

## INTRODUCTION

Whether or not people know it, they are always doing gender. From the way they dress, to how they talk, to how they carry their body, people are always performing their gender. How people present their gender is a reflection of who they feel they are. But sometimes, the signals are not clear. Within the United States, there are many people who do not fit into the categories of man or woman. They live outside these categories in a nebulous group of “others”. They are transgendered, transsexual, or intersexual. Living outside of social norms, society often stigmatizes these individuals as freaks or abnormal.

Those living outside the boundaries of male or female do not necessarily have to be stigmatized. Other cultures incorporate a third gender category that embraces greater gender diversity than the United State’s two-gender system. Recognizing various gendered expressions, a third gender allows individuals greater freedom in developing their gender identity without being cast out of society. The term third gender incorporates various gender expressions and is not meant to indicate a single type of third gender. Just as the categories of men and women are social constructs in that each culture has different gender expectations, so are third genders performed differently according to cultural norms. Some cultures do incorporate a fourth gender, as in the case of Mohave “two-spirits”. Male “two-spirits” and female “two-spirits” occupy two separate genders. Since the United States operates under a two-gender system, accepting a third gender is the next logical step. The purpose of this paper is to examine groups of people who have the potential to become a third gender in the United States. I look at transgenderists, transsexuals, intersexuals, and gender blenders as possible examples.

In this paper, I dismantle the notion that sex and gender conflate. Many theories of gender development exist, some arguing that biology has the greatest influence in determining gender while others believe that socialization holds greater sway. Through an examination of these theories, I discover the difference between gender identity and gender attribution. I also explore how gender operates in a patriarchal society. Then I establish the definition of third gender and support this concept through three anthropological examples from other cultures. The rest of this paper consists of investigating transgenderists, transsexuals, intersexuals, and gender blenders. I look specifically at gender identity development and how these groups uphold or dismantle the gender binary system. All four categories are weighed as possible third genders in the analysis section.

Used to classify and stratify, gender is both a social category and an expression of individuality. When society denies the legitimacy of individual gender identities that do not conform to current standards, third gendered individuals become alienated. By examining the possibility of third genders, this alienation can be reduced or even eliminated.

### **THEORIZATION OF GENDER**

Although seemingly straightforward, gender is actually a complicated, experimental social category. Imperative to social ordering and organization, gender is used to define and divide people based on a limited sense of individuality. The pervasive view today continues to claim that there are only two genders—man and woman—and that these genders correspond with biological sex. Researchers have found, however, that gender and sex are separate entities. The growing awareness of those who challenge

current gender categories—transgenderists, transsexuals, intersexuals, and gender blenders—also undermines the theory of gender dimorphism.

Gender dimorphism is the idea that there are only two genders naturally derived and necessary to the organization of society; everyone who does not fit into these two genders is considered deviant, abnormal, or indefinable (Herdt 1994). This philosophy, as held by present Western society, prevents the exploration of other genders. It taints anthropological studies of other culture's third genders, as outlined below. Gender dimorphism continues to prevail in Western society even though it fails to account for the experiences of intersexuals, transsexuals, transgenderists, or gender blenders. Herdt attributes this to the "powerful hegemony of the reproductive-dimorphism paradigm in the biomedical sciences" (p. 53). According to this hegemonic viewpoint, sex is the distinguishing mark that facilitates reproduction, and gender is simply a reflection of this biological function. There are two genders, in other words, so that people know who to mate with.

Recently, sociologists, sexologists, anthropologists, and feminists have begun to distinguish sex from gender. Sex is defined as the biological, anatomical identity of an individual classified as male or female. Through this definition, sex is identified through the primary characteristics of testicles or ovaries and the secondary characteristics such as body hair or voice. Sex, however, is not as straightforward as this initial identification. In the 1950s, sexologist Money developed the Six Sexes: chromosomal, anatomical (as described above), genital/gonadal, legal, hormonal, and psychological (behaviors and attitudes) (Raymond 1994). These distinctions are important in considering the cases of

transsexuals where the possibility of individual's ability to change sexes is questioned or with intersexuals where one sex characteristic may not match another.

Whereas sex is something you are born with, gender is something you learn. Gender is the social construction that puts people into the arbitrary categories of man or woman. Through their gender, people learn what behavior is appropriate or expected, how to present their gender, and how to relate to their world. Within each culture, these presentations of gender differ, proving that while sex may be universal, gender is culturally defined. Neither sex nor gender, however, is universally dichotomous. Third genders and intersexual individuals—those born with both male and female attributes—demonstrate this fact.

Given this information and diverging from the conflation of sex and gender, many theorists have come up with explanations of how gender is constructed. Some continue to believe that even if sex and gender are not the same, they undeniably correlate as “two sides of the same coin” as Money once stated (Blocking 1997:1). According to this theory, one must look no further than one's genitalia to discover how one is gendered and what is the ensuing proper course of behavior. In other words, one's nature determines how one functions in society. Similarly, Freudian psychoanalysts believe that children possess an innate sense of gender and mimic their same-sex parent's behavior in forming their gender identity (Devor 1989). This process is thought to be universal.

Contradicting these positions, many theorists point to the cultural variance of gender behavior proving that gender is not universal. Socialization, not biological sex, is the determinant of gendered behavior. In the 1920s Mead was one of the first anthropologists to support this theory of socialization. Concluding from her observations

of the Samoans in the South Seas, Mead recognized that so-called human nature could be heavily influenced by culture. Masculinity and femininity were therefore not determined by sex but helped mark sexual differentiation (Herdt 1994). Citing the impressionability of children for the first two years, this theory posits that how parents raise their children will help mold their ideas of gender presentation (Looy and Bouma 2005). Responding to their need to organize their world to make sense of it, and from the recognition that gender is important in their culture, children during these first few years attempt to conform to the gender they appear to belong to. They will also begin to attribute certain behaviors to the different genders (Devor 1989).

These two positions comprise the nature vs. nature debate of gender construction. According to the nature side, biological sex determines gender and it is universal. On the nature side, gender is fairly malleable, allowing parenting and socialization to shape gender.

### ***Formation of Gender Identity***

Gender can be broken into two aspects: gender identity and gender attribution. Gender identity is the sense of oneself that directs action and interaction and helps a person connect to the world. This aspect is an internal recognition of who one is and where one fits into society. Money “coined the term *gender identity* to describe a person’s inner sense of himself or herself as male or female” (Colapinto 2001:25). The significance of gender identity is especially poignant in narratives of transsexuals who claim a gender identity that is at odds with the gender society has attributed them.

The formation of one’s private gender identity begins early in childhood. The social learning theory of gender, also known as socialization, declares there is no innate

sense of gender. Children simply learn to conform to cultural norms as they are punished for certain behaviors and awarded for others (Butler 1999; Devor 1989). A sense of self, therefore, is culturally molded into what is acceptable or definable. Although there may be alternative gender identities, these lack language or outlet and are generally pushed to the sidelines and made invisible. Children learn to adapt who they feel to be (gender identity) to how they must present themselves in society (social gender). As Gagne and Tewksbury (1998) point out, “the individual cannot understand the self outside a cultural context, nor can she or he be recognized as an ungendered person” (p. 95). Thus, socialization has the power not only to mold conformist gender behavior, but also to affect how people view their gender identity.

Parents are powerful initiators of socialization as they have primary contact with their children during those first formative years. Social learning theorists generally accept that gender identity is extremely malleable during the first two years (Devor 1989). During this time, children watch their same-sex parents to learn what behaviors are appropriate for their particular gender. How they are awarded or punished for their behavior teaches children how they should present themselves.

For instance, when children are two years old, fathers tend to become very influential on gendered behavior. During this time, fathers spend more time with their sons offering a gender role-model for young boys. At the same time, girls feel the need to win their father’s attention and discover that they are generally most successful when acting in accordance to gender stereotypes (Devor 1989:39). Because of this punishment/reward system children may suppress who they feel themselves to be in order to please their parents. This can lead to the denial of a transsexual gender identity and

ensuing psychological harm and confusion. Another harmful effect of this two-year socialization theory is that it persuades doctors to “normalize the genitalia” of intersexed children and encourage the parents to rear the child in the corresponding gender (Looy and Bouma 2005:172). The physical and psychological harm of these surgeries will be discussed in the section on genital corrective surgery.

Other gender theorists doubt the existence of a central gender identity. Hausman (2001) believes “there is no central self, only the illusion thereof” (p. 7). Seeking to bypass the nature vs. nurture debate of gender identity formation, Hausman views gender as the construct of narratives that depict cultural experience and perspective. She wishes to view gender as a concept that is used to make sense of one’s world (Hausman 2000). Similarly, Butler (1999) claims gender is simply performative: gender is not about being who you are but rather “gender is always a doing” (p. 33). By repeating a set of acts, behaviors, or expressions, people perform their gender. There is no central self guiding these acts. There is only the performance.

Whether or not there is an innate sense of gender identity, people are perceived to be gendered, by themselves and by others. An individual’s sense of who they are as a gendered self has profound impact on how they present themselves in society. Through socialization they learn the appropriate gender performances and construct a social gender. This may or may not correlate to the private gender identity they construct internally. What many sociologists and gender theorists find troubling is the impetus of gender conformity: “the fact that...the development of a core identity in either gender seems feasible does not imply that gender can be assigned arbitrarily” (Meyer-Bahlburg

2005:372). Rather than listening to children's sense of themselves, parents and society are forcing children into gender roles that conform to social norms.

### *Public Attribution of Gender*

Gender attribution is the other side of gender that has nothing to do with an individual's feeling of self and everything to do with how one is perceived. Gender attribution is the assignment of a gender to an individual by the public. This may or may not correspond with one's gender identity. Money believes that gender attribution is the public manifestation of the private gender identity (Blockting 1997). With androgynous individuals such as gender blenders, however, gender attribution can be problematic for those stuck in the gender binary system. This system is the manifestation of gender dimorphism wherein people only attribute a feminine or masculine gender. There is no room for alternative genders or ambiguous gender. People automatically assign one gender or the other to people they encounter. For transsexuals who are trying to "pass" they receive validation when people attribute their acquired gender to them. However, for those individuals wishing to live in the gray areas of gender, gender attribution can be troubling as strangers constantly ask them "are you a man or a woman?"

Lucal (1999) argues, whether or not we consciously mean to, we are all constantly "doing" gender. How we present ourselves indicates to others what our gender is and therefore where we fit in the social order (p. 784). It is natural to present a gender and natural to attribute a gender. In a society that relies on gender to organize people into manageable categories, people automatically see gender. Some theorists even argue that gender is only formed in a social, public setting. As Butler (1999) explains, "gender reality is created through sustained social performance" (p. 180). It is only through social

interaction that gender is formed and legitimized (Gagne, Tewksbury, and McGaughey 1997; Gagne and Tewksbury 1998; Tewksbury and Gagne 1996).

The criterion for gender attribution is debatable. Due to the popular belief that sex and gender correlate—although this has been challenged in academic circles—the general public often looks to genitalia for signs of a person’s gender. In the late 1970s, Kessler and McKenna (1978), well-respected and often cited sex researchers, conducted a study called the Ten Question Gender Game. Participants could ask ten questions about an individual’s gender that could be answered with a yes or a no. Kessler and McKenna established a set pattern of responses regardless of the questions the participants asked. At the end of the ten questions, the participant guessed the gender. As a result of this study, Kessler and McKenna found that most people associated genital identification with gender attribution. In other words, once participants determined the genitals, they did not feel it necessary to keep asking questions to verify the gender. In a similar argument, Dreger (1998) argued that “whatever our physical make-up, none of us is fully a ‘boy’ or ‘girl’ until that identity is made for us by our family and community and embraced by us. One’s physical equipment is the signal, not the determinant, of gender identity” (p. 200). When deciding how to shape a child’s gender, according to this argument, one must look no farther than between the legs.

Access to this type of information, Devor (1989) claims, is limited, as people tend to cover up their genitalia according to the norms of human decency supported by U.S. culture. Devor points out that gender roles are what signal gender (p. 44). Judging by how one presents one’s gender through clothing, hairstyle, body language, or voice, people assume that gender and sex correspond. How you act is how people attribute your

gender. In this way, the gender binary system can work for those trying to “pass” as another gender because people will simply believe that you are presenting your biological sex through gendered actions. Therefore, one must change one’s gender role, not sex, to change one’s gender. This thought process reflects the notions held typically by children five to seven years old. By this age, children are pretty settled in their gender identity and are learning to attribute genders to others. At this stage, children “understand gender as a function of role rather than as a function of anatomy...[they] believe people may change their gender with a change in clothing, hairstyle, or activity” (Devor 1989:44). While children eventually learn that there is more to gender than hair or clothing, they do recognize an essential part of gender attribution; people attribute gender according to gender behavior or external features, not necessarily by genitalia.

Gender attribution comes naturally to most people and is not necessarily problematic. The problems that do arise come from the rigidity of the gender binary system, which does not allow individual expression or variation. Looy and Bouma (2005) believe that gender springs from a biological innateness that is then directed by society into categories determining impulses and perceptions. They also recognize, however, the setback of forcing people into two absolute categories that ignore the great diversity of gender expression. Although intersexed or transgendered individuals do not comprise the majority of people, they do challenge the binary gender system. Even when an individual expresses their gender in a non-binary fashion, their efforts often go overlooked. In order for his/her/hir expression to be validated, someone must notice it as different. Most times, people will automatically attribute the gender that most closely aligns with the gender behavior. It is very unlikely that a third gender will be attributed

to individuals because the general public has trouble conceptualizing such a category (Lucal 1999).

Not only do people assume that one is either one gender or the other, but they characterize certain behaviors with that gender. Gender differentiation is seen as an essential element of organized society—not only for division of labor but also for reproductive purposes. Money insists that there are gender differences resulting in reciprocity crucial to a healthy heterosexual relationship (Blockting 1997:1). Gender theorists, however, are challenging this notion, claiming that it is because society creates two genders that people see gender differentiation (Kessler and McKenna 1978). Since people are already seeing others according to the gender binary system, they draw a line between masculine and feminine behavior. Again relying on archaic theories of sex and gender, people claim that because this person is male, he will act in this manner. Kessler and McKenna contradict this belief by arguing that gender differentiation cannot be based on one behavior because gender behavior is not universal—even within a culture. Within a culture, there are as many different expressions of feminine and masculine behavior as there are women and men. Some behavior, typically attributed to gender differentiation, may not even stem from gender. For instance, dominance is typically associated with masculinity, and submission with femininity resulting in men acquiring more power. Devor (1989) found that dominant people tended to portray masculine behaviors and people with less power utilize feminine behaviors. She therefore concluded that power distribution causes masculine/feminine behavior, not the other way around (p. 50).

Gender attribution is natural in societies where gender plays an integral role in social interaction and organization. When individual expression is not allowed and

constricted to a rigid binary system, problems arise. People's alternate gender identities remain invisible and people see gender differentiation where it really does not exist.

### *Operation of Gender in Patriarchal Society*

Gender becomes especially troubling when one takes into account the patriarchal nature of the United States. Men hold the power and are the dominant force in society. Women become a backdrop, a marginalized voice, the Other. deBeauvoir wrote in *The Second Sex* (1949) that man is the subject, the One, and woman is the Other. Man is the assumed identity or gender or personhood; woman is what man is not. In her work with gender blenders, Lucal (1999) found that "individuals basically are assumed to be male/men until proven otherwise, that is, until some obvious marker of conventional femininity is noted" (p. 783). Society equates man with humanity while woman is the Other gender, the one that must be specified.

In their Overlay Study, Kessler and McKenna (1978) found that the penis was positively indicative of a man but the same was not true for the vagina and a woman. They also determined a tendency to lean towards male identification in general. Kessler and McKenna accredited these results to the androcentric (male centered) paradigm of U.S. society. Apparently, not only are people more likely to be attributed with a male gender, but the penis is unquestionably indicative of a male gender but it is a lack of penis, not possession of vagina, that distinguishes a woman.

To support these results, Devor (1989) found that people tend to attribute ambiguous gender behavior to a masculine role because man is the standard and has to make less effort to perform gender and because it is a safer assumption. One is less likely to offend someone or endanger their own well being by believing someone is a man

rather than a woman. Because the U.S. values masculinity, when mistaken for a man, the woman could feel complimented that she is exuding confidence and power—male attributes. On the other hand, it would be insulting for a man to be mistaken as a woman, making him seem less of a man.

Gender advocate Wilchins (2002b) further supports Kessler and McKenna's finding in a study he conducted among transgendered youth. When asked to describe a "real man" and a "real woman" one key component was having a penis and not having a penis. No one mentioned having a vagina or not having a vagina (p. 27). From these three studies, it seems that Freud's notion of penis envy has rooted itself in the American psyche when considering gender attribution.

Gender as a social category also oppresses women. Rubin, Herdt, and Hausman all argue that society constructs and enforces gender in order to preserve an unequal power structure that perpetuates inequality (Herdt 1994; Hausman 2001). By dividing people into two genders, one is invariably more valued in the gender hierarchy as the other is institutionally oppressed. Patriarchy is about who holds the power—men. Gender is used to prove that men are more capable and therefore more deserving of a greater share of resources, power, and representation.

"Passing" then becomes almost a political act where one can move up or down the social ladder by posing as the other gender. One either gives up or gains power when switching genders, which may explain why male-to-female (MTF) transsexuals are more accepted in U.S. society. MTFs abdicate some of their gender privilege when they make the switch, while FTMs may actually acquire privilege—if they are able to pass convincingly. At the same time, a woman putting on a man's role—as long as she does

not threaten any men's masculinity—is seen as a positive step towards progression and elevation. A man, however, is seen in a less positive manner: “a woman putting on a man's clothes is, in a sense, putting on male power status, whereas a man putting on women's clothes is putting on parody” (Raymond 1994:xxviii). It is harder for people to understand why a man would want to take on the lesser-valued role of a woman.

In the 1950s deBeauvoir discovered that woman was the Other, representing everything that was not man. Men in patriarchy, leaving women as the gendered object, monopolized the position of subject. This mindset was reaffirmed in the 1970s with gender attribution tests resulting in penised men and not-penised women. Even today, the gender hierarchy in patriarchy continues, lifting men to higher planes of power and leaving women in the same, marginalized category they have been relegated to.

### **DEFINITION OF THIRD GENDER**

In a world so focused on categorizing people and forcing them into gender boxes, it is hard to imagine any alternatives. It is difficult for people in the United States to imagine genders other than man and woman. Try mentioning a third gender to an anonymous, random person and watch the perplexed or incredulous look that ensues. Third genders are not part of current United States culture. The gender binary system dominates, forcing any alternative gender expressions into the margins along with other so-called abnormal or deviant behavior. As Wilchins (2002) points out, “the problem is not that we don't know the gender system well enough but that we know it all too well and can't envision any alternative” (p. 13). Yet, many cultures, like the Navajo in North America or the Sambia in Papua New Guinea, incorporate a third gender. By allowing for a third, or even fourth gender, cultures embrace varying gender expressions, giving

them an established place in society. This is not equivalent to dismantling gender completely—just gender dimorphism. Some activists have gone so far as to suggest that one way to move away from the trap of the gender binary system is to no longer require gender identification on official documents such as driver's licenses, passports, or surveys (Fausto-Sterling 2000:23). A third gender would not be as radical a transition.

A third gender is an accepted cultural category in societies not operating under the theory of gender dimorphism. Just like the other two genders, third genders are assigned gendered behavior and social roles. This other gender is entered into the local language so that it too becomes an identity subject. One can say, "I am a (insert third gender title)" just as easily as another can say "I am a man" or "I am a woman." Thus, not only does a third gender represent a cultural category but a gender identity. Third genders cannot be equated with "passing": the first is an accepted category while the second is enveloped in secrecy. Individuals who are "passing" are not trying to create an alternative gender but blend in with the mainstream and avoid the marginalization of the third-gendered (Herdt 1994).

Third genders can be constructed simply by the recognition and acceptance of varying gender expressions. By embracing these alternatives rather than scorning them, a society can create a new gender category. This is not an easy task, because "gender is neither fixed nor static, but like all social institutions, it is resistant to change" (Gagne and Tewksbury 1998:82). Although individuals have been expressing and even self-identifying as third genders in the U.S. for many years, they have not achieved a legitimized social category. It is essential to the creation of a third gender category that it be validated by the social experience, just like any other gender (Gagne, Tewksbury, and

McGaughey 1997). After all, gender can only be formed under the limits of a culture's language and construction of reality (Butler 1999:13). Only when a culture creates language and shifts its gender paradigm can it include a third gender category.

An essential element of the third gender is transformation. According to the Butler's (1999) theory of performative gender, gender transformation is found in the "failure to repeat" the stylized acts that have been arbitrarily strung together to form gender (p. 179). By breaking the pattern, one can establish a new gender. Herdt (1994), one of the most outspoken theorists for third genders and third sexes, emphasizes transformation as part of the experience of becoming third gendered/sexed. To become a third sex, one must retain either an ambiguity of genitals found in intersexed individuals or change one's genitals through acts such as castration. Similarly, becoming third gendered involves a change in gender role. Only the issue of third gender will be considered in the rest of this paper.

Standing in the way of the United States' acceptance of a third gender is its insistence that a person's sex is primarily a function of reproduction and their gender is inextricably linked with this function. As long as the United States holds onto this view, a third gender cannot be introduced. With third genders, there is no necessary link between sex and reproduction and their social roles. Furthermore, for most of its history, the United States maintained that a person's sex/gender must remain the same throughout their lifetime. This social belief thwarts the transformative nature of third genders that is so vital to their construction (Herdt 1994). There is hope, however, in the growing acceptance of transsexuals and sex reassignment surgeries. Currently, the United States is starting to allow transsexuals to change their gender/sex even though it is not willing to

alter the gender categories (Herdt 1994). This new trend is breaking down the notion that gender must remain static throughout one's lifetime.

### **ANTHROPOLOGICAL EXAMPLES OF THIRD GENDERS**

While the United States' willingness to adopt a third gender category is currently nebulous, many other cultures have embraced the category. Mostly found in non-western cultures, third gender categories have existed for many centuries. They are often an integral part of a society's culture, playing pivotal economic or religious roles. Third genders include transgenderists, transsexuals, and intersexuals, often blurring the lines between these classifications. In this paper, three examples will be briefly examined in order to portray how third genders operate within each society.

#### ***Two-Spirits in North America***

"Two-Spirits" is an overarching term to describe third and fourth genders found in many Native American cultures. It refers to those dressing and doing the work of the opposite gender and can include intersexuals. In the past, anthropologists called "two-spirits" *berdache*. This term, however, has negative connotations as it was originally used to describe eunuchs or slaves, pointing to their "effeminacy and celibacy, as well as cowardice..." (Havilan et al. 2005:138). Roscoe (1994) documented male "two-spirits" in approximately 150 North American cultures. Female "two-spirits" have also been noted but not as frequently.

An integral part of Native American cultures, spiritual powers and economic specialization mark "two-spirits." Male "two-spirits" did crafts and female "two-spirits" hunted (Roscoe 1994). Many Native American cultures see "two-spirits" as a natural, necessary category. Origin stories explain that just as men and women were made, so

were “two-spirits.” Individuals become “two-spirits” not because of sexual impotence or failure to fit into their assigned gender at birth, but because of their desire to belong to that gender (Roscoe 1994).

Levels of masculinity are not necessary indicators of a “two-spirit” status. One might assume that male “two-spirits” could be identified as men wishing to participate in feminine tasks such as raising children instead of going to war. This is an immense fallacy, however, as not all men participated in war while some male “two-spirits” did (Roscoe 1994). The identification as “two-spirits” is much more spiritual than simple gender role behavior. Among the Plains tribes, for instance, dreams were essential to establishing the identity of “two-spirits” (Roscoe 1994). Even if the most masculine man had “two-spirits” dreams, he would transition into his new gender status. Also, in many Native American religions, “the function is not to try to condemn or change what exists, but to accept the realities of the world and to appreciate their contributions to life” (Haviland et al. 2005: 125). Native American communities accept intersexuals and individuals wishing to change gender as natural. According to their beliefs, “it is the spirit of the child that determines what the gender of the child will ultimately be” (Haviland et al. 2005:125). If children feel that their true gender identity is “two-spirits,” then the community simply makes arrangements to accept the transition.

One of the main components of being a third gender is having an accepted cultural category. “Two-spirits” are not viewed as men or women but as a separate gender. This is expressed in their clothing style. While cross-dressing can be an indication of “two-spirits” status, some “two-spirits” wear the clothing of their original sex or develop a separate clothing pattern for their separate gender (Roscoe 1994).

Since “two-spirits” can be found in many different Native American cultures, it is important to note some of the different ways “two-spirits” have been accepted. For instance, “two-spirits” in the Navajo culture are called *nadleehe*, meaning, “being transformed” (Herdt 1994:424). The *nadleehe* include transvestites and hermaphrodites. They hold a prestigious position in society as head of the household. *Nadleehe* control family property, work on female crafts, perform the male role in religious ceremonies, and act as a mediator between men and women in disputes (Roscoe 1994). The Mohave “two-spirits”, however, live in a much more dichotomous setting. Male “two-spirits” are known as *alya* while female “two-spirits” are *hwame*. The Mohave “two-spirits” undergo rites of passage like other youths, transitioning from boy to *alya* or girl to *hwame* (Roscoe 1994). These rites indicate a change in gender and age. All “two-spirits” take on the names and reproductive roles of their new gender status, going so far as to perform simulated pregnancies and the birth of fecal fetuses (Roscoe 1994).

Comprising a broad group of third genders found in many Native American cultures, the “two-spirits” prove that there can be more than two genders in a society. As a third gender, they underwent rites of passage, developed separate gender roles, and fulfilled an essential niche in their culture.

### *Hijras in India*

Found mostly in North India, *hijras* are eunuchs and intersexual men who are classified as a third gender in their culture. Characterized by their sexual impotence, men are castrated in order to be accepted into their new gender status. Although mainly a category reserved for men, sometimes the *hijra* community accepts women who fail to menstruate. According to Nanda (1994) “the *hijra* as an alternative sex and gender role

has been maintained for well over a thousand years” (p. 405). There are approximately 50,000 *hijras* living in contemporary India (Herdt 1991).

Crossing religious and caste differences, *hijras* live both inside and outside the society (Nanda 1994; Nanda 2002). They live in their separate communities but perform essential social roles. Within their communities are *gurus* (spiritual leaders) and *chelas* (followers). Most *hijras* join the community in early to late adolescence after being raised in their families as males (Nanda 1994). The condition of intersexual children, is not always readily apparent at birth. It may take up to puberty for their intersexual condition to appear. This may explain why many *hijras* stay with their family until late adolescence. However, “*hijras* claim that any baby born intersexed belongs to their community and it is widely believed in India that this claim cannot be resisted” (Nanda 1994:386). Once parents discover a child’s intersexuality, the *hijras* assert their responsibility for the child.

Joining the *hijra* community is seen as a natural outcome for intersexual children. As one doctor told the parents of an intersexual child, “your child is not a man and not a woman. This is God’s gift” (Nanda 2002: 160). As a community, *hijras* perform at marriages where they bless fertility and at the birth of a male child (Nanda 1994).

Nanda (1994) describes *hijras* as both not men and not women, or men minus men and men plus women. They are not men because they have been castrated and therefore have no functioning penis. They are not women because they cannot have children, but they are plus women because they take on exaggerated feminine attributes, names, and sexual positions. Their in-between status is essential to their gender identity: “most *hijras*...do not take [hormones]...and their masculine bodies are (perhaps must be)

an important factor in their ambiguous gender identity” (p. 404). *Hijras* occupy a middle ground between men and women and therefore do not seek conformity in their bodies.

*Hijras* receive validation as a third gender category from Hinduism and their involvement with the Mother Goddess. Because of their sexual impotence, *hijras* are called to be devotees of Bahuchara Mata, casting off their impotent genitals to take on the power of the Mother Goddess (Nanda 1994). Castration or emasculation “is the *dharma* (religious obligation) of the *hijras*...” (Nanda 1999:15). This process involves the removal of both the penis and the testicles, but no vagina is constructed. In Hinduism, the Supreme Being contains both male and female organs, creating one sex (Nanda 1994). Therefore, everyone is thought to contain both male and female; hermaphroditism is revered. Also, according to Nanda (1994), “in some of these [Hindu] sects, male transvestism is used as a way of transcending one’s own sex, a pre-requisite to achieving salvation” (p. 376). These religious ideals pave the way for *hijras*’ acceptance in society.

*Hijras* are an accepted third gender in North India, described as not man and not woman. Living apart in their communities of *gurus* and *chelas*, they perform essential spiritual roles in society. Hermaphroditism found in Hinduism supports the continued existence of the *hijra* gender identity.

### ***Intersexuals in Dominican Republic and Papua New Guinea***

A form of intersexuality, known as 5-alpha reductase deficiency syndrome, has become a third gender in both the Dominican Republic and Papua New Guinea, Herdt (1994) reports. Individuals with this syndrome appear to be normal females at birth, displaying average external genitalia. Their internal reproductive organs, however, are male. Raised as women until puberty, when male genitalia develops, these intersexual

genetic males are then accepted as a third gender. Unfortunately, Herdt seems to be the only anthropologist studying third genders in these countries.

In the Dominican Republic, intersexual individuals are called *guevedoche*, or “penis at twelve” (Herdt 1994:426). This name comes from the development of a penis during puberty and the consequential gender role shift. At that time, they become third gendered: “*guevedoche* are not so confused as to forget that by sex assignment they were not male; that is why villagers call them *guevedoche*!” (p. 430). The Dominican Republic recognizes these individuals by their third gender title, not as man or woman.

Similarly in Papua New Guinea, intersexuals are known as *kwolu-aatmwol* (Herdt 1994). In this culture, it is also common to miss the intersexual diagnosis at birth and to raise the child as a female. Some intersexual children who never develop the male external genitalia, as happens in severe forms of 5-alpha reductase deficiency syndrome, are always considered female. For those whose penis does develop, however, “the change is from female to a third sex” (p. 420). Once their intersexuality is known, they are welcomed into the third gender, not forced to conform to a male or female gender.

These two cultures categorize intersexuals as a third gender rather than receiving surgery to fit into a two-gender system. Instead, the Dominican Republic and Papua New Guinea have found a way to accept these individuals as they are and give them a place in society.

### **TRANSGENDERISTS (NON-TRANSSEXUALS)**

Transgenderists are individuals whose gender identity does not match their biological sex. These individuals may seek to change their situation through sex reassignment surgery (SRS), may live with their incongruence as transgenderists, or may

create a new gender identity outside the mainstream that defies traditional gender definitions. “Transgender” is an over-arching category that covers various individuals such as cross-dressers (transvestites), drag queens, and transsexuals (pre and post operation). The motivations of gender performance behind each of these sub-categories differ. For instance, transvestites wish to explore another side of their gendered self and normally do so in the privacy of their home. Eroticism is often tied to cross-dressing. With drag queens, gender is a show and very public. Their purpose is not to pass as women but to parody gender. With transsexuals, on the other hand, the wish to be one’s true self is reflected in their attempt to pass as the other sex in public and sometimes seek surgery (Tewksbury and Gagne 1996). Transsexuals will be discussed in a separate section due the complexity of issues arising around sex reassignment surgery. For the purposes of this paper, transgenderists are individuals who feel their gender is different from their sex and often live outside society’s gender norms (Gagne, Tewksbury, McGaughey 1997; Gagne and Tewksbury 1998; Looy and Bouma 2005). They live in the gray areas of the binary black and white, and as such, their identity as a third gender has been discussed in much of the literature.

The development of a transgender identity is analogous to the development of conformist gender identity, but there are also important differences. Transgenderists look to their parents for clues on how to behave and how to shape their gender identity. Socialization influences their gender performance. What differs is that as transgenderists develop a stronger sense of personal gender identity, they find it does not correlate with their expected gender performance. In 1997, Diamond, a well-known sexologist and long-time opponent of his peer Money, published his interpretation of the four steps of

development of gender identity: 1) “same-different comparing” wherein individuals examine how they relate to the adults around them, learning that they match-up with the same-sexed parent; 2) “self-testing and niche searching” as individuals attempt to find where they fit in and if they are performing the correct behavior; 3) “decision-making and mental switching” indicates an individual has discovered that his/her/hir gender identity does not match social expectations based on their biological sex and must decide to either change their behavior or change their sex; and 4) “physical switching” when an individual has decided to change their sex so that it may match their gender identity (1997:11-12). Children who develop “normal” gender identities will stop after step two. Steps three and four are reserved for transgendered children.

Diamond is a well-respected sex-researcher who is known for his theory that gender is rooted in biological sex. One must understand this bias to appreciate his steps of development that ultimately end with the congruence of sex and gender. Diamond’s theory does not explain transgender identity development that results in an acceptance of a transgendered identity. For those not seeking sex reassignment surgery (SRS), Diamond’s model falls short. Gagne, Tewksbury, and McGaughey (1997) offer a different model of establishing transgender identity, one that ends with the acceptance of being transgendered—in between man and woman. In this model, individuals are told throughout their childhood that their feelings of gender not matching sex are wrong or perverse. This results in denial of their gender identity. Only when transgenderists find “that there are names for their feelings” are they able to begin to understand how they feel about their gender identity (p. 489). Finally, when transgenderists find others who have similar experiences, their transgendered identity is validated and accepted.

Alternative genders, such as those presented by transgenderists, are often mistakenly attributed to homosexuality (Gagne, Tewksbury, and McGaughey 1997). In current U.S. culture, people do have language for homosexual behavior; they do not have language for alternative genders. Therefore, people approach transgenderism from the concepts that they understand: homosexuality vs. heterosexuality. Findings from a 1997 survey of 1032 transvestites conducted by Docter and Prince, however, indicate that 87% reported heterosexuality. Just because someone presents an alternative gender does not signify a homosexual orientation. Alternately, a homosexual orientation does not necessarily result in an alternative gender presentation. Sexual orientation is part of a person's identity and many have argued that desire plays a role in gender identity formation. From the study cited above, however, one can conclude that sexual orientation does not automatically affect gender identity.

### *Transvestites*

In the case of transvestites (cross-dressers), gender identity and sexuality do overlap. Transvestites are men who put on women's clothing occasionally to express a feminine side of themselves; arousal is often caused by such action and cross-dressing performances normally conclude with masturbation (Gagne, Tewksbury, and McGaughey 1997). Forty per cent of respondents to Docter and Prince's (1997) survey reported sexual arousal and orgasm during cross-dressing. Other reasons cited for cross-dressing are "relief from the stress of the male role" and simply expressing their gender in a different way (Bolin 1994:458). The oppressive pressures of masculinity in the U.S. may explain why transgenderism in general is "three to four times more common in biological

men than women” (Looy and Bouma 2005:169). For male transgenderists, cross-dressing may be an escape from the social pressures of being a man.

Transvestites have often been associated with fetishism due to the sexual nature of their gender expression. This is a bit of a misnomer as the end desire or object of cross-dressing is not sexual arousal, although that may occur. Most transvestites aim to express their femininity through cross-dressing and see it as part of their gender identity. Indeed, 93% of transvestites in the 1997 survey reported they prefer complete cross-dressing as opposed to “fetish-like partial cross-dressing” (Docter and Prince 1997:5-6). It should be noted that Docter and Prince’s target group were people participating in support group activities, which tend to encourage full-time, committed alternative gender expressions. Members are often required to come cross-dressed even though they may normally only do this in the privacy of their home.

Whether or not transvestites have the same gender dysphoria—unhappiness with one’s gender—as other transgenderists is debatable and can vary from transvestite to transvestite. How transvestites view their gender identity may affect their sense of gender dysphoria. For instance, in a survey of 1032 transvestites, 80% felt they were expressing part of themselves while cross-dressing, while 20% said they were the same self, just different clothing (Docter and Prince 1997:5). Transvestites who express cross-dressing as a hidden part of themselves reflect a disunity in their gender identity and may tend towards gender dysphoria—especially since these people will be more likely to hide their cross-dressing. It has been suggested that those who display signs of gender dysphoria and feel that their gender and sex do not correlate are actually transsexuals who have not self-identified as such yet. This seems especially true of transvestites who

report feeling they are women trapped in a men's bodies rather than men with a feminine side. Sixty-six per cent of transvestites feeling trapped in the wrong body expressed a desire for SRS as opposed to 8% of transvestites with a feminine side (Docter and Prince 1997:8). In order to have SRS, a doctor must diagnosis an individual with transsexualism or gender identity disorder. This seems to indicate that transvestites seeking SRS should really be identified as transsexuals. Furthermore, they are much more likely to attempt "passing" in public as 41% of them have used a woman's restroom as opposed to 24% of transvestites (Docter and Prince 1997:8). For transvestites without gender dysphoria, gender and sex seem to correlate—it is simply the gender performance that changes (Tewksbury and Gagne 1996).

### *Destabilization of the Gender Binary System*

As members of a community that directly challenges the notion that gender and sex, or even gender identity and gender performance (as in the case of transvestites), must correlate, transgenderists have been posed as a possible third gender in the United States (Bolin 1994). They definitely do not fit into the binary system, as it is often unclear whether they are a man or a woman. Sometimes they self-identify as neither, both, or switch genders based on performance. Sixty percent of the 1032 transvestites surveyed by Docter and Prince (1997) preferred to identify as equally masculine and feminine (p. 7). Currently, there is no gender category that would incorporate such identification, leading the postulation that transgenderists may occupy a third gender.

One of the key elements of a third gender, however, is legitimacy within the culture. This is problematic for transgenderists as "individuals who seek to challenge this binary system of gender through enactments of androgynous gender or by crossing

gender boundaries, including masculine women and feminine men, are likely to be stigmatized, ostracized, and labeled mentally ill” (Gagne and Tewksbury 1998:81). Facing this degree of social criticism can force transgenderists into conformist gender behavior out of fear of rejection or even safety. It is questionable, according to Gagne and Tewksbury, if transgenderists possess the social legitimacy needed to truly challenge the gender binary system.

Even within the transgender community, people debate whether they should accept the social definitions forced on them and work toward conformity and legitimacy, or fight the system and remain individuals outside cultural categories. This debate is especially noticeable on the issue of the psychological diagnoses of transsexualism. Some wish to remove transsexualism/gender identity disorder from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, as it should not be seen as an illness needing medical correction. For those seeking SRS, however, a diagnosis may be their ticket to reconciling their body to their gender identity (Gagne, Tewksbury, and McGaughey 1997). Furthermore, in many transgender support groups, individuals receive pressure to conform to gender standards through cosmetic and behavioral tips from successful post-ops (Gagne, Tewksbury, and McGaughey 1997; Mason-Schrock 1996).

Tewksbury and Gagne (1996), however, believe that it is not the transgendered individuals who need to be fixed to solve the problem of defining gender but it is “our cultural concepts and processes of gender designation” that need adjustment (p. 2). The pressures put on transgenderists in support groups to conform to social standards of gender and enable them to “pass” more easily simply reflect a culture that would rather support individuals learning to perform current gender standards—even if their sex does

not correspond—than to allow individuals to stand outside the gender binary system, threatening its legitimacy. According to Looy and Bouma (2005) “persons with intersex or transgendered conditions find themselves in a social context that demands both gender dichotomy, and harmony between biological sex and psychological gender identity and gender role” (p. 173). Not only are transgenderists only given two gender options—man or woman—but also they must find a way to conflate their sex, gender identity, and gender performance. Anything short of this, threatens the binary system. Perhaps this explains why SRS has been legalized rather than new categories of gender developed.

As long as sex, gender identity, and gender performance must all correspond, the legitimacy of transgenderists is questionable. As Butler (1999) points out, cross-dressing is an excellent example of people’s attempt to normalize or find the reality of gender. If one thinks the person is a man in women’s clothing, they will assume that the first is the reality and the second is the illusion (pp. xxii—xxiii). In other words, the man remains a man in women’s clothing, not an alternative gender.

### *Exploration of New Gender Territory*

Although many transgenderists have remained trapped in the gender binary system, some have found a way out. By creating alternative gender identities and refusing to conform, they flaunt gender diversity from within the culture. Some have created names for their new gender identities such as “radical transgenderist, ambigendered, or a third gender” (Gagne, Tewksbury, and McGaughey 1997:482). These new identities challenge the current system by refusing to fit into a two-category system.

An ambigenderist is “an individual who lives alternatively as a man and a woman...”(Gagne, Tewksbury, and McGaughey 1997:484). Refusing to settle into one gender category, these individuals explore fully both their masculine and feminine side. By traveling between the two established genders, these ambigenderists prove that gender is arbitrary. It clearly is not based on sex. These individuals do not attempt SRS or attend classes on how to “pass” in society. Their gender identity truly expresses their individuality and how they wish to participate in the world. Karen, refusing to be identified simply as a transgenderist, claimed, “I insist that I am ambigenderal. I claim all gender space, if you will, and exist within this spectrum at different points at different times” (Bolin 1994:465). Ambigenderists refuse to be limited by two genders, exploring the possibilities of both.

In a similar vein, radical transgenderists challenge the gender attribution system. Gender radicals wish to be recognized as transgendered. Their goal is not to pass but to challenge the gender binary system. Howell, a librarian, self-identifies as an obvious transgenderist: “I say ‘obviously transgendered’ because I make little effort to present either a feminine or masculine appearance. I lived half a lifetime creating the caricature of a man and have no interest in spending the other half doing ‘woman’” (2002:20). Unlike ambigenderists, however, radical transgenderists tend to have a more political motivation rather than one of personal expression. A radical transgenderist is one whose biological sex and social gender corresponds but uses cross-dressing as a way to express attributes of the other gender and to expressly challenge the binary system (Gagne, Tewksbury, and McGaughey 1997).

Other transgenderists not wishing to undergo the medical and legal technicalities of changing their sex often filed to change their names. Along with their new name came a new driver's license and sometimes the opportunity to change their sex—on paper at least (Gagne and Tewksbury 1998). The truly radical—or just plain fed up—refuse labels of any sort, breaking down the very notion of gender: “I’m tired of being labeled. I don’t even like the label *transgender*. I’m tired of living with labels. I just want to be who I am...I don’t need the operation to find my identity” (Rivera 2002:72). Together, this group of transgenderists seeks to challenge the gender binary system that attempts to marginalize people like themselves.

### **TRANSSEXUALS**

Transsexuals fall under the umbrella term transgender but are being considered separately in this paper because of the involvement of sex reassignment surgery (SRS) in their formation of gender identity. Transsexuals are transgenderists seeking hormone treatment and SRS to create a sexed body that will match their gender identity (Bolin 1994; Hausman 2001). In the medical world, transsexualism has become synonymous with gender identity disorder (Looy and Bouma 2005). Prior to SRS, a transsexual must obtain a doctor's diagnosis of GID, receive hormone treatments, and live between six months and two years full time as the gender they are transitioning into (Ames 2005; Looy and Bouma 2005). The time span depends on the clinic offering the surgery. This medical practice promotes the theory of gender identity that one's anatomical sex, gender performance, and gender identity must be aligned for there to be psychological health (Looy and Bouma).

Identification of transsexuals is gender specific based on the direction of transition (i.e. women transitioning to men are female-to-male or FTM and men transitioning to women are male-to-female or MTF). In the United States, MTFs are more common than FTMs (Herman-Jeglinska, Grabowska, Dulko 2002). In fact, at the University of Minnesota's Program in Human Sexuality, 85% of the clientele are MTF (Raymond 1994). Herman-Jeglinska, Grabowska, and Dulko suggest that the higher rate of MTFs may reflect society's willingness to accept women displaying masculine roles and its displeasure when men display feminine roles. This seems consistent with much of the literature examining the role of patriarchy in gender. These researchers, however, continue later in their paper to claim that FTM transsexuals are reportedly better able to transition, cope, and live successfully in their new gender than MTFs. One reason suggested in explanation is the shock of gender discrimination MTFs often have to face after their operation. Although they have thought of themselves as women before SRS, the public has often attributed them a masculine gender and treated them accordingly. The literature fails to explain, nevertheless, why, if FTMs are able to transition more easily, that MTFs are more common.

One coping mechanism for transsexuals preparing for and adjusting to SRS is transgender support groups. In some groups, all transgendered individuals attend the same meetings. In others, transsexuals separate into their own group. Mason-Schrock (1996) spent over a year sitting in on transsexual support groups, discovering how transsexuals developed their gender identify through narratives. He found that transsexuals establish accepted patterns of self-identification that have to be affirmed by the group in order to receive recognition as a "true" transsexual. Childhood is often

looked to for examples of gender dysphoria or general differences. In particular, cross-dressing—whether in reality or in fantasy—is taken as evidence of a transsexual identity. Transsexuals also look at childhood athletic ability as evidence of their authentic transsexual identity. MTFs tend to possess less athletic skill than other young boys while FTMs tend to display more skill than their peers. Denial of a transsexual identity can often lead individuals to express hypermasculinity. For example, 18 out of 65 transsexuals studied by Gagne, Tewksbury, and McGaughey (1997) joined the military.

The development of a transsexual identity is not only difficult within the transgender community, but even more so within the general public and medical field. It is within these latter two communities that transsexuals must find acceptance in order to transition into their post-operation bodies. In the medical field, studies are being conducted to find biological reasons for the feeling of being a woman in a man's body.

Looy and Bouma (2005) cite such a study:

direct examination of the brain has revealed that a region known to be related to orgasm, the central subdivision of the bednucleus of the striaterminalis (BSTc), containing about one and a half times more neurons in heterosexual males as in heterosexual females. In transgendered men...the BSTc is similar to that of a heterosexual, nontransgendered woman. (p. 170)

In a society whose goal is to create heterosexual gendered individuals—post-operation transsexuals found homosexual are deemed non-transsexual and a misdiagnosis; this study could be used by MTFs to support their claim of gender dysphoria. According to this study, MTFs really are women stuck in men's bodies. Other transsexuals do not rely on biology to explain their transsexualism: “to me gender is not physical at all, but is altogether insubstantial. It is soul, perhaps, it is talent, it is taste, it is environment, it is how one feels...It is the essentialness of oneself, the psyche, the fragment of unity”

(Morris 2005:89). For these transsexuals, gender transcends the body allowing them to alter their genitalia to reflect their sense of self.

### *Evaluation of Sex Reassignment Surgery*

The medical world reserves sex reassignment surgery only for transsexuals. SRS is not a service available for transgenderists wishing to live outside the gender binary system. According to Gagne and Tewksbury (1998), “legal transformations were expected to be complete and permanent, and thus were not available to cross-dressers or those wishing to live between genders or as both genders” (p. 96). SRS is only for those wishing to conform to current gender standards.

The legal status of a transsexual, including legal sex and marriage status, depends on the state. Traditionally, a post-op transsexual must divorce a spouse to prevent same-sex marriage, and their birth certificate is changed to reflect their newly acquired sex (Bolin 1994). Although this is positive in that it supplies transsexuals with a legal identity matching their gender identity, it unfortunately also upholds the gender binary system. An individual’s previous identity is replaced. They are no longer transsexuals; they are simply a man or a woman. If this happens for all transsexuals, the identity of transsexual would disappear.

Not all states, however, follow this legal practice. The Texas Court of Appeals ruled in *Little v. Prange* that SRS does not change a person’s legal sexual status because it does not alter chromosomes (Flynn 2001). Arguing along the same lines, Chiland (2003) claims that SRS will never truly transform a transsexual into a full man or woman because the chromosomes cannot be altered. At best, they become intersexed. SRS can change genitalia and alter hormonal balances, but so far an individual will remain

chromosomally the sex they were born with. A New Jersey Superior Court, conversely, believes that anatomical sex at birth is merely one component of sex and gender. This court upheld the validity of a marriage between a male and a MTF transsexual on the basis that sex is determined primarily by gender (Flynn 2001).

Regardless of the legality of SRS, many gender advocates have rallied against this practice, claiming it “is rooted in social intolerance for incongruity between sex and gender” (Tewksbury and Gagne 1996:3). In a society where one must choose between male or female, and sex, gender performance, and gender identity must all align, SRS is a way to solve the social crisis caused by transgenderism. Some transsexuals are grateful for the opportunity to live in a body that reflects their inner sense of themselves. Gender advocates, however, point to the societal pressures that may be alienating transsexuals from their sex at birth. Both Hausman (2001) and Raymond (1994) draw parallels between SRS and cosmetic surgeries. These surgeries conform bodies to social standards, whether they are standards of gender or beauty. Raymond argues that men may be more apt to undergo SRS, because they do not have an alternate venue to explore differing gender expressions; women have the feminist movement. This may explain the prevalence of MTF transsexuals rather than FTMs. Drawing on the issue of race, Hausman points out that people also do not choose their race. Yet, there is no movement for racial reassignment surgeries. Instead of focusing energy on transforming bodies to fit more comfortably in society, Hausman presses for a transformation of society that does not emphasize sex and gender.

Despite these arguments, transsexuals continue to seek SRS and the transgender community encourages the process. Wilchins, a transgender advocate, does not want to

stop the practice of SRS but alter the way it is seen. S/he believes that one should be able to choose one's gender and that SRS should not involve the psychological reviews that deem transsexuality a mental disorder. If this were to happen, Wilchins believes more transsexuals would undergo SRS.

### *Perpetuation of the Gender Binary System*

When first approaching transsexualism, it seems that it is a natural challenge to the gender binary system. Here are individuals transforming their bodies to conform to their gender identity. Society has traditionally flipped that process around. Transsexualism, by inverting the gender identity formation process, should be a logical candidate for creating a third gender. Once one reviews the literature on transsexualism, however, it becomes apparent that transsexuals tend to actually support the gender binary system. The only time they begin to challenge it is when they are in transition (i.e. a man taking estrogen injections and living as a woman) (Gagne and Tewksbury 1998). Once they undergo SRS, transsexuals disappear into the binary system.

Transsexualism cannot challenge the system because it is seen as a mental disorder. By requiring a psychological diagnosis of GID, the medical world is suggesting that this is a social disease that can be cured like any other (Raymond 1994). As long as transsexuals are seen as individuals needing correction, they are seen as abnormal. Through SRS, they are made to conform to social standards. Gender Identity Clinics have been instrumental in upholding gender-role stereotypes. They determine who is a real candidate by who can adequately pass as the other gender, from speech, dress, to sexual position (Raymond 1994:91-92).

Furthermore, society expects transsexuals seeking SRS to undergo a complete transition. There is little tolerance for transition periods. Even individuals who support a transsexual's transition expect an immediate change. One transsexual, when coming out to his boss, was told that that the next time he entered, he should appear totally and believably as a woman; no in-between presentation would be acceptable (Gagne and Tewksbury 1998: 92). The intolerance for gender confusion dates back to a law in the 1960s that required at least three items of clothing to indicate a consistent gender: "legally, at that time, one was required to wear at least three gender-appropriate articles of clothing. Otherwise you were subject to arrest" (Brevard 2005:234). MTF transsexuals would wear a feminine outfit but couple it with two men's socks and a male undershirt. Although the perpetuation of this 1960s law is difficult today due to women wearing similar clothing as men, its essence is still very relevant. Requirements for transsexuals' complete transition and this 1960s law reflect the strength of the gender binary system.

As discussed above with Mason-Schrock's research, transsexual support groups also work to support the gender binary system by teaching transsexuals how to blend in, how to perform their gender "correctly." By including instructions on make-up, voice, and general gender presentation, these support groups upheld the binary system's basic idea that there are only two genders. After all, a transsexual's goal is validation as a *woman* or *man*, not as a transgenderist (Gagne, Tewksbury, and McGaughey 1997). Indeed, transsexuals have been reported to express stereotypical masculine or feminine behavior, more so than genetic men or women. Herman-Jeglinska, Grabowska, and Dulko (2002) attribute this trend to transsexuals' deliberate efforts to become one gender

while they straddled two. Unlike individuals born with a sex and gender identity that match, transsexuals must prove that they are in the wrong body—to themselves and the medical world. To prove that transsexuals are more likely to display stereotypical behavior, Herman-Jeglinska, Grabowska, and Dulko conducted a study comparing gendered behavior among transsexuals and genetic men and women (their control group). They discovered two basic trends. First, control and transsexual men and women displayed gender roles that were congruent with their gender. Second, transsexuals were more likely to display extreme gendered behavior. For instance, MTF transsexuals scored more feminine than control group females. Similarly, FTM were “more extreme in their sex-role identity” than control group males (p. 532). While genetic men and women can simply point to their genitalia for proof of their gender, transsexuals rely on gender behavior to create their gender. Therefore, transsexuals tend to almost overdo their gender performance.

### **INTERSEXUALS**

Intersexual is a term used within academia, the medical world, and gender advocate groups to describe a collection of syndromes otherwise known as hermaphroditic. Due to the negative connotations of a hermaphrodite, intersexuals have adopted this more neutral term to describe themselves. An intersexual is a person whose chromosomes do not match his/her/hir phenotype and/or whose phenotype may not be clearly male or female (How Common is Intersex 2002; Phillips 2001). Just as transgender is an umbrella term, so is intersexed. There are seven syndromes generally cited as intersexual in the literature, although some argue that others exist. Four of these

will be discussed in this paper to illustrate the range of manifestations intersexuality can produce.

The first is Klinefelter syndrome, where an individual has an extra sex chromosome such as XXY. Infants may initially appear male at birth but with the onset of puberty will develop female features such as breasts (Looy and Bouma 2005). The second syndrome is known as Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia, wherein an infant has male external genitalia and female reproductive internal organs due to prenatal hormone exposure (Fausto-Sterling 2000; Looy and Bouma; Phillips 2001). Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome is a third intersexuality case. In this instance, everything outwardly appears female and normal, including genitalia; however, infants with this syndrome “lack the female upper reproductive tract...and have the XY male chromosomal makeup” (Looy and Bouma:168). Finally, 5-alpha-reductase deficiency, in its most severe form, results in female external genitalia and male internal reproductive organs because of a malfunction of an enzyme needed to make testosterone (Looy and Bouma).

Difficulties in measuring the occurrence of intersexuality are complicated due to the broad definition of this category. Not everyone agrees on what exactly counts as intersexed. Some have argued that only syndromes resulting in ambiguous genitalia should be classified as intersexual (How Common is Intersex 2002). This ignores the chromosomal and hormonal cases that are commonly accepted as intersexed. Also, many cases of intersexuality seem normal at birth (genitalia being unambiguous), but hormonal development at puberty reveals inconsistencies. Most of the literature estimates that intersexuality resulting in ambiguous genitalia appears in about one in every 2,000 live

births annually (Colapinto 2001; Dreger 1998; Phillips 2001; Preves 2003). If one includes all intersexual conditions—chromosomes, hormones, genitalia, and gonads—then intersexuality occurs in approximately 1.7% of live births annually (Fausto-Sterling 2000; Kaldera 2006; Preves 2003). Dreger finds the rate of intersexuality in the U.S. comparable with the rate of cystic fibrosis or Down Syndrome. In the U.S. alone, doctors perform approximately 100 genital corrective surgeries on infants with ambiguous genitalia annually (Colapinto 2001).

Intersexuality is not a word recognized by the general public. People may have a vague concept of what a hermaphrodite is, picturing someone with both male and female genitalia. This concept, however, does not fully encapsulate the intersexual condition. True hermaphrodites, those possessing both testicular and ovarian tissue, are found in only one in 100,000 live births (Fausto-Sterling 2000). Intersexuality is a much more common, complicated situation. Some intersexual situations are benign and only cause social confusion or aesthetic problems. Others, however, result in physical deformities that can be fatal if not treated.

### *Classification of Genital Corrective Surgery*

Genital corrective surgery has been the solution for ambiguous genitalia and intersexuality since the 1950s. Money's conclusion, after studying approximately 131 intersexuals, that all children are born without a gender but are raised as one, and that one's sex can be reassigned within the first two and half years, allows for the perpetuation of genital corrective surgery (Colapino 2001). Hausman (2000) summarizes the basic premises of genital corrective surgery as practiced today:

standard medical theory and practice for sex reassignment during childhood maintains that gender identity...develops postnatally and is not established

definitely until the child reaches about two years of age, that vaginas are more easily made than penises, that gender identity reflects sex assignment and rearing more than chromosomal and other physical factors, and that to be male without a penis is unthinkable in psychological and social terms. (p. 114)

Genital corrective surgery solves a parent's nightmare of trying to raise a sexually ambiguous child in a society constrained by the gender binary system. For many parents, this surgery offers them a relief from the anxiety caused when one's child is not clearly male or female. It is important to note that this surgery has been used on non-intersexual infants, expanding the principles to include those whose genitals have been traumatized.

One famous case is that of David Reimer, also known as the John/Joan case (Colapinto 2001). The Reimer case was Money's proof that genital corrective surgery worked. David and his twin brother went in for circumcisions when they were eight months old. Unfortunately, there was a complication, and David lost his penis. After numerous doctors told David's parents that there was little they could do, they sought Money's opinion. Money suggested genital corrective surgery, where David would become Brenda. Until he was a teenager, David's parents raised him as a girl. He also received therapy from Money every year. David, however, was always extremely uncomfortable with Money's therapy, which encouraged him to be a girl. By the time he was a teenager, David refused to attend his therapy sessions. Around this time, his parents told him about his past, and he switched back to his original gender.

Equally important to note here is the fact that genital corrective surgery is not the same as sex reassignment surgery (although people in the literature have often conflated these terms). For the purposes of this paper, the first term applies only to cases of intersexuality, while the latter only to cases of transsexuality. This distinction is essential

since the time periods and the goals of the surgeries are quite different as Turner (1999) explains. First, transsexuals must prove their condition later in life while intersexuals are automatically given a sex at a young age, often without their consent. Second, adults who discover that they are intersexual often want to remain in the intermediary, whereas transsexuals insist on choosing one sex or the other.

Genital corrective surgery often results in both physical and psychological trauma for the young children on whom it is performed. Phillips reports that the surgery often “causes pain, scarring and lack of sensation, and removes the chance that improved treatments may someday make them fertile” (2001:2). Also, the term can be misleading as the treatment really consists of much more than one corrective surgery. Intersexuals often undergo multiple surgeries, some because of natural progression in their bodies’ development, some from complications resulting from previous surgeries. The process also involves hormone treatment and therapy emphasizing correct gender behavior.

Kaldera (2006) describes the after-care needed for intersexuals assigned a female gender:

when artificial vaginas are constructed in children, they need to be “dilated” to keep from closing up. This involves the parent being forced to insert a plastic “stent” or phallus into the baby’s genitals on a daily basis for a long time. In any other context, this could be considered sexual abuse, and indeed many of us [intersexuals] are psychologically and sexually damaged by this procedure. (para. 11)

This type of treatment has lead many intersexual activists to compare genital corrective surgery with female genital mutilation (or female cutting) as performed in many African cultures (Chase 2002).

Many gender advocates and theorists are questioning current medical treatment of intersexuals because of consequent physical and psychological harm. The three main alterations are a greater emphasis on therapy over surgery, connecting intersexuals with

each other to lessen the feelings of alienation, and full-disclosure to the patients of the process they are going through (Colapinto 2001; Diamond 1997; Fausto-Sterling 2000; Lebacqz 2004; Looy and Bouma 2005). Traditionally, the surgery is performed between the ages of eighteen months and two years. At this time, the child cannot be part of the decision making process. Many have argued that parents postpone surgery until the child is old enough to understand his/her/hir condition and to make the final decision.

The classification of genital corrective surgery as “experimental” is also sought after due to the overwhelming lack of literature and studies on the effect of genital corrective surgery for infants (Dreger 1998). Diamond (1997) supports Dreger’s experimental label by pointing out that the surgery is very inexact. Individuals with the same intersexual condition may identify as opposite genders from others with the same syndrome. Furthermore, Lebacqz (2004) argues that intersexual children may be psychologically scarred, whether they undergo the surgery or not. If they do, they may suffer post-surgery trauma. If they do not, they will be stigmatized as different. All these arguments seem to support a reassessment of how the medical world treats intersexuals.

### ***Operation of Patriarchy in Intersexual Treatment***

Several scholars note an interesting trend in intersexual sex assignment: 96% of intersexual children are given a female gender (Hausman 2000). Considering the patriarchal character of U.S. culture, this trend raises some questions. For instance, what are the criteria used to decide which gender to assign an intersexual infant? Many doctors claim that prenatal hormone levels are the main determinant in gender assignment (Looy and Bouma 2005). According to evidence in the literature, however, the sexual functions of men and women in society may actually have greater sway.

Dreger (1998) reports alternative criteria doctors use to determine gender assignment. In order for a doctor to assign an intersexual infant with male chromosomes a male gender, the penis must be able to stretch to 2.5 centimeters. If not, the penis is reduced into an acceptable clitoris size; the child is castrated and then raised as a girl. Genetic intersexual females, however, remain female no matter how masculine their genitalia. Their oversized clitoris is simply reduced or removed. Doctors make this choice in order to preserve their reproductive functions. Doctors claim that it is easier to construct a functioning vagina than a functioning penis. According to them, a functional vagina must simply be able to incorporate an average penis—no sexual stimulation is taken into account. For a penis to be considered functional, on the other hand, it must be able to become erect as well as pass fluids. Gender advocates, such as Chase, have protested against these criteria: “for intersex specialists, male genitals are for active penetration and pleasure while female genitals are for passive penetration and reproduction: Men have sex, women have babies” (2002:209). This double standard of genital corrective surgery for intersexuals demonstrates the active patriarchy in U.S. society.

### *Reclamation of Intersexuality*

Starting in the 1990s, intersexuals became vocal advocates for ending the current treatment of intersexuals. Many intersexuals were angry about the surgeries performed on their bodies without their consent, resulting in loss of sensation and constraining the development of their gender identity. In response to the medical world’s insistence on assigning one gender or the other to intersexual infants, Chase founded the Intersex Society of North America. Born a true hermaphrodite, Chase possessed both ovarian and

testicular tissue in her gonads. After living eighteen months as a boy, she received a clitoridectomy and doctors removed her testicular tissue (Colapinto 2001; Phillips 2001). It was not until Chase was an adult that she discovered these facts about her past and started embracing her identity as an intersexual.

Currently, Chase argues against genital corrective surgeries on intersex children as it forces them into the binary system of sex and dismisses the possible alternative they pose simply by being born intersexed (Hausman 2001). Intersexual children weaken the binary system as they prove that people are not always born clearly male or female. What is deemed unnatural, Chase suggests, may simply be a matter of cultural construct: “being intersexed is humanly possible but (in our culture) socially unthinkable...[doctors] are required—both legally and by social norms—to assign the child as either male or female” (2002:207). Through the promotion of genital corrective surgery, doctors uphold the gender binary system. This way they at least maintain the pretext of the existence of only two genders. As Lebacqz (2004) explains, “the decision to allow only two sexes is precisely that—a decision. It is social construction just as gender is also social construction” (p. 228). These ideas indicate that intersexuals could be prime candidates for a third gender category if their bodies were not automatically “corrected” to conform to social norms.

Treatment of intersexual infants should not be seen as malicious, per se. Parents and medical practitioners often cite concern for the psychological health of the child as the primary reason for genital corrective surgery. Not wanting the child to be stigmatized as abnormal, doctors conform the infant’s sex to social standards in hopes the child will be able to live a normal life. Also, the birth of an intersexual infant can become a social

crisis. Until the doctor constructs the gender of the baby, people do not know how to treat the child—as a boy or as a girl (Turner 1999). Everything from color of clothing to the child’s name is based on the gender of the baby. As Money points out, “you cannot be an *it*...” in our society (Colapinto 2001:248). From the time of one’s birth, gender is essential to operating in U.S. society.

Raising a child with ambiguous genitalia is nearly inconceivable in the U.S. Thomas (2004) points to the difficulty for parents to raise an ambiguous child and the lack of study on the effects of children raised with ambiguous genitalia to support genital corrective surgery—with the child’s consent. In 1989, however, Dr. Christopher Woodhouse from the Institute of Urology, conducted a study of twenty male patients diagnosed with micropenis at birth. A micropenis is any penis under 2.5 centimeters. Woodhouse’s study found that all participants were heterosexual and reported satisfying sexual and romantic lives; one was even a father (Dreger 1998).

Intersexuals are speaking out, basing their arguments on studies like Woodhouse’s, claiming that individuals are capable to live healthy lives as intersexuals. While some intersexuals settle into a male or female gender, others feel their identity lies somewhere in between, expressed as pansexuality, as a third gender, or even as lacking gender completely (Looy and Bouma 2005). One can compare these individuals to transgenderists discussed in the “Exploration of New Gender Territory” section. Like many of her peers, Chase embraces her intersexuality: “my body is not female; it is intersexed. Nonconsensual surgery cannot erase intersexuality and produce whole males and females; it produces emotionally abused and sexually dysfunctional intersexuals”

(2002:213). Individuals, like Chase, prove that people can live healthy lives outside of the gender binary system.

Even while living as a man or a woman, many will still claim an intersexual gender identity. For instance, Diamond (1997) cites an example of one true hermaphrodite who received a clitoridectomy and whose parents raised hir as a girl since she was one and a half. Although s/he would prefer to live as a man, it easier to live as a woman due to hir constructed genitals. S/he self-identifies as an intersexual woman. Some intersexuals even challenge the legal attribution process by writing an “I (intersexed) or O (other) rather than F or M on legal documents such as diver’s license” (Turner 1999:473). By reclaiming an intersexual gender identity, these individuals have begun to break down the gender binary system.

### **GENDER BLENDERS**

Within the United States, there is a great variance in how people express their gender identity. As it laid out in this paper, some individuals express gender outside the current binary system. One group that has yet to be discussed is gender blenders. Gender blenders are individuals, generally women, whose biological sex and gender identity correspond but who portray gender role behaviors that do not correspond with this identity (Devor 1989). Devor coined this term; it is not readily used in the literature. In fact, most third gender researches haven largely overlooked this group of people.

Some researches may group these people under the umbrella of transgender, minimizing the challenge they pose to the binary system. As a separate group, they may constitute a third gender. Gender blenders cannot be classified as transgender because their category is based not on gender identity but gender attribution. Unlike

transgenderists, whose difference is based on a gender identity that does not conform to social standards, gender blenders are very secure in their feminine gender identity. It is other people's perception of their behavior, mannerisms, and dress that causes them to receive a masculine gender attribution. As one gender blender states, "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...It's the gender that I *appear* to be...that is most relevant to my social identity and interactions with others" (Lucal 1999:791). Since social interaction constructs gender, gender is always happening. People constantly attribute gender, even if an individual wishes to avoid this process.

Gender blending women are often mistaken for men. They learn to deal with these attributions, although that is not the purpose of their gendered behavior. They are not attempting to pass as men, simply to express who they are. As people cater their behavior according to the people they are interacting with, many gender blenders find people treating them as if they were men. Women are wary of them while men are less hesitant to be confrontational than they might be with a woman. Something as seemingly ordinary as going into a public restroom can be an ordeal for many gender blenders:

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 breast 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. (Lucal 1999: 789-790)

Devor (1989) suggests that some gender blenders unconsciously choose to portray masculine gender roles, because it makes it easier to move through life in a patriarchal society. People displaying masculine gender roles tend to command more respect, increasing the likelihood of professional advancement. Safety while walking down the street, also, is not as worrisome for men as for women. Lucal, a gender blender, confirms

Devor's hypothesis: "I ...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" (1999:788).

Obviously, there are advantages to be mistaken for a man.

Gender blenders provide a striking example of how gender expression can be so varied. One does not have to possess an incongruence of sex and gender to live outside the gender binary system. In a society where gender is so prevalent and yet so narrowly defined, it seems easy to step outside the boundaries.

### **ANALYSIS**

After reviewing the literature on alternative and third genders, I conclude that while gender may be a necessary part of United States culture, it is also potentially harmful. Since gender is both essentially arbitrary and also central to how people interact with each other, it operates on a slippery slope. Gender is arbitrary in that it is a social construction that often does not reflect personal gender identity. It is an organizational tool in that it helps separate individuals into understandable categories so that they can operate in an otherwise chaotic world.

People who refuse, whether consciously or naturally, to conform to social norms, throw gender attribution into chaos. People do not know how to interact with someone who is not clearly male or female, black or white, poverty-stricken or affluent. Preoccupied with determining these categories, individuals fail to recognize the person's individuality. This tendency may explain why society categorizes racially mixed people in the minority position and gender ambiguous people as male. Once people attribute a gender, race, or class, they know the socially acceptable interactions. Until then, however, everything is up in the air.

As human beings, it is natural to organize and categorize. There is no harm in this act. As people try to make sense of who they are and where they fit in, gender can help connect individuals through shared experiences that validate and legitimize their gender identity. Connecting with other transgenderists helps individuals develop their transgender identity, giving language and shape to their personal experiences. Gender can prevent feelings of alienation and abnormality by drawing lines of commonality between people. There is nothing wrong with them. They are simply operating in a bigger system.

It is this bigger system—the gender binary system—that creates the problems. When gender becomes not an expression of who you are but rather how you should act, then gender is a negative force in society. When gender fails to connect people through shared experiences but separates people because of genitalia, then gender is destructive. Gender needs only to be a way of giving language to personal gender identity and to make sense of the world: it is a lens with which to look through. Gender is not a determinate of behavior but an expression. People should define their gender, not be defined by it. The literature presents examples of both normal and intersex children who resent their assigned. Perhaps the issue is not whether nature or nurture determines gender, but that gender is assigned at all. Individuals should be given free range on their identity and allowed to formulate their own gender based on who they feel they are, not what biology dictates or society encourages.

The gender binary system is particularly problematic, because it limits the acceptable modes of individual expression. People should be allowed to develop their own sense of gender—apart from the binary system—and then make physical

adjustments to their sex if it is at odds with their gender identity. Instead, society forces people into either/or categories. There is no gray area, no individual choice. Only if people operate in these two categories are they legitimized in society. If their sense of self lies outside the two prescribed genders, they need to be fixed. In reality, however, it is the system that needs adjustment. People simply do not fit into two categories. In this paper, I have examined four broad categories of people not fitting into the feminine or masculine gender. This only scratches the surface. Everyday, individuals find new ways of expressing their gender. When society is able to find new language to express these new gender performances, it moves towards accepting third genders.

Gender identity is part of our overall personal identity. It is impractical, therefore, to call for the complete dismantling of gender. Gender is a necessary part of society that helps people form an identity and interact with others. People are too well trained to operate under gender's labels to live without it. There is no evidence that this is a viable option; I have not run across any evidence of a culture existing without gender. What I found is plenty of evidence that proves that a functional society can incorporate more than two genders, and that individuals express gender in ways other than what is prescribed by the United State's gender binary system. Although the U.S. may not currently possess a third gender category, individuals are laying the groundwork. One day, the United States may develop language that allows its society to embrace third gendered individuals.

When beginning my research, I hypothesized that transsexuals were greatest potential for a third gender in the United States. After all, they conform their sexed bodies to match their gender identities. This process inverts the accepted construction of

gender, where anatomical sex is the signal for gender. I simply assumed that because transsexuals challenge the process of gender identity formation, they must compose a third gender. What I found instead, however, is a tendency to conform to the gender binary system. Transsexuals are caught in gender dimorphism where there are only two genders. The only thing that changes is the journey. After SRS, transsexuals' sex and gender correlate, and they blend in with the categories of man and woman. In fact, transsexuals go to great lengths to conform to societal gender norms. Hormones, therapy, support group advice on behavior, and lifestyle choices are coordinated to ensure a transsexual's identity as either man or woman. The ultimate goal of a true transsexual is straightforward: passing.

Transsexual's diagnosis of a gender disorder further undermines their identity as a third gender. As mentioned in "Destabilization of the Gender Binary System," transsexuals seek this diagnosis so that they may undergo SRS. For transsexuals, SRS is the reconciliation of their sexed bodies with their gendered selves. Only through surgery can transsexuals overcome gender dysphoria. No longer trapped in the wrong body, post-op transsexuals feel at home for the first time in their bodies. SRS and the diagnosis of GID, however, prevent the creation of third genders. By labeling transsexuals as mentally ill and needing medical correction, the process of SRS perpetuates the theory that sex and gender correlate. As long as sex and gender are inextricably linked, the formation of a third gender is impossible.

Whenever the United States establishes a third gender category, however, transsexuals will be instrumental in upholding the new category. Transsexuals prove that sex and gender do not always correlate. Furthermore, they demonstrate that gender can

determine sex (as long as chromosomal sex is not taken into account) instead of the other way around. Transsexuals exemplify a new process of gender formation. If they were accepted in society not as mentally ill but as a third gender, they would turn gender construction on its head.

Gender blenders may be the transitioning category in establishing a third gender in the United States. People are more likely to accept gender blenders and not label them as freaks. Gender blenders do not challenge the gender formation process, as with transsexuals. Instead, their sex and gender correlate—it is the gender performance that puts them outside the binary system. Gender blenders can be accepted into society more readily because of their conflation of sex and gender. By serving as examples of differing gender expressions, gender blenders may slowly chip away at the binary system. They do not present a radical shift—just enough to alter the system. Gender blenders do not fit into the gender binary system because they do not conform to social expectations of gender presentation. Instead, they are mistaken for men. In reality, they are self-identified women who act and dress in a masculine manner. It is essential to remember that these women are not trying to pass as men; they are simply doing gender differently than is socially prescribed. Gender blenders serve as a stepping-stone for the formation of third genders in the United States. By challenging the social norms of gender performances, they are examples of how people exist outside the binary system.

The true gender radicals are transgenderists living in the gray areas of gender. It is within this category that people form third genders, even if they are not currently accepted as such in society. Ambigenderists and radical transgenderists challenge the male-female dichotomy of gender and invent language to describe their new gender

identity. Not constrained by the binary notions, these radical individuals transgress the boundaries of gender. They have already formed a third gender. Radical transgenderists and ambigenderists have assigned themselves a new gender identity. They do not claim to be male or female, man or woman, but someone beyond or between. By discovering names for their gender identity, they begin the process of becoming a third gender. They can identify as “third gender” not “man” or “woman.” What is missing now is social acceptance—the critical key to establishing a third gender.

Before transgenderists are accepted as a third gender they must be accepted within their community. Currently, too much emphasis is laid on conformity. Transsexuals are at the top of the transgender totem pole. They are revered by their ability to function in society, to become socially acceptable through SRS. Other transgenderists learn from their success and their failure; however, all they are learning to do is blend into the current system. Before any truly radical steps can be taken, the transgender community must stop trying to fit in. Individuals not aiming for SRS hold the true potential for leadership. They are not trying to fix a gender identity disorder but simply be who they are. Ambigenderists and radical transgenderists occupy a middle zone. Within their gender identity lays the prospective guidance or example of how to form a third gender. Once the transgender community recognizes its radical potential and steps outside the gender binary game, it will find its pure power. The transgender community has the power to change how the United States thinks about gender.

Intersexuals stand as a potent ally for transgenderists in the formation of third gender identities. Lead by activists such as Chase and Wilchins, these individuals are already reclaiming a gender identity that does not fit into the binary system. By insisting

on identifying as an intersexual—not a man or a woman—intersexuals demand recognition outside the system. Gender advocates have plenty of evidence of the physical and psychological harm caused by genital corrective surgery. Slowly, they are building up a case against the medical world and its insistence on molding intersexual bodies to fit in the gender binary system.

Medical evidence, however, also helps validate intersexuals' fight. Birth records demonstrate that there are living examples of how nature is already creating ambiguities. Intersexuality is a natural outcome; gender ambiguity is much more common than once thought. These ambiguities create a social crisis only in situations where male and female are the only ways to perceive people. If the medical world would leave intersexual children alone, instead of performing invasive surgeries needing extensive follow-up procedures, intersexuals would be able to form their own gender identity. But it is because intersexuals are stuck in the medical world that progress has not been made. As long as intersexuals' time and energy is spent simply on fighting for their right to exist, they do not have the resources to form a third gender. By reclaiming an intersexual gender identity in the public, gender advocates are making room for the birth of a third gender.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

While searching through the literature on third genders, I was struck by the lack of recent, concrete research. It seems that every source I read criticizes and reviews the sources already in existence. There is not enough people conducting new research. What people are writing is only theory. I think this field has more than enough theoretical writing—it needs field research. There are four areas in particular that warrant attention.

First, more anthropologists need to study third genders in other cultures. Heavy biases operating within the paradigm of gender dimorphism cloud a lot of the older research. Only a few anthropologists are writing about third genders, and they each have their special niche. Nanda is stuck in India and Herdt in Papua New Guinea. No one is collaborating or supporting their findings. Anthropologists must set aside preconceived notions of gender and begin building a stronger case for third genders. From what anthropologists have found, it is very evident that third genders are prevalent. Now other anthropologists must validate these findings through new fieldwork.

Second, researchers must conduct follow-up studies to determine the rates of satisfaction for intersexuals who have undergone genital corrective surgery. In my research, I was only able to find one study that examined men living with micropenises. One in 2,000 live births results in a child with ambiguous genitalia. Yet there is little known about people who live with ambiguous genitalia or people who received corrective surgery. Instead of stigmatizing intersexual conditions and automatically “fixing” the problem, people need to take it seriously. How do people feel about their genital corrective surgery? How many transitioned successfully into their new gender? How many suffered from gender dysphoria or gender identity disorder or a general alienation from their body? These figures are not known. Before doctors perform any more genital corrective surgeries, studies must examine their success rate, just like with any other medical procedure.

Third, gender blenders deserve more space in the literature. I was only able to locate two researchers writing about gender blenders—Devor and Lucal. Perhaps others write about this category under different terminology or group them in with the

transgender community. Gender blenders, however, merit their own category. They are not transgendered because their gender identity and sex correlate; with gender blenders the issue is gender performance. As a possible third gender, gender blenders need to be studied in more depth.

Finally, theorists and activists need to start working together if they ever want to establish a third gender. From my research, it is evident that their arguments align—it's just a matter of realizing their common ground. Gender advocates put into action what the theorists argue. Theorists validate gender advocates' agenda by printing it in respected journals. Together, they have the qualifications and the passion to create a third gender.

In conclusion, before the United States can accept a third gender, some groundwork must be laid. Academia must dismantle the theory that sex determines gender. As long as this view prevails, society will be stuck in a two-gender system that denies individual expression and deems those that do not fit as mentally ill. Also, society must develop language that expresses the variety of gender performances already in existence. People must come together at the grassroots level, defining themselves and their gender identity apart from the binary system. Developing language that expresses their gender identity will build a movement. Academia can then step in to give the movement validity and a voice. As individuals, people must learn to respect others in how they present their gender. They must learn not to ask the question "Is that a man or a woman?" but to see people for who they are. Only once people are able to do this can society incorporate the infinite individuality already expressed. After these steps are taken, U.S. society may be able to create a niche for alternative genders. Through

recognition and legitimization of the people already forming third genders—  
transgenderists, intersexuals, transsexuals, and gender blenders—society will give all  
gendered people an identity and place in society. Within this community lies the hope  
that one day every gendered person will have an accepted place in society.

## REFERENCES

- Ames, Jonathan, ed. 2005. *Sexual Metamorphosis: An Anthology of Transsexual Memoirs*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Blockting, Walter O. 1997. "Gendermaps: Social Constructionism, Feminism, and Sexosophical History." *The Journal of Sex Research*. 34(4): (4 pages). Retrieved January 6, 2006 (<http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>).
- Bolin, Anne. 1994. "Transcending and Transgendering: Male-to-Female Transsexuals, Dichotomy and Diversity." Pg. 447-485 in *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History*. New York: Zone Books.
- Brevard, Aleshia. 2005. "The Woman I was not Born to Be." Pg. 228-247 in *Sexual Metamorphosis: An Anthology of Transsexual Memoirs*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Butler, Judith. 1999. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. 10<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Routledge.
- Chase, Cheryl. 2002. "Affronting Reason." Pg. 204-219 in *GenderQueer: Voices from Beyond the Sexual Binary*. New York: Alyson Books.
- Chiland, Colette. 2003. *Exploring Transsexualism*. David Alcorn, trans. London, UK: H. Karnac Books Ltd.
- Colapinto, John. 2001. *As Nature Made Him: The Boy Who Was Raised as a Girl*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.
- Devor, Holly. 1989. *Gender Blending: Confronting the Limits of Duality*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Diamond, Milton. 1997. "Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation in Children with Traumatized or Ambiguous Genitalia." *The Journal of Sex Research*. 34(2): (21 pages). Retrieved January 6, 2006 (<http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>).
- Docter, Richard F. and Virginia Prince. 1997. "Transvestism: A Survey of 1032 Cross-dressers." *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. 26(6): (13 pages). Retrieved January 4, 2006 (<http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>).
- Dreger, Alice Domurat. 1998. *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Fausto-Sterling, Anne. 2000. "The Five Sexes, Revisited." *Sciences*. 40(4): (18-23). Retrieved January 7, 2006 (Academic Search Premier <http://web29.epnet.com/>).

- Flynn, Taylor. 2001. "'Transforming' the Debate: Why We Need to Include Transgender Rights in the Struggles for Sex and Sexual Orientation Equality." *Columbia Law Review*. 101(2): (392-420). Retrieved January 11, 2006 (<http://jstor.org>).
- Gagne, Patricia, Richard Tewksbury, and Deanna McGaughey. 1997. "Coming Out and Crossing Over: Identity Formulation and Proclamation in a Transgender Community." *Gender and Society*. 11(4): (478-508). Retrieved January 7, 2006 (<http://jstor.org/>).
- Gagne, Patricia, and Richard Tewksbury. 1998. "Conformity Pressures and Gender Resistance among Transgendered Individuals." *Social Problems*. 45(1): (81-101). Retrieved January 7, 2006 (<http://jstor.org/>).
- Hausman, Bernice L. 2000. "Do Boys Have to Be Boys? Gender, Narrativity, and the John/Joan Case." *NWSA Journal*. 12(3): (114-138). Retrieved January 6, 2006 (<http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>).
- , 2001. "Recent Transgender Theory." *Feminist Studies*. 27(2): (16 pages). Retrieved January 6, 2006 (<http://firstsearch.oclc.org/>).
- Haviland, William A., Harald E.L. Pring, Dana Walrath, and Bunny McBride, ed. 2005. *Cultural Anthropology: The Human Challenge*. 11<sup>th</sup> ed. United States: Wadsworth.
- Herdt, Gilbert. 1991. "Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India." *American Anthropologist*. 93(1): (199-200). Retrieved January 25, 2006. (<http://www.jstor.org>).
- , ed. 1994. *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History*. New York: Zone Books.
- Herman-Jeglinska, Anna, Anna Grabowska, and Stanislaw Dulko. 2002. "Masculinity, Femininity, and Transsexualism." *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. 31(6): (527-534). Retrieved January 4, 2006 (<http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>).
- "How Common is Intersex? A Response to Anne Fausto-Sterling." 2002. *The Journal of Sex Research*. 39(3): (8 pages). Retrieved January 6, 2006 (<http://firstsearch.oclc.org/>).
- Howell, Clare. 2002. "Stories." Pg. 18-20 in *GenderQueer: Voices from Beyond the Sexual Binary*. New York: Alyson Books.
- Kaldera, Raven. N.d. "Congratulations! Is it a Boy or a Girl...And What to do If It's Not so Clear: The Truth and Reality about Intersex Children." (brochure) Portland, OR: In Other Words Bookstore.
- Kessler, Suzanne J. and Wendy McKenna. 1978. *Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

- Lebacqz, Karen. 1997. "Difference or Defect? Intersexuality and the Politics of Difference." *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*. 17(1): (213-229). Retrieved January 8, 2006 (ATLA Religion Database <http://web26.epnet.com>).
- Looy, Heather. 2005. "The Nature of Gender: Gender Identity in Persons Who are Intersexed or Transgender." *Journal of Psychology & Theology*. 33(3): (166-178). Retrieved January 7, 2006 (Academic Search Premier <http://web29.epnet.com/>).
- Lucal, Betsy. 1999. "What It Means to be Gendered Me: Life on the Boundaries of a Dichotomous Gender System." *Gender and Society*. 13(6): (781-797). Retrieved January 11, 2006 (<http://jstor.org>).
- Mason-Schrock, Douglas. 1996. "Transsexual's Narrative Construction of the 'True Self.'" *Social Psychology Quarterly*. 59(3): (16 pages). Retrieved September 27, 2004 (<http://www.jstor.com>).
- Meyer-Bahlburg, Heino F.L. 2005. "Introduction: Gender Dysphoria and Gender Change in Persons with Intersexuality." *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. 34(4): (371-373). Retrieved January 6, 2006 (<http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>).
- Morris, Jan. 2005. "Conundrum." Pg. 77-97 in *Sexual Metamorphosis: An Anthology of Transsexual Memoirs*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Nanda, Serena. 1994. "Hijras: An Alternative Sex and Gender Role in India." Pg. 373-417 in *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History*. New York: Zone Books.
- , 2002. "Life in the Margins: A Hijra's Story." Pg. 159-166 in *Everyday Life in South Asia*. Indianapolis, IN: Indian University Press.
- , 1999. *Neither Man nor Woman*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Albany, NY: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Phillips, Helen. 2001. "The Gender Police." *New Scientist*. 170(2290): (5 pages). Retrieved January 6, 2006 (<http://web1.infotrac.galegroup.com/>).
- Preves, Sharon E. 2003. *Intersex and Identity: The Contested Self*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Raymond, Janice G. 1994. *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Rivera, Sylvia. 2002. "Queens in Exile, the Forgotten Ones." Pg. 67-85 in *GenderQueer: Voices from Beyond the Sexual Binary*. New York: Alyson Books.

- Roscoe, Will. 1994. "How to Become a Berdache: Toward a Unified Analysis of Gender Diversity." Pg. 329-372 in *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History*. New York: Zone Books.
- Tewksbury, Richard and Patricia Gagne. 1996. "Transgenderists: Products of Non-Normative Intersections of Sex, Gender, and Sexuality." *The Journal of Men's Studies*. 5(2): (18 pages). Retrieved January 8, 2005 (<http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>).
- Thomas, D.F.M. 2004. "Gender Assignment: Background and Current Controversies." *BJU International*. 93: (47-50). Retrieved January 7, 2006 (Academic Search Premier <http://web29.epnet.com/>).
- Turner, Stephanie S. 1999. "Intersex Identities: Locating New Intersections of Sex and Gender." *Gender and Society*. 13(4): (457-479). Retrieved January 7, 2006 (<http://www.jstor.org/>).
- Wilchins, Riki. 2002. "A Continuous Nonverbal Communication." Pg. 11-17 in *GenderQueer: Voices from Beyond the Sexual Binary*. New York: Alyson Books.
- , 2002b. "It's Your Gender, Stupid!" Pg. 23-32 in *GenderQueer: Voices from Beyond the Sexual Binary*. New York: Alyson Books.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “About Transgenderism.” North West Gender Alliance Portland, OR. Retrieved January 8, 2006 (<http://nwgapdx.com/trans.php>).
- Abramson, Paul R. and Steven D. Pinkerton. 1995. *Sexual Nature Sexual Culture*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Andaya, Barbara Watson, ed. 2000. *Other Pasts: Women, Gender and History in Early Modern Southeast Asia*. Honolulu, HI: Center for Southeast Asian Studies.
- Blockting, Walter O. 2005. “Biological Reductionism Meets Gender Diversity in Human Sexuality.” *The Journal of Sex Research*. 42(3): (4 pages). Retrieved January 4, 2006 (<http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>).
- Boellstorff, Tom. 2004. “Playing Back the Nation: *Waria*, Indonesian Transvestites.” *Cultural Anthropology*. 19(2): (159-195). Retrieved January 25, 2006 (<http://jstor.org>).
- Bullough, Vern L. 2003. “The Contributions of John Money: A Personal View.” *The Journal of Sex Research*. 40(3): (6 pages). Retrieved January 6, 2006 (<http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>).
- Cohen-Kettenis, Peggy and Stephanie H.M. van Goozen. 1997. “Sex Reassignment of Adolescent Transsexuals: A Follow-Up Study.” *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*. 36(2): (263-271). Retrieved January 4, 2006 (<http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>).
- Epple, Carolyn. 1998. “Coming to Terms with Navajo ‘nadleehi’: A Critique of ‘berdache,’ ‘Gay,’ ‘Alternate Gender,’ and ‘Two-Spirit.’” *American Ethnologist*.
- Golden, Carla. 2000. “Beyond the Impoverishment of Gender Boxes: Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman.” *Journal of Lesbian Studies*. 4(2): (3 pages). Retrieved January 6, 2006 (<http://firstsearch.oclc.org/>).
- Gottschalk, Lorene. 2003. “Same-sex Sexuality and Childhood Gender Non-Conformity: A Spurious Connection.” *Journal of Gender Studies*. 12(1): (35-50). Retrieved January 8, 2006 (Academic Search Premier <http://web16.epnet.com>).
- Herd, Gilbert, ed. 1994. *Third Sex, Third Gender: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History*. New York: Zone Books.
- Hird, Myra. 2001. “Appropriating Identity: Viewing Boys Don’t Cry.” *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. 3(2): (435-442). Retrieved January 7, 2006 (Academic Search Premier <http://web29.epnet.com/>).

- , 2003. "Considerations for a Psychoanalytic Theory of Gender Identity and Sexual Desire: The Case of Intersex." *Signs*. 28(4): (27 pages). Retrieved January 8, 2006 (<http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>).
- Kulick, Don. 1998. *Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Johnson, Katherine. 2005. "From Gender to Transgender: Thirty Years of Feminist Debates." *Social Alternatives*. 24(2): (36-39). Retrieved January 7, 2006 (Academic Search Premier <http://web29.epnet.com/>).
- MacDonald, Theodore H. 1995. "Accounting for Transsexualism and Transhomosexuality." *British Journal of Psychology*. 86(2): (2 pages). Retrieved January 4, 2006 (<http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>).
- Mantilla, Karla. 2001. "Gender Rights, Transgender Rights, Women's Rights?" *Off Our Backs*. 31(7): (5 pages). Retrieved January 6, 2006 (<http://firstsearch.oclc.org/>).
- Mines, Diane P. and Sarah Lamb, ed. 2002. *Everyday Life in South Asia*. Indianapolis, IN: Indian University Press.
- Nestle, Joan, Clare Howell, and Riki Wilchins, ed. 2002. *GenderQueer: Voices from Beyond the Sexual Binary*. Los Angeles, CA: Alyson Books.
- Parsons, Ceri. 2000. "Challenging Gender Categories." *Psychology, Evolution & Gender*. 2(2): (157-159). Retrieved January 7, 2006 (Academic Search Premier <http://web29.epnet.com/>).
- Rehman, Jamil, Simcha Lazer, Alexandru E. Benet, Leah C. Schaefer, and Arnold Melman. 1999. "The Reported Sex and Surgery Satisfactions of 28 Postoperative Male-to-Female Transsexual Patients." *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. 28(1): (9 pages). Retrieved January 4, 2006 (<http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>).
- Risman, Barbara J. 1982. "The (Mis)Acquisition of Gender Identity Among Transsexuals." *Qualitative Sociology*. 5(4): (312-325). Retrieved January 7, 2006 (Academic Search Premier <http://web29.epnet.com/>).
- Rogers, Arthur. 1993. "Legal Implications of Transsexualism (conference)." *The Lancet*. 341(8852): (3 pages). Retrieved January 4, 2006 (<http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>).
- Rosario, Vernon A. 2004. "Transforming Sex." *Studies in Gender & Sexuality*. 5(4): (473-483). Retrieved January 7, 2006 (Academic Search Premier <http://web29.epnet.com/>).
- Rubin, Henry. 2003. *Self-Made Men: Identity and Embodiment Among Transsexual Men*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

- Serano, Julia. 2004. "Skirt Chasers: Why the Media Depicts the Trans Revolution in Lipstick and Heels." *Bitch*, Fall, 1(26).
- Tauchert, Ashley. 2002. "Fuzzy Gender: Between Female-Embodiment and Intersex." *General of Gender Studies*. 11(1): (29-38). Retrieved January 6, 2006 (Academic Search Premier <http://web29.epnet.com/>).
- Towle, Evan B. and Lynn M. Morgan. 2002. "Romancing the Transgender Native: Rethinking the Use of the 'Third Gender' Concept." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. 8(4): (469-497). Retrieved January 6, 2006 (<http://muse.jhu.edu>).
- "Transgender Glossary of Terms." Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. Retrieved January 5, 2006 (<http://www.glaad.org/media/guide/transfocus>).
- "Transsexualism." 1991. *The Lancet*. 338(8767): (2 pages). Retrieved January 4, 2006 (<http://web7.infotrac.galegroup.com>).
- Trumbach, Randolph. 1996. "The Third Gender in Twentieth-Century America." *Journal of Social History*. 30(2): (497-501). Retrieved January 7, 2006 (Academic Search Premier <http://web29.epnet.com/>).
- Turner, Stephanie S. 1999. "Intersex Identities: Locating New Intersections of Sex and Gender." *Gender and Society*. 13(4): (457-479). Retrieved January 7, 2006 (<http://www.jstor.org/>).
- Wiederman, Michael W. 2001. "Boy or Girl? When Doctors Choose a Child's Sex." *Journal of Sex Research*. 38(2): (5 pages). Retrieved January 6, 2006 (<http://firstsearch.oclc.org/>).
- Wilchins, Riki. 2003. "The Problem with 'passing.'" *The Advocate*, May 13, (889).
- Woodward, Steve. 2005. "When Your Gender Doesn't Match You." *The Oregonian*, April 24.