**Tuck:** [advertisement] The Heart is a show about intimacy, power, gender, bodies, love, sensations that linger in your body, interactions that you keep turning over in your mind. Host Kaitlyn Prest and a new team of producers bring you honest, raw, experimental narratives about all of the invisible things in the air between humans. From Mermaid Palace and Radiotopia, listen and subscribe at mermaidpalace.org or wherever you get your podcasts.

[*Gender Reveal* theme music starts]

**Tuck:** Welcome to Gender Reveal, a podcast where we hopefully get a little bit closer to understanding what the hell gender is. I'm your host and resident Gender Detective, Molly Woodstock.

[*Gender Reveal* theme song ends]

Hey everyone. What can I say, other than I hope you’re all hanging in there. As you’ve no doubt noticed, this is Episode 69 – nice! And although nobody is allowed to go anywhere or do anything, I still wanted to bring you some extra-special Episode 69 content. So I pulled my housemates into my room with me and we answered your relationship- and attraction-themed advice questions. Topics include navigating a gender transition in a previously cishet relationship, what terms like androsexual and gynesexual mean and whether they’re problematic, how to feel sexy in a non-normative body, and how and why we chose to be gay.

But first, there is new merch in the store. I was planning to keep the merch shop quiet, but I said that I would put stuff in the store if it was requested by listeners, and so right now we have a “Support Trans Media” hoodie. We have a “Support Trans Media” tank-top, which we’ve never had before. We have “Surf Don’t TERF” sweatshirts in blue and pink and white – very cute – and “Surf Don’t TERF” mugs, which I believe are less than twelve dollars. We have a shirt that our friend Beth Eastonmade off of an Instagram post that I made, that says “at least it’s spring in hell.” And we have posters of the “Nature is queer and I am nature” print by Eli. And so all of those things are priced as low as I could reasonably make them, and all of the proceeds, as always, go to trans people and trans organizations. So if you are looking for something to brighten up your quarantine zone, you can find that at <bit.ly/gendermerch>. All of those items are only available until April 1, so head over there if you want anything! That’s <bit.ly/gendermerch>.

Also, some of you are still joining the Patreon or upping your pledges, and I’m not clear, uh, why, but I appreciate you so, so, so much. I truly expected a mass exodus once things started going to shit, and that could still happen, but I really appreciate all of your continued support if it is reasonable for you financially. And then I also just appreciate your support in terms of emotional support and community-building. Folks are continuing to join the Slack at <bit.ly/genderslack2> and creating supportive online trans community for each other, which is so important all the time, but especially now, and I’m just really proud of all of you and really so grateful to be a part of this community.

Special thanks this week to new and upgrading patrons including Gabrielle, Ash, Sky, Maggie, Robert, Amelia, and Shaina Rose. If you would like to join us, you will get access to our weekly newsletter and something fun in the mail from me! By the way, mail is safe. I looked it up, it’s fine. [laughs] So anyway, you can join us at [patreon.com/gender](bit.ly/genderslack2).

Last but not least, I forgot to mention on here that I have a P.O. Box-style thing now, and so if for any reason you would like to send mail to me or to the podcast, you are welcome to do that. Maybe you are just very, very bored in isolation. I am not going to say that address publicly right now, but I will absolutely send it to you, just reach out on Twitter, Instagram, genderpodcast.com, and I will send you that address.

And with that, it’s time for This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gender intro music, a newsy fanfare, plays]

So This Week in Gender, I was actually resisting talking about this, but it was calling to me. So, as you may have heard, Marvel revealed its first nonbinary superhero, and the superhero is a black nonbinary person whose name is literally Snowflake? And Snowflake has a twin brother whose name is Safespace, and Snowflake wears all blue clothes and Safespace wears all pink clothes. And I don’t understand [chuckles] why this is happening. The backlash has been really huge. It is a rare moment where everyone agrees, but we all agree that’s something’s terrible. So the right is like, “Oh, these people are trying to be super woke and super social justice-y,” but then the left is like, “How *dare* you make the first nonbinary superhero and call them literally *Snowflake*, and then have a twin named Safespace and code them in the colors of the two genders, like what is *happening* right now!” If you are a person who is excited about this nonbinary representation, I absolutely don’t want to take it away from you, like please, the bar is in hell, take anything you want, but I just think that boy howdy [chuckles], if you are going to introduce a nonbinary character, maybe don’t make it as heavyhanded and easily mockable as possible?

So there’s also a character named Screentime, I guess, and there’s a quote from one of the creators that says, “Snowflake and Safespace are the twins, and their names are very similar to Screentime. It’s this idea that there are terms that get thrown around on the internet that they don’t see as derogatory. They take these words and kind of wear them as a badge of honor.” Okay, but like we don’t have to reclaim snowflake, like no one… we’re not… [laughs, groans] Um. More quotes. “Snowflake is nonbinary and goes by they/them and has the power to generate individual crystallized snowflake-shaped shurikens. The connotations of the word ‘snowflake’ in our culture right now are something fragile and this is a character who is turning it into something sharp.” Marvel… there are people you could hire to help you do this in a way that isn’t as damaging as possible. And I just continue to be deeply frustrated by cis people who think that they can create trans representation and profit off of trans representation without talking to *actual* *trans* *people*! That’s it! This has been This Week in Gender.

[This Week in Gender outro plays]

[upbeat electronic music begins to play]

Okay babies, buckle up, because the audio on this episode is *wild* and for once I am not going to apologize for it. We were all sitting in my room, Taegan and Tehya were sharing a microphone, so you’re going to hear some sounds for that. You’ll hear some car sounds, some face sounds, and at the beginning, you will *definitely* hear my cat just go absolutely ham on a toy. So, uh, I don’t know, this is the way we live now! Good luck. Enjoy!

[upbeat electronic music ends]

**Tuck:** The way we always start the show is by asking, in terms of gender, how do you identify?

**Taegan:** Uh, yeah, my name is Taegan Wolfe. My pronouns are they/them. I identify as a nonbinary trans girl.

**Tehya:** My name is Tehya, and I use they/them pronouns, and I identify as nonbinary.

[bell dings]

**Tuck:** “How can I, as a nonbinary and trans masc person who is also disabled, see myself as more attractive and actually feel ‘sexy?’ There’s a lot more advice out there for women of all sizes who struggle with this, but no advice that I’ve been able to find for nonbinary trans folks or for trans masc people. I’m not sure how to see myself as sexy as someone androgynous, leaning masculine, who was assigned female at birth. Because I’m not female at all, nor hypermasculine, I’m not even sure what sexy would look like for someone like me. We don’t really have any representation in the media, especially not when it comes to this topic. I have no one to look to as an example. I realize this is an issue that lots of people who aren’t cis, binary, gender-conforming, white, or abled deal with. It feels like because I’m not society’s idea of attractive (being trans, nonbinary, disabled, and not thin), I don’t deserve to feel sexy. I’m not expecting a direct answer for this question, I just wanted to hear other trans people’s experiences with this sort of thing. Thanks!” And that’s from Mason, whose pronouns are they/them.

**Tehya:** Hearing this question, the first thing that I thought of was what they were saying – like, there is no representation or no guidelines for how to be sexy as, like, a nonbinary person who is outside of a lot of “ideal” images for beauty in society. So it makes sense that they would feel like this is a struggle for them and that it would be challenging for them to feel like they knew what to do. I definitely have related to that too at points in my life. And for me, what felt good about that too is, like, there’s no rules, really. Like there are societal rules that obviously really hurt us and restrain us in so many ways, and once you are able to be in yourself despite all of that, there’s this freedom of like, “Well, now there are no rules and I can just be sexy and fuck you, you can’t tell me that I’m not.” I think for me, to go from a place where I was like, “Oh, how could I ever love myself because everything that I’ve ever seen has told me that I’m bad and horrible” – it was just sitting, being in myself, and there’s a point where it’s just like, “I can love myself and think that I’m super fucking sexy, or I can hate myself forever until I die.” There was just kind of that breaking point where I was just like, “Well, [chuckles] I’m going to choose to be fucking sexy.” [laughs]

**Tuck:** Totally. I feel like the strategies that have worked for me are, one, finding other people who aren’t normative in the way that this person describes who I find attractive and following them on Instagram or just generally looking at hot people that don’t fit that exact ideal. And then also, honestly, dating people who found me attractive, because before I was dating people who I found to be very attractive and cool and good who were like, “You are very hot,” I was just like, “Me?! You must have made some kind of mistake!,” you know, and it was honestly really helpful to be surrounded by other people who don’t fit that cis, het, thin, white norm. And also to get that feedback from other people, which I understand is also a privilege that I’ve received, and not everyone can just like go out and be told that they’re hot. But I think that a lot of people can go out and be told that they’re hot. [chuckles]

**Taegan:** Yeah, um, go hang out with people who are fat, disabled, brown, queer people and just love each other. Loving queer bodies is super radical, and so the more you love non-normative bodies, the more you’re going to love yourself. Hang out with the kind of people who are going to give you that validation. It’s totally cool if friends call you sexy, because they’re your friends and they want you to feel good, and it could be totally platonic. Start a finsta!

**Tuck:** Start a finsta!

[bell dings]

**Tehya:** “Can you talk at all about gender with regards to lesbianism? Many lesbians have talked about their unique relationship to gender in a world where womanhood is defined around men, and as a non-binary lesbian, it would mean a lot to me if you could talk about that.”

**Tuck:** Taegan, would you like to take this, as a non-binary lesbian?

**Taegan:** Yeah! I mean, like, lesbianism is literally whatever you want it to be! I’m a non-binary lesbian and ‘lesbian’ is just a term that feels good for me. But, in terms of gender, any gender can bea lesbian. There are non-binary lesbians, there are bisexual lesbians, there are queer lesbians. There are trans men who still identify as lesbians just because it’s a big part of who they were before coming out. So lesbian is just another way to validate ourselves in the world around us.

**Tuck:** Do you feel like lesbian has a specific meaning to you? Because what I’m hearing is that it can mean a lot of different things to a lot of different people.

**Taegan:** I mean, I mostly claim it to piss off TERFs. [someone laughs] Most cis lesbians don’t want me to be a lesbian because I’m non-binary and trans, and so it’s kind of just more of like, “I’m a lesbian, haha, fuck you.” But also just being really sapphic and thinking all girls are beautiful. [laughs]

**Tuck:** Yeah, I would hope that there are many cis lesbians that do want you to be a lesbian…

**Taegan:** I mean, I’ve met some of them.

**Tuck:** …but I recognize that there are many that don’t. Yeah.

**Taegan:** There’s a lot of TERFs out there.

[record-scratching noise]

**Tuck:** So, clearly this gets into some past discourse of “Are TERFs cis lesbians or cis straight women?” We’re not going to get into that here. I just want to let Taegan have their experience, and also shout-out to lesbians that don’t gatekeep other lesbians. Okay, moving on.

[bell dings]

**Taegan: “**My partner recently had come out to me as trans (MTF). He isn’t changing anything outwardly yet, including pronouns, and only a couple very close friends know. We’re both in therapy separately. We’ve been married for over a decade and have school-age kids. I’m fucking terrified of how this will change my sexual attraction to him if/when he transitions socially or physically. I’m very attracted to him as a male-presenting person, but I have always identified as cis female and don’t feel curious or excited for his transition as it pertains to me specifically. Super pumped for his dysphoria to decrease and for him to get to be his full, true self. My question is: If I’m not attracted to him as a female, is that due to inner transphobia I have or are some people legitimately straight? When I think about it on one level, I think everybody must be pan, because it’s not like I’d suddenly not love my person anymore once they transitioned. But other times I’m pretty convinced I will not be into this physically. How do I counter any inner transphobia I have to give us the best chance of success for our future together?”

**Tuck:** I feel like this person in this question is conflating loving someone and being physically attracted to someone, which feels slightly different to me. And I also am hearing this person having a lot of fear about something that hasn’t happened yet and where they don’t really know what they’re going to feel because it hasn’t happened yet. And so my hope for this person would be that they take the pressure off themself and think about all the other things their partner means to them, and their partnership means to them, without physical attraction. And then if physical attraction exists, or continues to exist, then that’s great and cool, but I think that if we put pressure on ourselves to be attracted to someone, that isn’t going to do a lot of good, because that just makes it more stressful. What do y’all think?

**Taegan:** Yeah, your partner’s transition has nothing to do with you. It’s about their gender and their journey trying to figure out what fits best for them. As their partner, you can totally hang out and see where it goes, and you can still be partners and co-parents without any sort of sexual attraction. But yeah, I think the thing to remember is, like, it’s not about you. They’re not doing it to hurt you – which it doesn’t seem like you think that from your question, but… The best way to unpack any internalized transphobia would just be to support them and help them through it, because they’re going to need support through this! Transitioning is not an easy thing to do, especially later on in life or in established relationships, so.

**Tehya:** I agree with what you were saying earlier about naming, it sounds like, the anxiety around what you don’t know and can’t know that will happen. It kind of reminds me of trying to plan for something that you just can’t know what it’s going to look like or how you’re going to feel or what your relationship will look like. And even if everybody was just, like, cis all the time, like you still can’t even know, will you still love your partner like a year from now. Like, who can say? The world is wild and everchanging. So I wouldn’t put so much pressure on this situation where you’re like, “Oh, someone’s coming out as trans. That’s a huge thing.” Yes, it is a big deal, but I would want to err on the side of the way that your relationship is *now*, and I think it’s a really like, positive sign that your partner would entrust you with this information, and that the way that you’ve been in relationship together has made it so your partner feels like they can entrust with this information. I think that’s a really good sign for the way that you communicate and the way that you relate. And that means, like, no matter what happens – like, a year down the line, two years down the line – you always will be linked as co-parents and that’s a good thing that will hold you, hopefully, together.

I understand where, I think, some of that anxiety comes from, because there’s not really a road map for different parts of relationships, especially like a partner coming out as trans or like suddenly you’re thinking about your own identity and “what does this mean for me,” like “am I straight? Am I pan?” Just being able to sit with that uncertainty and hold that and make space for that and realize, like, a lot of things in the world you’re just not going to know and it’s going to be okay at the same time. And you can recognize that a lot of that anxiety is coming up from societal stories around, like, what this looks like and what it should and what it doesn’t.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I think often transitioning is a lot more gradual than we think of it as too, like it’s not like you’re going to wake up one day and your partner is going to look completely different. So you will have time to feel your feelings and hopefully feel them in a way that doesn’t detract from all the support that you’re giving your partner.

**Taegan:** Yeah, like Tehya, how did you feel when I started more physically transitioning?

**Tehya:** I mean, I personally felt great. But I think in the kind of narratives that we’re given, and that are around, are all about how this is a huge change in your relationship. And it really doesn’t have to be. There are a lot of people who have gender revelations or sexuality revelations or all kinds of things in their relationship and a lot of the times I think you hear about it when it’s, like, a break-up or a divorce or this huge drama thing, but when people are just like, “Hey, this is great,” it’s not as much of a story.

[bell dings]

**Tuck:** “Hey! I’m really new to your podcast and pretty new to understanding all things gender. I identify as a cis straight woman. I’ve had a handful of times as an adult that I’ve felt attracted to a woman. I’m in my mid-30s now. This really catches me by surprise every time it happens, so when it happened to me today for the first time in years, I thought to myself, ‘I need to write Molly about this.’ I never imagine or fantasize about being in a relationship with a woman, so it feels like these attractions come out of nowhere. In every instance except one, the woman has been a bit more masculine in presentation. On one occasion, it was someone I had a shallow new friendship with. Every other situation, it was someone who was just a stranger or a brief new acquaintance. Nothing ever came of these attractions. Also in retrospect, I really don’t truly know the genders of these folks. I guess I’ll just say that they passed as women.” Mm, okay. Well, I know what you’re trying to say.

“I have no idea about their sexuality either, but I did guess that some of them were queer. After the very first time this happened like a decade ago, I just decided that, ‘Oh, I guess sexuality must be fluid and exist on a spectrum and apparently I’m not 100% straight.’ I started joking with my closest friend that I’m 97% straight. It was interesting to me, but not something that made me wrestle with my identity or sexuality. I’m wanting to get your take on this. Would you say that sexuality is fluid to some extent for most people? Is it weird that I don’t make much of these attractions and that I go on identifying as straight? Am I weird? How can I or should I think about this in new ways?”

**Taegan:** I mean, short answer: yes. Sexuality is fluid.

**Tuck:** I feel like it is up to every individual person how much they want to explore. You’re definitely not weird. It is very, very convenient in our society to be a straight person and if it is not causing you any sort of anguish or even deep curiosity to explore any part of your attraction to people that aren’t men, then I don’t think you need to. I don’t think you’re legally required to spend a lot of time dwelling on it if that’s not something that you feel naturally drawn to do. I think it’s totally fine to identify as a straight person and to pursue heterosexual relationships. Why would you want to do that? I don’t know! But if that’s what you want, you should do it!

**Taegan:** On the flip side of that, if this *is* making you think like, “Huh, maybe I’m not entirely straight,” you’re allowed to identify in a different way, even if you’re like, “Oh, I’ve never been with another woman, so I can’t be gay,” you can still be bisexual, queer, pansexual. There’s a whole list of identities that you could identify with even if you still have only ever been in cishet relationships.

**Tehya:** What this makes me think of is, sometimes you can just have a friend crush, I think, and that’s fine. Maybe you’re like, “Oh! This person – I can tell that they’re hot! And I’m really excited to get to know them,” and maybe that could be happening? Or also maybe you’re just like…

**Taegan:** I’m kinda gay!

**Tehya:** I’m kinda gay! [laughs]

**Tuck:** Yeah. I mean… yeah. It’s totally fine to just be kinda gay sometimes…

**Tehya:** Oh yeah!

**Tuck:** …and you don’t have to make it a huge revelation. Like we were saying in the last question, it doesn’t have to be a thing that shatters your entire world, like I kind of like your attitude of just being like, “Well, I’m 97% straight! Moving on…” [Taegan chuckles] You know, that feels good.

**Tehya:** Yeah! Seems fine!

**Taegan:** I would say lean into it. [all laugh] Lean into that 3%. Go find a cute girl to go on a date with.

**Tehya:** It reminds me of the zine from Archie Bongiovannithat says “Don’t overthink what feels good.” If you’re happy, that’s great!

[bell dings]

**Tehya:** “I’m a nonbinary AFAB person in a two-year relationship with a nonbinary AMAB person who identifies more towards femme. But for both of us, presenting with our ideal gender-related presentation is quite hard because of our individual workplaces. My partner has always kept their face shaved and has long desired electrolysis hair removal. Over the past three months, they have chosen to grow out their beard and mustache, and it is pretty thick and full now. Because I have a past of sexual trauma from male-bodied people, this beard makes me really uncomfortable and triggered at unpredictable times. I’m generally only attracted to femme-presenting people. Given that gender is totally made up, this feels so weird to have my attraction shift based on someone’s gender presentation. I have not said anything to them because I would hate to tell someone else what to do with their body. It’s theirs, and a beard shouldn’t be an inherently masc thing. And it’s still them under there. I am having trouble managing this discomfort. Should I speak to them about this? Do you have any ideas for how I could shift my mental reactions?”

**Taegan:** Yeah, I was honestly going to jump in to… probably don’t use the term ‘male-bodied!’

**Tuck:** Right.

**Tehya:** Yeah.

**Taegan:** But yeah, I don’t know. Your partner’s *not* a man, so if you have trauma with that, that’s one way to try to start getting your mind around it. They may have a beard or a mustache, but it’s still on them, and so if they’re more femme, then it’s like a feminine beard or mustache.

**Tehya:** I’d also be curious too – you said that this presentation has changed for them. I wonder if you’ve had any conversations about that, and just be like, “I noticed you have grown out some facial hair, what does that mean to you?” And perhaps if they’re like, “This helps me feel really affirmed for this reason,” or if they can let you in to kind of what’s going on around that, it might take on a new meaning for you and it might be something that you explore together. It sounds like you haven’t talked about how this certain aspect of their presentation feels triggering to you. I can see why you would recognize, like, “I don’t want to put this on you,” but I just wonder if you have had any conversations about that facial hair and what that means.

**Tuck:** Yeah! I was thinking about what I do when I encounter triggers of various kinds, because it is really hard. And something that happens to me when I’m in that space is that I find my brain getting hijacked and pulled back into traumatic experiences in the past. Something that helps me is to name that that’s happening, and also name what’s different. And so I don’t want to spell out what this person’s process should be, but it could be something like, “Oh, I’m having this reaction because of this memory, but right now I’m in my house and I’m safe and I’m with my partner who loves me and who has never made me feel unsafe.” And that kind of exercise can help as well, because I think this isn’t really about facial hair, this is really about a trauma response that you’re having. And the good news is that it is possible to do a lot of work that’s really difficult but that can shift that response for you. The solution doesn’t have to be that you can never be around anyone with facial hair ever again.

[bell dings]

**Taegan:** “Hello! I identify as nonbinary. I am wondering what labels are available for nonbinary people to describe sexuality. I am AFAB and I am generally attracted to people who identify as male or masculine. Neither straight nor gay fit for me because they imply that I am either a male or a female. I have heard of the term ‘androsexual,’ which seems to fit, but I have also heard it to be problematic, so I want to be careful before claiming that label.” Alex, who uses they/them pronouns.

**Tuck:** Yeah, so the next several questions and comments that we have are going to also address this question, so we don’t need to get super deeply into it, but I did want to sort of pull apart ‘attracted to people who identify as male or are masculine’ because those feel like two different things to me, because a masculine person can be any gender and a male person can be masculine, feminine, neither, both. So I just want to encourage, if this person feels comfortable with it, not feeling like they need a really specific label, and just using something like queer, and then if someone – maybe you’re dating them, or a friend – is asking you more and you feel comfortable sharing, you can just say, “I’m a queer person who most of the time is attracted to men and/or masculine people.” That’s also okay. We don’t have to have really, really specific labels unless that feels really important to you specifically.

**Tehya:** Yeah, I think I agree with what you’re saying, where I can understand the draw for… you’re trying to find a word that just exactly describes this certain part of your identity, and also I think that you’re being like, “Hmm, it seems like it could be problematic in some ways.” And I think with trying to over-specify attraction to a certain ambiguous – because I feel like there’s not one specific word for people who are… like we’re even saying “people who are men,” “people who are masc of center,” there’s a huge spectrum for that. So it seems like it’s hard to find one word to describe that in a way that isn’t going to be zooming into too far almost, I guess. For me, being able to zoom back and be like, “Oh, I’m just queer,” also then it gives you room too, in, like, who knows, maybe you’ll be into somebody and they’ll be completely outside of the people you thought you’d be attracted to and then you leave room for kind of the unknown in that too. So that’s kind of exciting.

**Tuck:** Yeah, I really like leaving space for the unknown, personally. [Tehya laughs]

**Taegan:** Yeah. You’re zooming in really hard and I think you just need to, like, pull back and be like, “I’m queer! I’m gay!” We’re coming into a time where gay doesn’t mean like cis gay men, it just means, like, gay umbrella. We’ve started using gay as an umbrella again and it feels nice. We can all just be like, “Yeah, I’m fucking gay.”

**Tuck:** Yeah! And we talked about this on the podcast, I think, since this person asked this question, so I don’t think they had this context, but yeah, people who are nonbinary sometimes use gay to mean literally attracted to any gender. So it doesn’t have to be that limited. But you know, that doesn’t mean you have to use it if it doesn’t feel good!

[bell dings]

**Tuck:** So, I just wanted to read this. This person wrote in *very* pointedly and said, “Why don’t you think asexual and aromantic people are queer? If you did, you wouldn’t say cishet, but allocishet.” So, I just want to clarify that, uh, I understand that allocishet is preferred nomenclature. As someone who’s on the asexual spectrum myself, I don’t consider asexual people to be heterosexual because I consider them to be asexual. [brief laugh] So when I say cishet, I don’t mean cisgender, heterosexual, and also ace. Uh, I’m sorry if anyone feels erased by that. I probably honestly won’t change my language. It would be great if I did. I probably won’t, so I just want to say that I identify on the asexual spectrum. Z, who’s normally answering these with me, identifies on the asexual spectrum. Taegan, waving – hey Taegan!

**Taegan:** Hi! Yeah, I identify as demisexual. Asexual people are by definition not het, so…

**Tuck:** Yeah, and I think about it, like, I identify as ace spectrum and also gay, so I’m sure there are people who can identify as ace spectrum and also straight. But I’m definitely not trying to gatekeep anyone out of the community, I think anyone gets to identify as literally however they want, is really all I’m trying to say.

[bell dings]

**Tuck:** Comments! We have some comments about language you can use to describe your sexuality. Would anyone – Tehya, you want to read this one?

**Tehya:** “You recently answered a question from a nonbinary listener on February 17 who was struggling to find the right terms for their sexual identity when most of the common terms use the binary gender to describe sexuality. I personally like terms androsexual, gynosexual, skoliosexual, and pansexual because they don’t take the speaker’s gender into account when expressing who they are attracted to. Sapiosexual is another useful term. I love that sapiosexual is a type of attraction that has nothing to do at all with gender. Also queer can be a nice catchall if you don’t feel the need to get super specific about your attractions, but want to acknowledge that there’s something not entirely cishet about them.”

**Tuck:** Yeah. So we can all respond. I wanted to run through the definitions of these things first.

**Taegan:** Yeah, thank you.

**Tuck:** So, androsexual would be sexual attraction to masculine-of-center people. Gynosexual is attraction to feminine-of-center people. Skoliosexual would be attraction to trans and nonbinary people. Pansexual is attraction to people regardless of gender. [sigh] Sapiosexual… is generally defined as attracted to intelligence, and I have seen people warn – so I guess we’ll start here!

Most people I know see sapiosexual as a red flag rather than as a charming thing, because it’s often used by straight people to – I don’t know what they’re trying to do. But it can come across as really classist and it can come across as really ableist, and just generally rude to say, like, “Ah, I’m attracted to intelligence,” because it sort of implies that if someone’s not attracted to you, then you weren’t smart enough for them, which can feel really shitty. And I understand that there are people in communities where that’s not how they’re trying to use the term and it works well for them, so I don’t want to say it’s always bad. I just want to warn people if they start to use it that it could be seen by others to be derogatory or a red flag. Do we have any thoughts on any of these other words and how we feel about them?

**Taegan:** I haven’t heard of most of them. Those are new to me. Skoliosexual kind of sounds like a metal band though. [Tuck laughs]

**Tuck:** Totally! I mean, I’m a person who’s attracted to trans and nonbinary people, and I personally prefer to use terms like gay or queer as opposed to skoliosexual. I find it to be more accessible and it just feels better to me, but please use whatever words you would like to use that feel better for you.

**Taegan:** As a trans girl, I do kind of dislike the gynosexual one.

**Tuck:** Yeah.

**Taegan:** It feels – I mean, even if it’s not the definition, it sounded to me like it was very bio-essentialist at first…

**Tuck:** Totally.

**Taegan:** …until you were like, “Oh yeah, it’s femme-of-center people.” Just hearing the word without knowing the definition, I was like, “Ew, that’s gross.”

**Tuck:** Yeah, and I’m also using the most generous possible definitions, because there are definitions that are like “feminine-of-center people” and then there are definitions that are like “women and/or vaginas.” And so I think that’s when someone was like, androsexual can be problematic, I think that’s where it’s coming from, it’s like, there are generous ways to describe them and then there are really harmful bio-essentialist ways. And even if you are meaning it in a really trans-inclusive way, that doesn’t mean that people will know that that’s what you mean.

**Tehya:** I think also too, in a society where there’s certain types of knowledge that are privileged and seen as being smart, like in terms of accessing university and a lot of these other things, I think it can also be really racist…

**Tuck:** Mmm.

**Tehya:** …and centering a certain type of speech or a certain type of knowledge.

[bell dings]

**Taegan:** “I’m a really new listener and have been jumping around the series, so I apologize if this has been addressed directly, but I noticed your use of queer only including non-straight, non-cis identities, and I wanted to raise the point that queer is very often used in academic spaces to refer to experiences that lie outside societal norm. This includes the experiences of POC and disabled folks especially, and there are so many intersections and nuances to these identities and gender and sexuality. I guess this is more of an ask rather than a question, but I think raising awareness to this fact is important because it is critical in analyzing and realizing queer lives. It is also my rationale for personally ‘excluding’ people from the term queer if their politics and existence aren’t fundamentally towards queer liberation.” Mickey, who uses they/them.

**Tuck:** So this is more of a comment, but does anyone have thoughts on this comment?

**Taegan:** I had no ideathat queer was used in academia to refer to other things, so I guess thanks for letting me know. But how many people know that?

**Tuck:** It is something that I was and am aware of, and I think I use the word queer colloquially knowing that it is used different in academic spaces, but since I’m not really in academic spaces, I don’t worry about it too much, but I do appreciate this person bringing attention to it. So you will hear people say, like, “queering the blah blah.” Someone was making a joke on Twitter that people were going to start being like, “queering the quarantine,” which… [chuckles]

**Taegan:** The queerantine!

**Tuck:** The queerantine! [Tehya laughs] Shoutout. So yeah, it is useful when people say, like, “queering academia,” to know that they don’t necessarily mean making academia gay.

[bell dings]

**Tuck:** Here’s a long one. Buckle up.

“I’ve struggled with my gender for years and finally came out as trans to my wife a few weeks ago. I was in tears and she began by comforting me, but very quickly became extremely apprehensive about how it could affect our marriage and her life, and the entire conversation since then has centered around her fears about how *me* being trans would change everything. I’ve always been the type to avoid conflict and ended up backing down on my conviction, telling her it could just be a phase. Since then, she resists talking about it, except to comment on my clothing being too tight or too feminine, always with the implication that it’s painful for her to see me dressing that way. I can’t wear the clothes I want to wear and I can’t express myself or experiment in the way I need to without triggering her anxiety. This results so far in me repressing myself even more than ever before, and she essentially pretending that nothing happened.

I get that maybe she just needs time to process, but in all honesty have no idea how to balance my needs and her needs in this situation, and I worry that the two options are one, repress forever, or two, end the relationship. I can’t imagine either and I feel trapped. I had hoped that coming out would allow me to figure out who I am in the open, but now I am confined entirely to exploring my identity online, and I’m feeling my mental health beginning to slip, as well as my commitment to living in reality. I’ve been spending every free moment in virtual worlds, inhabiting an avatar that reflects the real me. I totally understand that one party in a marriage being trans affects both parties, and I’m trying so hard to be considerate of her needs, but I feel like I’m not allowed to even bring it up. I’m in therapy at the moment, and that one hour a week of being able to be myself and talk completely openly about things, as well as basically living the rest of the time online, is basically all that’s keeping me going right now.” Baby!

**Taegan:** That’s very sad, and my heart goes out to you. I would say the first thing you could do is invite your wife to your therapy session, so she can see you being yourself and your therapist can kind of be there to help her with her anxieties as well.

**Tehya:** That was one of the things that I was thinking about that came up to me right away. Or even if you’re able to get a couples therapist who is ‘competent in trans’, it might be beneficial if you wanted to bring your wife in too. But I can also see the value in making sure that you still have that one connection to a therapist who is just yours, and seeing if you can find maybe an outside – you know, a second therapist or something for a couple. That sounds so hard and so stressful, when you’re trying to talk about something that’s so vulnerable and deep into your heart and someone who you’re trying to go to for support and love and care is only able to make it about them. So I wonder if your wife has a therapist or if she has other people who she can see, because having anxiety about – like we were kind of talking about earlier – about the unknown in your relationship is really stressful and overwhelming and hard to deal with. But also I don’t think it’s appropriate for her to put that stress on you, because you’re also under a lot of stress, and you deserve to be able to express your gender and be trans and be happy and wear the clothes you want to wear without somebody making it all about them.

**Tuck:** Yeah. You deserve to have people in your life who are really excited about your transition and who are wholeheartedly supporting you. I’m curious if there’s anyone else in your life that you could come out to that might give you that support. I know that that would be super, super scary if you came out to one person and that went so badly, but I’m just curious what it would be like if you’re living entirely online to have real-life resources and maybe rewrite that experience into proving that it won’t always go this badly every single time. I’m also wondering if your wife has any resources or support groups she could access to see partners who are really excited about their partners’ transition to see that that’s also an option for her. And again, it might be really, really difficult for her, but I think it’s good to have modeling of people who are like, “I’ve gone through this and it worked out well” or “I’m going through this now and here’s things I’m doing to remind myself that it’s not all about hurting me, it’s actually about my partner and supporting them!”

Also I just want to say that at the end of the day, I understand that you can’t imagine ending this relationship, and also you don’t deserve to be in a relationship that requires you not being the gender that you are. And so I hope that you find a resolution with your wife, but I just want to remind you that you shouldn’t have to sacrifice your entire gender for your relationship.

**Tehya:** Yeah, and also it sounds like it’s been a few weeks. And sometimes what people need is to take a few weeks, and I don’t think that it makes it any more okay that – the way that she’s treating you, I think, is really disrespectful, and it sounds like it’s really, really hurting you, and I don’t think that’s fair. But maybe she just needs some time, and with some resources and an ability to recognize what her feelings are – and being able to recognize, I think, too, the things that she has control over in her life are not going to be how you dress or what your gender is. Like, you can only control yourself and how you respond to other people around you. And I think being able to recognize what’s hers to hold on to and what’s hers to process, like maybe in some time she can come around. It’s not impossible.

**Taegan:** I would also recommend reaching out to your online friends in real life. I have some great friends who I met online, and I talk to them outside of the platform where we met all the time. It can be great to have people in other aspects of your life. Even if they’re not close in proximity to you, being able to reach out to them and talk to them and have virtual hang-outs, because, I mean, we’re living in the quarantine right now, so we’re all having to deal with virtual hang-outs. But inviting the people you know online into other areas of your life could be really helpful.

[bell dings]

**Tuck:** [laughs] So, previously in the podcast, I have said that being gay can be a choice for some people, which is mostly a response to the problems that I have with the “born this way” narrative. And so someone just asked, “Why and how did you choose to be gay?,” and I can’t tell if they’re just trying to somehow call my bluff or not? But does anyone want to talk about why and how they chose to be gay? Because I absolutely will!

My experience is as someone who can experience attraction to a lot of different people of many, many different genders. And I realized that when I date people whose gender is really different than mine, it can bring up a lot of things. One is I can find myself bringing in a lot of gender roles and gender dynamics. Even if I try really hard not to, I end up feeling trapped in performing a specific gender. I also, if someone has a really different gender than me, often feel myself feeling othered, and like I have to explain or justify myself or my experience with gender. And so there’s just something that I find very comfortable and comforting dating someone whose gender resonates with mine. And that doesn’t mean I only date nonbinary people, it just means that I only date people whose gender *resonates* with mine. I don’t really know how else to describe it. So I made that choice because it’s what made me feel the most safe and comfortable and in control of my own experiences. And I can still experience attraction to other people and I could still want to make out with other people, but in my heart of hearts, it’s really important to me that I don’t follow the script of heterosexuality that I was given, and that I instead pursue relationships that help me be my truest self and my happiest self. And so that’s what I’m trying to do.

**Taegan:** Sailor Moon made me gay.

**Tuck:** Hell yeah!

**Tehya:** I chose to be gay after watching *Charlie’s Angels* and the scene where Lucy Liu has a riding crop and brandishes it in front of a whole boardroom of men, and I was like, “This is somehow my gender.” And now I am gay.

**Tuck:** Thank you so much both of you for coming on the show…

**Taegan:** Of course!

**Tuck:** …and for telling me how you chose to be gay. It’s exactly what I hoped for. Thank you also for making this quarantine art with me and living in a house with me [Taegan and Tehya laugh] and being my best friends as we all wait to emerge from our homes, like mole people.

**Taegan:** Yay!

**Tehya:** Hooray!

**Tuck:** Bye!

**Taegan:** Bye!

**Tehya:** I was thinking, I wasn’t sure if we were mentioning the quarantine or not, but.

**Tuck:** We absolutely can. Go ahead. [laughs]

**Tehya:** [laughs] In the first question, or not the first question, but the question about the person whose spouse had just come out as trans and she was just like, “Oh no, I’m so worried about being attracted,” and I was just like, “Well, honestly, you don’t know what’s going to be happening in a year.” Like, last year at this time, I had a lot of things I was worried about. Were any of them being quarantined?! [Tuck laughs] No! And now I’m just dealing with that! And the world is large and a lot of things can happen and you can worry about some of the things, but ultimately what you’re going to find is you’re going to worry about stuff and [laughs] turns out that the things that you were worried about and the things that actually happen that you *should* worry about are two separate circles on the Venn diagram. [laughs]

**Tuck:** I hope everyone takes a lot of time to just sit quietly and contemplate their genders. [Tuck and Tehya laugh]

[outro music, a rockin’ track with leading electric guitar, begins]

**Tuck:** That’s going to do it for this week’s show. Thank you so much for hanging out with us for a bit and putting up with the whole recording situation. I am hoping to finetune it in the next several weeks.

If you would like to hang out with us more, we are on Twitter, we are on Instagram. I am on Twitter and Instagram. And I’ve actually been thinking about joining every other person on Earth and doing an Instagram Live thing for the show? I’m wondering: Would you be into that? Is that already overplayed? Is there something else I could do? Let me know. I am down for literally anything that sounds good to all of you.

You can also find us at genderpodcast.com, where we’re working on getting transcripts up for all of our episodes, and on Slack at [bit.ly/genderslack2](file:///Users/kirafindling/Documents/Gender%20Reveal/bit.ly/genderslack2), where hundreds of trans and I think some chill cis folks are just waiting to hang out with you. You can find our merch, including “Surf Don’t TERF” sweatshirts and mugs, “Nature is Queer” posters, “Spring in Hell” t-shirts, “Trans Media” tank tops. You can find all that stuff at bit.ly/gendermerch through April 1.

And you can join our Patreon at patreon.com/gender for our weekly newsletter and some fun stuff in the mail. And you can send *us* mail if you want to for some reason. Just hit me up on any of the places I just mentioned for the address.

If you want to send in your own question about gender, sexual orientation, identity, things like that, there is an anonymous Google form to do so in the show notes.

This week’s episode was produced and edited by me, Molly Woodstock. Our logo is by the talented Ira M. Leigh. Our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. Hang in there, babies, and we will be back real soon with more feelings about gender. Nice.

[music ends]

**Tuck:** Yeah, and do you feel like it has a specific definition to you? Jesus Christ, Ruby. Hold on.

**Tehya:** [singing] That is baby! New world! What a baby! Is good at playing games. [Taegan laughs] [speaking] You want to get the high score? The high score is only if you go in the hallway.

**Taegan:** You have to leave all of this in.