in “Bud-Sex,” how does age impact men’s experiences with bud-sex?

- a. Younger respondents reported internalizing more strict masculine norms.
- b. Older respondents stated that sex with men helped them maintain their friendships with other men.
- c. Bodily changes, such as erectile dysfunction, affected older respondents’ ability to have sex with women.
- d. Younger men were more likely to spend the night at another man’s house.
- e. Older men were more likely to want to date instead of having a one-time sexual encounter.

ANS: c

Reading 6

“Straight Girls Kissing”? Understanding Same-Gender Sexuality beyond the Elite College Campus

—Jamie Budnick

Summary

Women are afforded more sexual fluidity than men when it comes to sexual identity, behavior, and desire. However, they are also provided with a culture of acceptance and encouragement when they engage in same-gender sexual interactions, especially on elite college campuses. Budnick’s article explores how women from different educational, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds experience their sexual fluidity. Drawing on 35 interviews gathered from participants recruited from the Relationship Dynamics and Social Life (RDSL) study, Budnick finds that working-class women’s life course considerations, like early motherhood and marriage, hinder their ability to engage in same-gender sexual encounters. Women’s sexual friendships, however, allow for same-gender exploration and intimacy. Furthermore, some interviewees engage only in casual same-gender sexual encounters to preserve their sexual reputations. Budnick argues that “the processes of sexual identification and the enactment of desire are intersectional,” illustrating that embracing labels such as *bisexual* or *queer* differ for women based on their race, education, and socioeconomic status.

Discussion Questions

- Why are college and university campuses stereotyped as “hives of same-sex experimentation” for women?
- How do the participants in Budnick’s study discuss the importance of intimate and sexual friendships in experiencing same-gender encounters?
- What role do casual hook-ups play in facilitating women’s negotiation of same-gender desire and sexual behavior, according to Budnick’s research?
- What is the importance of sexual identity labels? What differences are there between using the labels *bisexual* and *queer*, according to Budnick’s interviewees? Why were certain women more (or less) likely to use the label *bisexual*? What about *queer*?

Exam Questions

11. In “ ‘Straight Girls Kissing’?,” Jamie Budnick argues

- a. women report high levels of same-sex experiences while attending elite colleges.
- b. there are few to no same-sex experiences reported on community college campuses.
- c. *queer* is a better term than *bisexual* to describe a woman’s sexual fluidity.
- d. sexual friendships provide opportunities to explore same-gender sex and desire.
- e. most women’s same-sex experiences primarily aim to arouse their male partners.

ANS: d

12. According to Jamie Budnick in “ ‘Straight Girls Kissing’?,” having or planning a threesome is one possible way to

- a. act on same-gender attraction without threatening a woman’s motherhood identity or primary relationship.
- b. get back at a woman’s husband who cheated on her.
- c. have sex with multiple people in order to fulfill a woman’s sexual fantasy.
- d. take some sexual risk instead of following societal expectations of monogamy.
- e. reduce marital boredom and give a woman’s husband a gift for his birthday or anniversary.

ANS: a

Chapter 1 Activities and Exercises

Large Group Discussions

On the first or second day of class, write *sex* on the blackboard. Then ask students to shout out all the names and words we have for sex. Typically, a few bold students will shout out funny words at first, then the class slowly realizes you are serious in generating all possible terms—without censoring. See how long it takes students to say “fuck” and “making love,” and whether they include slang for oral, anal, masturbation, and queer sex acts. After students stop generating terms (we’ve seen lists get to about 50), ask them what themes they notice. Slang terms for sex often include violent imagery. They also reinforce divisions between procreational, recreational, and emotional sex. And despite our cultural norm for sex within intimate contexts only, most of these terms do not connote images of love and romance. Discuss the different meanings of sex and how it is defined. Highlight how students may have limited their terms to heterosexual sex, coupled sex, and penetrative sex and what this suggests about how we define sex.

Create different scenarios of sexual practices and vary them based on sexual identity, sexual anatomy, and gender identity. Have students decide whether the sex acts described count as sex.

Sample scenario: Andre and Adale have been married for 15 years. They love each other dearly and enjoy being sexual together. Much of their sex life involves penile-vaginal sex. Last year, Adale began taking testosterone and going by the name Adam. Adam got chest surgery but didn’t get genital surgery because the options were inadequate. Still, Adam lives life as a man and everyone around him perceives him as such. The couple remains married and continues to enjoy the same sexual activities with each other.

Continuing from part 2 of the writing exercise for this chapter (outlined below), segue into a broader class discussion whereby the class collectively attempts to construct a working definition of sex. Engaging in a class discussion helps students see that definitions of sex are varied and diverse. (This assignment and discussion work well with smaller classes, and after students have read Reading 1 by Greta Christina, “Are We Having Sex Now or What?”). Use Christina’s essay

to draw comparisons to the class definition of sex, noting the difficulties she experiences in attempting to define the word. How are her stumbling blocks similar to those experienced by the class? Why is it difficult to come to a consensus?

Small Group Exercises

Break the class into four small groups. Task one group with outlining biological arguments for determining sexual identity (nature arguments like genetic contributions); task another with outlining social arguments (nurture arguments like cultural norms). For the other two groups, have one group outline the political implications of nature arguments and have the other outline the political implications of nurture arguments. After the groups generate their answers, have them report to the rest of the class. Discuss the nature versus nurture influence on sexuality and the sociopolitical implications of the debate.

Break the class into groups of three to four students. Have each group come up with a list of possible sexual behaviors one could possibly engage in. Then have each group create a list of possible factors that would stop or prevent someone from engaging in those behaviors. Have the groups discuss their findings with the others to see what similarities and differences they have for each list. Then, as a large group, discuss how desire and behavior may be socially and individually mitigated due to normative cultural narratives regarding gender, age, race/ethnicity, class, religion, homophobia, misogyny, biphobia, transphobia, etc.

Writing Exercise

Part 1: In your opinion, what counts as sex?

Part 2: Create a definition of sex that applies to everyone, regardless of sexual identity, gender identity, and body type, and that acknowledges only consensual sex.

Films

Ancient Inventions: “Sex and Love”

1998, 52 min., Daniel Percival, Discovery Channel

This television series looks at the many inventions and ideas that seem unique and modern but are actually centuries old. In this episode, the history of sex and its paraphernalia are tracked back through history. It describes the Roman invention of kissing and its classifications, China’s invention of the clock to track the emperor’s sex life, and the invention of the birth control pill by a German nun.

Before You Know It

2013, 110 min., PJ Raval, Independent Television Service and others

This documentary follows three gay seniors as they navigate the adventures, challenges, and surprises of life and love in their golden years.

Being Gay: Coming Out in the 21st Century

2003, 24 min., Charlotte Angel and Kyle Boyd, Cambridge Educational

Tracing the history of U.S. society’s views on homosexuality, this program examines contemporary stigmas that make coming out a difficult decision. It describes the “six stages of coming to terms with sexual identity” and addresses the dangers of avoiding sexual self-acceptance.

Boy I Am

2006, 72 min., Sam Feder and Julie Hollar, Women Make Movies (distributor)

Based on the experiences of transgender men, this documentary explores issues related to gender and sexuality and the tensions that transgender identity has ignited in queer communities.

A Boy Named Sue

2000, 69 min., Julie Wyman, Women Make Movies (distributor)

This film documents six years of Theo’s transition from female to male and examines how the transition process also impacts those closest to the transitioning individual—their lovers, friends, family, and community.

... but Words DO Hurt: Stories from GLBTT Youth

2005, 30 min., Fred Fountain, Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre

This program features young gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and transsexual (GLBTT) individuals discussing identity issues, the media, coming out, their families, their experiences in school, and their hopes for the future.

Camp Out

2006, 78 min., Kirk Marcolina and Larry Grimaldi, Evolution Film & Tape

This documentary chronicles the experiences of gay teens at a week-long summer camp for gay Christian youth.

Do I Sound Gay?

2015, 77 min., David Thorpe, Impact Partners and others

This documentary dissects the stereotype of the gay voice and includes discussions with gay celebrities and actors.

The Family Journey: Raising Gender

2010, 14 min., New Day Films

Through several interviews with parents and families of gender-nonconforming children, this film provides insights into the personal and social struggles with raising children who defy strict heteronormative sex and gender proscriptions.

Girl Inside

2007, 70 min., Maya Gallus, Red Queen Productions

The film follows Madison, a 26-year-old trans woman, through three years of her physical and emotional journey. Also featuring her 80-year-old grandmother Vivien, who has taken the role of teaching Madison about femininity and womanhood, the film provides a unique comparison of the generational differences in what it means to be a woman in society.

Hermaphrodites Speak!

1997, 30 min., Cheryl Chase, Intersex Society of North America

Documentary of a 1996 weekend retreat of intersex people who discuss sex, gender, and sexuality. Home video with poor image quality but good sound.

I'm Just Anneke

2010, 12 min., Jonathan Skurnik, New Day Films

Follows one family's decision to place their daughter on hormone blockers to delay the onset of puberty, providing Anneke with more time to decide where she fits on the gender spectrum. This film highlights the various struggles faced by gender-nonconforming children as well as their families.

In the Flesh

2000, 45 min., Gordon McLennan, National Film Board of Canada

Interviews with four very different transgender individuals.

Is It a Boy or a Girl?

2000, 60 min., Phyllis Ward, Discovery Channel

This documentary explores issues related to being intersex and contains perspectives of doctors, parents of intersex children, and intersex adults.

Mala Mala

2014, 87 min., Antonio Santini and Dan Stickles, El Peligro and others

This documentary is about the power of transformation told by nine trans-identifying individuals in Puerto Rico.

My Prairie Home

2013, 76 min., Chelsea McMullan, National Film Board of Canada

This documentary follows nonbinary transgender singer/songwriter Rae Spoon as they discuss their childhood abuse as well as the process of exploring their gender.

The New Black

2013, 80 min., Yoruba Richen, Promised Land

This documentary examines how African Americans struggle with LGBTQ rights in light of the gay marriage movement and the call for equal rights. It uncovers homophobia and how the black church grapples with gay rights.

One in 2000

2007, 26 min., Ajae Clearway, Polyvinyl Pictures and others

This documentary focuses on babies who are born intersex. It argues that there is little evidence that “gender reassignment” surgery is beneficial to the child. The program profiles several people born with ambiguous sexual anatomy who have managed to deal with some very difficult family and social issues but today are living “ordinary” and productive lives. It also includes a young mother who is matter-of-factly creating the conditions for her intersex baby to do the same.

Orchids: My Intersex Adventure

2010, 56 min., Phoebe Hart, Hartflicker Moving Pictures

The film includes interviews and narratives of intersex individuals in Australia and examines the significance of the medicalization of intersexuality, genital surgery, and the rigid constructions of sex, gender, and sexuality.

Out in the Line-Up

2014, 69 min., Ian W. Thomson, Yellow Dot Productions

This documentary follows two gay surfers who embark on a global journey to uncover the taboo of homosexuality in surfing.

Sir: Just a Normal Guy

2002, 57 min., Melanie La Rosa, Women Make Movies (distributor)

This film documents the 15-month transition of a trans man, including interviews with his partner and friends.

Southern Comfort

2001, 90 min., Kate Davis, Q-Ball Productions

Award-winning documentary that profiles transgender people living in rural Georgia; deals with relationship issues, sexual identity, and sexual health concerns.

Transgender Basics

2009. 20 min., Rosa Juel Nordentoft, Gender Identity Project

This educational film includes personal narratives from trans and genderqueer individuals while highlighting the inadequacies of traditional heteronormative frames of thinking about sex, gender, and sexuality. The Gender Identity Project offer an alternative model that is more inclusive of intersex, trans, queer, and asexual experiences.

Two Spirits

2009, 65 min., Lydia Nibley, Say Yes Quickly Productions and others

Offering a cultural and historical account of those individuals who occupy multiple gender identities, including the prominence they were once regarded in Native American societies, this documentary also examines the life and horrific murder of Fred Martinez, a 16-year-old boy who was also a girl.

You Don't Know Dick

1997, 58 min., Candace Schermerhorn and Bestor Cram, Northern Light Productions

Six trans men discuss how being transgender has affected their lives.

Online Resources

Accord Alliance

An intersex education and advocacy group

www.accordalliance.org

American Institute of Bisexuality

www.americaninstituteofbisexuality.org

BiNet USA

www.binetusa.org

BRC: Bisexual Resource Center

<http://biresource.org>

GLAAD

www.glaad.org

Human Rights Campaign

www.hrc.org

Intersex Society of North America

www.isna.org

The Kinsey Institute, Indiana University

<https://kinseyinstitute.org>

National Center for Transgender Equality

<http://transequality.org>

Transgender Law Center

<http://transgenderlawcenter.org>

