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THE Kaleidoscope OF GENDER

Prisms, Patterns, and Possibilities

6

The Kaleidoscope of Gender

Sixth Edition

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Prisms, Patterns, and Possibilities

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PREFACE

This sixth edition of *The Kaleidoscope of Gender: Prisms, Patterns, and Possibilities* provides an overview of the cutting-edge literature and theoretical frameworks in the sociology of gender and related fields for understanding the social construction of gender. Although not ignoring classical contributions to gender theory and research, this book focuses on where the field is moving and the changing paradigms and approaches to gender studies. *The Kaleidoscope of Gender* uses the metaphor of a kaleidoscope and three themes—prisms, patterns, and possibilities—to unify topic areas. It focuses on the prisms through which gender is shaped, the patterns gender takes, and the possibilities for social change through a deeper understanding of ourselves and our relationships with others, both locally and globally.

The book begins, in the first part, by looking at gender and other social prisms that define gendered experiences across the spectrum of daily lives. We conceptualize prisms as social categories of difference and inequality that shape the way gender is defined and practiced, including culture, race/ethnicity, social class, sexuality, age, and ability/disability. Different as individuals' lives might be, there are patterns to gendered experiences. The second part of the book follows this premise and examines these patterns across a multitude of arenas of daily life. From here, the last part of the book takes a proactive stance, exploring possibilities for change. Basic to the view of gender as a social construction is the potential for social change. Students will learn that gender transformation has occurred and can occur and, consequently, that it is possible to alter the genderscape. Because prisms, patterns, and possibilities themselves intersect, the framework for this book is fluid, interweaving topics and emphasizing the complexity and ever-changing nature of gender.

We had multiple goals in mind as we first developed this book, and the sixth edition reaffirms these goals:

1. Creating a book of readings that is accessible, timely, and stimulating in a text whose structure and content incorporate a fluid framework, with gender presented as an emergent, evolving, complex pattern—not one fixed in traditional categories and topics;

2. Selecting articles that creatively and clearly explicate what gender is and is not and what it means to say that gender is socially constructed by incorporating provocative illustrations and solid scientific evidence of the malleability of gender and the role of individuals, groups, and social institutions in the daily performance and transformation of gender practices and patterns;

3. Including readings that untangle and clarify the intricate ways gender is embedded in, intersects with, and is defined by the prisms of culture/nation, race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, ability/disability, and other patterns of identities, groups, and institutions;

4. Integrating articles with cross-cultural and global foci to illustrate that gender is a continuum of categories, patterns, and expressions whose relevance is contextual and continuously shifting, and that gender inequality is not a universal and natural social pattern, but at the same time, emphasizing how patriarchal social systems result in similar patterns of experiences and inequalities;

5. Assembling articles that offer students useful cognitive and emotional tools for making sense of the shifting and contradictory genderscape they inhabit, its personal relevance, its implications for relationships both locally and globally, and possibilities for change.

These goals shaped the revisions in the sixth edition of *The Kaleidoscope of Gender.* New selections in this

edition emphasize sex and gender diversity, including the experiences of transgender and intersex people. Global and intersectional analyses as well as new contemporary social movements for gender justice are incorporated throughout the book. We continue to explore the role of institutions in maintaining gender difference and inequality. Across the chapters, readings examine the individual, situational, and institutional bases for gendered patterns in relationships, behaviors, and beliefs. Additionally, many readings illustrate how multiple prisms of difference and inequality, such as race, age, and social class, create an array of patterns of gender—distinct but sometimes similar to the idealized patterns in a culture.

As in the fifth edition, reading selections include theoretical and review articles; however, the emphasis continues to be on contemporary contributions to the field. The introduction to the book provides an overview of theories in the field, particularly theories based on a social constructionist perspective. In addition, the introduction to the book develops the kaleidoscope metaphor as a tool for viewing gender and a guide for studying gender. Revised chapter introductions contextualize the literature in each part of the book, introduce the readings, and illustrate how they relate to analyses of gender. Introductions and questions for consideration precede each reading to help students focus on and grasp the key points of the selections. Additionally, each chapter ends with questions for students to consider and topics for students to explore.

It is possible to use this book alone, as a supplement to a text, or in combination with other articles or monographs. It is designed for undergraduate audiences, and the readings are appropriate for a variety of courses focusing on the study of gender, such as sociology of gender, gender and social change, and women's studies. The book may be used in departments of sociology, anthropology, psychology, women's studies, and gender studies.

We would like to thank those reviewers whose valuable suggestions and comments helped us develop the book throughout five editions, including the following:

Finally, we would like to thank students in our sociology of gender courses for challenging us to think about new ways to teach our courses and making us aware of arenas of gender that are not typically the focus of gender studies books.

OPEN ACCESS TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES

The SAGE Gender and Sexuality Resource Site is an open access site meant to enhance the teaching and learning environments in gender and sexuality courses. Access the site by visiting **study.sagepub.com/socgsrc**.

Video, podcasts, web links, and articles are provided for the following topic areas:

- Theories of Gender and Sexuality
- Learning and "Doing Gender"
- Sexual Minorities
- Sexual Violence and Commodification
- Crime, Social Control, and the Legal System
- Religion
- Politics and Power
- Families, Intimate Relationships, and Reproduction
- The Workplace
- Health and Medicine
- Education
- Sports
- Media and Popular Culture
- Social Movements and Activism
- Gender and Sexuality Across Cultures

INTRODUCTION

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This book is an invitation to you, the reader, to enter the fascinating and challenging world of gender studies. Gender is briefly defined as the meanings, practices, and relations of femininities and masculinities that people create as we go about our daily lives in different social settings in the contemporary United States. Although we discuss gender throughout this book, it is a very complex term to understand and the reality of gender goes far beyond this simple definition. While a more detailed discussion of what gender is and how it is related to biological maleness and femaleness is provided in Chapter 1, we find the metaphor of a kaleidoscope useful in thinking about the complexity of the meaning of gender from a sociological viewpoint.

THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF GENDER

A real kaleidoscope is a tube containing an arrangement of mirrors or prisms that produces different images and patterns. When you look through the eyepiece of a kaleidoscope, light is typically reflected by the mirrors or prisms through cells containing objects such as glass pieces, seashells, and the like to create ever-changing patterns of design and color (Baker, 1999). In this book, we use the kaleidoscope metaphor to help us grasp the complex and dynamic meaning and practice of gender as it interacts with other social prisms—such as race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and social class—to create complex patterns of identities and relationships. Three themes then emerge from the metaphor of the kaleidoscope: prisms, patterns, and possibilities.

Part I of the book focuses on prisms. A prism in a kaleidoscope is an arrangement of mirrors that refracts or disperses light into a spectrum of patterns (Baker, 1999). We use the term *social prism* to refer to socially constructed categories of difference and inequality through which our lives are reflected or shaped into patterns of daily experiences. In addition to gender, when we discuss social prisms, we consider other socially constructed categories such as race, ethnicity, age, social class, and sexuality. Culture is also conceptualized as a social prism in this book, as we examine how gender is shaped across groups and societies. The concept of social prisms helps us understand that gender is not a universal or static entity but, rather, is continuously created within the parameters of individual and group life. Looking at the interactions of the prism of gender with other social prisms helps us see the bigger picture—gender practices and meanings are a montage of intertwined social divisions and connections that both pull us apart and bring us together.

Part II of the book examines the patterns of gendered expressions and experiences created by the interaction of multiple prisms of difference and inequality. Patterns are regularized, prepackaged ways of thinking, feeling, and acting in society, and gendered patterns are present in almost all aspects of daily life. In the United States, examples of gendered patterns include the association of the color pink with girls and blue with boys (Paoletti, 2012). However, these patterns of gender are experienced and expressed in different ways depending on the other social prisms that shape our identities and life chances. Furthermore, these patterns are not static, as Paoletti illustrates.

Before the 1900s, children were dressed similarly until around the age of 7, with boys just as likely as girls to wear pink—but both more likely to be dressed in white. In addition, dresses were once considered appropriate for both genders in Europe and America. It wasn't until decades later, in the 1980s, that color became rigidly gendered in children's clothing, in the pink-and-blue schema. You will find that gendered patterns restrict choices, even the colors we wear—often without our even recognizing it is happening.

Another example of a gendered pattern is the disproportionate numbers of female educators and male engineers (see Table 7.1 in this book). If you take a closer look at Table 7.1, you will note that architects and engineers are predominately White men and educational occupations are predominantly White women (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018a). These patterns of gender are a result of the complex interaction of multiple social prisms across time and space.

Part III of the book concerns possibilities for gender change. Just as the wonder of the kaleidoscope lies in the ever-evolving patterns it creates, gendered patterns are always in flux. Each life and the world we live in can be understood as a kaleidoscope of unfolding growth and continual change (Baker, 1999). This dynamic aspect of the kaleidoscope metaphor represents the opportunity we have, individually and collectively, to transform gendered patterns that are harmful to women and men. Although the theme of gender change is prominent throughout this book, it is addressed specifically in Chapter 10. One caveat must be presented before we take you through the kaleidoscope of gender. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word ordinarily used to refer to one thing is applied to better understand another thing. A metaphor should not be taken literally. It does not directly represent reality. We use the metaphor of the kaleidoscope as an analytical tool to aid us in grasping the complexity, ambiguity, and fluidity of gender. However, unlike the prisms in a real kaleidoscope, the meaning and experience of social prisms (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, social class, sexuality, and culture) are socially constructed and change in response to patterns in the larger society. Thus, although the prisms of a real kaleidoscope are static, the prisms of the gender kaleidoscope are fluid and shaped by the patterns of society.

As you step into the world of gender studies, you'll need to develop a capacity to see what is hidden by the cultural blinders we all wear at least some of the time. This capacity to see into the complexities of human relationships and group life has been called the sociological imagination or, to be hip, a "sociological radar." It is a capacity that is finely honed by practice and training both inside and outside the classroom. A sociological perspective enables us to see through the cultural smokescreens that conceal the patterns, meanings, and dynamics of our relationships.

GENDER STEREOTYPES

The sociological perspective will help you think about gender in ways you might never have considered. It will, for example, help you debunk *gender stereotypes,* which are rigid, oversimplified, exaggerated beliefs about femininity and masculinity that misrepresent most women and men (Walters, 1999). To illustrate, let's analyze one gender stereotype that many people in American society believe—women talk more than men (Anderson & Leaper, 1998; Swaminathan, 2007; Wood, 1999).

Social scientific research is helpful in documenting whether women actually talk more than men, or whether this belief is just another gender stereotype. To arrive at a conclusion, social scientists study the interactions of men and women in an array of settings and count how often men speak compared with women. They almost always find that, on average, men talk more in mixed-gender groups (Brescoli, 2011; Wood, 1999). Researchers also find that men interrupt more and tend to ignore topics brought up by women (Anderson & Leaper, 1998; Wood, 1999). In and of themselves, these are important findings—the stereotype turns reality on its head.

So why does the stereotype continue to exist? First, we might ask how people believe something to be real—such as the stereotype that women talk more than men—when, in general, it isn't true. Part of the answer lies in the fact that culture, briefly defined as the way of life of a group of people, shapes what we experience as reality (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion). As Allan Johnson (1997) aptly puts it, "Living in a culture is somewhat like participating in the magician's magic because all the while we think we're paying attention to what's 'really' happening, alternative realities unfold without even occurring to us" (p. 55). In other words, we don't usually reflect on our own culture; we are mystified by it without much awareness of its bewildering effect on us. The power of beliefs, including gender beliefs, is quite awesome. Gender stereotypes shape our perceptions, and these beliefs shape our reality.

A second question we need to ask about gender stereotypes is: What is their purpose? For example, do

they set men against women and contribute to the persistence of a system of inequality that disadvantages women and advantages men? Certainly, the stereotype that many Americans hold of women as nonstop talkers is not a positive one. The stereotype does not assume that women are assertive, articulate, or captivating speakers. Instead, it tends to depict women's talk as trivial gossip or irritating nagging. In other words, the stereotype devalues women's talk while, at the same time, elevating men's talk as thoughtful and worthy of our attention. One of the consequences of this stereotype is that both men and women take men's talk more seriously (Brescoli, 2011; Wood, 1999). This pattern is reflected in the fact that the voice of authority in many areas of American culture, such as television and politics, is almost always a male voice (Brescoli, 2011). The message communicated is clear—women are less important than men. In other words, gender stereotypes help legitimize status and power differences between men and women (Brescoli, 2011).

However, stereotypical images of men and women are not universal in their application, because they are complicated by the kaleidoscopic nature of people's lives. Prisms, or social categories, such as race/ethnicity, social class, and age, intersect with gender to produce stereotypes that differ in symbolic meaning and functioning. For example, the prisms of gender, race, and age interact for African American and Hispanic men, who are stereotyped as dangerous (as noted in Adia Harvey Wingfield's reading in Chapter 7 and Dawn Marie Dow's reading in Chapter 8). These variations in gender stereotypes act as controlling images that maintain complex systems of domination and subordination in which some individuals and groups are dehumanized and disadvantaged in relationship to others (see readings in Chapter 2).

Development of the Concept of Gender

Just a few decades ago, social scientists described gender as two discrete categories called sex roles—masculine/men and feminine/women. These sex roles were conceptualized in a biological "essentialist" framework to be either an automatic response to innate personality characteristics and/or biological sex characteristics such as hormones and reproductive functions (Kimmel, 2004; Tavris, 1992) or a mix of biological imperatives and learning reinforced by social pressure to conform to one or the other sex role (Connell, 2010). For example, women were thought to

be naturally more nurturing because of their capacity to bear children, and men were seen as prewired to take on leadership positions in major societal institutions such as family, politics, and business. This "sex roles" model of women and men was one-dimensional, relatively static, and ethnocentric, and it is *not* supported by biological, psychological, historical, sociological, or anthropological research.

The concept of gender developed as social scientists conducted research that questioned the simplicity and accuracy of the "sex roles" perspective. One example of this research is that social scientists have debunked the notion that biological sex characteristics cause differences in men's and women's behaviors (Tavris, 1992). Research on hormones illustrates this point. Testosterone, which women as well as men produce, does not cause aggression in men (Sapolsky, 1997), and the menstrual cycle does not cause women to be more "emotional" than men (Tavris, 1992; see L. Ayu Saraswati's reading in Chapter 6).

Another example is that social scientific research demonstrated that men and women are far more physically, cognitively, and emotionally alike than different. What were assumed to be natural differences and inequalities between women and men were clearly shown to be the consequence of the asymmetrical and unequal life experiences, resources, and power of women compared with men (Connell, 2010; Tavris, 1992). Consider the arena of athletics. It is a common and long-held belief that biological sex is related to physical ability and, in particular, that women are athletically inferior to men. These beliefs have been challenged by the outcomes of a recent series of legal interventions that opened the world of competitive sports to girls and women. Once legislation such as Title IX was implemented in 1972, the expectation that women could not be athletes began to change as girls and young women received the same training and support for athletic pursuits as did men. Not surprisingly, the gap in physical strength and skills between women and men decreased dramatically. Today, women athletes regularly break records and perform physical feats thought impossible for women just a few decades ago.

Yet another example of how the "sex roles" model was discredited was the documentation of inequality as a human-created social system. Social scientists highlighted the social origins of patterns of gender inequality within the economy, family, religion, and other social institutions that benefit men as a group and maintain patriarchy as a social structure. To illustrate, in the 1970s, when researchers began studying

gender inequality, they found that women made between 60 and 70 cents for every dollar men made. Things are not much better today. In 2017, the median weekly salary for women was 81.8% of men's median salary (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018b).

The intellectual weaknesses of "sex roles" theory (Connell, 2010), buttressed by considerable contradictory evidence, led social scientists to more sophisticated theories and modes of studying gender that could address the complexities and malleability of sex (femaleness and maleness) and gender (femininities and masculinities). In short, social science documented the fact that we are made and make ourselves into gendered people through social interaction in everyday life (Connell, 2010). It is not natural or normal to be a feminine woman or a masculine man. Gender is a socially constructed system of social relations that can be understood only by studying the social processes by which gender is defined into existence and maintained or changed by human actions and interactions (Schwalbe, 2001). This theory of gender social construction will be discussed throughout the book.

One of the most important sources of evidence in support of the idea that gender is socially constructed is derived from cross-cultural and historical studies as described in the earlier discussion of the gendering of pink and blue. The variations and fluidity in the definitions and expressions of gender across cultures and over time illustrate that the American gender system is not universal. For example, people in some cultures have created more than two genders (see Serena Nanda's reading in Chapter 1). Other cultures define men and women as similar, not different (see Christine Helliwell's reading in Chapter 3). Still others view gender as flowing and changing across the life span (Herdt, 1997).

As social scientists examined gender patterns through the prism of culture and throughout history, their research challenged the notion that masculinity and femininity are defined and experienced in the same way by all people. For example, the meaning and practice of femininity in orthodox, American religious subcultures is not the same as femininity outside those communities (Rose, 2001). The differences are expressed in a variety of ways, including women's clothing. Typically, orthodox religious women adhere to modesty rules in dress, covering their heads, arms, and legs.

Elaborating on the idea of multiple or plural masculinities and femininities, Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell coined the terms *hegemonic*

masculinity and *emphasized femininity* to understand the relations between and among masculinities and femininities in patriarchal societies. Patriarchal societies are dominated by privileged men (e.g., upper-class White men in the United States), but they also typically benefit less privileged men in their relationships with women. According to Connell (1987), hegemonic masculinity is the idealized pattern of masculinity in patriarchal societies, while emphasized femininity is the vision of femininity held up as the model of womanhood in those societies. In Connell's definition, hegemonic masculinity is "the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). Key features of hegemonic masculinity include the subordination of women, the exclusion and debasement of gay men, and the celebration of toughness and competitiveness (Connell, 2000). However, hegemony does not mean violence per se. It refers to "ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). Emphasized femininity, in contrast, is about women's subordination, with its key features being sociability, compliance with men's sexual and ego desires, and acceptance of marriage and child care (Connell, 1987). Both hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity patterns are "embedded in specific social environments" and are, therefore, dynamic as opposed to fixed (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846).

According to Connell, hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity are not necessarily the most common gender patterns. They are, however, the versions of manhood and womanhood against which other patterns of masculinity and femininity are measured and found wanting (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel, 2004). For example, hegemonic masculinity produces marginalized masculinities, which, according to Connell (2000), are characteristic of exploited groups such as racial and ethnic minorities. These marginalized forms of masculinity may share features with hegemonic masculinity, such as "toughness," but are socially debased (see Adia Harvey Wingfield's reading in Chapter 7).

In patriarchal societies, the culturally idealized form of femininity, emphasized femininity, is produced in relation to male dominance. Emphasized femininity insists on compliance, nurturance, and empathy as ideals of womanhood to which all women should subscribe (Connell, 1987). Connell does not use the term *hegemonic* to refer to emphasized femininity, because, she argues, emphasized femininity is

always subordinated to masculinity. James Messerschmidt (2012) adds to our understanding of femininities by arguing that the construction of hegemonic masculinity requires some kind of "buy-in" from women and that, under certain circumstances and in certain contexts, there are women who create emphasized femininities. By doing so, they contribute to the perpetuation of coercive gender relations and identities. Think of circumstances and situations—such as within work, romantic, or family settings—when women are complicit in maintaining oppressive gender relations and identities. Why would some women participate in the production of masculinities and femininities that are oppressive? The reading by Karen D. Pyke and Denise L. Johnson in Chapter 2 is helpful in answering these questions, employing the term *hegemonic femininity* rather than *emphasized femininity.* They describe the lives of young, second-generation Asian women and their attempts to balance two cultural patterns of gender in which White femininity, they argue, is hegemonic, or the dominant form of femininity.

Another major source of gender complexity is the interaction of gender with other social categories of difference and inequality. Allan Johnson (2001) points out,

> Categories that define privilege exist all at once and in relation to one another. People never see me solely in terms of my race, for example, or my gender. Like everyone else's, my place in the social world is a package deal—white, male, heterosexual, middle-aged, married . . .—and that's the way it is all the time. . . . It makes no sense to talk about the effect of being in one of these categories—say, white—without also looking at the others and how they're related to it. (p. 53)

Seeing gender through multiple social prisms is critical, but it is not a simple task, as you will discover in the readings throughout this book. Social scientists commonly refer to this type of analysis as intersectionality, but other terms are used as well (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of this). We need to be aware of how other social prisms alter life experiences and chances. For example, although an upper-class African American woman is privileged by her social class category, she will face obstacles related to her race and gender. Or consider the situation of a middle-class White man who is gay; he might lose some of the privilege attached to his class and race because of his sexual orientation.

Finally, gender is now considered a social construct shaped at individual, interactional, and institutional levels. If we focus on only one of these levels, we provide only a partial explanation of how gender operates in our lives. This idea of gender being shaped at these three different levels is elaborated in Barbara J. Risman's article in Chapter 1 and throughout the book. Consider these three different ways of approaching gender and how they interact or influence one another. At the *individual* level, sociologists study the social categories and stereotypes we use to identify ourselves and label others (see Chapter 4). At the *interactional* level, sociologists study gender as an ongoing activity carried out in interaction with other people, and how people vary their gender presentations as they move from situation to situation (see Carla A. Pfeffer's reading in Chapter 1). At the *institutional* level, sociologists study how "gender is present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life," such as religion, health care, language, and so forth (Acker, 1992, p. 567; see also Joan Acker's reading in Chapter 7).

Theoretical Approaches for Understanding Gender

Historically, conflict and functionalist theories explained gender at a macro level of analysis, with these theories having gone through many transformations since first proposed around the turn of the 20th century. Scholars at that time were trying to sort out massive changes in society resulting from the industrial and democratic revolutions. However, a range of theories—for example, feminist, postmodernist, and queer theories—provide more nuanced explanations of gender. Many of these more recent theories frame their understanding of gender in the lived experiences of individuals, what sociologists call micro level theories, rather than focusing solely on a macro level analysis of society, wherein gender does not vary in form or function across groups or contexts.

Functionalism

Functionalism attempts to understand how all parts of a society (e.g., institutions such as family, education, economy, and the polity or state) fit together to form a smoothly running social system. According to this theoretical paradigm, parts of society tend to complement each other to create social stability (Durkheim, 1933). Translated into separate sex role relationships, Talcott Parsons and Robert Bales (1955), writing after World War II, saw distinct and separate

gender roles in the heterosexual nuclear family as a functional and logical adaptation to a modern, complex society. Women were thought to be more "functional" if they were socialized and aspired to raise children. And men were thought to be more "functional" if they were socialized and aspired to support their children and wives. However, as Michael Kimmel (2004) notes, this "sex-based division of labor is functionally anachronistic," and if there ever was any biological basis for specific tasks being assigned to men or women, it has been eroded (p. 55). The functionalist viewpoint has largely been discredited in sociology, although it persists as part of common culture in various discourses and ideologies, especially conservative religious and political thought.

Evolutionary Psychology and Neuroscience

Functionalist thinking is also replicated in the realms of neuroscience and evolutionary psychology. In brief, the former tries to explain gender inequality by searching for neurological differences in human females and males assumed to be caused by hormonally induced differences in the brain. The hypothesized behavioral outcomes, according to neuroscientists such as Simon Baron-Cohen (2003), are emotionally tuned in, verbal women in contrast to men who are inclined to superior performance in areas such as math and music (Bouton, 2010). The latter, evolutionary psychology, focuses on "sex differences" (e.g., high-risk-taking male behaviors) between human females and males that are hypothesized to have their origins in psychological adaptations to early human, intrasexual competition. Both approaches, which assume there are essential differences between males and females embedded in their bodies or psyches, have been roundly critiqued by researchers (e.g., Fine, 2010; Fine, Jordan-Young, Kaiser, & Rippon, 2013) who uncovered a range of problems, including research design flaws, no significant differences between female and male subjects, overgeneralization of findings, and ethnocentrism. Feminist neuroscientists have carefully set out the serious, negative consequences of the tendency of evolutionary psychology and neuroscience to produce "untested stereotype-based speculation" that reinforces popular misconceptions about women and men (Fine, 2013). In a short essay titled "Plasticity, Plasticity, Plasticity . . . and the Rigid Problem of Sex," Cordelia Fine and colleagues (2013) discuss the ways in which behavioral neuroendocrinology "has been transformed by an increasingly large body of research demonstrating the power of an individual's behavior, the behavior of others, and aspects of the environment to influence behavior through reciprocal modulation of the

endocrine system" (p. 551). Simply put, we are not hardwired. Our brains are "adaptively plastic," interacting and changing with individual life experiences and social contexts (p. 551).

Conflict Theories

Karl Marx and later conflict theorists, however, did not see social systems as functional or benign. Instead, Marx and his colleague Friedrich Engels described industrial societies as systems of oppression in which one group, the dominant social class, uses its control of economic resources to oppress the working class. The economic resources of those in control are obtained through profits gained from exploiting the labor of subordinate groups. Marx and Engels predicted that the tension between the "haves" and the "have-nots" would result in an underlying conflict between these two groups. Most early Marxist theories focused on class oppression; however, Engels (1942/1970) wrote an important essay on the oppression of women as the earliest example of oppression of one group by another. Marx and Engels inspired socialist feminists, discussed later in this introduction under "Feminist Theories."

Current theorists, while recognizing Marx and Engels's recognition of the exploitation of workers in capitalist economies, criticize early conflict theory for ignoring women's reproductive labor and unpaid work (Federici, 2012). They focus on the exploitation of women by global capitalism (see article by Bandana Purkayastha in Chapter 2). Conflict theories today call for social action relating to the oppression of women and other marginalized groups, particularly within this global framework.

Social Constructionist Theories

Social constructionist theories offer a strong antidote to biological essentialism and psychological reductionism in understanding the social worlds (e.g., institutions, ideologies, identities) constructed by people. This theory, as discussed earlier, emphasizes the social or collective processes by which people actively shape reality (e.g., ideas, inequalities, social movements) as we go about daily life in different contexts and situations. The underpinnings of social constructionist theory are in sociological thought (e.g., symbolic interactionism, dramaturgy, and ethnomethodology), as well as in anthropology, social psychology, and related disciplinary arenas.

Social constructionism has had a major impact on gender analysis, invigorating both gender research and

theoretical approaches (e.g., discussions of doing gender theory, relational theory, and intersectional analysis). From a social constructionist viewpoint, we must learn and do gender (masculinities and femininities) in order for gender differences and inequalities to exist. We also build these differences and inequalities into the patterns of large social arrangements such as social institutions. Take education. Men predominate in higher education and school administration, while women are found at the elementary and preschool levels (Connell, 2010). Theories rooted in the fundamental principles of gender social construction follow.

"Doing Gender" Theory

Drawing on the work of symbolic interactionism, specifically dramaturgy (Goffman) and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel), Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman published an article in 1987 simply titled "Doing Gender." In this article, they challenged assumptions of the two previous decades of research that examined "sex differences" or "sex roles." They argued that gender is a *master identity,* which is a product of social interactions and "doing," not simply the acting out of a role on a social stage. They saw gender as a complicated process by which we categorize individuals into two sex categories based on what we assume to be their sex (male or female). Interaction in contemporary Western societies is based on "knowing the sex" of the individual we are interacting with. However, we have no way of actually knowing an individual's sex (genitalia or hormones); therefore, we infer sex categories based on outward characteristics such as hairstyle, clothing, etc. Because we infer sex categories of the individuals we meet, West and Zimmerman argue that we are likely to question those who break from expected gendered behaviors for the sex categories we assign to them. We are also accountable for our own gender-appropriate behavior. Interaction in most societies becomes particularly difficult if one's sex category or gender is ambiguous, as you will read in Betsy Lucal's article in Chapter 1.

Thus, this process of being accountable makes it important for individuals to display appropriate gendered behavior at all times in all situations. As such, "doing gender" becomes a salient part of social interactions and embedded in social institutions. As they note, "Insofar as a society is partitioned by 'essential' differences between women and men and placement in a sex category is both relevant and enforced, doing gender is unavoidable" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 137).

Of course, they recognize that not everyone has the same resources (such as time, money, and/or expertise) to "do gender" and that gender accomplishment varies across social situations. In considering the discussion of who talks more, "doing gender" might explain why men talk more in work groups, as they attempt to portray their gendered masculinity while women may be doing more gender-appropriate emotion work such as asking questions and filling in silences. As such, when men and women accomplish gender as expected for the sex categories they display and are assigned to by others, they are socially constructing gender.

This concept of "doing gender" is used in many articles included in this book, but the use of the concept is not always consistent with the way the authors originally presented it (West & Zimmerman, 2009). Doing gender is a concept that helped move the discussions of sex/gender to a different level where interactions (micro) and institutions (macro) can be studied simultaneously and gender becomes a more lived experience, rather than a "role."

Postmodern Theories

Postmodernism focuses on the way knowledge about gender is constructed, not on explaining gender relationships themselves. To postmodernists, knowledge is never absolute—it is always situated in a social reality that is specific to a historical time period. Postmodernism is based on the idea that it is impossible for anyone to see the world without presuppositions. From a postmodernist perspective, then, gender is socially constructed through discourses, which are the "series of stories" we use to explain our world (Andersen, 2004). Postmodernists attempt to "deconstruct" the discourses or stories used to support a group's beliefs about gender (Andersen, 2004; Lorber, 2001). For example, Jane Flax argues that to fully understand gender in Western cultures, we must deconstruct the meanings in Western religious, scientific, and other discourses relative to "biology/sex/gender/nature" (cited in Lorber, 2001, p. 199). As you will come to understand from the readings in Chapters 1 and 3 (e.g., Nanda and Christine Helliwell), the association between sex and gender in Western scientific (e.g., theories and texts) and nonscientific (e.g., films, newspapers, media) discourses is not shared in other cultural contexts. Thus, for postmodernists, gender is a product of the discourses within particular social contexts that define and explain gender.

Queer Theories

Queer theories borrow from the original meaning of the word *queer* to refer to that which is "outside

ordinary and narrow interpretations" (Plante, 2006, p. 62). Queer theorists are most concerned with understanding sexualities in terms of the idea that (sexual) identities are flexible, fluid, and changing, rather than fixed. In addition, queer theorists argue that identity and behavior must be separated. Thus, we cannot assume that people are what they do. From the vantage point of this theory, gender categories, much like sexual categories, are simplistic and problematic. Real people cannot be lumped together and understood in relationship to big cultural categories such as men and women, heterosexual and homosexual (Plante, 2006). Carla A. Pfeffer's reading in Chapter 1 sets out the premises and impact of queer theory on gender studies in considerable detail. She argues that the discipline of sociology is well positioned to examine the lives of queer social actors, and her work is an excellent example of the application of queer theory.

Relational Theory

The relational theory of gender was developed in response to the problems of the "sex roles" model and other limited views of gender (e.g., categoricalism, as critiqued by queer theory). Connell (2000) states that a gender relations approach opens up an understanding of "the different dimensions of gender, the relation between bodies and society, and the patterning of gender" (pp. 23–24). Specifically, from a relational viewpoint, (1) gender is a way of organizing social practice (e.g., child care and household labor) at the personal, interactional, and institutional levels of life; (2) gender is a social practice related to bodies and what bodies do but *cannot* be reduced to bodies or biology; and (3) masculinities and femininities can be understood as *gender projects* that produce the *gender order* of a society and interact with other social structures such as race and class (pp. 24–28).

Feminist Theories

Feminist theorists expanded on the ideas of theorists such as Marx and Engels, turning attention to the causes of women's oppression. There are many schools of feminist thought. Here, we briefly introduce you to those typically covered in overviews. One group, socialist feminists, continued to emphasize the role of capitalism in interaction with a patriarchal social structures as the basis for the exploitation of women. These theorists argue that economic and power benefits accrue to men who dominate women in capitalist societies. Another group, radical feminists, argues that patriarchy—the domination of men over women—is the fundamental form of oppression of women. Both socialist and radical feminists call for far-reaching changes in all institutional arrangements and cultural forms, including the dismantling of systems of oppression such as sexism, racism, and classism; replacing capitalism with socialism; developing more egalitarian family systems; and making other structural changes (e.g., Bart & Moran, 1993; Daly, 1978; Dworkin, 1987; MacKinnon, 1989).

Not all feminist theorists call for deep, structural, and cultural changes. Liberal feminists are inclined to work toward a more equitable form of democratic capitalism. They argue that policies such as Title IX and affirmative action laws opened up opportunities for women in education and increased the number of women professionals, such as physicians. These feminists strive to achieve gender equality by removing barriers to women's freedom of choice and equal participation in all realms of life, eradicating sexist stereotypes, and guaranteeing equal access and treatment for women in both public and private arenas (e.g., Reskin & Roos, 1990; Schwartz, 1994; Steinberg, 1982; Vannoy-Hiller & Philliber, 1989; Weitzman, 1985).

Although the liberal feminist stance may seem to be the most pragmatic form of feminism, many of the changes brought about by liberal varieties of feminism have "served the interests of only the most privileged women" (Motta, Fominaya, Eschle, & Cox, 2011, p. 5). Additionally, liberal feminist approaches that work with the state or attempt to gain formal equal rights within a fundamentally exploitive labor market fail to challenge the growth of neo-liberal globalism and the worsening situation of many people in the face of unfettered markets, privatization, and imperialism (Motta et al., 2011; e.g., see discussion of the Great Recession in Chapter 5). In response to these kinds of issues and problems, 21st-century feminists are revisiting and reinventing feminist thinking and practice to create a "more emancipatory feminism" that can lead to "post-patriarchal, anti-neoliberal politics" (Motta et al., 2011, p. 2; see readings in Chapter 10).

Intersectional or Prismatic Theories

A major shortcoming with many of the theoretical perspectives just described is their failure to recognize how gender interacts with other social categories or prisms of difference and inequality within societies, including race/ethnicity, social class, sexuality, age, and ability/disability (see Chapter 2). A growing number of social scientists are responding to the problem of incorporating multiple social categories or social positions in their research by developing a new form of analysis, often described as intersectional analysis,

which we also refer to as prismatic analysis in this book. Chapter 2 explores these theories of how gender interacts with other prisms of difference and inequality to create complex patterns. Without an appreciation of the interactions of socially constructed categories of difference and inequality, or what we call prisms, we end up with not only an incomplete but also an inaccurate explanation of gender.

As you read through the articles in this book, consider the basis for the authors' arguments in each reading. How do the authors apply the theories just described? What observations, data, or works of other social science researchers do these authors use to support their claims? Use a critical eye to examine the evidence as you reconsider the assumptions about gender that guide your life.

The Kaleidoscope of Gender: Prisms, Patterns, and Possibilities

Before beginning the readings that take us through the kaleidoscope of gender, let us briefly review the three themes that shape the book's structure: prisms, patterns, and possibilities.

Part I: Prisms

Understanding the prisms that shape our experiences provides an essential basis for the book. Chapter 1 explores the meanings of the pivotal prism—gender—and its relationship to biological sex and sexuality. Chapter 2 presents an array of prisms or socially constructed categories that interact with gender in many human societies, such as race/ethnicity, social class, sexuality, age, and ability/disability. Chapter 3 focuses on the prism of culture/nation, which alters the meaning and practice of gender in surprising ways.

Part II: Patterns

The prisms of the kaleidoscope create an array of patterned expressions and experiences of femininity and masculinity. Part II of this book examines some of these patterns. We look at how people learn, internalize, and "do" gender (Chapter 4); how gender is exploited by corporate capitalism (Chapter 5); how gender engages bodies, sexualities, and emotions (Chapter 6); how gendered patterns are reproduced and modified in work (Chapter 7); how gender is created and transformed in our intimate relationships (Chapter 8); and how conformity to patterns of gender is enforced and maintained (Chapter 9).

Part III: Possibilities

In much the same way as the colors and patterns of kaleidoscopic images flow, gendered patterns and meanings are inherently changeable. Chapter 10 examines the shifting sands of the genderscape and reminds us of the many possibilities for change.

We use the metaphor of the gender kaleidoscope to discover what is going on under the surface of a society whose way of life we don't often penetrate in a nondefensive, disciplined, and deep fashion. In doing so, we will expose a reality that is astonishing in its complexity, ambiguity, and fluidity. With the kaleidoscope, you never know what's coming next. Come along with us as we begin the adventure of looking through the kaleidoscope of gender.

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PART I

Prisms

1

THE PRISM OF GENDER

CATHERINE G. VALENTINE

In the metaphorical kaleidoscope of this book, gender is the pivotal prism. It is central to the intricate patterning of social life and encompasses power relations, the division of labor, symbolic forms, and emotional relations (Connell, 2000). The shape and texture of people's lives are affected in profound ways by the prism of gender as it operates in their social worlds. Indeed, our ways of thinking about and experiencing gender, and the related categories of sex and sexuality, originate in our society. As we noted in the introduction to this book, gender is very complex. In part, the complexity of the prism of gender in North American culture derives from the fact that it is characterized by a marked contradiction between people's beliefs about gender and real behavior. Our real behavior is far more flexible, adaptable, and malleable than our beliefs would have it. To put it another way, contrary to the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, there are no gender certainties or absolutes. Real people behave in feminine, masculine, and nongendered ways as they respond to situational demands and contingencies (Glick & Fiske, 1999; Pfeffer, 2014; Tavris, 1992).

To help us think more clearly about the complexity of gender, two questions are addressed in this chapter: (1) How does Western, i.e., Euro-American, culture condition us to think about gender, especially in relation to sex and sexuality? (2) How does social scientific research challenge Western beliefs about gender, sex, and sexuality?

WESTERN BELIEFS ABOUT GENDER, SEX, AND SEXUALITY

Most people in contemporary Western cultures, such as the United States, grow up learning that there are two and only two sexes, male and female; two and only two genders, feminine and masculine; and two and only two sexualities, heterosexual and homosexual (Bem, 1993; Budgeon, 2014; Lucal, 2008; Pfeffer, 2014; Wharton, 2005). We are taught that a real woman is female-bodied, feminine, and heterosexual; a real man is male-bodied, masculine, and heterosexual; and any deviation or variation is strange, unnatural, and potentially dangerous. Most people also learn that femininity and masculinity flow from biological sex characteristics (e.g., hormones, secondary sex characteristics, external and internal genitalia). We are taught that testosterone, a beard, big muscles, and a penis make a man, while estrogen, breasts, hairless legs, and a vagina make a woman. Many of us never question what we have learned about sex and gender, so we go through life assuming that gender is a relatively simple matter: A person who wears lipstick, high-heeled shoes, and a skirt is a feminine female, while a person who plays rugby, belches in public, and walks with a swagger is a masculine male (Lorber, 1994; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004).

The readings we have selected for this chapter reflect a growing body of social scientific research that challenges and alters the Western view of sex, gender, and sexuality. Overall, the readings are critical of the American tendency to explain virtually every human behavior in individual and biological terms. Americans overemphasize

biology and underestimate the power of social facts to explain sex, sexuality, and gender (Connell, n.d.; O'Brien, 1999). For instance, Americans tend to equate aggression with biological maleness and vulnerability with femaleness; natural facility in physics with masculinity and natural facility in child care with femininity; lace and ribbons with girlness and rough-and-tumble play with boyness (Glick & Fiske, 1999; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). These notions of natural sex, gender, and sexuality difference, opposition, and inequality (i.e., a consistently higher valuation of masculinity than femininity) permeate our thinking, color our labeling of people and things in our environment, and affect our practical actions (Bem, 1993; Haines, Deaux, & Lofaro, 2016; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009; Wharton, 2005).

We refer to the American two-and-only-two sex/gender/sexuality system as the "pink and blue syndrome" (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). This syndrome is deeply lodged in our minds and feelings and is reinforced through everyday talk, performance, and experience. It's everywhere. Any place, object, discourse, or practice can be gendered. Children's birthday cards come in pink and blue. Authors of popular books assert that men and women are from different planets. People love PMS and alpha-male jokes. In "The Pink Dragon Is Female" (see Chapter 5), Adie Nelson's research reveals that even children's fantasy costumes are predictably gendered as masculine or feminine. The "pink and blue syndrome" is so embedded within our culture and, consequently, within individual patterns of thinking and feeling that most of us cannot remember when we learned gender stereotypes and expectations or came to think about sex, gender, and sexuality as natural, immutable, and fixed. It all seems so simple and natural. But is it?

What is gender? What is sex? What is sexuality? How are gender, sex, and sexuality related? Why do most people in our society believe in the "pink and blue syndrome"? Why do so many of us attribute one set of talents, temperaments, skills, and behaviors to women and another, opposing set to men? These are the kinds of questions social scientists have been asking and researching for well over 50 years. Thanks to the good work of an array of scientists, we now understand that gender, sex, and sexuality are not so simple. Social scientists have discovered that the gender landscape is complicated, shifting, and contradictory. Among the beliefs called into question by research are

- the notion that there are two and only two sexes, two and only two genders, and two and only two sexualities;

- the assumption that the two-and-only-two system is universal; and

- the belief that nature, rather than nurture, causes the "pink and blue syndrome."

USING OUR SOCIOLOGICAL RADAR

Before we look at how social scientists answer questions such as, "What is gender?" let's do a little research of our own. Try the following: Relax, turn on your sociological radar, and examine yourself and the people you know carefully. Do all the men you know fit the ideal of masculinity all the time, in all relationships, and in all situations? Do all the women in your life consistently behave in stereotypical feminine fashion? Do you always fit into one as opposed to the other culturally approved gender category? Or are most of the people you know capable of "doing" both masculinity and femininity, depending on the interactional context? If we allow ourselves to think and see outside the contemporary American cultural framework, we will observe that none of the people we know are aggressive all the time, nurturing all the time, sweet and submissive all the time, or strong and silent all the time. Thankfully, we are complex and creative. We stretch and grow and develop as we meet the challenges, constraints, and opportunities of different and new situations and life circumstances. Men can do mothering; women can "take care of business." Real people are not stereotypes.

Yet even in the face of real gender fluidity, variation, and complexity, the belief in sex/gender/sexuality dichotomy, opposition, and inequality continues to dominate almost every aspect of the social worlds we inhabit. For example, recent research shows that even though men's and women's roles have changed and blended, the tendency of Americans to categorize and stereotype people based on the simple male/female dichotomy persists (Glick & Fiske, 1999; Haines, Deaux, & Lofaro, 2016; Miller, Eagly, & Linn, 2014; Shields, Garner, Di Leone, & Hadley, 2006; Snyder, 2014). As Peter Glick and Susan Tufts Fiske (1999) put it, "We typically categorize people by sex effortlessly, even nonconsciously, with diverse and profound effects on social interactions" (p. 368). To reiterate, many Americans perceive humankind as divided into mutually exclusive, nonoverlapping groups: males/masculine/men and females/feminine/women (Bem, 1993; Lucal, 2008; Wharton, 2005). This perception is shored up by the belief that

heterosexuality or sexual attraction between the two, and only two, sexes/genders is natural. *Heteronormativity* (see Chapter 6 for detailed discussion) is now the term commonly used by sociologists to refer to the "cultural, legal, and institutional practices" that maintain a binary and unequal system (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009, p. 441). The culturally created model of gender, as well as sex and sexuality, then, is nonkaleidoscopic: no spontaneity, no ambiguity, no complexity, no diversity, no surprises, no elasticity, and no unfolding growth.

Social Scientific Understandings of Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

Modern social science offers a rich and complex understanding of gender, sex, and sexuality. It opens the door to the diversity of human experience and rejects the tendency to reduce human behavior to simple, single-factor explanations. Research shows that the behavior of people, no matter who they are, depends on time and place, context and situation—not on fixed sex/gender/sexuality differences (Lorber, 1994; Tavris, 1992; Vespa, 2009). For example, just a few decades ago in the United States, cheerleading was a men's sport because it was considered too rigorous for women (Dowling, 2000), women were thought to lack the cognitive and emotional "stuff" to pilot flights into space, and medicine and law were viewed as too intellectually demanding for women. As Carol Tavris (1992) says, research demonstrates that perceived gender differences turn out to be a matter of "now you see them, now you don't" (p. 288).

If we expand our sociological examination of sex/gender/sexuality to include cross-cultural studies, the real-life fluidity of human experience comes fully alive (see Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion). In some cultures (e.g., the Aka hunter-gatherers), fathers as well as mothers suckle infants (Hewlett, 2001). In other cultures, such as the Agta Negritos, women as well as men are hunters (Estioko-Griffin & Griffin, 2001). Among the Tharus of India and Nepal, marriage is "woman-friendly" and women readily divorce husbands because each woman "enjoys a more dominant position and can find another husband more easily" (Verma, 2009, para. 14). As Serena Nanda discusses in depth in her reading in this chapter, extraordinary gender diversity was expressed in complex, more-than-two sex/gender/sexuality systems in many precontact Native American societies.

In addition, the complex nature of sex/gender/sexuality is underscored by scholarship on multiple masculinities and femininities, as discussed in the introduction to this book. There is no single pattern of masculinity or femininity. Masculinities and femininities are constantly in flux (Coles, 2009). Recall that Raewyn Connell (2000), in her analysis of masculinities, argued that hegemonic masculinity produces complicit, marginalized, and subordinated masculinities. Similarly, there is no femininity, singular. Instead, the ideal and practice of femininity vary by class, race, sexuality, historical period, nation, and other social factors. In her reading in this chapter, Connell extends analysis of masculinities by critiquing Eurocentric assumptions about gender relations with a focus on the relation between hegemony and masculinity through eras of decolonization, postcolonial development, and neoliberal globalization. Let's use sociological radar again and call on the work of social scientists to help us think more precisely and "objectively" about what gender, sex, and sexuality are. It has become somewhat commonplace to distinguish between gender and sex by viewing sex, femaleness and maleness, as a biological fact unaffected by culture and thus unchanging and unproblematic, while viewing gender as a cultural phenomenon, a means by which people are taught who they are (e.g., girl or boy), how to behave (e.g., ladylike or tough), and what their roles will be (e.g., mother or father) (Sørensen, 2000). However, this mode of distinguishing between sex and gender has come under criticism, largely because new studies have revealed the cultural dimensions of sex itself (Schilt, 2010). That is, the physical characteristics of sex cannot be separated from the cultural milieu in which they are labeled and given meaning. In other words, the relationship between biology and behavior is reciprocal, both inseparable and intertwined (Sapolsky, 1997; Yoder, 2003).

Sex, as it turns out, is not a clear-cut matter of DNA, chromosomes, external genitalia, and the like, factors that produce two and only two sexes—female and male. First, there is considerable biological variation. Sex is not fixed in two categories. Biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling (1993) suggests that sex is more like a continuum than a dichotomy. For example, all humans have estrogen, prolactin, and testosterone but in varying and changing levels (Abrams, 2002). Think about this: In American society, people tend to associate breasts and related phenomena, such as breast cancer and lactation, with women. However, men have breasts. Indeed, some men have bigger breasts than some women, some men lactate, and some men get

breast cancer. Also, in our society, people associate facial hair with men. What's the real story? All women have facial hair, and some have more of it than do some men. Indeed, recent hormonal and genetic studies (e.g., Abrams, 2002; Beale, 2001) are revealing that, biologically, women and men, female and male bodies are far more similar than different. In a short article, Vanessa Heggie (2015), an historian of science, notes that as early as the 1930s, scientists (e.g., geneticists) were aware of the non-binary nature of sex and gender. She emphasizes that "there has never been scientific (or philosophical, or sociological) consensus that there are simply two human sexes, that they are easily (and objectively) distinguished, and that there is no overlap between the groups. Nor have they agreed that all of us are 'really' one sex or the other. . . . You can examine someone's genitals, their blood, their genes, their taste in movies, the length of their hair, and make a judgement, but none of these constitute a universal or objective test for sex, let alone gender."

Second, not only do femaleness and maleness share much in common, but variations in and complexities of sex development produce *intersex* people whose bodies do not fit either of the two traditionally understood sex categories (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Fujimora, 2006). Until recently in the United States, intersex was kept a secret and treated as a medical emergency (Grabham, 2007). Now that activists and researchers are challenging the marginalization and medicalization of intersex people, we understand that intersex is not a rarity. Scientists estimate that up to 2% of live births are intersex. Among intersex births are babies born with both male and female characteristics and babies born with "larger-than-average" clitorises or "smaller-than-average" penises (Lucal, 2008). Joan H. Fujimora (2006) examined recent research on sex genes and concluded that "there is no single pathway through which sex is genetically determined" and we might consider sex variations, such as intersex, as resulting from "multiple developmental pathways that involve genetic, protein, hormonal, environmental, and other agents, actions, and interactions" (p. 71). Judith Lorber and Lisa Jean Moore (2007) argue that intersex people are akin to multiracial people. They point out that just as scientists have demonstrated through DNA testing that almost all of us are genetically interracial, similarly, "if many people were genetically sex-typed, we'd also find a variety of chromosomal, hormonal, and anatomical patterns unrecognized" in our rigid, two-sex system (p. 138). In their chapter reading, Georgiann Davis and Sharon Preves examine the harmful consequences of the medicalization of intersex in the United States. They also discuss

in detail the emergence of the intersex rights movement both as a response to medically unnecessary "normalization" surgeries and as a challenge to the two-and-only-two sex/gender/sexuality system. Biology is a complicated business, and that should come as no surprise. The more we learn about biology, the more elusive and complex sex becomes. What seemed so obvious—two opposite sexes—turns out to be a gross oversimplification.

Then, what is gender? As discussed in the introduction to this book, gender is a human invention, a means by which people are sorted (in our society, into two gender categories), a basic aspect of how our society organizes itself and allocates resources (e.g., certain tasks assigned to people called women and other tasks to those termed men), and a fundamental ingredient in how individuals understand themselves and others ("I feel feminine"; "He's manly"; "You're androgynous").

One of the fascinating aspects of gender is the extent to which it is negotiable and dynamic. In effect, masculinity and femininity exist because people believe that women and men are distinct groups and, most important, because people "do gender," day in and day out, and enforce gender conformity. It is now common for gender scholars to refer to gender as a performance or a masquerade, emphasizing that it is through the ways we present ourselves in our daily encounters with others that gender is created and recreated. The chapter reading by Betsy Lucal illustrates vividly how gender is a matter of attribution and enactment.

We even do gender by ourselves, and sometimes quite self-consciously. Have you ever tried to make yourself look and act more masculine or feminine? What is involved in "putting on" femininity or masculinity? Consider *transvestism,* or cross-gender dressing. "Cross-dressers know that successfully being a man or a woman simply means convincing others that you are what you appear to be" (Kimmel, 2000, p. 104). Think about the emerging communities of *transgender* people who are "challenging, questioning, or changing gender from that assigned at birth to a chosen gender" (Lorber & Moore, 2007, p. 139). Although most people have deeply learned gender and view the gender category they inhabit as natural or normal, intersex and transgender activists attack the boundaries of "normal" by refusing to choose a traditional sex, gender, or sexual identity (Lorber & Moore, 2007). In so doing, cultural definitions of sex and gender are destabilized and expanded. Carla A. Pfeffer's chapter reading illustrates this process by exploring transgender identities and relationships, demonstrating how the experiences of "queer" social

actors have the potential to shake the foundations of normative binaries of sex, gender, and sexuality.

You may be wondering why we have not used the term *role,* as in *gender role,* to describe "doing gender." The problem with the concept of roles is that many social roles, such as those of teacher, student, doctor, or nurse, are situation specific. However, gender, like race, is a status and identity that cuts across situations and institutional arenas. In other words, gender does not "appear and disappear from one situation to another" (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001, p. 32). In part, this is a consequence of the pressures that other people exert on us to "do gender" no matter the social location in which we find ourselves. Even if an individual would like to "give up gender," others will work hard to define and interact with that individual in gendered terms. If you were an accountant, you could "leave your professional role behind you" when you left the office and went shopping or vacationing. Gender is a different story. Could you leave gender at the office? What would that look like, and what would it take to make it happen?

So far, we have explored gender as a product of our interactions with others. It is something we do, not something we inherit. Gender is also built into the larger world we inhabit in the United States, including its institutions, images and symbols, organizations, and material objects. For example, jobs, wages, and hierarchies of dominance and subordination in workplaces are gendered. Even after decades of substantial increase in women's workforce participation, occupations continue to be allocated by gender (e.g., secretaries are overwhelmingly women; men dominate construction work) and a wage gap between men and women persists (Bose & Whaley, 2001; Steinberg, 2001; see also the introduction to this book and the introduction to Chapter 7). In addition, men are still more likely to be bosses and women to be bossed. The symbols and images that surround us and by which we communicate are another part of our society's gender story. Our language speaks of difference and opposition in phrases such as "the opposite sex" and in the absence of any words except awkward medical terms (e.g., hermaphrodite) or epithets (e.g., fag) to refer to sex/sexual/gender variants. In addition, the swirl of standardized gendered images in the media is almost overwhelming. Blatant gender stereotypes still dominate TV, film, magazines, and billboards (Lont, 2001). Gender is also articulated, reinforced, and transformed through material objects and locales (Sørensen, 2000). Shoes are gendered, body adornments are gendered, public restrooms are gendered, ships are gendered, wrapping paper is gendered, and deodorants are gendered. The list is endless. The point is that these locales and objects are transformed into a medium for gender to operate within (Sørensen, 2000). They make gender seem "real," and they give it material consequences (p. 82).

Just as culture spawns the binary and oppositional sex and gender template (Grabham, 2007), sexuality, too, is socially constructed (see discussion in Chapter 6). It is not "a natural occurrence derived from biological sex" (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009, p. 443). But in the United States, the imperative to do heterosexuality dominates and is bound to privilege and power. Kristen Schilt and Laurel Westbrook state that our gender system "must be conceived of as heterosexist, as power is allocated via positioning in the gender and sexual hierarchies" (p. 443). Masculinity and heterosexuality are privileged, while femininity and homosexuality are denigrated. Other sexualities (e.g., bisexuality and pansexuality) are relegated to the margins.

In short, social scientific research underscores the complexity of the prism of gender and demonstrates how gender/sex/sexuality are constructed at multiple, interacting levels of society. The first reading in this chapter, by Barbara J. Risman, is a detailed examination of the ways our gender structure is embedded in the individual, interactional, and institutional dimensions of our society, emphasizing that gender cannot be reduced to one level or dimension: individual, interactional, or institutional. We are literally and figuratively immersed in a gendered world—a world in which difference, opposition, and inequality are the culturally defined themes. And yet, that world is kaleidoscopic in nature. The lesson of the kaleidoscope is that "nothing in life is immune to change" (Baker, 1999, p. 29). Reality is in flux; you never know what's coming next. The metaphor of the kaleidoscope reminds us to keep seeking the shifting meanings as well as the recurring patterns of gender (Baker, 1999).

We live in an interesting time of kaleidoscopic change. Old patterns of sex/gender/sexuality difference and inequality keep reappearing, often in new guises, while new patterns of convergence, equality, and self-realization have emerged. Social science research is vital in helping us stay focused on understanding the prism of gender as changeable and helping us respond to its context—as a social dialogue about societal membership and conventions and "as the outcome of how individuals are made to understand their differences and similarities" (Sørensen, 2000, pp. 203–204). With that focus in mind, we can more clearly and critically explore our gendered society.

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Introduction to Reading 1

Barbara Risman is a sociologist who has made significant contributions to research and writing on gender in heterosexual American families. In this article, she argues that we need to conceptualize gender as a social structure so we can better analyze the ways gender is embedded in the individual, interactional, and institutional dimensions of social life. You will want to pay special attention to Table 1.1, in which Risman summarizes social processes that create gender in each dimension.

1. Why does Risman include the individual dimension of social life in her theory of gender as a social structure?

2. What are the benefits of a multidimensional structural model of gender?

3. Define the concept "trading power for patronage," and discuss at least two examples from your experience or observations of heterosexual relationships.

GENDER AS A SOCIAL STRUCTURE

THEORY WRESTLING WITH ACTIVISM

Barbara J. Risman

In this article, I briefly summarize my . . . argument that gender should be conceptualized as a social structure (Risman 1998) and extend it with an attempt to classify the mechanisms that help produce gendered outcomes within each dimension of the social structure.

GENDER AS SOCIAL STRUCTURE

With this theory of *gender as a social structure,* I offer a conceptual framework, a scheme to organize the confusing, almost limitless, ways in which gender has come to be defined in contemporary social science. Four distinct social scientific theoretical traditions have developed to explain gender. The first tradition focuses on how individual sex differences originate, whether biological (Udry 2000) or social in origin (Bem 1993). The second tradition . . . emerged as a reaction to the first and focuses on how the social structure (as opposed to biology or individual learning) creates gendered behavior. The third tradition, also a reaction to the individualist thinking of the first, emphasizes social interaction and accountability to others' expectations, with a focus on how "doing gender" creates and reproduces inequality (West and Zimmerman 1987). The sex-differences literature, the doing gender interactional analyses, and the structural perspectives have been portrayed as incompatible in my own early writings as well as in that of others (Epstein 1988; Ferree 1990; Kanter 1977; Risman 1987; Risman and Schwartz 1989). England and

Browne (1992) argued persuasively that this incompatibility is an illusion: All structural theories must make assumptions about individuals, and individualist theories must make presumptions about external social control. While we do gender in every social interaction, it seems naive to ignore the gendered selves and cognitive schemas that children develop as they become cultural natives in a patriarchal world (Bem 1993). The more recent integrative approaches (Connell 2002; Ferree, Lorber, and Hess 1999; Lorber 1994; Risman 1998) treat gender as a socially constructed stratification system. This article fits squarely in the current integrative tradition.

Lorber (1994) argued that gender is an institution that is embedded in all the social processes of everyday life and social organizations. She further argued that gender difference is primarily a means to justify sexual stratification. Gender is so endemic because unless we see difference, we cannot justify inequality. I share this presumption that the creation of difference is the very foundation on which inequality rests.

I build on this notion of gender as an institution but find the institutional language distracting. The word "institution" is too commonly used to refer to particular aspects of society, for example, the family as an institution or corporations as institutions. My notion of gender structure meets the criteria offered by Martin (forthcoming). . . . While the language we use may differ, our goals are complementary, as we seek to situate gender as embedded not only in individuals but throughout social life (Patricia Martin, personal communication).

I prefer to define gender as a social structure because this brings gender to the same analytic plane as politics and economics, where the focus has long been on political and economic structures. While the language of structure suits my purposes, it is not ideal because despite ubiquitous usage in sociological discourse, no definition of the term "structure" is widely shared. Smelser (1988) suggested that all structuralists share the presumption that social structures exist outside individual desires or motives and that social structures at least partially explain human action. Beyond that, consensus dissipates. Blau (1977) focused solely on the constraint collective life imposes on the individual. Structure must be conceptualized, in his view, as a force opposing individual motivation. Structural concepts must be observable, external to the individual, and independent of individual motivation. This definition of "structure" imposes a clear dualism between structure and action, with structure as constraint and action as choice.

Constraint is, of course, an important function of structure, but to focus only on structure as constraint minimizes its importance. Not only are women and men coerced into differential social roles; they often choose their gendered paths. A social structural analysis must help us understand how and why actors choose one alternative over another. A structural theory of action (e.g., Burt 1982) suggests that actors compare themselves and their options to those in structurally similar positions. From this viewpoint, actors are purposive, rationally seeking to maximize their self-perceived well-being under social-structural constraints. As Burt (1982) suggested, one can assume that actors choose the best alternatives without presuming they have either enough information to do it well or the options available to make choices that effectively serve their own interests. For example, married women may choose to do considerably more than their equitable share of child care rather than have their children do without whatever "good enough" parenting means to them if they see no likely alternative that the children's father will pick up the slack.

While actions are a function of interests, the ability to choose is patterned by the social structure. Burt (1982) suggested that norms develop when actors occupy similar network positions in the social structure and evaluate their own options vis-à-vis the alternatives of similarly situated others. From such comparisons, both norms and feelings of relative deprivation or advantage evolve. The social structure as the context of daily life creates action indirectly by shaping actors' perceptions of their interests and directly by constraining choice. Notice the phrase "similarly situated others" above. As long as women and men see themselves as different kinds of people, then women will be unlikely to compare their life options to those of men. Therein lies the power of gender. In a world where sexual anatomy is used to dichotomize human beings into types, the differentiation itself diffuses both claims to and expectations for gender equality. The social structure is not experienced as oppressive if men and women do not see themselves as similarly situated.

While structural perspectives have been applied to gender in the past (Epstein 1988; Kanter 1977), there has been a fundamental flaw in these applications. Generic structural theories applied to gender presume that if women and men were to experience identical structural conditions and role expectations, empirically observable gender differences would disappear. But this ignores not only internalized gender at the individual level . . . but the cultural interactional

expectations that remain attached to women and men because of their gender category. A structural perspective on gender is accurate only if we realize that gender itself is a structure deeply embedded in society.

Giddens's (1984) structuration theory adds considerably more depth to this analysis of gender as a social structure with his emphasis on the recursive relationship between social structure and individuals. That is, social structures shape individuals, but simultaneously, individuals shape the social structure. Giddens embraced the transformative power of human action. He insisted that any structural theory must be concerned with reflexivity and actors' interpretations of their own lives. Social structures not only act on people; people act on social structures. Indeed, social structures are created not by mysterious forces but by human action. When people act on structure, they do so for their own reasons. We must, therefore, be concerned with why actors choose their acts. Giddens insisted that concern with meaning must go beyond the verbal justification easily available from actors because so much of social life is routine and so taken for granted that actors will not articulate, or even consider, why they act.

This nonreflexive habituated action is what I refer to as the cultural component of the social structure: The taken for granted or cognitive image rules that belong to the situational context (not only or necessarily to the actor's personality). The cultural component of the social structure includes the interactional expectations that each of us meet in every social encounter. My aims are to bring women and men back into a structural theory where gender is the structure under analysis and to identify when behavior is habit (an enactment of taken for granted gendered cultural norms) and when we do gender consciously, with intent, rebellion, or even with irony. When are we doing gender and re-creating inequality without intent? And what happens to interactional dynamics and male-dominated institutions when we rebel? Can we refuse to do gender or is rebellion simply doing gender differently, forging alternative masculinities and femininities?

Connell (1987) applied Giddens's (1984) concern with social structure as both constraint and created by action in his treatise on gender and power (see particularly chapter 5). In his analysis, structure constrains action, yet "since human action involves free invention . . . and is reflexive, practice can be turned against what constrains it; so structure can deliberately be the object of practice" (Connell 1987, 95). Action may turn against structure but can never escape it.

A theory of gender as a social structure must integrate this notion of causality as recursive with attention to gender consequences at multiple levels of analysis. Gender is deeply embedded as a basis for stratification not just in our personalities, our cultural rules, or institutions but in all these, and in complicated ways. The gender structure differentiates opportunities and constraints based on sex category and thus has consequences on three dimensions: (1) at the individual level, for the development of gendered selves; (2) during interaction as men and women face different cultural expectations even when they fill the identical structural positions; and (3) in institutional domains where explicit regulations regarding resource distribution and material goods are gender specific.

Advantages to Gender Structure Theory

This schema advances our understanding of gender in several ways. First, this theoretical model imposes some order on the encyclopedic research findings that have developed to explain gender inequality. Thinking of each research question as one piece of a jigsaw puzzle, being able to identify how one set of findings coordinates with others even when the dependent variables or contexts of interest are distinct, furthers our ability to build a cumulative science. Gender as a social structure is enormously complex. Full attention to the web of interconnection between gendered selves, the cultural expectations that help explain interactional patterns, and institutional regulations allows each research tradition to explore the growth of their own trees while remaining cognizant of the forest.

A second contribution of this approach is that it leaves behind the modernist warfare version of science, wherein theories are pitted against one another, with a winner and a loser in every contest. In the past, much energy . . . was devoted to testing which theory best explained gender inequality and by implication to discounting every alternative possibility.[1] Theory building that depends on theory slaying presumes parsimony is always desirable, as if this complicated world of ours were best described with simplistic monocausal explanations. While parsimony and theory testing were the model for the twentieth-century science, a more postmodern science should attempt to find complicated and integrative theories (Collins 1998). The conceptualization of gender as a social structure is my contribution to complicating, but hopefully enriching, social theory about gender.

A third benefit to this multidimensional structural model is that it allows us to seriously investigate the

direction and strength of causal relationships between gendered phenomena on each dimension. We can try to identify the site where change occurs and at which level of analysis the ability of agentic women and men seem able at this, historical moment, to effectively reject habitualized gender routines. For example, we can empirically investigate the relationship between gendered selves and doing gender without accepting simplistic unidirectional arguments for inequality presumed to be either about identities or cultural ideology. It is quite possible, indeed likely, that socialized femininity does help explain why we do gender, but doing gender to meet others' expectations, surely, over time, helps construct our gendered selves. Furthermore, gendered institutions depend on our willingness to do gender, and when we rebel, we can sometimes change the institutions themselves. I have used the language of dimensions interchangeably with the language of levels because when we think of gender as a social structure, we must move away from privileging any particular dimension as higher than another. How social change occurs is an empirical question, not an a priori theoretical assumption. It may be that individuals struggling to change their own identities (as in consciousness-raising groups of the early second-wave women's movement) eventually bring their new selves to social interaction and create new cultural expectations. For example, as women come to see themselves (or are socialized to see themselves) as sexual actors, the expectations that men must work to provide orgasms for their female partners becomes part of the cultural norm. But this is surely not the only way social change can happen. When social movement activists name as inequality what has heretofore been considered natural (e.g., women's segregation into low-paying jobs), they can create organizational changes such as career ladders between women's quasi-administrative jobs and actual management, opening up opportunities that otherwise would have remained closed, thus creating change on the institutional dimension. Girls raised in the next generation, who know opportunities exist in these workplaces, may have an altered sense of possibilities and therefore of themselves. We need, however, to also study change and equality when it occurs rather than only documenting inequality.

Perhaps the most important feature of this conceptual schema is its dynamism. No one dimension determines the other. Change is fluid and reverberates throughout the structure dynamically. Changes in individual identities and moral accountability may change interactional expectations, but the opposite is possible as well. Change cultural expectations, and individual identities are shaped differently. Institutional changes must result from individuals or group action, yet such change is difficult, as institutions exist across time and space. Once institutional changes occur, they reverberate at the level of cultural expectations and perhaps even on identities. And the cycle of change continues. No mechanistic predictions are possible because human beings sometimes reject the structure itself and, by doing so, change it.

Social Processes Located by Dimension in the Gender Structure

When we conceptualize gender as a social structure, we can begin to identify under what conditions and how gender inequality is being produced within each dimension. The "how" is important because without knowing the mechanisms, we cannot intervene. If indeed gender inequality in the division of household labor at this historical moment were primarily explained (and I do not suggest that it is) by gendered selves, then we would do well to consider the most effective socialization mechanisms to create fewer gender-schematic children and resocialization for adults. If, however, the gendered division of household labor is primarily constrained today by cultural expectations and moral accountability, it is those cultural images we must work to alter. But then again, if the reason many men do not equitably do their share of family labor is that men's jobs are organized so they cannot succeed at work and do their share at home, it is the contemporary American workplace that must change (Williams 2000). We may never find a universal theoretical explanation for the gendered division of household labor because universal social laws may be an illusion of twentieth-century empiricism. But in any given moment for any particular setting, the causal processes should be identifiable empirically. Gender complexity goes beyond historical specificity, as the particular causal processes that constrain men and women to do gender may be strong in one institutional setting (e.g., at home) and weaker in another (e.g., at work).

The forces that create gender traditionalism for men and women may vary across space as well as time. Conceptualizing gender as a social structure contributes to a more postmodern, contextually specific social science. We can use this schema to begin to organize thinking about the causal processes that are most likely to be effective on each dimension. When we are concerned with the means by which individuals come to have a preference to do gender, we should focus on how identities are constructed through early childhood development, explicit socialization, modeling, and adult

Table 1.1 Dimensions of Gender Structure, by Illustrative Social Processes[a]

| | *Dimensions of the Gender Structure* | | |
	Individual Level	*Interactional Cultural Expectations*	*Institutional Domain*
Social Processes	Socialization	Status expectations	Organizational practices
	Internalization	Cognitive bias	Legal regulations
	Identity work	Othering	Distribution of resources
	Construction of selves	Trading power for patronage	Ideology
		Altercasting	

[a]These are examples of social processes that may help explain the gender structure on each dimension. They are meant to be illustrative and not a complete list of all possible social processes or causal mechanisms.

experiences, paying close attention to the internalization of social mores. To the extent that women and men choose to do gender-typical behavior cross-situationally and over time, we must focus on such individual explanations. Indeed, much attention has already been given to gender socialization and the individualist presumptions for gender. The earliest and perhaps most commonly referred to explanations in popular culture depend on sex-role training, teaching boys and girls their culturally appropriate roles. But when trying to understand gender on the interactional/cultural dimension, the means by which status differences shape expectations and the ways in which in-group and out-group membership influences behavior need to be at the center of attention. Too little attention has been paid to how inequality is shaped by such cultural expectations during interaction. I return to this in the section below. On the institutional dimension, we look to law, organizational practices, and formal regulations that distinguish by sex category. Much progress has been made in the post–civil rights era with rewriting formal laws and organizational practices to ensure gender neutrality. Unfortunately, we have often found that despite changes in gender socialization and gender neutrality on the institutional dimension, gender stratification remains.

What I have attempted to do here is to offer a conceptual organizing scheme for the study of gender that can help us to understand gender in all its complexity and try to isolate the social processes that create gender in each dimension. Table 1.1 provides a schematic outline of this argument.[2]

Cultural Expectations During Interaction and the Stalled Revolution

In *Gender Vertigo* (Risman 1998), I suggested that at this moment in history, gender inequality between partners in American heterosexual couples could be attributed particularly to the interactional expectations at the cultural level: the differential expectations attached to being a mother and father, a husband and wife. Here, I extend this argument in two ways. First, I propose that the stalled gender revolution in other settings can similarly be traced to the interactional/cultural dimension of the social structure. Even when women and men with feminist identities work in organizations with formally gender-neutral rules, gender inequality is reproduced during everyday interaction. The cultural expectations attached to our sex category, simply being identified as a woman or man, has remained relatively impervious to the feminist forces that have problematized sexist socialization practices and legal discrimination. I discuss some of those processes that can help explain why social interaction continues to reproduce inequality, even in settings that seem ripe for social change.

Contemporary social psychological writings offer us a glimpse of possibilities for understanding how inequality is reconstituted in daily interaction. Ridgeway and her colleagues (Ridgeway 1991, 1997, 2001; Ridgeway and Correll 2000; Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1999) showed that the status expectations attached to gender and race categories are cross-situational. These expectations can be thought of as one of the engines that re-create inequality even in new settings where there is no other reason to expect male privilege to otherwise emerge. In a sexist and racist society, women and all persons of color are expected to have less to contribute to task performances than are white men, unless they have some other externally validated source of prestige. Status expectations create a cognitive bias toward privileging those of already high status. What produces status distinction, however, is culturally and historically variable. Thus, cognitive bias

is one of the causal mechanisms that help to explain the reproduction of gender and race inequality in everyday life. It may also be an important explanation for the reproduction of class and heterosexist inequality in everyday life as well, but that is an empirical question.

Schwalbe and his colleagues (2000, 419) suggested that there are other "generic interactive processes through which inequalities are created and reproduced in everyday life." Some of these processes include othering, subordinate adaptation, boundary maintenance, and emotion management. Schwalbe and his colleagues suggested that subordinates' adaptation plays an essential role in their own disadvantage. Subordinate adaptation helps to explain women's strategy to adapt to the gender structure. Perhaps the most common adaptation of women to subordination is "trading power for patronage" (Schwalbe et al. 2000, 426). Women, as wives and daughters, often derive significant compensatory benefits from relationships with the men in their families. Stombler and Martin (1994) similarly showed how little sisters in a fraternity trade affiliation for secondary status. In yet another setting, elite country clubs, Sherwood (2004) showed how women accept subordinate status as "B" members of clubs, in exchange for men's approval, and how when a few wives challenge men's privilege, they are threatened with social ostracism, as are their husbands. Women often gain the economic benefits of patronage for themselves and their children in exchange for their subordinate status.

One can hardly analyze the cultural expectations and interactional processes that construct gender inequality without attention to the actions of members of the dominant group. We must pay close attention to what men do to preserve their power and privilege. Schwalbe and his colleagues (2000) suggested that one process involved is when superordinate groups effectively "other" those who they want to define as subordinate, creating devalued statuses and expectations for them. Men effectively do this in subversive ways through "politeness" norms, which construct women as "others" in need of special favors, such as protection. By opening doors and walking closer to the dirty street, men construct women as an "other" category, different and less than independent autonomous men. The cultural significance attached to male bodies signifies the capacity to dominate, to control, and to elicit deference, and such expectations are perhaps at the core of what it means for men to do gender (Michael Schwalbe, personal communication).

These are only some of the processes that might be identified for understanding how we create gender inequality based on embodied cultural expectations. None are determinative causal predictors, but instead, these are possible leads to reasonable and testable hypotheses about the production of gender. . . .

NOTES

1. See Scott (1997) for a critique of feminists who adopt a strategy where theories have to be simplified, compared, and defeated. She too suggested a model where feminists build on the complexity of each other's ideas.

2. I thank my colleague Donald Tomaskovic-Devey for suggesting the visual representation of these ideas as well as his usual advice on my ideas as they develop.

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Introduction to Reading 2

By analyzing the challenges she faces in the course of her daily experience of negotiating the boundaries of our gendered society, sociologist Betsy Lucal describes the rigidity of the American binary gender system and the consequences for people who do not fit. Since her physical appearance does not clearly define her as a woman, she must navigate a world in which some people interact with her as though she is a man. Through analysis of her own story, Lucal demonstrates how gender is something we do, rather than something we are.

1. Why does Lucal argue that we cannot escape "doing gender"?

2. How does Lucal negotiate "not fitting" into the American two-and-only-two gender structure?

3. Have you ever experienced a mismatch between your gender identity and the gender that others perceive you to be? If so, how did you feel and respond?

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE GENDERED ME

Betsy Lucal

I understood the concept of "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman 1987) long before I became a sociologist. I have been living with the consequences of inappropriate "gender display" (Goffman 1976; West and Zimmerman 1987) for as long as I can remember. My daily experiences are a testament to the rigidity of gender in our society, to the real implications of "two and only two" when it comes to sex and gender categories (Garfinkel 1967; Kessler and McKenna 1978). Each day, I experience the

consequences that our gender system has for my identity and interactions. I am a woman who has been called "Sir" so many times that I no longer even hesitate to assume that it is being directed at me. I am a woman whose use of public rest rooms regularly causes reactions ranging from confused stares to confrontations over what a man is doing in the women's room. I regularly enact a variety of practices either to minimize the need for others to know my gender or to deal with their misattributions.

I am the embodiment of Lorber's (1994) ostensibly paradoxical assertion that the "gender bending" I engage in actually might serve to preserve and perpetuate gender categories. As a feminist who sees gender rebellion as a significant part of her contribution to the dismantling of sexism, I find this possibility disheartening.

In this article, I examine how my experiences both support and contradict Lorber's (1994) argument using my own experiences to illustrate and reflect on the social construction of gender. My analysis offers a discussion of the consequences of gender for people who do not follow the rules as well as an examination of the possible implications of the existence of people like me for the gender system itself. Ultimately, I show how life on the boundaries of gender affects me and how my life, and the lives of others who make similar decisions about their participation in the gender system, has the potential to subvert gender.

Because this article analyzes my experiences as a woman who often is mistaken for a man, my focus is on the social construction of gender for women. My assumption is that, given the gendered nature of the gendering process itself, men's experiences of this phenomenon might well be different from women's.

The Social Construction of Gender

It is now widely accepted that gender is a social construction, that sex and gender are distinct, and that gender is something all of us "do." This conceptualization of gender can be traced to Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodological study of "Agnes."[1] In this analysis, Garfinkel examined the issues facing a male who wished to pass as, and eventually become, a woman. Unlike individuals who perform gender in culturally expected ways, Agnes could not take her gender for granted and always was in danger of failing to pass as a woman (Zimmerman 1992).

This approach was extended by Kessler and McKenna (1978) and codified in the classic "Doing Gender" by West and Zimmerman (1987). The social

constructionist approach has been developed most notably by Lorber (1994, 1996). Similar theoretical strains have developed outside of sociology, such as work by Butler (1990) and Weston (1996). . . .

Given our cultural rules for identifying gender (i.e., that there are only two and that masculinity is assumed in the absence of evidence to the contrary), a person who does not do gender appropriately is placed not into a third category but rather into the one with which her or his gender display seems most closely to fit; that is, if a man appears to be a woman, then he will be categorized as "woman," not as something else. Even if a person does not want to do gender or would like to do a gender other than the two recognized by our society, other people will, in effect, do gender for that person by placing her or him in one and only one of the two available categories. We cannot escape doing gender or, more specifically, doing one of two genders. (There are exceptions in limited contexts such as people doing "drag" [Butler 1990; Lorber 1994].)

People who follow the norms of gender can take their genders for granted. Kessler and McKenna asserted, "Few people besides transsexuals think of their gender as anything other than 'naturally' obvious"; they believe that the risks of not being taken for the gender intended "are minimal for nontranssexuals" (1978, 126). However, such an assertion overlooks the experiences of people such as those women Devor (1989) calls "gender blenders" and those people Lorber (1994) refers to as "gender benders." As West and Zimmerman (1987) pointed out, we all are held accountable for, and might be called on to account for, our genders.

People who, for whatever reasons, do not adhere to the rules, risk gender misattribution and any interactional consequences that might result from this misidentification. What are the consequences of misattribution for social interaction? When must misattribution be minimized? What will one do to minimize such mistakes? In this article, I explore these and related questions using my biography.

For me, the social processes and structures of gender mean that, in the context of our culture, my appearance will be read as masculine. Given the common conflation of sex and gender, I will be assumed to be a male. Because of the two-and-only-two genders rule, I will be classified, perhaps more often than not, as a man—not as an atypical woman, not as a genderless person. I must be one gender or the other; I cannot be neither, nor can I be both. This norm has a variety of mundane and serious consequences for my everyday existence. Like Myhre (1995), I have found that the

choice not to participate in femininity is not one made frivolously.

My experiences as a woman who does not do femininity illustrate a paradox of our two-and-only-two gender system. Lorber argued that "bending gender rules and passing between genders does not erode but rather preserves gender boundaries" (1994, 21). Although people who engage in these behaviors and appearances do "demonstrate the social constructedness of sex, sexuality, and gender" (Lorber 1994, 96), they do not actually disrupt gender. Devor made a similar point: "When gender blending females refused to mark themselves by publicly displaying sufficient femininity to be recognized as women, they were in no way challenging patriarchal gender assumptions" (1989, 142). As the following discussion shows, I have found that my own experiences both support and challenge this argument. Before detailing these experiences, I explain my use of my self as data.

My Self as Data

This analysis is based on my experiences as a person whose appearance and gender/sex are not, in the eyes of many people, congruent. How did my experiences become my data? I began my research "unwittingly" (Krieger 1991). This article is a product of "opportunistic research" in that I am using my "unique biography, life experiences, and/or situational familiarity to understand and explain social life" (Riemer 1988, 121; see also Riemer 1977). It is an analysis of "unplanned personal experience," that is, experiences that were not part of a research project but instead are part of my daily encounters (Reinharz 1992).

This work also is, at least to some extent, an example of Richardson's (1994) notion of writing as a method of inquiry. As a sociologist who specializes in gender, the more I learned, the more I realized that my life could serve as a case study. As I examined my experiences, I found out things—about my experiences and about theory—that I did not know when I started (Richardson 1994).

It also is useful, I think, to consider my analysis an application of Mills's (1959) "sociological imagination." Mills (1959) and Berger (1963) wrote about the importance of seeing the general in the particular. This means that general social patterns can be discerned in the behaviors of particular individuals. In this article, I am examining portions of my biography, situated in U.S. society during the 1990s, to understand the "personal troubles" my gender produces in the context of a two-and-only-two gender system. I am not attempting to generalize my experiences; rather, I am trying to use them to examine and reflect on the processes and structure of gender in our society.

Because my analysis is based on my memories and perceptions of events, it is limited by my ability to recall events and by my interpretation of those events. However, I am not claiming that my experiences provide the truth about gender and how it works. I am claiming that the biography of a person who lives on the margins of our gender system can provide theoretical insights into the processes and social structure of gender. Therefore, after describing my experiences, I examine how they illustrate and extend, as well as contradict, other work on the social construction of gender.

Gendered Me

Each day, I negotiate the boundaries of gender. Each day, I face the possibility that someone will attribute the "wrong" gender to me based on my physical appearance. I am six feet tall and large-boned. I have had short hair for most of my life. For the past several years, I have worn a crew cut or flat top. I do not shave or otherwise remove hair from my body (e.g., no eyebrow plucking). I do not wear dresses, skirts, high heels, or makeup. My only jewelry is a class ring, a "men's" watch (my wrists are too large for a "women's" watch), two small earrings (gold hoops, both in my left ear), and (occasionally) a necklace. I wear jeans or shorts, T-shirts, sweaters, polo/golf shirts, button-down collar shirts, and tennis shoes or boots. The jeans are "women's" (I do have hips) but do not look particularly "feminine." The rest of the outer garments are from men's departments. I prefer baggy clothes, so the fact that I have "womanly" breasts often is not obvious (I do not wear a bra).

Sometimes, I wear a baseball cap or some other type of hat. I also am white and relatively young (30 years old).[2] My gender display—what others interpret as my presented identity—regularly leads to the misattribution of my gender. An incongruity exists between my gender self-identity and the gender that others perceive. In my encounters with people I do not know, I sometimes conclude, based on our interactions, that they think I am a man. This does not mean that other people do not think I am a man, just that I have no way of knowing what they think without interacting with them.

Living With It

I have no illusions or delusions about my appearance. I know that my appearance is likely to be read as "masculine" (and male) and that how I see myself is socially irrelevant. Given our two-and-only-two gender structure, I must live with the consequences of my appearance. These consequences fall into two categories: issues of identity and issues of interaction.

My most common experience is being called "Sir" or being referred to by some other masculine linguistic marker (e.g., "he," "man"). This has happened for years, for as long as I can remember, when having encounters with people I do not know.[3] Once, in fact, the same worker at a fast-food restaurant called me "Ma'am" when she took my order and "Sir" when she gave it to me.

Using my credit cards sometimes is a challenge. Some clerks subtly indicate their disbelief, looking from the card to me and back at the card and checking my signature carefully. Others challenge my use of the card, asking whose it is or demanding identification. One cashier asked to see my driver's license and then asked me whether I was the son of the cardholder. Another clerk told me that my signature on the receipt "had better match" the one on the card. Presumably, this was her way of letting me know that she was not convinced it was my credit card.

My identity as a woman also is called into question when I try to use women-only spaces. Encounters in public rest rooms are an adventure. I have been told countless times that "This is the ladies' room." Other women say nothing to me, but their stares and conversations with others let me know what they think. I will hear them say, for example, "There was a man in there." I also get stares when I enter a locker room. However, it seems that women are less concerned about my presence, there, perhaps because, given that it is a space for changing clothes, showering, and so forth, they will be able to make sure that I am really a woman. Dressing rooms in department stores also are problematic spaces. I remember shopping with my sister once and being offered a chair outside the room when I began to accompany her into the dressing room. Women who believe that I am a man do not want me in women-only spaces. For example, one woman would not enter the rest room until I came out, and others have told me that I am in the wrong place. They also might not want to encounter me while they are alone. For example, seeing me walking at night when they are alone might be scary.[4]

I, on the other hand, am not afraid to walk alone, day or night. I do not worry that I will be subjected to the public harassment that many women endure (Gardner 1995). I am not a clear target for a potential rapist. I rely on the fact that a potential attacker would not want to attack a big man by mistake. This is not to say that men never are attacked, just that they are not viewed, and often do not view themselves, as being vulnerable to attack.

Being perceived as a man has made me privy to male-male interactional styles of which most women are not aware. I found out, quite by accident, that many men greet, or acknowledge, people (mostly other men) who make eye contact with them with a single nod. For example, I found that when I walked down the halls of my brother's all-male dormitory making eye contact, men nodded their greetings at me. Oddly enough, these same men did not greet my brother.

I had to tell him about making eye contact and nodding as a greeting ritual. Apparently, in this case I was doing masculinity better than he was! I also believe that I am treated differently, for example, in auto parts stores (staffed almost exclusively by men in most cases) because of the assumption that I am a man. Workers there assume that I know what I need and that my questions are legitimate requests for information.

I suspect that I am treated more fairly than a feminine-appearing woman would be. I have not been able to test this proposition. However, Devor's participants did report "being treated more respectfully" (1989, 132) in such situations. There is, however, a negative side to being assumed to be a man by other men. Once, a friend and I were driving in her car when a man failed to stop at an intersection and nearly crashed into us. As we drove away, I mouthed "stop sign" to him. When we both stopped our cars at the next intersection, he got out of his car and came up to the passenger side of the car, where I was sitting. He yelled obscenities at us and pounded and spit on the car window. Luckily, the windows were closed. I do not think he would have done that if he thought I was a woman. This was the first time I realized that one of the implications of being seen as a man was that I might be called on to defend myself from physical aggression from other men who felt challenged by me. This was a sobering and somewhat frightening thought.

Recently, I was verbally accosted by an older man who did not like where I had parked my car. As I walked down the street to work, he shouted that I should park at the university rather than on a side street nearby. I responded that it was a public street and that I could park there if I chose. He continued to yell, but the only thing I caught was the last part of what he said: "Your tires are going to get cut!" Based on my

appearance that day—I was dressed casually and carrying a backpack, and I had my hat on backward—I believe he thought that I was a young male student rather than a female professor. I do not think he would have yelled at a person he thought to be a woman—and perhaps especially not a woman professor.

Given the presumption of heterosexuality that is part of our system of gender, my interactions with women who assume that I am a man also can be viewed from that perspective. For example, once my brother and I were shopping when we were "hit on" by two young women. The encounter ended before I realized what had happened. It was only when we walked away that I told him that I was pretty certain that they had thought both of us were men. A more common experience is realizing that when I am seen in public with one of my women friends, we are likely to be read as a heterosexual dyad. It is likely that if I were to walk through a shopping mall holding hands with a woman, no one would look twice, not because of their open-mindedness toward lesbian couples but rather because of their assumption that I was the male half of a straight couple. Recently, when walking through a mall with a friend and her infant, my observations of others' responses to us led me to believe that many of them assumed that we were a family on an outing, that is, that I was her partner and the father of the child.

Dealing With It

Although I now accept that being mistaken for a man will be a part of my life so long as I choose not to participate in femininity, there have been times when I consciously have tried to appear more feminine. I did this for a while when I was an undergraduate and again recently when I was on the academic job market. The first time, I let my hair grow nearly down to my shoulders and had it permed. I also grew long fingernails and wore nail polish. Much to my chagrin, even then one of my professors, who did not know my name, insistently referred to me in his kinship examples as "the son." Perhaps my first act on the way to my current stance was to point out to this man, politely and after class, that I was a woman.

More recently, I again let my hair grow out for several months, although I did not alter other aspects of my appearance. Once my hair was about two and a half inches long (from its original quarter inch), I realized, based on my encounters with strangers, that I had more or less passed back into the category of "woman." Then, when I returned to wearing a flat top, people again responded to me as if I were a man.

Because of my appearance, much of my negotiation of interactions with strangers involves attempts to anticipate their reactions to me. I need to assess whether they will be likely to assume that I am a man and whether that actually matters in the context of our encounters. Many times, my gender really is irrelevant, and it is just annoying to be misidentified. Other times, particularly when my appearance is coupled with something that identifies me by name (e.g., a check or credit card) without a photo, I might need to do something to ensure that my identity is not questioned. As a result of my experiences, I have developed some techniques to deal with gender misattribution.

In general, in unfamiliar public places, I avoid using the rest room because I know that it is a place where there is a high likelihood of misattribution and where misattribution is socially important. If I must use a public rest room, I try to make myself look as nonthreatening as possible. I do not wear a hat, and I try to rearrange my clothing to make my breasts more obvious. Here, I am trying to use my secondary sex characteristics to make my gender more obvious rather than the usual use of gender to make sex obvious. While in the rest room, I never make eye contact, and I get in and out as quickly as possible. Going in with a woman friend also is helpful; her presence legitimizes my own. People are less likely to think I am entering a space where I do not belong when I am with someone who looks like she does belong.[5]

To those women who verbally challenge my presence in the rest room, I reply, "I know," usually in an annoyed tone. When they stare or talk about me to the women they are with, I simply get out as quickly as possible. In general, I do not wait for someone I am with because there is too much chance of an unpleasant encounter.

I stopped trying on clothes before purchasing them a few years ago because my presence in the changing areas was met with stares and whispers. Exceptions are stores where the dressing rooms are completely private, where there are individual stalls rather than a room with stalls separated by curtains, or where business is slow and no one else is trying on clothes. If I am trying on a garment clearly intended for a woman, then I usually can do so without hassle. I guess the attendants assume that I must be a woman if I have, for example, a women's bathing suit in my hand. But usually, I think it is easier for me to try the clothes on at home and return them, if necessary, rather than risk creating a scene. Similarly, when I am with another woman who is trying on clothes, I just wait outside.

My strategy with credit cards and checks is to anticipate wariness on a clerk's part. When I sense that there is some doubt or when they challenge me, I say, "It's my card." I generally respond courteously to requests for photo ID, realizing that these might be routine checks because of concerns about increasingly widespread fraud. But for the clerk who asked for ID and still did not think it was my card, I had a stronger reaction. When she said that she was sorry for embarrassing me, I told her that I was not embarrassed but that she should be. I also am particularly careful to make sure that my signature is consistent with the back of the card. Faced with such situations, I feel somewhat nervous about signing my name—which, of course, makes me worry that my signature will look different from how it should.

Another strategy I have been experimenting with is wearing nail polish in the dark bright colors currently fashionable. I try to do this when I travel by plane. Given more stringent travel regulations, one always must present a photo ID. But my experiences have shown that my driver's license is not necessarily convincing. Nail polish might be. I also flash my polished nails when I enter airport rest rooms, hoping that they will provide a clue that I am indeed in the right place.

There are other cases in which the issues are less those of identity than of all the norms of interaction that, in our society, are gendered. My most common response to misattribution actually is to appear to ignore it, that is, to go on with the interaction as if nothing out of the ordinary has happened. Unless I feel that there is a good reason to establish my correct gender, I assume the identity others impose on me for the sake of smooth interaction. For example, if someone is selling me a movie ticket, then there is no reason to make sure that the person has accurately discerned my gender. Similarly, if it is clear that the person using "Sir" is talking to me, then I simply respond as appropriate. I accept the designation because it is irrelevant to the situation. It takes enough effort to be alert for misattributions and to decide which of them matter; responding to each one would take more energy than it is worth.

Sometimes, if our interaction involves conversation, my first verbal response is enough to let the other person know that I am actually a woman and not a man. My voice apparently is "feminine" enough to shift people's attributions to the other category. I know when this has happened by the apologies that usually accompany the mistake. I usually respond to the apologies by saying something like "No problem" and/or "It happens all the time." Sometimes, a misattributor will offer an account for the mistake, for example, saying that it was my hair or that they were not being very observant.

These experiences with gender and misattribution provide some theoretical insights into contemporary Western understandings of gender and into the social structure of gender in contemporary society. Although there are a number of ways in which my experiences confirm the work of others, there also are some ways in which my experiences suggest other interpretations and conclusions.

What Does It Mean?

Gender is pervasive in our society. I cannot choose not to participate in it. Even if I try not to do gender, other people will do it for me. That is, given our two-and-only-two rule, they must attribute one of two genders to me. Still, although I cannot choose not to participate in gender, I can choose not to participate in femininity (as I have), at least with respect to physical appearance. That is where the problems begin. Without the decorations of femininity, I do not look like a woman. That is, I do not look like what many people's commonsense understanding of gender tells them a woman looks like. How I see myself, even how I might wish others would see me, is socially irrelevant. It is the gender that I appear to be (my "perceived gender") that is most relevant to my social identity and interactions with others. The major consequence of this fact is that I must be continually aware of which gender I "give off" as well as which gender I "give" (Goffman 1959).

Because my gender self-identity is "not displayed obviously, immediately, and consistently" (Devor 1989, 58), I am somewhat of a failure in social terms with respect to gender. Causing people to be uncertain or wrong about one's gender is a violation of taken-for-granted rules that leads to embarrassment and discomfort; it means that something has gone wrong with the interaction (Garfinkel 1967; Kessler and McKenna 1978). This means that my non-response to misattribution is the more socially appropriate response; I am allowing others to maintain face (Goffman 1959, 1967). By not calling attention to their mistakes, I uphold their images of themselves as competent social actors. I also maintain my own image as competent by letting them assume that I am the gender I appear to them to be.

But I still have discreditable status; I carry a stigma (Goffman 1963). Because I have failed to participate

appropriately in the creation of meaning with respect to gender (Devor 1989), I can be called on to account for my appearance. If discredited, I show myself to be an incompetent social actor. I am the one not following the rules, and I will pay the price for not providing people with the appropriate cues for placing me in the gender category to which I really belong.

I do think that it is, in many cases, safer to be read as a man than as some sort of deviant woman. "Man" is an acceptable category; it fits properly into people's gender worldview. Passing as a man often is "the path of least resistance" (Devor 1989; Johnson 1997). For example, in situations where gender does not matter, letting people take me as a man is easier than correcting them.

Conversely, as Butler noted, "We regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right" (1990, 140). Feinberg maintained, "Masculine girls and women face terrible condemnation and brutality—including sexual violence—for crossing the boundary of what is 'acceptable' female expression" (1996, 114). People are more likely to harass me when they perceive me to be a woman who looks like a man. For example, when a group of teenagers realized that I was not a man because one of their mothers identified me correctly, they began to make derogatory comments when I passed them. One asked, for example, "Does she have a penis?"

Because of the assumption that a "masculine" woman is a lesbian, there is the risk of homophobic reactions (Gardner 1995; Lucal 1997). Perhaps surprisingly, I find that I am much more likely to be taken for a man than for a lesbian, at least based on my interactions with people and their reactions to me. This might be because people are less likely to reveal that they have taken me for a lesbian because it is less relevant to an encounter or because they believe this would be unacceptable. But I think it is more likely a product of the strength of our two-and-only-two system. I give enough masculine cues that I am seen not as a deviant woman but rather as a man, at least in most cases. The problem seems not to be that people are uncertain about my gender, which might lead them to conclude that I was a lesbian once they realized I was a woman. Rather, I seem to fit easily into a gender category—just not the one with which I identify. In fact, because men represent the dominant gender in our society, being mistaken for a man can protect me from other types of gendered harassment. Because men can move around in public spaces safely (at least relative to women), a "masculine" woman also can enjoy this freedom (Devor 1989).

On the other hand, my use of particular spaces—those designated as for women only—may be challenged. Feinberg provided an intriguing analysis of the public rest room experience. She characterized women's reactions to a masculine person in a public rest room as "an example of genderphobia" (1996, 117), viewing such women as policing gender boundaries rather than believing that there really is a man in the women's rest room. She argued that women who truly believed that there was a man in their midst would react differently. Although this is an interesting perspective on her experiences, my experiences do not lead to the same conclusion.[6]

Enough people have said to me that "This is the ladies' room" or have said to their companions that "There was a man in there" that I take their reactions at face value. Still, if the two-and-only-two gender system is to be maintained, participants must be involved in policing the categories and their attendant identities and spaces. Even if policing boundaries is not explicitly intended, boundary maintenance is the effect of such responses to people's gender displays.

Boundaries and margins are an important component of both my experiences of gender and our theoretical understanding of gendering processes. I am in effect both woman and not woman. As a woman who often is a social man but who also is a woman living in a patriarchal society, I am in a unique position to see and act.

I sometimes receive privileges usually limited to men, and I sometimes am oppressed by my status as a deviant woman. I am, in a sense, an outsider within (Collins 1991). Positioned on the boundaries of gender categories, I have developed a consciousness that I hope will prove transformative (Anzaldúa 1987). In fact, one of the reasons why I decided to continue my non-participation in femininity was that my sociological training suggested that this could be one of my contributions to the eventual dismantling of patriarchal gender constructs. It would be my way of making the personal political. I accepted being taken for a man as the price I would pay to help subvert patriarchy. I believed that all of the inconveniences I was enduring meant that I actually was doing something to bring down the gender structures that entangled all of us.

Then, I read Lorber's (1994) *Paradoxes of Gender* and found out, much to my dismay, that I might not actually be challenging gender after all. Because of the way in which doing gender works in our two-and-only-two system, gender displays are simply read as evidence of one of the two categories. Therefore, gender bending, blending, and passing between the

categories do not question the categories themselves. If one's social gender and personal (true) gender do not correspond, then this is irrelevant unless someone notices the lack of congruence.

This reality brings me to a paradox of my experiences. First, not only do others assume that I am one gender or the other, but I also insist that I *really am* a member of one of the two gender categories. That is, I am female; I self-identify as a woman. I do not claim to be some other gender or to have no gender at all. I simply place myself in the wrong category according to stereotypes and cultural standards; the gender I present, or that some people perceive me to be presenting, is inconsistent with the gender with which I identify myself as well as with the gender I could be "proven" to be. Socially, I display the wrong gender; personally, I identify as the proper gender.

Second, although I ultimately would like to see the destruction of our current gender structure, I am not to the point of personally abandoning gender. Right now, I do not want people to see me as genderless as much as I want them to see me as a woman. That is, I would like to expand the category of "woman" to include people like me. I, too, am deeply embedded in our gender system, even though I do not play by many of its rules. For me, as for most people in our society, gender is a substantial part of my personal identity (Howard and Hollander 1997). Socially, the problem is that I do not present a gender display that is consistently read as feminine. In fact, I consciously do not participate in the trappings of femininity. However, I do identify myself as a woman, not as a man or as someone outside of the two-and-only-two categories.

Yet, I do believe, as Lorber (1994) does, that the purpose of gender, as it currently is constructed, is to oppress women. Lorber analyzed gender as a "process of creating distinguishable social statuses for the assignment of rights and responsibilities" that ends up putting women in a devalued and oppressed position (1994, 32). As Martin put it, "Bodies that clearly delineate gender status facilitate the maintenance of the gender hierarchy" (1998, 495).

For society, gender means difference (Lorber 1994). The erosion of the boundaries would problematize that structure. Therefore, for gender to operate as it currently does, the category "woman" is expanded to include people like me. The maintenance of the gender structure is dependent on the creation of a few categories that are mutually exclusive, the members of which are as different as possible (Lorber 1994). It is the clarity of the boundaries between the categories that allows gender to be used to assign rights and responsibilities as well as resources and rewards.

It is that part of gender—what it is used for—that is most problematic. Indeed, is it not *patriarchal*—or, even more specifically, *heteropatriarchal*—constructions of gender that are actually the problem? It is not the differences between men and women, or the categories themselves, so much as the meanings ascribed to the categories and, even more important, the hierarchical nature of gender under patriarchy that is the problem (Johnson 1997). Therefore, I am rebelling not against my femaleness or even my womanhood; instead, I am protesting contemporary constructions of femininity and, at least indirectly, masculinity under patriarchy. We do not, in fact, know what gender would look like if it were not constructed around heterosexuality in the context of patriarchy. Although it is possible that the end of patriarchy would mean the end of gender, it is at least conceivable that something like what we now call gender could exist in a postpatriarchal future. The two-and-only-two categorization might well disappear, there being no hierarchy for it to justify. But I do not think that we should make the assumption that gender and patriarchy are synonymous.

Theoretically, this analysis points to some similarities and differences between the work of Lorber (1994) and the works of Butler (1990), Goffman (1976, 1977), and West and Zimmerman (1987). Lorber (1994) conceptualized gender as social structure, whereas the others focused more on the interactive and processual nature of gender. Butler (1990) and Goffman (1976, 1977) view gender as a performance, and West and Zimmerman (1987) examined it as something all of us do. One result of this difference in approach is that in Lorber's (1994) work, gender comes across as something that we are caught in, something that, despite any attempts to the contrary, we cannot break out of. This conclusion is particularly apparent in Lorber's argument that gender rebellion, in the context of our two-and-only-two system, ends up supporting what it purports to subvert. Yet, my own experiences suggest an alternative possibility that is more in line with the view of gender offered by West and Zimmerman (1987): If gender is a product of interaction, and if it is produced in a particular context, then it can be changed if we change our performances. However, the effects of a performance linger, and gender ends up being institutionalized. It is institutionalized, in our society, in a way that perpetuates inequality, as Lorber's (1994) work shows. So, it seems that a combination of these two approaches is needed.

In fact, Lorber's (1994) work seems to suggest that effective gender rebellion requires a more blatant approach—bearded men in dresses, perhaps, or more active responses to misattribution. For example, if

I corrected every person who called me "Sir," and if I insisted on my right to be addressed appropriately and granted access to women-only spaces, then perhaps I could start to break down gender norms. If I asserted my right to use public facilities without being harassed, and if I challenged each person who gave me "the look," then perhaps I would be contributing to the demise of gender as we know it. It seems that the key would be to provide visible evidence of the nonmutual exclusivity of the categories. Would *this* break down the patriarchal components of gender? Perhaps it would, but it also would be exhausting.

Perhaps there is another possibility. In a recent book, *The Gender Knot,* Johnson (1997) argued that when it comes to gender and patriarchy, most of us follow the paths of least resistance; we "go along to get along," allowing our actions to be shaped by the gender system. Collectively, our actions help patriarchy maintain and perpetuate a system of oppression and privilege. Thus, by withdrawing our support from this system by choosing paths of greater resistance, we can start to chip away at it. Many people participate in gender because they cannot imagine any alternatives. In my classroom, and in my interactions and encounters with strangers, my presence can make it difficult for people not to see that there *are* other paths. In other words, following from West and Zimmerman (1987), I can subvert gender by doing it differently.

For example, I think it is true that my existence does not have an effect on strangers who assume that I am a man and never learn otherwise. For them, I do uphold the two-and-only-two system. But there are other cases in which my existence can have an effect. For example, when people initially take me for a man but then find out that I actually am a woman, at least for that moment, the naturalness of gender may be called into question. In these cases, my presence can provoke a "category crisis" (Garber 1992, 16) because it challenges the sex/gender binary system.

The subversive potential of my gender might be strongest in my classrooms. When I teach about the sociology of gender, my students can see me as the embodiment of the social construction of gender. Not all of my students have transformative experiences as a result of taking a course with me; there is the chance that some of them see me as a "freak" or as an exception. Still, after listening to stories about my experiences with gender and reading literature on the subject, many students begin to see how and why gender is a social product. I can disentangle sex, gender, and sexuality in the contemporary United States

for them. Students can begin to see the connection between biographical experiences and the structure of society. As one of my students noted, I clearly live the material I am teaching. If that helps me to get my point across, then perhaps I am subverting the binary gender system after all. Although my gendered presence and my way of doing gender might make others—and sometimes even me—uncomfortable, no one ever said that dismantling patriarchy was going to be easy.

NOTES

1. Ethnomethodology has been described as "the study of commonsense practical reasoning" (Collins 1988, 274). It examines how people make sense of their everyday experiences. Ethnomethodology is particularly useful in studying gender because it helps to uncover the assumptions on which our understandings of sex and gender are based.

2. I obviously have left much out by not examining my gendered experiences in the context of race, age, class, sexuality, region, and so forth. Such a project clearly is more complex. As Weston pointed out, gender presentations are complicated by other statuses of their presenters: "What it takes to kick a person over into another gendered category can differ with race, class, religion, and time" (1996, 168). Furthermore, I am well aware that my whiteness allows me to assume that my experiences are simply a product of gender (see, e.g., hooks 1981; Lucal 1996; Spelman 1988; West and Fenstermaker 1995). For now, suffice it to say that it is my privileged position on some of these axes and my more disadvantaged position on others that combine to delineate my overall experience.

3. In fact, such experiences are not always limited to encounters with strangers. My grandmother, who does not see me often, twice has mistaken me for either my brother-in-law or some unknown man.

4. My experiences in rest rooms and other public spaces might be very different if I were, say, African American rather than white. Given the stereotypes of African American men, I think that white women would react very differently to encountering me (see, e.g., Staples [1986] 1993).

5. I also have noticed that there are certain types of rest rooms in which I will not be verbally challenged; the higher the social status of the place, the less likely I will be harassed. For example, when I go to the theater, I might get stared at, but my presence never has been challenged.

6. An anonymous reviewer offered one possible explanation for this. Women see women's rest rooms as their space; they feel safe, and even empowered, there. Instead of fearing men in such space, they might instead pose a threat to any man who might intrude. Their invulnerability in this situation is, of course, not physically based but rather socially constructed. I thank the reviewer for this suggestion.

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Introduction to Reading 3

Sociologists Georgiann Davis and Sharon Preves are at the cutting-edge of intersex theory and activism. In this reading, they bring their deep understanding together to explore what intersex is and how intersex advocacy emerged and developed in the United States. Intersex is a natural physical variation occurring in approximately 1 of every 2,000 births worldwide. The majority of intersex traits are not harmful. However, in the United States, intersex has been medicalized and intersex people have commonly been subjected to dangerous "normalization" surgeries and treatments in an effort on the part of medical providers to fit intersex bodies into the two-and-only-two sexes (female or male) binary. The intersex rights movement began in the late 1980s to challenge the medical establishment and has rapidly grown into a global movement. Davis and Preves detail the struggles of intersex advocates to challenge the ethics of normalization surgeries and, on a broader scale, to unsettle the sex binary itself.

1. How does the reality of intersex demonstrate the flaws of binary thinking about sex?

2. What is the terminology debate, and why is the language of intersex important?

3. What is the relationship between the intersex rights movement and other movements for gender and sexual equality?

REFLECTING ON INTERSEX

25 YEARS OF ACTIVISM, MOBILIZATION, AND CHANGE

Georgiann Davis and Sharon Preves

INTRODUCTION: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF INTERSEX AS A MEDICAL PROBLEM

"A pregnancy test?" I, Georgiann Davis, was so confused. Before the medical scheduler would even agree to arrange the endocrinology consultation that my primary care provider had requested, she insisted that I needed a slew of lab work—eleven orders to be exact: progesterone, leutinizing hormone, prolactin, testosterone, free T4, vitamin D 1,25-dihydroxy, phosphorus, estradiol, glycohemoglobin, TSH ultra-sensitive, and serum qualitative pregnancy. I asked the medical scheduler again, but this time with obvious frustration: "Why a pregnancy test? That makes no sense. I can't get pregnant." Apologetically the medical scheduler explained that the endocrinologist required the results of my pregnancy test before even allowing her to schedule a consultation. While a pregnancy test might seem like a harmless and routine test for a medical provider to require of a thirty-four-year-old woman seeking an endocrinology consultation, I'm not your average woman. You might be thinking that I am trans*, but I'm not. I'm an intersex queer woman and a sociologist who studies intersex. I'm also the 2014–2015 president of the AIS-DSD Support Group, one of the largest intersex support groups in the world.[1] I was born with complete androgen insensitivity syndrome (CAIS), an intersex trait that was diagnosed in the mid-1990s. I later learned the mid-1990s was also the same point in history when the intersex rights movement was in its infancy in the United States. I have XY chromosomes and a vagina but no uterus. I had testes, but they were removed when I was a teenager. My parents agreed to this medically unnecessary surgery because my medical providers suggested that doing so would minimize my

risk of cancer—a claim that is not empirically supported (Nakhal et al. 2013). Pregnancy is biologically impossible in my body, so the pregnancy test made no sense. I find my experiences with medical care, then and now, unnecessarily frustrating and humiliating, which leaves me asking, with a mentor, colleague, and friend, sociologist Sharon Preves, how much has intersex medical care, and the advocacy that seeks to critically examine and disrupt it, changed over the past twenty-five years, and how much has it stayed the same?[2]

Intersex is a natural physical variation occurring in approximately 1 of every 2,000 births worldwide. The term *intersex* represents the "I" in the acronym LGBTI and refers to the diversity in physical sex development that differs from typical female or male anatomy. The "LGB" in the acronym LGBTI refers to lesbian, gay, or bisexual sexual identities, and the "T" stands for transgender or transsexual (often abbreviated as "T*"), which relates specifically to one's sense of gender identity and gender expression as feminine or masculine in a way that is not congruent with their biological female or male sex at birth. The current medical model of surgically and hormonally "correcting" intersex variations emerged primarily from the work of Johns Hopkins University psychologist John Money in the mid-1950s.

Intersex terminology emerged in the late nineteenth century and was used not only when referring to hermaphrodites, the more popular pre-twentieth-century term for intersex people, but to homosexuals as well (Epstein 1990). Today, the term *hermaphrodite* is considered derogatory by many, although not all, people with intersex traits. The term *intersex*, and its derivatives, including intersex traits, intersex conditions, and the like, is still widely used and accepted by intersex

people and their families. However, as we explain later, *intersex* was renamed a *disorder of sex development* throughout the medical community at the beginning of the twenty-first century, which has caused terminological tensions in the intersex community.

In contemporary Western societies, it is commonly understood that biological sex, which comprises chromosomes, hormones, gonads, external genitalia, and internal reproductive structures, is a simple two-category phenomenon that is naturally correlated with our gender identity. Men have penises, testes, and XY chromosomes while women have vaginas, ovaries, uteruses, and XX chromosomes. However, sex is anything but simple and one's biological sex isn't always correlated with their gender or sexual identity. For example, many people with CAIS, Georgiann included, are born with an outward female appearance, and most live their lives as women. They have vaginas, yet they also have undescended testes and XY chromosomes. Women with CAIS do not have a uterus. None of this, however, would be obvious without invasive exploratory surgeries or the power of medical technologies, such as imaging and chromosome testing, which reveal such complexities of biological sex. CAIS is only one example of an intersex trait. In fact, there are more than twenty different documented types of intersex traits. Hypospadias, for example, is an intersex trait in which the urethral opening of the penis is located along the base or shaft of the penis rather than at the tip. Some intersex traits result in externally ambiguous genitalia, but others, like CAIS or minor hypospadias, do not.

Hypospadias is quite common and has been increasing in frequency in recent decades, occurring in an estimated 1 of every 250 male births (Baskin 2012; Holmes 2011). Surgery to "correct" the position of the urethral opening to facilitate standing during urination is very common, as many medical providers view the ability to stand while urinating as central to masculine identity and social acceptance by one's peers. Note that many men with hypospadias do not identify as intersex and that historically men lived full lives with hypospadias prior to the invention of surgical "repair." Men with hypospadias often experience ongoing problems following hypospadias "repair" surgery, such as frequent urinary tract infections, narrowing of the urethral canal due to the buildup of scar tissue, and painful urination. Chronic complications resulting from surgeries to "correct" the position of the urethra are common—so common, in fact, that doctors coined the term *hypospadias cripple* to describe patients who experience ongoing and debilitating surgically induced complications (Craig et al. 2014).

Although the majority of intersex traits are not physiologically harmful, the birth of an intersex baby is often viewed as a medical emergency (see Davis and Murphy 2013; Preves 2003), a rather predictable response given that childbirth is medicalized throughout the Western world, especially in the United States where, more often than not, babies are born in hospitals under the care of medical doctors and nurses whose task is to ensure the safe delivery of a healthy baby. The issue here is that intersex traits rarely pose health concerns. Yet, because intersex bodies are viewed as unhealthy because they deviate from social expectations of what male and female bodies, especially genitalia, ought to look like, medical providers are quick to recommend and perform urgent surgical and hormonal "correction" (Davis and Murphy 2013; Preves 2003). Because childbirth occurs in a medical setting, the response to any "deviance" in a newborn's body is medical. Intersex "deviance" is medically "normalized" by surgical and hormonal interventions to create cosmetically typical female or male bodies.

Prior to the twentieth century, medical providers did not have the tools, for example surgical expertise and chromosomal testing, that they have now to "fix" intersex bodies. As Geertje Mak (2012) notes in a study of nineteenth-century hermaphrodite case histories, rather than attempt to biologically capture or prove an individual's sex, medical providers understood sex as embedded within the social, moral, and legal fabric of the individual's community through the type of occupation one held (or eventually held), the clothes one wore (or chose to wear when the individual was able to independently make such choices), and the social relationships one maintained. Sex was regarded as a social location and not a physical bodily phenomenon.

Medical advances of the twentieth century offered providers the tools to subject intersex people to "normalization" surgeries (Reis 2009; also see Warren 2014 for a discussion of an eighteenth-century surgery). These procedures are designed to "normalize" intersex bodies by erasing evidence of any sex difference that challenges a sex/gender binary. For instance, medical providers often recommend that people with CAIS undergo a gonadectomy, like Georgiann did, to remove their internal testes. Although providers justify these recommendations by claiming that removal of internal testes reduces the risk of testicular cancer, these claims are not empirically supported (Nakhal et al. 2013). Instead, as we and others have argued elsewhere, such "normalization" surgeries are not medically necessary but rather are recommended by medical practitioners in order to uphold a sex/gender binary that insists, for example, that women should not have testes (Davis 2015; Feder 2014; Holmes 2008; Karkazis 2008; Preves 2003; Reis 2009). This insistence on enforcing

a sex/gender binary in the face of obvious and consistent sex/gender diversity is no doubt related to an overarching social system in which heterosexuality is deemed normative. If sexual identity were not a concern, diversity of sex development (in the case of intersex) or of gender identity (in the case of trans*) would be of far less concern to medical providers and others.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, people with intersex traits began organizing to challenge the medically unnecessary interventions providers were performing on intersex babies and children to shoehorn intersex people into the male/female sex binary, planting the seeds of a global intersex rights movement (see Preves 2005). Such "social surgeries" were first conducted on intersex infants and children as early as the nineteenth century, if not before (see Warren 2014). Initially, as we describe in detail later, intersex activists engaged in confrontational mobilization strategies that involved public protests at medical conferences and media appearances where they shared their horrific experiences of medical trauma, notably stories about their diagnosis and the medically unnecessary and irreversible interventions they were subjected to as children. Today, intersex advocacy has shifted to a more collaborative model to promote social change; that is, a mobilization strategy where at least some intersex activists are collaborating with medical allies to bring about change in intersex medical care. This strategy of working within medicine to promote change occurs more frequently in the United States than in other countries, where it is more often than not contested as a viable strategy for changing intersex medical care.

Georgiann and Sharon have come together to write this piece as a critical reflection on intersex that explores the past, present, and potential future of U.S. intersex advocacy. We focus specifically on intersex advocacy in the United States because that is where our expertise resides. The questions we explore in this reflection are why and how did intersex advocacy come to be? In what ways is intersex advocacy different today than it was in the past? In what ways is it similar? And how might the visibility of intersex in mainstream youth media affect the lives of the next generation of intersex people?

The Rise of the Intersex Rights Movement: Challenging the Medical Treatment of Intersex, 1993–2003

Intersex is a relatively new area of sociocultural inquiry. Outside of medicine, relatively few people have studied intersex, in part due to the fact intersex people were rather invisible until the global intersex rights movement was formed toward the end of the twentieth century. One reason for this invisibility is that when providers told people that they were intersexed, and they often did not, they also typically informed them that their anatomical differences were extremely rare and that they were unlikely to ever meet another person with a similar anatomical trait. Providers commonly withheld the intersex diagnosis from their patients, lying to them to allegedly protect their gender identity development (i.e., how young children develop a sense of self as feminine or masculine). Medical providers encouraged their patients' parents to do the same, an experience Georgiann knows firsthand. When Georgiann was a teenager, she had surgery to remove what she was told by her providers and parents were precancerous, underdeveloped ovaries. In actuality, as mentioned earlier, providers removed her internal testes for a medically unnecessary reason: to ensure that a girl didn't have testes. Georgiann's testes were producing the majority of her body's sex hormones. By removing them, providers left her dependent on synthetic hormone replacement therapy for the rest of her life to replace what her testes were already producing naturally. These hormones are essential to prevent people from developing osteoporosis or other potentially debilitating physical ailments.

Intersex medicalization gained the attention of feminist scholars in the early 1990s. For example, in a 1993 article titled "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough," biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling refuted the widely accepted assumption that sex was a simple two-category phenomenon consisting only of "females" and "males." If we are going to categorize people into sex categories, Fausto-Sterling maintained in a tongue-to-cheek tone, then we must expand the sex binary to include true-hermaphrodites, male pseudo-hermaphrodites, and female pseudo-hermaphrodites. Social psychologist Suzanne Kessler (1998) further warned that the expansion of biological sex to five categories wouldn't suffice, for it rested on the assumption that people's sex could indeed be categorized. Rather than expand the available sex categories, Kessler argued for the recognition of the diversity of sex development. Later, in 2000, Fausto-Sterling accepted Kessler's critique in a piece she titled "The Five Sexes, Revisited."

By the early 2000s, Sharon was well on her way to documenting how intersex people were treated by medical providers and, more generally, how they live with their intersex traits. It was 1993 when Sharon was a first-year medical sociology doctoral student at the University of California, San Francisco, when she was

assigned Fausto-Sterling's "Five Sexes" article in a Gender and Science seminar. She was simultaneously enrolled in a seminar on Medicine and the Family that semester for which she began a literature review to explore how parents made sex assignment and gender rearing decisions when their children were born intersex. What she found was a complete lack of discussion of this topic, or of intersex at all, in the sociology, social work, and psychology literature. When she extended her research to the medical literature, Sharon was shocked to find numerous reports of surgical sex assignment on seemingly healthy infants and children. These reports focused on the physical, rather than the psychosocial, outcomes of medical intervention, and many of them contained disturbing, grainy black and white photos of children's genitals or full naked bodies with their eyes blocked out (in an apparent attempt to protect their identities). Curiously, the majority of these publications didn't report long-term longitudinal follow-up with the patients about their gender and sexual identities or any quality-of-life measures; they were primarily limited to preadolescent reports. It was these alienating photographs coupled with a complete lack of quality-of-life outcomes that compelled Sharon to search further for the voices and stories behind these photos. She decided to document the experiences of intersex adults, including their long-term quality of life and psychosocial health. As a result of her systematic sociological analysis, Sharon produced a number of publications, including her book *Intersex and Identity: The Contested Self* (2003). This book provided the very first in-depth account of intersex experiences. It was in *Intersex and Identity* that we learned that contemporary intersex people felt isolated and stigmatized by medical providers—feelings that were minimized when these same people were able to connect with others who were intersex to offer peer support. We also learned that intersex people felt physically and emotionally harmed by the irreversible intersex "normalization" interventions of early surgery, ongoing examinations, and hormone treatments.

Although a handful of intersex people and their parents were connecting through support groups in the 1980s, the U.S. intersex community truly emerged in the early 1990s after Bo Laurent, using the pseudonym Cheryl Chase to protect her identity, founded the Intersex Society of North America (ISNA). Chase founded ISNA by publishing a letter to the editor of the journal *The Sciences* (Chase 1993). She wrote this letter in direct response to Fausto-Sterling's article "The Five Sexes." In her letter, Chase critiqued intersex medical sex assignment as destructive, raising concerns about the ethics and effectiveness of surgical procedures that impair sexual and psychological function. In the last line of her letter, Chase noted her affiliation with ISNA, an organization she fabricated in that very letter to increase her legitimacy. In her signature line, Chase listed a mailing address for ISNA at a San Francisco post office box. Much to her surprise, she soon began receiving mail from intersex people around the world and decided to form the Intersex Society of North America in earnest.

ISNA published the first issue of its newsletter, cleverly titled *Hermaphrodites with Attitude,* in the winter of 1994 (Intersex Society of North America 1994). By the time this first issue was published, ISNA had already established a mailing list that included recipients in fourteen of the United States and five countries. The political content of the publication, and the organization itself, worked to transform intersex, including the word *hermaphrodite,* from being a source of shame into a source of pride and empowerment. In other words, intersex activists were reclaiming intersex and hermaphrodite terminologies. The newsletter consisted primarily of personal stories, essays, poetry, and humor, providing formerly isolated individuals with the means to connect with others who had similar experiences. *Hermaphrodites with Attitude* was published from 1994 to 1999.

In addition to its newsletter, ISNA also provided support groups, a popular website, and annual retreats. Early on, ISNA's mission was divided between providing peer support to its members and its objective of medical reform. While other intersex organizations chose to address the mission of support as their primary focus, ISNA ultimately decided to pursue social change. The political action of ISNA members alienated them from some other intersex people and groups.

ISNA made deliberate appeals to queer activists, press outlets, and medical organizations, framing intersex as an issue of gender and sexuality. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender activist organizations, both in and outside of medicine, could easily relate to intersex grievances of stigma, shame, and alienation. At the same time, aligning intersex issues with sexual or gender minorities compromised intersex activists' ability to establish credibility with the non-LGBT medical mainstream, who viewed heterosexual normalcy as one of the primary objectives of intersex medical sex assignment.

In September 1996, former U.S. House Representative Patricia Schroeder's (D. Colorado) anti–female genital mutilation (FGM) bill became law. This law banned genital cutting on girls under the age of 18 in

the United States except in cases where "health" demands its necessity, thus allowing for intersex "emergencies" to be exempt. Press coverage of this law included a front-page article in the *New York Times*. Chase and other members of ISNA were outraged by the law's complicit endorsement of intersex genital surgeries. They began to stage protests to draw attention not only to this law's loophole but to "intersex genital mutilation" (IGM) as well (Preves 2003, 2005).

In addition to lobbying members of Congress to extend the anti-FGM bill to include IGM, ISNA staged protests at medical conferences. ISNA's first major protest was at the 1996 American Academy of Pediatrics meeting in Boston. Members of ISNA joined with noted trans* activist Riki Anne Wilchins and members of Transsexual Menace for this event, collectively calling themselves "Hermaphrodites with Attitude" (HWA). They picketed the conference after intersex activists were denied floor time to address the doctors in attendance. ISNA representatives used the name HWA frequently during the 1990s when they engaged in protests (Preves 2003, 2005). This historic 1996 protest in Boston propelled the American Academy of Pediatrics to create a position statement on infant and childhood genital surgery (Committee on Genetics 2000). By 1997, the broader medical community began engaging in a debate about best practices for intersex infants and children, largely in response to the first reports of David Reimer's unsuccessful sex/gender reassignment, which served to discredit the validity of what is now known as the "optimum gender of rearing" (OGR) model (Money, Hampson, and Hampson 1957). The OGR model "held that *all* sexually ambiguous children should— indeed *must*—be made into unambiguous-looking boys or girls to ensure unambiguous gender identities" (Dreger and Herndon 2009:202).

David Reimer and his identical twin brother were born in 1965, as typical, non-intersex boys. During a circumcision accident at the age of eight months, David's penis was tragically burned off by electrocautery. His devastated parents worked with psychologist John Money, the primary clinician who developed the OGR model, to help their child live a healthy life. Dr. Money suggested bringing about optimal gender identity development through a surgical castration and social reassignment of David as female when he was twenty-two months old. For decades following his reassignment, the medical intervention on intersex children relied on the apparent successful outcome of this case until David spoke out against his sex reassignment in 1997 (Colapinto 1997, 2000). David had

rejected the female-feminine gender that he had been assigned and had been living as a boy since the age of fourteen. He reported that the treatments that were intended to bring about a feminine gender identity were, in fact, a cause of great stigma, isolation, and shame. Despite being a very private person, he was motivated to speak out publicly after learning that other children were being subjected to the same treatments he received and that his case had been lauded as evidence of the success of sex reassignment in early childhood. Many intersex adults also decry their childhood medical sex assignment when they grow up to identify as a gender different than their surgical sex. Many of these intersex adults choose to physically transition their sex, as David Reimer did and many trans*-identified individuals do, so that their sex is congruent with their gender identity. The rate of intersex adults that are also trans* isn't well known. In Sharon's 2003 study, nearly 25% of her interviewees were living in a gender different from their medical sex assignment.

Medical debates about the efficacy of surgical and hormonal sex assignment of intersex children quickly followed the headlines of Reimer's male identity and the apparent failure of Dr. Money's optimal gender rearing model (Preves 2005). These debates were quite polarized and framed the issue at hand as whether to perform *immediate* or *delayed* medical treatment; that is, these discussions focused on *when* and not *whether* to intervene, and many physicians felt that they were being put on the defensive. In more recent years, some physicians have begun to advocate watchful waiting rather than emergency medical intervention in an appeal for additional and more systematic longitudinal research on intersex children and adults.

This debate came to a head in 2000 and was described as a crisis in medicine by physicians who had formerly considered this treatment to be in the best interest of intersex children and their families. The North American Task Force on Intersex was formed in 2000 with the intention of open and interdisciplinary collaboration and an aim to reach some consensus on best practices in intersex care. The membership of the task force included key players in the American Academy of Pediatrics and ISNA, as well as scholars and clinicians in many related fields (Preves 2005). While the task force was not long-lived, some of the conversations were, ultimately leading to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) issuing a program announcement in 2001 for funding dedicated to new and continued research on intersex. Well over a decade later, the NIH continues to dedicate resources to and requests

for research on culturally competent care for intersex people and their families.

As ISNA sought credibility in medical circles by shedding its former confrontational "Hermaphrodites with Attitude" activism, it retooled itself to put forth an image more conducive to collaboration with medical providers. This included the publication of its new newsletter, *ISNA News,* in 2001, in place of its more radical *Hermaphrodites with Attitude* publication (Intersex Society of North America 2001). In addition to the newsletter's change in title, *ISNA News* moved away from the personal stories and humor that were commonplace in *Hermaphrodites with Attitude* to more professional and organizational concerns such as financial reports, profiles of board members, and continued coverage of medical conferences and research. This shift mirrors an overarching change within the intersex movement at the beginning of the twenty-first century when at least some intersex activists and doctors began working alongside one another for change rather than against each other as political adversaries. A mere four years after picketing outside of such conventions, Cheryl Chase began to be featured as an invited keynote speaker at prominent medical conventions (Preves 2005).

ISNA distanced itself even further from a narrative of personal medical trauma when Chase stepped down as the executive director and a non-intersex medical sociologist, Monica Casper, took the helm for one year, from 2003 to 2004. Chase stepped back in to serve as ISNA's executive director in 2004 until ISNA closed down in 2008. During her time at ISNA, Casper helped connect the intersex movement's concerns to other movements and communities, including women's health, disability rights, children's rights, sexual rights, and reproductive rights. She also helped expand ISNA's Medical Advisory Board, on which Sharon served from 2005 to 2008.

How Intersex Became a "Disorder of Sex Development": Terminological Tensions, 2004–2014

In October 2005, a few years before ISNA ceased operations, two medical providers convened a meeting in Chicago of fifty experts on intersex from around the world. This international group of experts consisted of medical specialists from various fields and two intersex activists, including Cheryl Chase. This meeting produced the very first consensus statement on the medical management of intersex conditions, which was published in various scholarly medical outlets (see Houk et al. 2006; Lee et al. 2006). According to meeting attendees, the consensus statement, which was a revision of the earlier American Academy of Pediatrics statement in 2000 (Committee on Genetics 2000), was necessary due to medical advances in intersex care and the recognition of the value of psychosocial support and patient advocacy to overall quality of life (Lee et al. 2006). This new statement made a number of recommendations, including avoiding unnecessary surgical intervention, especially cosmetic genital surgery. The authors also questioned the claim that early surgical intervention "relieves parental distress and improves attachment between the child and the parents" (Lee et al. 2006:491). Although this statement was promising, there was still no guarantee that medical professionals would follow its recommendations (and indeed, few have).

A second recommendation of the 2006 "Consensus Statement on Management of Intersex Disorders" was the call for an interdisciplinary team approach to treating individuals with intersex traits (Lee et al. 2006). This approach calls for various pediatric specialists, including endocrinology, surgery, psychiatry, and others, to collaborate when making medical recommendations and providing intersex medical care. While this team model seems like a step in the right direction away from Dr. John Money's OGR model that dominated much of the second half of the twentieth century, in *Contesting Intersex,* Georgiann questions the ability of this team model to account for the voices of intersex people and/or their parents (Davis 2015). Although the goal of this concentrated expertise is to provide a multidisciplinary approach to intersex medical care, it may work to intimidate intersex people and their parents through the illusion that every concern has been addressed by a diverse group of medical experts.

Perhaps the most controversial component of the consensus statement is the recommended shift away from intersex language and all uses of hermaphrodite terminology. The authors of the consensus statement claim that patients disapprove of such terms, and they also allege providers and parents find such language "confusing" (Lee et al. 2006:488). In place of intersex language and hermaphrodite terminology, the authors advocate for disorders of sex development (DSD) nomenclature. The introduction of DSD language created new conflict in the intersex community, which compelled Georgiann to bridge her personal and professional interests in intersex by conducting a sociological analysis of intersex in contemporary U.S. society during her doctoral studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. As she first argued in a 2014 paper