

how does gender exist?

before we get started, i believe it's essential to first explain what most people mean by gender, acknowledging its complexity. today, gender is still often defined by its biology by more conservative people; but many people do agree it's also about how individuals identify and are perceived socially. due to the biological aspect, and the social perception of oneself, people are externally defined. this, in turn, means people don't have full control over their own gender.

furthermore, the way people grow as people is often nurtured by external perceptions, which turns into a feedback loop, which validates (or invalidates) your own personal identity. despite attempts to break free from gender norms, individuals often find themselves labeled and treated as norm-breakers (by others, AND themselves), which, again, affects their own perception of self.

the problem with labels

i'd also like to highlight the complexity of using labels, since they're not very descriptive and specific by themselves, as jenkins starts to express, but i think we can specify this even further, using three different perspectives: biology, identity, and society

in the biological sense gender appears as your externally visible factors (primary and secondary traits: genitalia, facial hair, eg), genetical markers (XY vs XX vs XXY... eg), and hormonal balance levels. this is often what we refer to as the [biological] sex

when we look at people's identity, we can point out people have a box to fit in (a word or label which makes you feel comfortable, their preferred pronouns), their gender expression (how you act, how you speak, how you interact with other people), and their community (what group of people they normally hang with as "their people")

socially, we can both look at the gender people are assigned by other people (both at birth—which affect their gender roles—, but also when meeting new people/strangers); and also their sociopolitical position (both in a sense of having privileges/oppression, but also in the sense of using your voice for the people)

all these factors work together into shaping who one is, and feed off each other in one sense or another, but attempting to cling to a single name for any combination of these seems to restrict what a [woman] can be (as we've discussed plenty in class already :P). being more specific about what we're referring to is always useful, and having specific names for atomic/specific things makes it easier to talk about them.

neurotypes

to follow along the previous point, i believe there is much to gain in objective facts. it's useful to talk about people who get raped. it's useful to talk about people who are being discriminated against due to some condition. putting all the problems in the same box doesn't seem super useful as part of the discourse. discussing what women are or what women aren't doesn't really stop anyone from being victims of domestic abuse. we should address the problem: teach people that violence is bad. offer support for victims. create tools for everyone which lets them avoid accidentally becoming a victim.

to be clear, i'm not saying clustering different groups together based on some multivariadic similarity is bad, per se, but i'm claiming it obfuscates some of the problems, and can often shadow the actual problems. on top of that, i don't think there's much to gain from having pre-conditioned boxes to fit in, since then not everyone gets to be their own creative and ideal self.

in contrast, identifying with a neurotype or interest seems to offer a more accurate reflection of one's reality, where traditional definitions of gender are increasingly becoming irrelevant. the main reason i'm suggesting this is because neurotypes do have some real value attached to them, instead of (entirely) being subjective to the state of society or self.