Edited by James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy

Understanding Transgender Identities

FOUR VIEWS

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An Introduction

Paul Rhodes Eddy and James K. Beilby

Since the social ferment of the 1960s, Western culture has become increasingly attuned to matters of **sexuality** and **gender**. Over the last two decades, one way this new sensitivity has manifested is in the increasing awareness of the experiences and identities of **transgender** people. While the contemporary understanding of transgender identity was largely forged in the late twentieth century, it has only been within the last few years that our culture, in the words of *Time* magazine, has reached a "transgender tipping point."[1] Key moments have included Diane Sawyer's *20/20* interview of Caitlyn Jenner in April 2015; the debut in July of that same year of *I Am Jazz*, a reality TV show featuring Jazz Jennings, a transgender teen; and the back-and-forth of the transgender "bathroom debate."

While the church has spent significant energy in recent years engaging certain questions surrounding gender and sexuality—questions about the role of gender in marriage, the place of women in ministry, and an understanding of homosexuality within the context of the Christian life—much less attention has been given thus far to transgender experience. To date, most of what has

1. Katy Steinmetz, "The Transgender Tipping Point," *Time*, May 29, 2014. The issue's cover uses the tagline "America's Next Civil Rights Frontier."

been written on this subject comes from the more liberal/progressive quarters of the Christian world.[2] When it comes to more traditional Christian engagement with transgender identity, serious conversation has barely begun.[3]

It is the purpose of this book to further the Christian conversation on transgender experience and identity by bringing a range of perspectives into dialogue. The bulk of the book will be devoted to reflections from our five contributors and their responses to each other's reflections. This introduction will serve to set the context for the dialogue. We will begin by offering a survey of key historical moments over the last century or so (with a focus on the North American context). Next, we will touch on some of the contemporary issues, questions, and debates surrounding transgender experiences and identities. Finally, we will set the stage for the conversation on transgender identity in Christian perspective that follows.

Before we continue, a few words about language and terminology: First, throughout this introduction, we will be using terminology, some of it quite technical, that is specifically related to the contemporary transgender conversation. Some of it may be unfamiliar to the reader. We will, now and then, provide definitions in the text as we proceed, but a more thorough list of terms and their definitions is provided in a glossary at the back of the book. Any term that appears in the glossary will be placed in bold at its first use within the book. Second, as one author of an introductory book on our topic observes, "One of the biggest challenges people face when addressing or talking about trans individuals is the use of pronouns."[4] The issue of pronoun use can be especially challenging for the Christian community, given that significant theological convictions can underlie differences of opinion on this question.[5] No matter one's perspective, every Christian should be able

2. For a small representative sampling, see Vanessa Sheridan, *Crossing Over: Liberating the Transgender Christian* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2001); Justin Tanis, *Trans-Gendered: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2003); and Christina Beardsley and Michelle O'Brien, eds., *This Is My Body: Hearing the Theology of Transgender Christians* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2016).

3. The short list of books from this sector of Christianity includes Oliver O'Donovan, *Transsexualism and Christian Marriage* (Nottingham: Grove, 1982); Mark A. Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015); and Andrew T. Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate: What Does the Bible Actually Say about Gender Identity?* (Purcellville, VA: Good Book, 2017).

4. Nicholas M. Teich, *Transgender 101: A Simple Guide to a Complex Issue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 11.

5. E.g., Walker, *Transgender Debate*, 156–57; and Denny Burk, "Bruce or Caitlyn? He or She? Should Christians Accommodate Transgender Naming?," June 4, 2015, http://www.dennyburk.com/bruce-or-caitlyn-he-or-she-should-christians-accomodate-transgender-naming/.

to agree with Andrew Walker that our disagreements on this topic must be done charitably.[6]

Transgender Experiences and Identities: A History

One might think that it was only within the last few years—with the fame of transgender people like Chaz Bono, Laverne Cox, Janet Mock, and Caitlyn Jenner—that transgender experience first attracted media attention. Not so. It was December 1, 1952, when the *Daily News* in New York City ran a front-page story with the headline "Ex-GI Becomes Blonde Beauty." And with that, Christine Jorgensen was introduced to America. Transgender histories within the US context commonly begin with Jorgensen (1926–89), the first American to become widely known for having a procedure referred to at the time as a "sex change" but more commonly known today as **sex reassignment surgery** (**SRS**), **gender reassignment surgery**, **gender confirmation surgery,** or **gender-affirming surgery**. Jorgensen's surgery was performed in Denmark, and upon returning to the US she became an instant celebrity. She went on to work as an actor and entertainer and became an early transgender advocate.[7]

While Jorgensen was the first **transsexual** person to gain widespread recognition in America, others preceded her in this journey, both in the US and beyond.[8] Certain medical advances were necessary before SRS could become truly viable, including anesthesia, hormone therapy, and plastic surgery. Genital reconstruction surgery initially grew as a response to children with **intersex** conditions and victims of accidents and war injuries.[9] But medical

6. Walker, *Transgender Debate*, 156. It is our view that both charity (*agape*-love) and the church's missional calling are best served by our meeting people wherever they are, regardless of our personal agreement with them (e.g., 1 Cor. 9:19–23). This would include referring to transgender people in the way they prefer. It is in this light that we will approach language issues in this introduction.

7. See Christine Jorgensen, *Christine Jorgensen: A Personal Autobiography* (New York: Bantam, 1967).

8. On transsexuality prior to Jorgensen's transition in the 1950s, see Vern L. Bullough and Bonnie Bullough, *Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pt. 1; Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), chap. 1; and Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley: Seal, 2008), 31–47. For a case of transsexuality in the 1930s, see Lili Elbe, *Man into Woman: An Authentic Record of a Change of Sex* (London: Blue Boat, 1933).

9. On intersex conditions—formerly known as hermaphroditism, and often referred to within medical literature today as **differences/disorders of sex development** (**DSDs**)—see Alice D. Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Intervention of Sex* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Megan K. DeFranza, *Sex Difference in Christian Theology: Male, Female, and Intersex in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

advances were not the only necessary condition for SRS to arise. Technological capacity had to be paired with a hospitable theory of sexuality. And just such a theory was in the air in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the theory of the universal constitutional bisexuality of humanity (i.e., the idea that human sexual differentiation is **nonbinary** in nature). The germ of this idea can be traced back to Charles Darwin, who set the stage for a "new genderless human nature,"[10] and it can be found running through the thought of many of the early leading sexologists (e.g., Magnus Hirschfeld, Havelock Ellis, Sigmund Freud, and James Kiernan). This idea leads to the conclusion that the male and female sexes do not conform to a strict binary but instead reflect something of a continuum. Within this intellectual atmosphere, the idea that a man could become a woman, or vice versa, seemed increasingly plausible.

Prior to the mid-twentieth century—and under the powerful influence of the father of modern sexology, German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing, and his magnum opus, *Psychopathia Sexualis*—people who are referred to today as transgender or transsexual were commonly identified as expressing homosexuality, sexual **fetish**, or psychosis.[11] However, in the first decade of the twentieth century, German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld became the first to clearly distinguish homosexuality and transvestism (from "cross" [*trans*] "dress" [*vestis*])—which in its most "extreme" form today would be called transsexuality.[12] In 1949, David Cauldwell first used the term "transsexualism" to identify people wanting to change their sex.[13]

With new terminology came more nuanced categories and the ability to distinguish between different phenomena. By midcentury, transvestism—or what is more commonly referred to as **cross-dressing** today—was given a clear distinction and public voice by Virginia Charles Prince.[14] For Prince, a self-described transvestite or "femmiphile" (i.e., a lover of the feminine)

10. Lawrence Birken, *Consuming Desire: Sexual Science and the Emergence of a Culture of Abundance, 1871–1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 74. See also Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 22–29.

11. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Forensic Study*, trans. F. J. Rebman, 12th ed. (1906; repr., New York: Physicians and Surgeons Book Co., 1933), 218, 253, 310, 322–24.

12. Magnus Hirschfeld, *The Transvestites: An Investigation of the Erotic Drive to Cross Dress*, trans. M. A. Lombardi-Nash (1910; repr., Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1991).

13. David O. Cauldwell, "Psychopathia Transexualis," *Sexology* 16, no. 5 (1949): 274–80.

14. On Virginia Prince, see Richard Ekins and Dave King, eds., *Virginia Prince: Pioneer of Transgendering* (Binghamton, NY: Haworth Medical, 2006); and Bullough and Bullough, *Cross Dressing*, chap. 12. On cross-dressing through history, see Bullough and Bullough, *Cross Dressing*; and Gregory G. Bolich, *Transgender History and Geography* (Raleigh, NC: Psyche's, 2007).

who founded the newsletter *Transvestia* in the 1960s, transvestism was quite distinct from both homosexuality and transsexuality. Prince went on to use the terms "sex" and "gender" to distinguish her transvestism from transsexuality: "I, at least, know the difference between sex and gender and have simply elected to change the latter and not the former."[15]

Through the twentieth century, as transsexuality and cross-dressing were increasingly distinguished both from homosexuality and from each other, another distinction emerged: dressing in drag. "Drag" refers to dressing in clothing associated with the opposite sex, as with cross-dressing, but differs in that it is often for entertainment purposes. Drag has an extensive history within the performing arts, with the performer in drag often enacting exaggerated gender stereotypes associated with that sex. Men who dressed in order to impersonate women became known as **drag queens**, while female impersonators of men became known as **drag kings**.[16]

The 1950s and '60s brought new language and categories that forever transformed how people thought about sexuality and, eventually, **gender identity**. Most importantly, the ideas of **sex** and gender became increasingly distinguished. "Sex" refers to the biological/physical characteristics that identify humans as male and female (i.e., chromosomes, sex hormones, gonads, genitals, etc.). "Gender," on the other hand, refers both to one's gender identity (i.e., one's inner sense of being a man or woman, or what some referred to as one's "psychological sex") and to one's **gender role / expression** (i.e., the outward manifestation of one's gender identity, typically expressed in societal norms associated with masculinity or femininity).[17] These categories were originally formed by doctors and psychologists engaged with the treatment of intersex conditions. It wasn't long, however, before they were being used to explain transsexual persons as well. In this atmosphere, it was increasingly the case that "the mind—the sense of self—was [seen as] less malleable than the body."[18]

In 1966, a landmark book by Harry Benjamin was published: *The Transsexual Phenomenon*.[19] By the time the book was written, Benjamin (who

15. Virginia Prince, "Change of Sex or Gender," *Transvestia* 10, no. 60 (1969): 65.

16. See Bullough and Bullough, *Cross Dressing*, chap. 10.

17. As early as 1945, Madison Bentley used the term "gender" to signal "the socialized obverse of sex," while John Money first published on the idea of gender role in 1955. See respectively, Madison Bentley, "Sanity and Hazard in Childhood," *American Journal of Psychology* 58, no. 2 (1945): 228; and John Money, "Hermaphroditism, Gender, and Precocity in Hyperadrenocorticism: Psychologic Findings," *Bulletin of the Johns Hopkins Hospital* 96, no. 6 (1955): 253–64 (esp. 254).

18. Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 99.

19. Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (New York: Julian, 1966).

served as Christine Jorgensen's endocrinologist) had already been advising transsexual patients regarding the **transition** process—that is, transitioning from living as their **birth sex** (or **assigned sex**) to living in congruence with their gender identity. Along with John Money (who founded the Johns Hopkins Gender Identity Clinic in 1965), Benjamin became a leading resource and advocate for those seeking hormone therapy and SRS.

Throughout the 1960s and '70s, transsexuality slowly grew in terms of public awareness and acceptance.[20] When Money opened the Johns Hopkins clinic in 1965, it became the first major US clinic offering SRS. Others quickly followed. By 1975, over twenty major centers were offering treatment, and around a thousand people had undergone surgery.[21] Despite the growing availability of medical centers able and willing to guide people through the stages of transition, most transsexuals were not able to afford such an expensive procedure. In the mid-1960s, the Erickson Educational Foundation (EEF)—founded and run by Reed Erickson, a female-to-male (**FtM**) **transman**—stepped in to aid in the funding of transsexual research.[22]

During this period, transgender activism grew. The 1966 riot at the Compton Café in San Francisco—a response by drag queens and transvestites to police raids—has been deemed the first significant act of transgender-focused protest in America.[23] The 1970s saw the formation of new transgender-related organizations.[24] An important public figure at this time was Renée Richards, a **transwoman** who underwent a male-to-female (**MtF**) transition in 1975. The next year, she was denied entrance to the women's US Open tennis tournament. Richards fought the decision, and in 1977 the New York Supreme Court ruled in her favor. The incident became a landmark moment for transgender rights.

While the 1960s and '70s brought increasing awareness and acceptance of transgender people, this time period also brought new challenges and critiques. One area of challenge was largely the result of a medical "turf

20. Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 188–254; Stryker, *Transgender History*, chaps. 3–4; and Barry Reay, "The Transsexual Phenomenon: A Counter-History," *Journal of Social History* 47, no. 4 (2014): 1042–70.

21. Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 217–22. As Reay notes in "Transsexual Phenomenon," this doesn't mean things were anything like smooth sailing for the transgender community during these years.

22. Aaron H. Devor and Nicholas Matte, "ONE Inc. and Reed Erickson: The Uneasy Alliance of Gay and Trans Activism, 1964–2003," *GLQ* 10, no. 2 (2004): 179–209.

23. The 2005 film *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria*, written and directed by Susan Stryker and Victor Silverman, documents this event.

24. Jordy Jones, "Transgender Organizations and Periodicals," in *Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History in America*, ed. Marc Stein (New York: Thomson Gale, 2004), 3:196–99.

war."[25] As the number of medical doctors willing to assist people in transitioning grew, pushback came from the psychiatric and psychological fields, where psychotherapeutic interventions were encouraged instead. From the beginning, many psychoanalysts working within the Freudian tradition were particularly critical of so-called sex-change interventions.[26] In the early 1960s, UCLA's department of psychiatry opened its Gender Identity Research Clinic. In contrast to Money's clinic, the UCLA clinic would neither assist in nor recommend transitioning for transsexuals. Instead, psychotherapeutic protocols were developed with the intention of enabling gender-variant children to eventually embrace their birth sex and its gender identity correlates.[27]

To close out the decade, 1979 brought a year of conflicting episodes in America. On the one hand, a Standards of Care (SoC)—a milestone in medical care protocol for transsexual persons—was released for the first time. This SoC was designed for several purposes, including advising the health care world on appropriate treatment protocols, protecting transgender patients from less-than-appropriate treatment methods, and safeguarding medical professionals from accusations of malpractice. Originally known as the Harry Benjamin Standards of Care, it was produced by the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association (HBIGDA), which was launched that same year. In 2007, HBIGDA changed its name to the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), and the SoC was renamed Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender Nonconforming People. This document is regularly revised by WPATH and is the most common protocol document for professionals working with the transgender community today.[28]

On the other hand, 1979 also marked the year in which Paul McHugh, the new director of the department of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins, put an end to performing SRS at the very clinic where John Money had begun it all. McHugh has gone on to become a leading voice among those warning that transitioning

25. Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 107. One can get a sense of the range of views in this skirmish in Richard Green and John Money, eds., *Transsexualism and Sex Reassignment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969). On the fraught relationship between the psychoanalytic movement and transsexuals, see Patricia Elliot, "Psychoanalysis," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, nos. 1–2 (2014): 165–68; and Reay, "Transsexual Phenomenon."

26. See Reay, "Transsexual Phenomenon."

27. Robert J. Stoller, *Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity and Femininity* (New York: Science House, 1968); and Richard Green, *Sexual Identity Conflict in Children and Adults* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

28. The current (seventh) version was published in 2011 and is available at https://www.wpath.org/publications/soc.

is not the best response to **gender dysphoria**.[29] The year 1979 also saw the publication of Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire*, the most well-known feminist critique of transsexuality.[30] Raymond challenged both the medical/psychiatric approach to transsexualism as a disease and transitioning as its cure.

There is broad agreement that the 1980s saw a significant conservative cultural adjustment to America. This cultural shift, which began in the late '70s and extended through the '80s, brought both a conservative political impulse, marked by the Reagan presidency, and the emergence of a number of new socially conservative, often explicitly Christian organizations such as Focus on the Family, the National Federation for Decency, and the Moral Majority. The 1980s served as the immediate context for what James Davison Hunter identified as the "culture wars."[31]

According to transgender historian Susan Stryker, during this time things became increasingly difficult for the transgender community. "All across the political spectrum, from reactionary to progressive, and all points in between, the only options presented to [transgender people] were to be considered bad, sick or wrong."[32] The decade opened with the term "transsexualism" being included for the first time in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM*). Its inclusion as a diagnosable mental disorder within the *DSM*—which fosters the notion that transgender experience is a form of pathology—has continued to be a point of contention between the transgender and psychiatric communities ever since. Stryker reports that, throughout the 1980s, antitransgender cultural sentiments continued to "proliferate" and that the "level of vitriol directed against transgender people actually increased."[33] As a result, the transgender community tended to circle the wagons and focus on offering each other mutual support, rather than moving outward in political activism. Meyerowitz notes that as the 1980s came to a close, bringing the deaths of both Harry Benjamin and Christine Jorgensen, in an important sense an "era had ended" for the transgender experience in America.[34]

29. Paul R. McHugh, "Surgical Sex: Why We Stopped Doing Sex Change Operations," *First Things*, November 2004, http://www.firstthings.com/article/2004/11/surgical-sex; and McHugh, "Transgender Surgery Isn't the Solution," *Wall Street Journal*, June 12, 2014, http://www.wsj.com/articles/paul-mchugh-transgender-surgery-isnt-the-solution-1402615120.

30. Janice Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the Shemale* (1979; repr., New York: Teachers College Press, 1994).

31. James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

32. Stryker, *Transgender History*, 113.

33. Stryker, *Transgender History*, 110.

34. Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*, 256.

In a number of respects, the 1990s brought a new day for the transgender community. Catalysts for this shift ranged from the effects of the HIV/AIDS crisis to the rise of postmodernism and the advent of the internet. By the 1990s, the public visibility and cultural acceptance of transgender identity was slowly on the increase. Despite the fact that transgender people played a role in the 1969 Stonewall riots that inaugurated the contemporary gay liberation movement, they often experienced rejection from the gay and lesbian communities throughout the late 1970s and '80s. But this trend began to reverse significantly in the 1990s.[35] It became increasingly common during this decade for the "T" to be included alongside "LGB." Transgender activism also increased significantly during this decade.[36]

By the early '90s, a growing number of academics were using "transgender" as an umbrella term that included any and all **gender minority** people who exhibited **gender variance** or **gender nonconformity** (i.e., **TGNC**), including transsexuals, cross-dressers/transvestites/**femmes**, drag kings and queens, intersex persons, and those who understand their gender as something beyond the male/masculine–female/feminine binary (e.g., **genderqueer**, **bigender**, **pangender**, **postgender**, **agender**, **third gender/sex**, **Two-Spirit**, etc.).[37] With this contemporary usage came an increased emphasis that transgender identity had to do with one's sense of gender identity, not **sexual orientation**. As the transgender community has continued to grow and develop, language and terminology have evolved as well.[38] Seeking to foster more inclusivity, some have begun to substitute "**trans**" (sometimes "**trans-**" or "**trans***") for "transgender."[39] In the '90s, transgender activists also coined the term "**cisgender**" (now sometimes "**cissexual**" or simply "**cis**") to refer to nontransgender people (i.e., people whose sense of gender identity matches their birth sex

35. Amy L. Stone, "More Than Adding a T: American Lesbian and Gay Activists' Attitudes towards Transgender Inclusion," *Sexualities* 12 (2009): 334–54.

36. Jones, "Transgender Organizations," 198–99; and Stryker, *Transgender History*, 135–47.

37. Leslie Feinberg's 1992 pamphlet, *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come*, is regularly credited with originating this umbrella use of the term "transgender." One recent study of specific self-identities within the wider transgender community found that the most commonly endorsed gender identity was "genderqueer." See L. E. Kuper, R. Nussbaum, and B. Mustanski, "Exploring the Diversity of Gender and Sexual Orientation Identities in an Online Sample of Transgender Individuals," *Journal of Sex Research* 49 (2012): 244–54.

38. Cristan Williams, "Transgender," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, nos. 1–2 (2014): 232–34; and K. J. Rawson and Cristan Williams, "Transgender*: The Rhetorical Landscape of a Term," *Present Tense* 3, no. 2 (2014): 1–9.

39. Gwynn Kessler, "Transgender/Third Sex/Transsexualism," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Gender Studies*, ed. Julia M. O'Brien (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2:427; and Ruth Pearce, Deborah Lynn Steinberg, and Igi Moon, "Introduction: The Emergence of 'Trans,'" *Sexualities* 22, nos. 1–2 (2019): 3–12.

and/or cultural gender norms).[40] The concept of **cisnormativity** eventually arose as well.

The decade of the 1990s also brought the emergence of the interdisciplinary field of **transgender studies**.[41] A major impetus for the rise of this new academic field was Sandy Stone's essay "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto."[42] In this essay, Stone, a transwoman, presses a new transgender vision that, in her words, is characterized by "postmodernism, postfeminism, and (dare I say it) posttranssexualism."[43] A key to understanding Stone's essay—and the wider transgender studies movement that followed—is its connection to **queer theory**, which also arose in the '90s.

The moniker "**queer**"—originally a derogatory slur—came to be embraced by the gay and lesbian communities of the '90s as a term of pride, one that "encompassed defiance, celebration and refusal."[44] Queer theory itself emerged from the confluence of several academic streams, including poststructuralist/deconstructionist literary theory, feminist thought, and gay and lesbian studies.[45] The work of Michel Foucault, especially his three-volume *The History of Sexuality*, was highly influential.[46] Early shapers of queer theory include Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.[47] Noreen Giffney captures the theoretical gist—along with the philosophical-aesthetic proclivities—of queer theory.

> Queer theory is an exercise in discourse analysis. . . . Queer is all about excess, pushing the boundaries of the possible, showing up language and discursive categories more specifically for their inadequacies. . . . There is an unremitting emphasis in queer theoretical work on fluidity, über-inclusivity, indeterminacy,

40. A. Finn Enke, "The Education of Little Cis: Cisgender and the Discipline of Opposing Bodies," in *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, ed. Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura (New York: Routledge, 2013), 234–47.

41. Kristen Schilt and Danya Lagos, "The Development of Transgender Studies in Sociology," *Annual Review of Sociology* 43 (2017): 425–43.

42. Stone's essay, originally written in 1987, was published in 1991. Citations below are from its reprint: Sandy Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 221–35.

43. Stone, "Empire Strikes Back," 224.

44. Noreen Giffney, "Introduction: The 'q' Word," in *Ashgate Research Companion to Queer Theory*, ed. Noreen Giffney and Michael O'Rourke (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 2.

45. On queer theory, see Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

46. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 3 vols., trans. Robert Hurley (1976–84; repr., New York: Random House, 1978–86). See Lynne Huffer, *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

47. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

> indefinability, unknowability, the preposterous, impossibility, unthinkability, unintelligibility, meaninglessness and that which is unrepresentable or incommunicable. . . . The erotics of thinking, speaking, writing, listening and reading is a chief concern.[48]

It is evident from this description that queer theory is located within the wider postmodern cultural impulse. In terms of religio-philosophical moorings, queer theory, similar to the poststructuralism/deconstructionism that inspired it, is most comfortably at home in a nontheistic, or religiously nonrealist, conceptual environment. That being said, religious appropriations of it are, to one degree or another, increasingly being made, often under the rubric of "queer theology."[49] Queer theory aligns with those quarters of the social sciences that embrace a vision of reality guided by **social constructionism**. It sets itself against the tendency within the hard sciences to understand phenomena, including sexual phenomena, in terms of definable essences (**essentialism**) with a "nature," often rooted in biology, that preexists and transcends language.[50] In this, it resonates with twentieth-century feminism's emphasis on the socially constructed nature of gender and gender differences. But it presses further to suggest that even the supposed sex differences associated with male and female are primarily a factor of sociolinguistic construction, not objective biological facts. To think otherwise is to fall victim to the "phallocentric straightjacket of biological reductionism."[51] A key idea within queer theory—one that resonates with the field of transgender studies—is that identity is fluid and malleable and thus that gender is not an "essence" human beings possess but rather a "performance" they engage in.[52] Gender is understood as "potentially porous and permeable spatial territories (arguably numbering more than two) each capable of supporting rich and rapidly proliferating ecologies of embodied difference."[53]

48. Giffney, "Introduction," 7–9.

49. On queer theology, see Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology* (New York: Routledge, 2001); and Patrick S. Cheng, *Radical Love: Introduction to Queer Theology* (New York: Seabury, 2011).

50. See Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Jeffrey Weeks, "Essentialism," in *The Languages of Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 43–45; Weeks, "Social Constructionism," in *Languages of Sexuality*, 204–8; and Deborah F. Sawyer, "Gender," in O'Brien, *Oxford Encyclopedia*, 1:264–73.

51. Leonore Tiefer, quoted in Jane M. Ussher, "Unraveling the Mystery of 'The Specificity of Women's Sexual Response and Its Relationship with Sexual Orientations': The Social Construction of Sex and Sexual Identities," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 46, no. 5 (2017): 1207.

52. The concept of performativity is central to Butler's landmark work, *Gender Trouble*.

53. Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah, and Lisa Jean Moore, "Introduction: Trans-, Trans, or Transgender?," *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 36, nos. 3–4 (2008): 12.

With the turn of the century and the coming of age of the millennial generation, cultural acceptance of transgender identity was on the rise. Similar to other sexual minority communities, transgender people from around the globe were able to connect and organize because of the internet's revolutionary transformation of our communication modes.[54] Along with other expressions of the LGBT community, transgender people began to experience a higher profile within the media and entertainment worlds. In April 2007, for example, Barbara Walters introduced Jazz Jennings, a seven-year-old transgender girl, to the nation.[55] In 2009, President Barack Obama declared June to be Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month. In 2011, Chaz Bono's transition was the subject of the documentary film "Becoming Chaz," and Bono's book *Transition: Becoming Who I Was Always Meant to Be* was released.[56] By June 2014, *Time* magazine could proclaim that our culture had reached a "transgender tipping point."

In recent years, much of the international attention on the transgender community has focused on things like appropriate medical protocols for the process of transitioning and legal protection for transgender persons.[57] On the legal front, issues being addressed include legal guidelines regarding medical/surgical intervention, legal recognition of a new sex status, policies for governmental and/or health insurance provider coverage for medical treatments, minimum legal age for transitioning processes, legal effects of transitioning on marital status, and, of course, legislative enactment of equal access and antidiscrimination laws.[58]

Certain European countries led the way in terms of legislation related to transgender persons, with Switzerland being the first to grant individuals the ability to change their legal sex status in the 1930s.[59] In the US, a few states began to include transgender people within their antidiscrimination laws in the 1990s. At present, this number has grown to seventeen states and

54. Andre Cavalcante, "'I Did It All Online': Transgender Identity and the Management of Everyday Life," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 33 (2016): 109–22; and Eve Shapiro, "'Trans' cending Barriers: Transgender Organizing on the Internet," *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services* 16, nos. 3–4 (December 2004): 165–79.

55. Jazz Jennings, *Being Jazz: My Life as a (Transgender) Teen* (New York: Random House, 2016).

56. Chaz Bono with Billie Fitzpatrick, *Transition: Becoming Who I Was Always Meant to Be* (New York: Dutton, 2011).

57. On the former topic, see Randi Ettner, Stan Monstrey, and Eli Coleman, eds., *Principles of Transgender Medicine and Surgery*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016).

58. Jens M. Scherpe, ed., *The Legal Status of Transsexual and Transgender Persons* (Portland, OR: Intersentia, 2015).

59. Friedemann Pfäfflin, "Transgenderism and Transsexuality: Medical and Psychological Viewpoints," in Scherpe, *Legal Status*, 17.

the District of Columbia. Japan, Singapore, and Taiwan have also enacted legislation. The Yogyakarta Principles were eventually formulated and released in 2006–7, a key moment for international transgender human rights.[60] A few predominantly Muslim Middle Eastern countries have also enacted protective legislation for transgender people. Turkey, for example, did so in 1988. And, interestingly, more sex reassignment surgeries are performed annually in Iran than in any other country in the world, with the exception of Thailand.[61]

Alongside the growing cultural awareness and acceptance of the transgender community have come countertendencies that serve to raise critical questions regarding transgender identity, particularly transsexuality. For example, the feminist critique that began in the 1970s has continued within certain sectors of contemporary feminist thought. Referred to as radical feminism or gender-critical feminism—or, alternatively, as trans-exclusionary radical feminism or TERF by its critics—this feminist perspective proposes that the presence of MtF transsexuals can threaten (natal) women-only safe spaces, and poses just one more way in which men are able to co-opt and "erase" women.[62]

Transgender Experiences and Identities Today: Some Issues and Controversies

"Sex" and "Gender": Academic Terminology and Its Challenges

Inherent within the term "transgender" itself is the idea of gender. As noted earlier, the contemporary notion of gender is relatively new, having emerged in the mid-twentieth century.[63] Within second-wave feminism, the sex/gender divide was widely adopted during the 1970s and '80s. As used today

60. *The Yogyakarta Principles: The Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity*, 2007, http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/.

61. Vanessa Barford, "Iran's 'Diagnosed Transsexuals,'" *BBC News*, February 25, 2008, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7259057.stm. This fact is a direct result of a 1987 fatwa issued by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. See M. Alipour, "Islamic Shari'a Law, Neotraditionalist Muslim Scholars and Transgender Sex-Reassignment Surgery: A Case Study of Ayatollah Khomeini's and Sheikh al-Tantawi's Fatwas," *International Journal of Transgenderism* 18, no. 1 (2017): 91–103.

62. Sheila Jeffreys, *Gender Hurts: A Feminist Analysis of the Politics of Transgenderism* (New York: Routledge, 2014); and Ruth Barrett, ed., *Female Erasure: What You Need to Know about Gender Politics' War on Women, the Female Sex and Human Rights* (Pacific Palisades, CA: Tidal Time, 2016).

63. On the history of the use of "sex" and/or "gender," see Diederik F. Janssen, "Know Thy Gender: Etymological Primer," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 47, no. 8 (2018): 2149–54, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-018-1300-x; and David Haig, "The Inexorable Rise of Gender and the Decline of Sex: Social Change in Academic Titles, 1945–2001," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 33, no. 2 (2004): 87–96.

in most contexts, the distinction is understood as follows: "sex" refers to the biological/physiological characteristics that identify humans as male, female, or intersex (i.e., chromosomes, sex hormones, gonads, genitals, secondary sex characteristics, etc.), while "gender" signals the common traits associated with being a man/masculine, a woman/feminine, or some gender-variant alternative within any given sociocultural context. Seen in this light, gender came to be understood as "a social construction that arises from biological sex."[64] Over the last few decades of the twentieth century, these two terms—along with the concept of "sexuality" as referring to one's preferred object of desire (i.e., sexual orientation)—came to form the three-part schema of sex-gender-sexuality that is now widely used within the social sciences and beyond.[65]

Increasingly, however, there are signs that this commonly shared schema—particularly the ideas of sex and gender—has problems, both conceptual and practical. First, there is widespread equivocal use of the term "gender" such that it is sometimes used in contradistinction from the term "sex," while at other times the two are used as virtual synonyms. This has led a number of researchers to call for a moment of interdisciplinary reassessment and reclarification of terminology.[66] Milton Diamond, for example, has argued that, given the most common academic definitions of sex and gender today, conceptual consistency should lead us to refer to "the way one views him- or herself as a male or female" as one's *sexual* identity, not *gender* identity, as is most common today.[67] In light of the terminological equivocations and inconsistencies associated with the terms "sex" and "gender," others have gone so far as to question whether this distinction is any longer meaningful.[68]

A second problem is tied to the disciplinary turf wars between the biological and social sciences of the last several decades.[69] Under the pressure of

64. Kimberly Tauches, "Transgendering: Challenging the 'Normal,'" in *Handbook of the New Sexuality Studies*, ed. Steven Seidman, Nancy Fischer, and Chet Meeks (New York: Routledge, 2006), 174.

65. E.g., American Psychiatric Association, "Gender Dysphoria," in *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 451 (hereafter *DSM-5*).

66. E.g., D. A. Gentile, "Just What Are Sex and Gender, Anyway? A Call for a New Terminological Standard," *Psychological Science* 4 (1993): 120–22; and Milton Diamond, "Sex and Gender Are Different: Sexual Identity and Gender Identity Are Different," *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 7, no. 3 (2002): 320–34.

67. Diamond, "Sex and Gender," 323.

68. Charlene L. Muehlenhard and Zoe D. Peterson, "Distinguishing between Sex and Gender: History, Current Conceptualizations, and Implications," *Sex Roles* 64 (2011): 791–803.

69. On this unfortunate state of interdisciplinary affairs within contemporary sexuality studies, see Roy F. Baumeister, Jon K. Maner, and C. Nathan DeWall, "Theories of Human Sexuality," in *Sex and Sexuality*, vol. 1, *Sexuality Today: Trends and Controversies*, ed. Richard D. McAnulty and M. Michele Burnette (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), esp. 17–23.

this tension, the social sciences have witnessed the ascendency of a social constructionist approach to human sexuality, and with it a strong rejection of anything that tends toward biological "essentialism."[70] In fact, by the late 1970s and into the '80s, some within the social sciences and feminist studies had begun to treat the category of sex—the specific category of the sex/gender binary that was originally reserved for the biological side of things—as virtually fully accounted for by social/cultural construction of gender.[71]

Throughout the 1980s and onward, the postmodern trajectory of thought within the Western academy served to further anchor and intensify this perspective.[72] In the 1990s, the rise of queer theory reinforced the idea that the category of sex was as much a social construction as gender, with the former arising out of the latter. As noted previously, an important voice here was Judith Butler in her landmark book *Gender Trouble*. Butler's thesis is succinctly captured in the opening chapter: "If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all."[73] The social constructionist impulse within the social sciences has led many to the point of functionally deconstructing any significant difference between sex and gender by effectively casting all things sexual as merely sociolinguistically constructed gender all the way down.

Finally, the fallout of the academic turf wars over the configuration of sex, gender, and sexuality has had implications for the wider society, particularly for the transgender community and its political and legal concerns. For example, with the rights movement serving as an initial model, sexual minority communities have found that one effective way of anchoring themselves within a legal paradigm of human rights, analogous to that which protects people from racism or sexism, is to appeal to biology as a basis for the community's

70. E.g., Jennifer Harding, "Investigating Sex: Essentialism and Constructionism," in *Constructing Sexualities: Readings in Sexuality, Gender, and Culture*, ed. Suzanne LaFont (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003), 6–17; Weeks, "Essentialism"; and Weeks, "Social Constructionism." As applied to transgender experience, see Boby Ho-Hong Ching and Jason Teng Xu, "The Effects of Neuroessentialism on Transprejudice: An Experimental Study," *Sex Roles* 78 (2018): 228–41.

71. E.g., Suzanne J. Kessler and Wendy McKenna, *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach* (New York: Wiley, 1978); and Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

72. William Simon, "The Postmodernization of Sex," in *Sexualities and Society: A Reader*, ed. Jeffrey Weeks, Janet Holland, and Matthew Waites (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 22, 29.

73. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 9–10. See also Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 5.

identity. From this perspective, defending a biological etiology for transgender experience—for example, the brain-sex theory (discussed below under "Biological Theories")—makes good sense.

On the other hand, the transgender community has also seen the way in which the appeal to a biological etiology easily lends itself to being coopted by a disease model of transgender experience, which naturally leads to pathologization and stigma and, moreover, to a biological determinism that undercuts human "agency." Seen from this perspective, the rejection of "biological essentialism" seems to offer the most politically advantageous path. However, here another potential risk emerges. In rejecting biological causation by emphasizing sociocultural forces, as, for example, queer theorists and many within trans activist circles tend to do today, transgender experience is left open to being understood as primarily a psychosocial phenomenon, and thus as something possibly to be approached from a psychological therapeutic model. This raises the possibility of a new pathologizing interpretation from a different direction.[74] In all of this, the categories of sex, gender, and sexuality are found to be mired in another level of controversy and debate.

Implications for Understanding the Human Sexes

In most people's estimations there are two sexes, and they are expressed in the binary of male and female. With the increasing awareness of the various experiences and identities expressed within the transgender community, especially when viewed through the lens of queer theory, the idea that the category of human sex is better understood as a continuum is receiving increasing attention. A significant factor here has been the proposal by some to include intersex persons within the transgender umbrella. As a category, intersex includes over forty different conditions, such as Klinefelter Syndrome, Turner Syndrome, Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS), and Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH).[75] In varying ways, intersex leads to a situation where the physical/biological characteristics that typically identify a person's sex (e.g., chromosomes, hormones, gonads, genitals) are such that the person, at one biological level or another, is neither unambiguously female nor unambiguously male.

Many activists press the point that the seemingly clear, biologically based sex binary of male versus female is fundamentally destabilized and disrupted

74. We will return to these sorts of questions below in the section "The Causal Question."

75. Amy B. Wisniewski, Steven D. Chernausek, and Bradley P. Kropp, *Disorders of Sex Development: A Guide for Parents and Physicians* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), chap. 2.

by the phenomena of intersex. According to Cheryl Chase, founder of the Intersex Society of North America (ISNA), intersex offers "clear evidence" that "the male/female binary is not 'immutable.'" Furthermore, it "furnishes an opportunity to deploy 'nature' strategically to disrupt heteronormative systems of sex, gender, and sexuality."[76]

Beyond intersex, scholars working within queer theory and transgender studies frequently cite other sources that appear to call into question the traditional male/female sex binary. These include the following: (1) Neurofeminist studies that deconstruct claims of biologically based sex differences, which are seen as often fed by the biases of "neurosexism."[77] (2) Thomas Laqueur's argument that, from ancient times until about 1750, the dominant model of human sexuality held that there was only one sex (i.e., women were essentially seen as inferior males) and that the current two-sex model is a modern innovation.[78] (3) Various cross-cultural examples of gender variance that can be construed as something like a "third sex"—for example, the Hijra of India, the Two-Spirit people (formerly **berdache**) of certain First Nations groups, and the Xanith of Oman.[79]

Of course, each of these lines of argument has been challenged in one way or another. For example, with regard to the appeal to intersex conditions in order to deconstruct the male/female binary, Emi Koyama, founder of the Portland-based Intersex Initiative, points out that "most people born with intersex conditions do view themselves as belonging to one binary sex or another. They simply see themselves as a man (or a woman) with a birth condition like any other."[80]

Koyama's observation points to an increasingly common area of criticism leveled against queer theory—namely, that it frequently disregards the lived experiences of the very people it appeals to in its theoretical arguments. More specifically, from early on queer theorists tended to cast a skeptical eye on the

76. Cheryl Chase, "Hermaphrodites with Attitude: Mapping the Emergence of Intersex Political Activism," in Stryker and Whittle, *Transgender Studies Reader*, 301. See also Suzanne J. Kessler, *Lessons from the Intersexed* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

77. Robyn Bluhm, Anne Jaap Jacobson, and Heidi Lene Maibom, eds., *Neurofeminism: Issues at the Intersection of Feminist Theory and Cognitive Science* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

78. Thomas W. Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

79. Thomas E. Bevan, *The Psychobiology of Transsexualism and Transgenderism: A New View Based on Scientific Evidence* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014), chap. 4; Bolich, *Transgender History and Geography*; and Gilbert Herdt, ed., *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History* (New York: Zone, 1994).

80. Emi Koyama, "From 'Intersex' to 'DSD': Toward a Queer Disability Politics of Gender," http://www.intersexinitiative.org/articles/intersextodsd.html.

transsexual sector of the transgender community. The reason for this is simple. The reported experience of many transsexuals is that their true self, which they often describe in terms of an innate and unchanging gender identity, is trapped in the "wrong body" (i.e., the wrong **biological sex**). But this sort of claim appears to depend on something like a fixed, essentialist identity and the male/female sex binary, which runs afoul of the central convictions of queer theory.[81] This explains why many trans activists who embrace queer theory have often expressed attitudes toward SRS ranging from ambivalence to outright disdain.[82]

In light of this common sentiment among queer theorists—including those trans activists who have embraced a queer theoretical approach—a number of advocates for transsexual people have voiced concerns regarding queer theory's "erasure" of the transsexual experience from the ranks of the wider transgender community.[83] All too often, it is said, queer theory and its political vision do not "leave space for trans people who don't self-identity as beyond the binary. Many trans people see themselves as men and women. Taken to its most extreme, the beyond-the-binary model suggests these people are mistaken (i.e., it invalidates their self-identities). At best, it accepts such self-identifications while recognizing them as politically problematic since they disavow the resistant force of trans lives lived in opposition to the oppressive binary."[84]

Criticisms have also been voiced in regard to the other aforementioned lines of argument against the male/female sex binary. While neurofeminists strive to deconstruct biologically based arguments for significant sex differences, many within the biological sciences see indisputable evidence of just such differences.[85] Frequently, these biologically based sex differences focus on sex hormones—particularly testosterone—and their effect on the early sexual

81. This queer-based critique of the transsexual experience is articulated in Sandy Stone's essay, "The Empire Strikes Back" (222), the very essay that inaugurated the discipline of transgender studies. See also Ulrica Engdahl, "Wrong Body," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, nos. 1–2 (2014): 267–69.

82. A recent issue of *Transgender Studies Quarterly* was devoted to this contested question. See the guest editors' opening essay: Eric Plemons and Chris Straayer, "Introduction: Reframing the Surgical," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (2018): 164–73.

83. E.g., Viviane K. Namaste, *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); and Henry Rubin, *Self-Made Men: Identity and Embodiment among Transsexual Men* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2003).

84. Talia Mae Bettcher, "Trapped in the Wrong Theory: Rethinking Trans Oppression and Resistance," *Signs* 39, no. 2 (2014): 385.

85. E.g., Jill B. Becker, Arthur P. Arnold, Karen J. Berkley, et al., "Strategies and Methods for Research on Sex Differences in Brain and Behavior," *Endocrinology* 146 (2005): 1650–73; and Akira Matsumoto, ed., *Sexual Differentiation of the Brain* (New York: CRC, 1999).

differentiation of the brain.[86] Moreover, some within feminist quarters have called into question the common feminist assumption that granting innate, biologically based sex differences will inevitably lead to negative consequences for women.[87]

Thomas Laqueur's one-sex model has also come under attack.[88] Methodologically, some have chastised Laqueur for his uncritical employment of a radical postmodern philosophy of science.[89] He has also been critiqued at the level of historical argument—namely, by those who say that, contrary to his thesis, there are clear examples of "two-sexes" models in various pre-1700 sources.[90] Finally, the use of cross-cultural instances of gender variance as examples of the widespread occurrence of transgender experience—or as evidence of a "third gender"—has been called into question.[91]

Transgender Population Frequencies

With the growing scholarly focus on transgender experience has come increasing attention to population and demographic questions. But with this growing body of research has come divergent methodologies and differing results. For example, the *DSM-5* (the most recent edition of the *DSM*, published in 2013) estimates that between 0.005 percent and 0.014 percent of adult males, and between 0.002 percent and 0.003 percent of adult females, experience gender dysphoria.[92] This set of estimates is based on data regarding people seeking treatment in clinical settings. Others have criticized this approach, pointing out that "most transsexuals and transgender people are never treated . . . by a mental health professional."[93] When we turn to self-reporting sur-

86. E.g., Sheri A. Berenbaum and Adriene M. Beltz, "Sexual Differentiation in Human Behavior: Effects of Prenatal and Pubertal Organizational Hormones," *Frontiers in Neuroendocrinology* 32 (2011): 183–200.

87. Mary Midgley, "On Not Being Afraid of Natural Sex Differences," in *Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy*, ed. M. Griffiths and M. Whitford (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), 29–41.

88. E.g., Helen King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial: The Early and Modern Evidence* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014); and Heinz-Jürgen Voss, *Making Sex Revisited: Dekonstruktion des Geschlechts aus biologisch-medizinischer Perspektive* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010).

89. Alan G. Soble, "The History of Sexual Anatomy and Self-Referential Philosophy of Science," http://philpapers.org/archive/alatho.pdf.

90. E.g., the ancient Hippocratic treatise *Diseases of Women*, which proposes that women have a very different physiology than men.

91. E.g., Evan B. Towle and Lynn M. Morgan, "Romancing the Transgender Native: Rethinking the Use of the 'Third Gender' Concept," in Stryker and Whittle, *Transgender Studies Reader*, 666–84.

92. *DSM-5*, 454.

93. Bevan, *Psychobiology*, 47.

veys, the frequency numbers increase significantly.[94] For example, from this perspective, Thomas Bevan concludes that MtF transsexuals represent roughly 0.1 percent (or higher) of the male population, while the broader MtF transgender population (i.e., those who identify in some way with another gender, while stopping short of extensive transitioning procedures) represents 1 percent of the male population.[95] Regarding population frequency estimates for FtM transsexuals, Bevan offers 0.05 percent as a "conservative" rule of thumb and proposes a 0.5 percent estimate for the wider FtM transgender population.[96] In terms of actual numbers, the Williams Institute of the UCLA School of Law estimates that, as of 2016, around 1.4 million American adults "identify as transgender."[97] Interestingly, the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (ASPS) reported that the US saw an increase of nearly 20 percent in the number of gender confirmation surgeries performed in 2016 compared to 2015.[98]

The Question of Comparisons

As public awareness of the range of transgender experience and identity has grown, the question of relevant comparisons to other phenomena has been raised. One set of comparative experiences is related to transability, which refers to the experience of an able-bodied person sensing that their authentic identity is reflected in having a particular physical impairment or disability.[99] This has been tied to the phenomenon of **body integrity identity disorder** (**BIID**).[100] Comparisons have also been made with transracialism—that is, the

94. E.g., L. Kuyper and C. Wijsen, "Gender Identities and Gender Dysphoria in the Netherlands," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 43 (2014): 377–85; and E. Van Caenegem, K. Wierckx, E. Elaut, et al., "Prevalence of Gender Nonconformity in Flanders, Belgium," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 44 (2015): 1281–87.

95. Bevan, *Psychobiology*, 49.

96. Bevan, *Psychobiology*, 50. On transgender/transsexual population frequencies, see also Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, 92–95; and Francisco J. Sánchez and Eric Vilain, "Transgender Identities: Research and Controversies," in *Handbook of Psychology and Sexual Orientation*, ed. C. J. Patterson and A. R. D'Augelli (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 43.

97. Andrew R. Flores, Jody L. Herman, Gary J. Gates, and Taylor N. T. Brown, "How Many Adults Identify as Transgender in the United States," June 2016, https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/how-many-adults-identify-as-transgender-in-the-united-states/.

98. American Society of Plastic Surgeons, "Gender Confirmation Surgeries Rise 20% in First Ever Report," May 22, 2017, https://www.plasticsurgery.org/news/press-releases/gender-confirmation-surgeries-rise-20-percent-in-first-ever-report.

99. E.g., Alexandre Baril, "Needing to Acquire a Physical Impairment/Disability: (Re)Thinking the Connections between Trans and Disability Studies through Transability," *Hypatia* 30, no. 1 (2015): 30–48.

100. Antonia Ostgathe, Thomas Schnell, and Erich Kasten, "Body Integrity Identity Disorder and Gender Dysphoria: A Pilot Study to Investigate Similarities and Differences," *American*

experience of sensing that one's authentic racial/ethnic identity is other than that of one's genetic ancestry.[101] Such comparisons have quickly become sites of controversy as critics of transgender identities have used them within the context of polemical reductio ad absurdum and slippery-slope arguments.[102] In response, many trans activists and allies have, not surprisingly, rejected not only the comparisons but the very idea of these other trans phenomena as worthy of serious consideration.[103] In an all-too-rare example of a measured consideration of such comparisons—one calling for open-mindedness and dialogue—Stryker concludes,

> To say that *transracial* is not "like" *transgender* merely highlights how impoverished our conceptual vocabulary truly is, for specifying modes of resemblance and dissimilarity—for clearly there are underlying similarities as well as divergences which we have yet to adequately map. It is not time to settle the question of their identities once and for all—and after all, who are we to assume that we properly occupy the position of the decider?—but rather to keep the conversation going, at increasingly fine levels of nuance and detail.[104]

The Causal Question

As Vern and Bonnie Bullough have observed, "The struggle of the professional therapeutic community to find causality for a cross-gendered identity has been a long and difficult one."[105] Indeed, the question of what causes the

Journal of Applied Psychology 3, no. 6 (2014): 18–43. The experiences of both gender dysphoria and BIID must be distinguished from that of **body dysmorphic disorder** (**BDD**).

101. E.g., Roger Brubaker, *Trans: Gender and Race in an Age of Unsettled Identities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016). Additional comparisons have been made with the phenomena of transpecies (species dysphoria) and age dysphoria/age identity disorder. See respectively, S. E. Roberts, C. N. Plante, K. C. Gerbasi, and S. Reysen, "The Anthrozoomorphic Identity: Furry Fandom Members' Connections to Non-human Animals," *Anthrozoos* 28, no. 4 (2015): 533–48 (esp. 540 and 543); James Gile, "Age Dysphoria: A Case Study," in *Sexual Essays: Gender, Desire, and Nakedness* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton, 2017), 81–93.

102. E.g., Michelle A. Cretella, "Gender Dysphoria in Children and Suppression of Debate," *Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons* 21, no. 2 (2016): 51; and Jeffreys, *Gender Hurts*, 34–35, 187.

103. E.g., note the outrage expressed by many within the academic community toward the article by Rebecca Tuvel, "In Defense of Transracialism," *Hypatia* 32 (2017): 263–78. See Jennifer Schuessler, "A Defense of 'Transracial' Identity Roils Philosophy World," *New York Times*, May 19, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/19/arts/a-defense-of-transracial-identity-roils-philosophy-world.html?mcubz=0.

104. Susan Stryker, "Caitlyn Jenner and Rachel Dolezal: Identification, Embodiment, and Bodily Transformation," *AHA Today: A Blog of the American Historical Association*, July 13, 2015, http://blog.historians.org/2015/07/caitlyn-jenner-and-rachel-dolezal-identification-embodiment-bodily-transformation/.

105. Bullough and Bullough, *Cross Dressing*, 268.

transgender experience in its various forms has been surrounded by controversy for many years. Not surprisingly, the academic debates on this question often reflect interdisciplinary turf wars and their respective methodological biases. While many call for a balanced approach, often under the moniker of an "integrationist" model, far fewer actually go on to demonstrate it.

Another complicating factor here is that the transgender community now includes such a wide array of gender-variant people. This means that to ask the question of what lies behind the "transgender experience" is actually to ask the question of what lies behind cross-dressing, drag expression, genderfluidity, transsexuality, and a host of other gender-variant expressions. Several approaches to the causal question—most of them focusing on transsexuality—have come to dominate the scholarly discussion over the last number of decades. We will now survey some of these leading etiological theories.

Psychological Theories

To begin, those who hold that psychological phenomena offer the best explanatory pathways for understanding transgender phenomena often point to the many studies that show a significantly higher degree of mental health problems among the trans population compared with the general populace.[106] Specifically, researchers have found that conditions including ADHD, autism, affective and anxiety disorders, depression, and schizophrenia occur at significantly higher-than-usual rates among transgender people.[107] Those advocating a psychological approach to treatment, as opposed to hormone and/or surgery-based transitioning protocols, can point to research showing that, while SRS appears to alleviate mental health problems for some, for a sizable group of others psychological morbidity is unaffected by—or actually increases after—surgical transitioning.[108]

106. E.g., Cecilia Dhejne, Roy Van Vlerken, Gunter Heylens, and Jon Arcelus, "Mental Health and Gender Dysphoria: A Review of the Literature," *International Review of Psychiatry* 28, no. 1 (2016): 44–57; and Melanie Bechard, Doug P. VanderLaan, Hayley Wood, Lori Wasserman, and Kenneth J. Zucker, "Psychosocial and Psychological Vulnerability in Adolescents with Gender Dysphoria: A 'Proof of Principle' Study," *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy* 43, no. 7 (2017): 678–88.

107. E.g., R. P. Rajkumar, "Gender Identity Disorder and Schizophrenia: Neurodevelopmental Disorders with Common Causal Mechanisms?," *Schizophrenia Research and Treatment*, 2014, http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2014/463757; and J. F. Strang, L. Kenworthy, A. Dominska, et al., "Increased Gender Variance in Autism Spectrum Disorders and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 43, no. 8 (2014): 1525–33.

108. R. K. Simonsen, A. Giraldi, E. Kristensen, and G. M. Hald, "Long-Term Follow-Up of Individuals Undergoing Sex Reassignment Surgery: Psychiatric Morbidity and Mortality," *Nordic Journal of Psychiatry* 70, no. 4 (2016): 241–47.

A common rebuttal to this line of evidence is the claim that these increased rates of mental health problems are due to the stress and stigma caused by the ubiquitous transprejudice and transphobia at work within our culture (more on this below). But proponents of psychological approaches have countered with the observation that "anxiety has been found to be relatively common in individuals with gender dysphoria, even in cultures with accepting attitudes toward gender-variant behavior."[109] In this vein, J. Michael Bailey and Ray Blanchard write, "The idea that mental health problems—including suicidality—are caused by gender dysphoria rather than the other way around (i.e., mental health and personality issues cause a vulnerability to experience gender dysphoria) is currently popular and politically correct. It is, however, unproven and as likely to be false as true."[110]

With regard to the question of specific causes, psychological explanations of transsexuality have often focused on factors related to psychosexual maladjustment during childhood. For example, some have argued that gender dysphoria can develop in a child as a result of an overly enmeshed relationship with the parent of the opposite sex and/or a distant relationship with the parent of the same sex.[111] Some refer to insecure parental attachment in terms of being a risk factor rather than a cause.[112] A related proposal traces the roots of gender dysphoria or cross-dressing to being encouraged, or even forced, to adopt cross-sex behavior as a child. It is theorized that this can happen when, for example, a parent wishes that their baby boy had been a girl (or vice versa), or when a mother takes revenge on her son for being masculine.[113] For researchers who take this sort of perspective, it is not surprising to find that therapeutic treatments of gender-variant children often focus as much on the parents as they do the child.[114]

109. *DSM-5*, 459.

110. J. Michael Bailey and Ray Blanchard, "Suicide or Transition: The Only Options for Gender Dysphoric Kids?," *4th Wave Now*, September 8, 2017, https://4thwavenow.com/2017/09/08/suicide-or-transition-the-only-options-for-gender-dysphoric-kids/.

111. E.g., Robert J. Stoller, "Fathers of Transsexual Children," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 27 (1979): 837–66; and Domenico Di Ceglie, "Reflections on the Nature of the 'Atypical Gender Identity Organization,'" in *A Stranger in My Own Body: Atypical Gender Identity Development and Mental Health*, ed. D. Di Ceglie and D. Freedman (London: Karnac, 1998), 9–25.

112. Kenneth J. Zucker and Susan J. Bradley, *Gender Identity Disorder and Psychosexual Problems in Children and Adolescents* (New York: Guilford, 1995), 119.

113. Robert J. Stoller, "The Term 'Transvestism,'" *Archives of General Psychiatry* 24 (1971): 230–37; and Kenneth J. Zucker, Hayley Wood, Devita Singh, and Susan J. Bradley, "A Developmental, Biopsychosocial Model for the Treatment of Children with Gender Identity Disorder," *Journal of Homosexuality* 59, no. 3 (2012): 376–77.

114. Kenneth J. Zucker and Peggy T. Cohen-Kettenis, "Gender Identity Disorder in Children and Adolescents," in *Handbook of Sexual and Gender Identity Disorders*, ed. David L. Rowland