Gender Identity as a Social Developmental Process

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1 Introduction

The process of establishing a gender identity, or the gender group that an individual identifies with, is one of the most ubiquitous psychological processes observed across cultures. Members of nearly all societies report a sense of belonging to specific gender groups, despite cross-cultural differences in languages, histories, and ideologies (Wood & Eagly, 2009). The field's understanding of the concept has evolved significantly in the last 20 years (e.g., Singh, 2016; American Psychological Association, 2015). Gender identity has long been thought of as a developmental process in which children come to understand their identity as a "boy" or "girl," and subsequently view gender as permanent. More recently, social psychologists have challenged this notion by arguing that children's identification with gender identities on the transgender spectrum is developmentally normative (e.g., Olson & Gülgöz, 2018; Tate et al., 2014.) Advances in social psychology have shown gender to be both a developmental phenomenon (meaning that there are periods of stability and change over time), and also a social one, meaning that the process of knowing and experiencing one's gender is intertwined with "interpersonal relationships, interpersonal attitudes, and social signaling" (Tate et al., 2014, p. 304). Public and academic sensitivity towards the experiences of people whose gender identities lie outside of the binary conception of man and woman has increased by large margins (Bowers & Whitley, 2020). These shifts require psychologists to integrate new advances into research and practice in order to more fully characterize the way gender is experienced and expressed among diverse populations (Fig. 1).

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Gender identity development research has a homogenous past. White cisgender scholars from the United States and Europe have largely focused on the experiences of white cisgender children in the United States and Europe, and the science reflects this narrowly centered viewpoint. As Tadishi Dozono (2017) notes, the approach taken in this chapter is to "not end in a place where one thinks, 'how strange the past was' or 'how strange those other genders are,' but rather to think about how strange and particular one's own contexts and assumptions are, amidst a vast array of interpretations of reality" (p. 426). By pointing out perspectives outside of the mainstream, such as gender structures within indigenous cultures, dominant theories tend to lose their strong grip on the field's narrow and deeply westernized conceptualization of the concept. Until very recently, the experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals were absent from mainstream psychological theories about how gender develops, although there is a long history of social scientists' documentation of (and often pathologization of) gender non-conforming people (e.g., Garfinkel, 1967; Stoller, 1968). To the degree possible, we rely on non-Eurocentric and indigenous perspectives whenever possible throughout the chapter.

The purpose of this chapter is to integrate scientific advances in gender identity development research with perspectives on gender that are typically marginalized. We argue that when viewed holistically, the process of identifying with a gender group is most accurately described as a social developmental process that is bound by individuals' unique cultural contexts. Although experiences of discrimination and minority stress often come along with gender identities outside of man and woman, we do not explicitly focus on describing experiences of prejudice and violence faced by individuals in marginalized gender groups (but readers should see Grant et al., 2011). Rather, we concentrate on advances in the field's intersectional

Fig. 1 Dominique Jackson (actress) poses with Cecilia Gentili (trans activist and community organizer). Photo Courtesy of Cecilia Gentili

understanding of gender identity as a persisting psychological phenomenon and the implications this has for policy and practice. Before we turn our focus to these contributions, we define some common terms that will be used throughout the chapter, as previously described by Best and Puzio (2019), unless otherwise noted.

- *Gender identity* refers to self-identification with a specific gender category (e.g., man, woman, or non-binary).
- *Sex* refers to anatomical and physiological differences between individuals that are typically described as male and female. Although commonly thought of as two dimorphic categories, an individual's sex can be expressed non-dimorphically across a range of factors, some of which include reproductive organs, genitals, and hormones. People who exhibit variation from male and female sex categories are typically described as *intersex* or as having *disorders of sexual development* (DSD),[1] which occur in roughly 1 out of 100 infants (Brown et al., 2020).
- *Cisgender* describes individuals whose birth-assigned sex category aligns with their gender identity (e.g., a person who was assigned as "female" at birth and has the gender identity of "woman").
- *Transgender* or *transgender spectrum* describes individuals whose birth assigned sex categories do not align with their gender identity (e.g., a person who was assigned "male" at birth and has the gender identity of "woman").
- *Gender role ideology* is the degree to which traditional social roles that gender groups are thought to occupy with differential frequency are accepted or endorsed (e.g., "Women should put effort into their appearance"). Gender role ideologies are typically described as varying on a continuum anchored at "traditional" and increasing towards "progressive" or "egalitarian" ideology. Gender role ideologies can be expressed by individuals, groups, or larger systems such as schools or governments.
- *Genderqueer, queer, gender non-conforming, and non-binary (sometimes "enby" for short)* are used to describe gender identites that exist between or beyond the gender binary. These terms can describe a multitude of identities that reject or do not conform to the gender binary.
- *The gender binary* is the notion that human beings and their behavior are categorizable into two mutually exclusive gender categories of man/masculine and woman/feminine, of which there is no in between or overlap (Drescher, 2010).

2 Self-Identification and Labels

Gender identity measurement has become more varied with the advent of research with transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) populations. It is common for researchers who specialize in TGNC research to allow respondents to write-in their self-identifying gender identity label. One reason for this is that past measures

[1] There is considerable debate around the appropriate term. Some individuals and activists believe that DSD is the most appropriate term to bring about informed medical treatment. Others find this term stigmatizing and prefer "intersex" or "hermaphrodite." (Drescher, 2010).

have been microaggressive toward TGNC people; therefore, giving the respondent the option to label themselves resolves that issue. Unfortunately, in order to make broader recommendations for the mental and physical health of TGNC communities, researchers need a way to group individuals who are likely to have similar experiences. Sometimes, self-identification precludes grouping, as individuals who have similar life experiences may not use the same label for their gender identity. Though the body of research with TGNC populations is growing, it is important to be able to aggregate across datasets for a clearer picture of the common experiences or problems these individuals face. Nonidentical self-identification labels can sometimes complicate that endeavor.

In the 2010s, more diverse terminology and labels for gender identity became more widely recognized (e.g., Harrison et al., 2012). For instance, non-cisgender people might identify as two-spirit, bigender, agender, genderqueer, gender nonbinary, gender fluid, gender variant, or transgender. Having a more diverse vocabulary for non-cisgender identities has multiple benefits. First, awareness of more appropriate terms helps to prevent microaggressions and microinvalidations on the part of researchers, healthcare providers, mental health professionals, and educators. Second, having a broader set of terminology increases the likelihood that people will find a term that conveys how they identify their gender. In other words, people who may have struggled to conceptualize their gender within the boundaries of a cisgender context have access to terms that are becoming more commonly understood. Finally, as terms are more popularized, it is more feasible for researchers to make informed judgements about people who identify with a specific term. For instance, understanding how the experiences of people who identify as gender fluid differ from those who identify as genderqueer could have implications for research on self-esteem and mental health. As the spectrum model of gender identity becomes more widely accepted, the collection of new labels and self-identifying terminology will continue to grow (Fig. 2).

3 History of Gender Identity in Social Science

Discussions of *dominant* theories of gender identity development should begin with an acknowledgement of the larger assumptions that these ideas rest upon. In this section, we will discuss several ways that previous theorists have described how and why humans come to understand themselves as gendered beings. Most of these perspectives describe processes in which individuals typically come to think of themselves as cisgender by using information available within their social environments. In other words, these theories often assume that becoming cisgender is a natural and ultimately adaptive process of human development. We wish to point out that these processes are only "natural" to the extent that prevailing ideological structures of gender present in our society are "natural." Stage theories, or theories that describe human development as a sequential process, such as learning how to crawl or form words, often presume there is a correct and natural course of human

Fig. 2 Noam Parness—a genderqueer community organizer and art curator poses at an event hosted by the Center for LGBTQ Studies. Photo Courtesy of Nivea Castro

development. The flaw in logic, then, is that dominant gender identity theories are often *teleological*, meaning they implicitly argue for a destiny or grand design to society's gender structure when in fact many individuals do not adhere to that structure. This issue is precisely why dominant theories fail to propose mechanisms for when humans develop gender identities outside of woman and man. It should be clear that the processes we describe in this section may indeed be typical, but typical is not synonymous with "adaptive" or "natural."

Until recently, psychologists have largely accepted two dominant definitions of gender identity that date back to the 1960s and 1970s. The first widely acknowledged definition, which refers to gender identity as little more than a psychological experience of categorizing one's gentials, was derived from Robert Stoller's *Sex and Gender*. Stoller (1968) proposed the concept of *core gender identity*, the idea that identification with a gender group comes from three sources: (1) a sense of awareness of one's genitals, (2) the acknowledgement of one's gender from members of the home environment, and (3) a "biological force" (p. 40). This definition characterizes gender identity as an awareness of the social meaning that is ascribed to one's genitals, which contemporary theorists see as problematic and in conflict with intersex and transgender children's experiences. Although Freud had earlier claimed

that sex and gender could diverge (see Freud, 1905, 1925, 1932), Stoller's (1968) case studies explicitly instantiated that sex and gender could exist as separate and not "inevitably bound" (p. vi) into the canon of clinical psychology. His documentation of TGNC individuals was revolutionary in its time, but with it came the explicit declaration that deviation from complete alignment between sex and gender was pathological. This notion of gender deviance or pathology has pervaded psychiatry and clinical psychology since, which we discuss at length later in the chapter.

The second dominant perspective, which defines gender identity as the degree to which a person endorses certain traits that society has deemed masculine or feminine, originates from Sandra Bem's gender schema theory (Bem, 1974, 1981). Similar to Stoller, Bem's conceptualizing of gender identity has occupied a strong, although less clinically widespread, place in the field's understanding of the concept. She drew from cognitive schema theories in her understanding of gender identity, or the idea that individuals organize information into mental templates (e.g., "buses that take children to school are yellow") from which they can then easily and quickly understand new information (e.g., "that particular bus is yellow, so it must be taking children to school"). According to gender schema theory, each individual has a "gender schema" in which they organize gender-related information, including information about the self. Thus, one could infer gender identity from examining the set of traits associated with male and female gender groups, which Bem measured with the "Bem Sex Role Inventory" (BSRI, see the *Measuring Gender Identity* section later in this chapter for other trait measures). Bem endorsed "psychological androgyny" as advantageous to psychological adjustment, such that individuals should aim to endorse both masculine and feminine traits.

The field's understanding of gender has expanded beyond a trait based perspective in recent years and now considers Bem's notion of traits to be culturally masculinized or feminized rather than characteristics that are essential to men and women. It seems unlikely, as Egan and Perry (2001) have noted, that individuals' report of personality traits at a given moment could reflect the complete psychological experience of self-identifying with a particular gender group. Despite these limitations, perceptions of "fit" within the traits associated with a given gender may still be at play in constituting gender identity as one piece of a larger puzzle. The core feature of Bem's contribution is the proposition that gender identity development takes place in a social context. The idea that individuals perceive and then integrate information about gender into their developing self-concept, rather than simply learn to acknowledge physiology, has had lasting value in the field.

Both Bem and Stoller's ideas of gender identity represent early thinking within the field of psychology. Current perspectives would describe the process of establishing a gender identity as "developmentally acquiring self-knowledge that translates into self-categorization as female, male, or some other gender identity" (Tate, 2014, p. 8), but we review these advances later in the section titled *Current Perspectives on Gender Identity*. However, the idea that establishing a gender identity is a developmental process has largely been credited to the stage theories of Jean Piaget (1983), Lawrence Kohlberg (1966), and Walter Mischel (1966), three highly influential thinkers within mainstream psychology. Their theories are often referred

to as cognitive developmental theories of gender development because of their focus on children's cognitive labeling or gradual recognition of themselves as cisgender.

Similar to Piaget's descriptions of children's gradual development of object permanence, or the understanding that objects exist even when we cannot see them, Kohlberg (1966) proposed that children come to understand gender in a similar, stage-like manner. Near the age of three, he proposed that children come to label themselves according to the gender label that others use to describe them (see also Slaby and Frey 1975). Then, between the ages of three and seven, children acquire what he calls gender constancy, or the internal sense that gender is fixed and immutable. For example, a child may use information available in their social environment to determine that "I am a boy. I'm a boy no matter what. Because I'm a boy, I like to do things that I see other boys do." However, Mischel (1966) used a behaviorist approach that is now referred to as a social-learning theory of gender development. Through this perspective, children's sense of gender is derived through social rewards (e.g.., "People say I'm a boy. People like when I do boy things. Therefore, I must be a boy").

Both Kohlberg and Mischel put emphasis on the role of others in facilitating the child's recognition of their gender, but the proposed mechanisms differ between theories. Kohlberg proposed that reaching the cognitive stage of gender constancy motivates gender norm adherence, whereas Mischel proposed that being rewarded for adhering to gender norms leads the child to make the inference that one is, indeed, the gender that others have determined them to be. These theories captured a great deal of attention among social and developmental psychologists who study gender, but they have since been questioned and challenged for two major reasons. First, they cannot account for gender variance in childhood. In other words, social learning and cognitive developmental theories do not explain children who develop gender identities outside of boy and girl, and they adequately explain children who resist their gender socialization (e.g., "People say I'm a boy. People like when I do boy things. But I like doing girl things instead"). Second, as we point out in the beginning of this section, both approaches implicitly argue for a teleological or "grand design" logic to the way gender operates. As Pascoe and Bridges (2016) point out, this logic collapses when an element of society's gender structure changes. For example, when more girls enroll in school sports compared to 40 years ago, social-learning and cognitive developmental theorists have no mechanism to describe why such a change took place. This is because both of these theoretical stances assume that individuals adhere to a naturally imposed gender binary, when in fact many people–including children–resist a binary conceptualization of gender.

Before shifting our attention to some of the more modern theories about gender development, let's highlight three components of the early theories that are still relevant to today's gender theories. From Stoller (1968) and Freud (1905, 1925), we learn that gender and sex do not always align. From Bem (1974, Bem 1981), we learn that establishing a gender identity is a dynamic interaction where individuals use cognitive structures of categorization to make sense of information in their social environments. And finally, from early developmental theorists Kohlberg and

Mischel (Kohlberg, 1966; Mischel, 1966) we learn that gender identity is developed over time and likely in dynamic interaction with an individuals' social context.[2] In turn, there are many components of these earlier theories that should be firmly opposed: the notion that gender identities outside of or beyond the gender binary are indicative of mental disorder, the idea that individuals select their gender identities based solely on a myriad of traits, and that gender is immutable after a certain developmental stage.

4 Gender Today: A Social Developmental Process

4.1 Two Major Models of Gender

Contemporary theorists propose gender identity development as a multidimensional process that considers the possibility of resistance *or* adherence to the gender binary, meaning that these theories take into account gender variance beyond the cisgender gender identity. They also separate aspects of gender that are felt internally or privately and the aspects that exist in the social world (e.g., gender categorization from others, such as being told "you're a girl," vs. a personally felt "I am a girl"). We first focus on Egan and Perry (2001), who propose a five-dimension model of gender identity. These dimensions are (1) knowledge of membership to a gender category, (2) gender typicality or degree to which one feels they are similar or different from members of the gender group, (3) felt pressure to conform to social expectations for the gender group, (4) felt contentment with belonging to this group, and (5) a sense of favoritism or superiority towards one's own group in relation to other gender groups.

The second major perspective we review, written by Tate and her colleagues (Tate et al., 2014; Tate, 2014), updated Egan and Perry's model to consist of five different facets. These are: (a) "birth-assignment to a gender category by a cultural authority," (b) "one's self-categorization into a gender group," (c) "one's recognition of and possible adherence to stereotypes and expectations associated with their own and other gender groups," (d) "one's expression of gender as embodied by the use of names and accouterments associated with gender groups," and (e) "one's attitudinal and cognitive evaluation of members of one's gender ingroup" (Tate et al., 2014; p. 303). The model presented by Egan and Perry is particularly geared toward children and adolescents, whereas Tate and colleagues' is more suited for adults and more fully integrates the experiences of transgender and gender nonconforming individuals. We position gender identity as a social developmental process by assessing the points of overlap and contrast in these perspectives.

[2] Freud also argued the point that gender developed over time, although more implicitly than Kohlberg and Mischel.

4.2 Dimension 1: Membership Knowledge

Egan and Perry (2001) suggested that a more dimensional model of gender identity could expand the reach of cognitive developmental, social learning, and trait-based theories and improve on their limitations. They refined and aggregated elements of these perspectives to create a multidimensional construct, starting with their first proposed dimension of "knowledge of membership in a gender category" (p. 451). Three-year-old Children's ability to respond to the question "Are you a boy or a girl?" suggests to Egan and Perry that gender identity involves a knowledge of gender that reaches "constancy" by age six or seven. The field has little idea of what is meant by gender "knowledge" in the first years of life, however. For example, does a three-year-old's response of "I'm a girl" reflect an embodied identification with girlhood or a learned response of giving the "correct" answer to an adult? This point is unclear. However, children's insistence on belonging to a gender group is seen widely across children who are raised in cultures that ask this question, and is seen in both transgender and cisgender children (Olson & Gülgöz 2018). Researchers have, however, documented differences in transgender and cisgender children's beliefs about gender constancy, as transgender children are more likely to believe that gender can change over the course of the lifespan (Ruble et al., 2007). Recognizing the near ubiquity of children's self-labeling, Egan and Perry theorized that the cognitive developmental process of early gender group knowledge is a fundamental component of gender identity.

4.3 Dimensions 2 & 3: Gender Typicality and Felt Pressure

Egan and Perry (2001) also drew from trait based perspectives, but with an important update to include not only how much a child engages in gendered behavior but also their experience of pressure to do so. They note that Bem's (1981) perspective was limited in that most individuals only show a moderate degree of gender-stereotyped behaviors, yet tend to clearly identify with a gender group. For example, a man may be unconflicted about his gender identity but also endorses traits culturally deemed feminine, such as nurturance for his children and putting effort into his physical appearance. However, the process of inferring gender identity from behavior may be slightly different for children. Drawing from Maccoby's (1998) research, Egan and Perry (2001) conclude that "self-observation of concrete, easily observable aspects of sex typing, such as activity choices and playmate preferences, may be especially important for feeling that one is a good fit with one's gender" (p. 453). Of course, children's sex typing is not a fully endogenous beahvior. Children are influenced by their familial and social contexts, which led to a separate dimension that takes into account the pressure to conform to expectations for their assigned gender.

4.4 Dimensions 4 & 5: Gender Compatibility and Outgroup Favoritism

Egan and Perry argue that children experience a felt sense of compatibility or lack of compatibility with their gender group after establishing membership knowledge (Dimension 1). This can be described as an experience of belonging to their gender, which some children experience in the negative sense of dissatisfaction or lack of belonging. They draw on social psychologists' work on group membership to argue that a sense of belonging to a gender typically fosters a sense of superiority, favoritism, or preference for that group (e.g., Tajfel & Turner 1979). These behaviors are typically observed in children's same-gender play and favorable descriptions of their own gender group, and are argued to be a dimension of gender identity at least during childhood.

Broadly, Egan and Perry's model made the contribution that children's gender identity is constructed over time through a multifaceted evaluation of how they are perceived by others, but also how it feels to be their gender and not another gender. Using these five dimensions as sources from which to make an inference, children arrive at their gender identity. According to this model, a child who has a solidified sense of their cisgender identity would (1) know that they are perceived as a boy, (2) behave in ways that are culturally expected for boys, (3) feel pressure to conform to gender expectations for boys, (4) feel compatible with the male gender group, and (5) experience a sense of favoritism towards boys as opposed to girls or another gender. This model leaves some limited room for gender variant identities, such as a child who has knowledge of the gender they are perceived to be but feels belonging, contentment, and a sense of gender group superiority when engaging in activities and traits associated with another gender, like Rey in our case study example at the end of this chapter. However, as Tate and others will argue, Egan and Perry's model can be expanded to fully encapsulate and normalize transgender and gender variant experiences.

5 The Gender Bundle: Tate and Colleagues

Social and personality psychologists have called for an updated understanding of gender identity that can integrate the experiences of trans and gender non-conforming people. Egan and Perry's model is concerned primarily with the child's developing understanding of gender *after* identification has taken place, particularly their felt compatibility with the gender assignment given to them by others. This assumes that the child will internalize the label put forward by adults, which we discuss in earlier sections as a teleological approach (assumes a "grand design") that does not capture a large portion of children. For example, some transgender girls "may have never experienced their self-categorization as male—even when treated in a social manner based on this category by family and close others" (Tate et al., 2014, p. 307). If a child does not identify with the gender label that others ascribe to them, the rest

of the model, which focuses on compatibility with this label, becomes difficult to apply. In fact, some children identify with being both male and female, and sometimes neither. Some estimates suggest that 1.3% of youth identify as transgender by the time they reach middle school (Shields et al., 2013), and this number is thought to increase to about 2.4% by adulthood (Tate et al., 2013). These individuals' experiences can guide psychologists to new understandings of gender, as Tate suggests by noting that "genderqueer/non-binary experiences invite theorists and researchers to consider the possibility that gender self categorization is a process of identifying to some degree with all available gender categories within one's culture" (Tate et al., 2014, p. 309).

Acknowledging ways in which the field was limited in its ability to describe identities on the transgender spectrum, Tate et al. (2014) developed the gender bundle (Fig. 3). This approach considers the components of gender to be a bundle, much like "separate objects that are bundled together in one package" (p. 304). By viewing it's components separately and not as interrelated dimensions, it becomes more possible to integrate the experiences of all children–transgender, gendernonconfirming, and cisgender–under it's umbrella. Importantly, Tate and colleagues intentionally do not comment on how the components of the bundle are interrelated or distinguishable from one another, as the purpose of the model is descriptive rather than predictive. It is not intended to infer one aspect of gender by simply knowing another. Gender is exceedingly complex, and this model allows for that complexity.

5.1 Gender Bundle: Facets A & B

Egan and Perry (2001) use the term "membership knowledge" to label the process of one's self-categorization into a gender group. Tate and colleagues separate this category into the membership group that one is assigned at birth (Facet A) and an

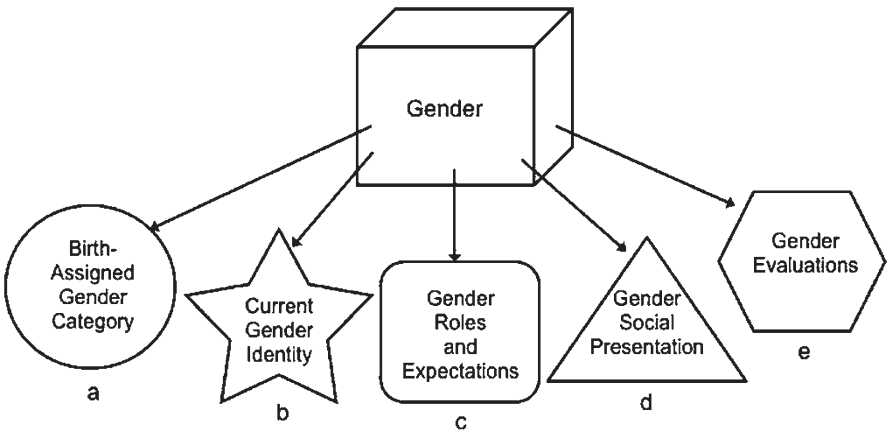

Fig. 3 The gender bundle. Tate et al. (2014)

individual's current self-identified gender label (Facet B). This broadens the reach of the concept of group "membership," explicitly acknowledging that membership can be experienced differently from an internal and external perspective. For example, although Rey (the person described in our case study) has a clear knowledge of being labeled male at birth, they understand that they internally are "just not a boy." By emphasizing Facet B as "current" gender identity, the gender bundle approach is able to consider that gender is not bound by age–it can change and sometimes does. Differentiating between sex assignment and current gender identity eliminates the need to focus so much on "awareness" of one's assigned gender category, a component that is better suited in understanding gender in children rather than adults.

5.2 Gender Bundle: Facets C, D, & E

The last components of the model require the individual to know Facets A (*Birth-Assigned Gender Category*) and B (*Current Gender Identity)* so that they might have reference points of their gender "ingroups" and "outgroups." Using the descriptions of Dimensions 2–5 in Egan and Perry's model, Facets C, D, and E (*Gender Roles and Expectations*, *Gender Social Presentation*, and *Gender Evaluations,* respectively) are largely self-explanatory and primarily concern how a person experiences gender in the social world and how their own gender is evaluated by others. Facet D, the social presentation of gender, is particularly new to gender identity models in psychology. This facet acknowledges that despite how an individual may vary on Facets A, B, C, and E, their presentation of gender to the world can be similar or altogether different from how others (or even themselves) understand their gender. For example, a transgender woman who is not "out" to her community may have a social presentation as a man despite an internal knowledge that she is a woman. These complexities were previously uncaptured by Egan and Perry's (2001) multidimensional model. Tate and colleagues' approach serves psychologists greatly in showing all possible combinations and idiosyncrasies within the gender bundle to be valid and within the range of healthy development.

6 Indigenous, Historical, & Cross-Cultural Perspectives

Scholars from indigenous and non-Western cultures have commented on how dominant theories do not capture how gender is and can be experienced within their societies. Indigenous peoples are those who, among other factors identified by Corntassel (2003), "are ancestrally related and identify themselves, based on oral/written histories, as the descendants of the original ancestral homelands" (p. 92). While writing this chapter, we found that there were few primary resources about gender development from indigenous communities themselves, but we rely on the voices of these scholars when it is possible. As a White and Black scholar

describing these traditions, we recognize that we are not adequate narrators about indigenous and cross cultural experiences. We direct readers to Driskill et al. (2011), Mirandé (2017), Tikuna and Picq (2016), for some exceptional research that speaks about indigenous and cross cultural gender minorities from scholars who are part of or deeply embedded in these communities).

Cultures with third gender practices have received much focus from gender scholars, so much so that their existence has been exoticized and "othered" in order to teach about gender diversity (Dozono, 2017). Our point here is not to do that, but rather to highlight the ways that gender is embedded in social life beyond self-identification and outward expression in ways that even the gender bundle model does not capture. In their ethnographic work with the *Muxes* of Juchitán, a third gender group in Oaxaca, Mexico, Mirandé (2017) describes the ways that gender identity can be experienced as a way of retaining cultural practices and traditions. Muxes are "biological males who also manifest feminine identities in their dress and attire, but they are not transsexual nor are they seeking to become women" (385). The muxes embody qualities that Western cultures associate with both men and women, and their gender is described not as between the gender binary but rather beyond it altogether. The notion of a gender identity that goes beyond the concept of gender itself is similar to the *hijra* third gender group of India (see Reddy, 2005). Many other indigenous cultures have non-binary gender systems, including the Two Spirit gender identity within many Native American cultures, the Metis of Nepal, and the Mashoga of Kenya (Driskill et al., 2011). These individuals and their communities cannot be understood with the blunt theoretical tool of a teleological perspective; their identities transcend what dominant models have described. Importantly, the communities described here show that gender cannot be easily encapsulated into clean components and reveal the many ways that gender development is articulated by the cultures in which children are reared. Importantly, indigenous gender systems show that the lines between gender and other social structures, such as religion and cultural traditions, can be complex and multilayered.

Historical perspectives challenge the concept of gender permanence, one of the most dominant gender identity concepts in psychology. In Albania, *burrnesha* or "sworn virgins," take on a vow of chastity and embody the social role of men in situations of economic hardship when males are absent from families. For *burrneshas*, the transition to manhood is motivated less by an internal desire to live as a man and more by economic necessity in a highly patriarchal system. Something similar, although motivated by different reasons, is seen in Iran where gender reassignment surgeries are sometimes performed as an alternative to homosexuality. Some experts suggest that over 150,000 transgender individuals live in Iran, and that many of these transitions take place in order for gay individuals to engage in relationships that can be socially deemed as hetersexual (Drescher, 2007). These practices reflect that gender can transform in response to certain cultural and economic contexts, especially those that are oppressive (Young, 2000). This shows the gender bundle model in action, particularly Facet D (the social presentation of one's gender identity) as a component of gender that can change as a response to one's context. The multidimensional model of gender identity development from Egan and Perry

(2001) is limited in this aspect, as these practices challenge the concept of reaching a fixed sense of "membership knowledge" and "compatibility" with binary gender groups.

Psychological theories about gender, such as those reviewed in the beginning of this chapter, are meant to capture what they propose as universal human processes. The universality of these theories is exposed as troublesome when set against the information that gender development can and does occur in incredibly diverse ways across human cultures. However, models like the gender bundle may be a step in a direction to more fully capture the many facets of gender and how they are contextually and culturally bound. When indigenous and cross-cultural perspectives are incorporated into the cannon of gender identity theory, psychologists using mainstream frameworks might begin to interrogate "how exotic, strange, limited, and narrow our dominant categories of gender are" (Dozono, 2017, p. 430).

7 Measuring Gender Identity

In the past, psychologists' measurement relied more on a schema of gendered traits and ideologies (i.e., trait theories) than on the individual's self-identification (for a review, see Forbes, 2017). However, gender ideologies continue to shift throughout time. These shifts affect the construct validity of trait and ideology measures, requiring social scientists to reevaluate how gender identity should be measured. There are some differences in how gender identity was originally measured, and how psychologists, sociologists, and other research and advocacy groups have revised the definitions and measurement of gender identity (Fig. 4).

7.1 Measuring Gender Identity in the Past: A Brief Review

The change in measurement of gender identity has happened incrementally over the course of numerous research endeavors and survey projects. The early research on gender measured the presence of certain "traits," or personality characteristics, that were deemed feminine or masculine (which we discuss conceptually under our section titled "History of Gender Identity in Social Science").

One of the most well-known measures is the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). Developed by Sandra Bem (Bem 1974), the BSRI provides a list of traits thought to be, at that time, associated with women (feminine) or associated with men (masculine). Feminine traits were characteristics like "warm," "affectionate," "loyal," and "likes children," and some of the masculine traits were "forceful," "analytical," "leadership ability," and "self-sufficient." The BSRI is a self-report measure on a likert-type scale for each of the gendered or androgynous traits. Bem's goal was to demonstrate that gendered traits exist on more than just a binary plane. Specifically, the participant's score on the measure would result in one of four labels that were

Fig. 4 A model's artistic interpretations of the complexities of gender binaries. Photo Courtesy of Dean Shim

not tied to the sex that the individual was assigned at birth: masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated personalities.

Boldizar (1991) created the Child Sex Role Inventory (CSRI), a measure that was intended to be "conceptually equivalent" to the Bem Sex Role Inventory. Instead of offering a selection of traits associated with gender identity in adults, the CSRI used words or phrases that are more relevant to children. On the CSRI, children reported their level of identification with characteristics articulating their self-worth, athletic competence, cognitive performance, and toy or activity preferences. Subsequent studies have used the CSRI for investigating the relationship between gender-role identity (i.e., level of masculinity and femininity) with brain volume (Priess et al., 2009), mental health (Belfi et al., 2014), self-esteem (Indhumathi, 2019), and career aspirations (Indhumathi, 2019). Other commonly used trait based measures developed during the seventies and eighties include the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) (Spence et al., 1975) and Children's Personal Attributes Questionnaire (CPAQ) (Hall & Halberstadt, 1980).

Another method of measuring gender identity has been through a respondent's endorsement of sets of traditional "ideals" for cisgender men and women. The Adolescent Masculinity in Relationships Scale (AMRIS) (Chu et al., 2005), along with the Male Role Norms Scale (MRNS) (Thompson Jr. & Pleck, 1986), and the Male Role Attitudes Scale (MRAS) (Pleck et al., 1993) require participants to identify with descriptive phrases and traditional stereotypes about how boys or men should behave interpersonally, including a focus on agency and assertiveness.

Likewise, the Adolescent Femininity Ideology Scale (AFIS) (Tolman & Porche, 2000), the Conformity to Feminine Norms Inventory (CFNI) (Mahalik et al. 2005), and the Feminine Ideology Scale (FIS) (Levant et al., 2007) measure the extent to which one endorses traditional stereotypes about how girls or women should behave, with an emphasis on physical attractiveness and emotionality. Measuring gender identity in this way would be in line with a trait based perspective, which we describe as problematic and outdated in the above sections. Such measures are better described as estimates of gender ideology.

7.2 Changes in Gender Identity Measurement

Gender identity measurement research has evolved over time. The trait based measures use gendered stereotypes that are outdated and, in some cases, negative. Due to an increasing endorsement of egalitarian gender ideologies among the public and academics, researchers have begun to think of new ways to measure one's identification with gender norms. Another shift in American culture that has promoted changes in how gender identity is discussed and measured is the increase of research on gender nonconformity, and on people who have non-cisgender or non-binary gender identities. Additionally, the diversity of gendered behavior for people who have same-sex romantic relationships has led researchers to reduce reliance on cisgender, heterosexualist gender norms with regard to gender identity measurement. Taken together, these cultural acknowledgments and increased cultural competency regarding gender identity have perpetuated the transition from binary classifications to spectrum-oriented measures.

The process of creating a questionnaire that measures all gender identities requires a multifaceted approach. The Williams Institute (The GenIUSS Group, 2013) recommends that researchers use at least a two-step method when measuring gender identity. Research questionnaires must include an item regarding an individual's current gender identity (i.e., male, non-binary, transgender female, etc.). Additionally, for the purposes of context, the questionnaires should also include an item about the respondent's birth-assigned sex (i.e., female, male, intersex). Researchers' understanding of the experience of people's gender identity is incomplete without information regarding one's socially-perceived, or socially-assigned gender identity; that is, the gender that others evaluate them to be. This is especially relevant for research purposed with furthering the understanding of the experience of people who identify as transgender or gender nonconforming (TGNC). Thus, gender identity measures should include items that inform researchers about non-binary gender identities.

Wylie et al. (2010) used a multi-step approach to measure gender identity and nonconformity. This approach included the two steps recommended by the Williams Institute, along with two other items to measure gender presentation. One item read: "A person's appearance, style, or dress may affect the way people think of them. On average, how do you think people would describe your appearance, style, or dress?"

Another item read: “A person’s mannerisms (such as the way they walk or talk) may affect the way people think of them. On average, how do you think people would describe your mannerisms?” Participants were given the following seven options: ”very feminine,” “mostly feminine,” “somewhat feminine,” “equally masculine and feminine,” “somewhat masculine,” “mostly masculine,” and “very masculine”. One disadvantage of gender identity measures that use masculinity and gender nonconformity is that they do not account for the extent to which a person who identifies as transgender might appear gender conforming according to their gender identity.

8 Towards a Non-Pathological Model of Gender Identity

Those wishing to understand their gender identity or cope with stigmatization, particularly within cultures and contexts that do not outwardly accept gender variance, may seek the help of a psychologist or medical doctor. These professionals play a critical role in supporting the health and wellness of those on the transgender or genderqueer spectrum (Drescher, 2010). Thus, it is important that professional doctrine and training matches the needs of gender variant individuals. Historically, however, the psychological and medical establishment have been hostile, and often harmful, to gender variant people. Dominant theories of gender development sometimes consider gender identities beyond man and woman, but typically view transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals as pathological or mentally disordered. The American Psychological Association has revamped its official stance on gender variance and has identified several areas for improvement in terms of specialized training guidelines for community health experts (APA, 2015). Still, transgender actvists argue that the field is far from reaching an intersectional, non-pathologized understanding of how to care for individuals outside of the gender binary.

A pathological focus on gender variance was prevalent within the American Psychological Association’s Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM) until 2013 and in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) until 2015 (See Fig. 5) (Drescher, 2013). Categorizing non-binary gender identities as mental disorders appeared in the DSM formally in 1980 under two separate “Gender Identity Disorder in Childhood” (GIDC) and “Transsexualism” (intended for adolescents and adults). These two definitions were later revised to include “Non-Transsexual Type Gender Dysphoria in Adolescents [Adults]” (designated by “by life stage” in the figure), and then were re-revised to collapse these definitions together in a catch-all diagnosis of “Gender Identity Disorder” or GID, with specifications for the diagnosis in children and adults (Drescher, 2013).

Remnants of a pathological focus are present, but fading, within psychiatry and clinical psychology. Today, the most recent edition of the DSM uses the Gender Dysphoria diagnosis to refer to those who experience distress as a result of a felt incongruence between their sexed anatomy and gender identity (APA, 2013). The inclusion of this condition is debated—however, some argue that its existence can

help people receive treatment and care in situations of distress, or possibly help transgender children receive gender affirming treatment earlier (Scharrón-del Río et al., 2014). Access to affirming interventions/therapies is critical to people who are experiencing stress in a non-affirming society (e.g., Olson et al., 2016; Singh, 2016; Scharrón-del Río et al., 2014).

While the APA and medical professionals have sought to abandon classifications defined by pathology, most health insurance institutions, including Medicare and Medicaid, require that these standard gender affirming therapies are deemed "medically necessary" (Mallory & Tentindo, 2019). These therapeutic interventions, including hormone therapy, are prohibitively expensive without sufficient health insurance coverage. Even people with federal and state-sponsored health insurance plans (Medicaid and Medicare) have difficulty accessing care depending on the regulations governing the rights of people who identify as transgender in their home states. For these individuals, as with others, obtaining their gender affirming therapies depends heavily on the therapies being deemed medically necessary, a fraught threshold that can preclude TGNC people from receiving care.

Despite lack of agreement about the status and persistence of Gender Dysphoria, the American Psychological Association is beginning to more intentionally address the concerns of the TGNC community. The APA's task force on Gender Identity and Gender Variance has identified major areas for improving their professional training and guidelines for community health providers and experts (APA, 2015). The task force's first goal is to educate all psychologists on gender as a non-binary construct that exists independently from sex assinged at birth, and other goals within the report address the various biases that providers commonly hold against TGNC individuals. This education is intended to have a strong emphasis on socioeconomic status and race, which greatly inform the lived experience of discrimination, stigmatization, and violence towards transgeder people. A full summary of the training components can be found in the report.

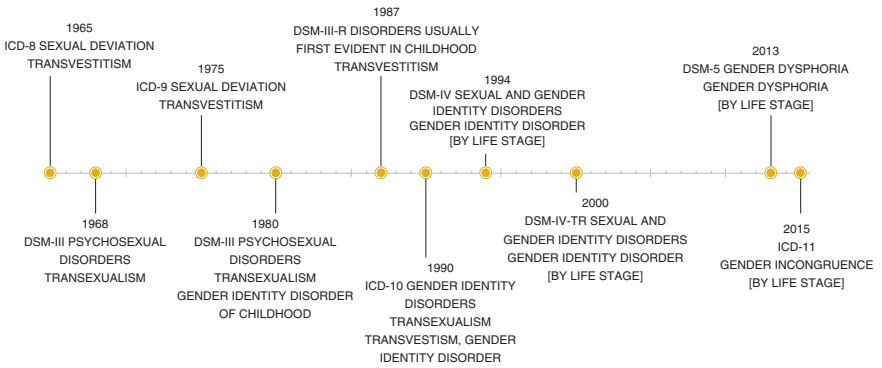

Fig. 5 Historical timeline of transgender identity in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM) & International Classification of Diseases (ICD)

9 Case Study

The subject of our case study is Rey–a 30-year-old African American living in Los Angeles. Because of disabilities, Rey has never been employed and relies on government aid. Rey currently identifies as gender non-binary and was assigned male sex at birth. Rey prefers the pronouns "they," "their," and "them." Rey's gender identity categorization has varied on a spectrum between male and non-binary/gender fluid throughout their life. To Rey, it does not make sense to define their gender identity. Rey feels freer without labels and the constraints that come with connotations and schemas of gendered behavior. Rey recognized early in life that they did not identify with, nor were they fond of engaging with the social norms associated with their birth-assigned gender. When asked about Rey's gender identity, Rey emphasized that their conception of their gender identity is filtered first through the lens of race and racism.

10 Rey in Early Childhood

Rey was raised as male with two cisgender parents who identified as a woman and man, respectively. He also had a twin brother and a cisgender older sister. Their household was moderately religious and middle-class. They went to church as a family almost every Sunday. The family was not fully dependent upon public assistance but received food stamps when Rey was a child. Though Rey's mother was a feminist, gender nonconformity by Rey or Rey's brother was discouraged. However, when Rey was a toddler and preschooler, Rey and their brother would take their older sister's toys—specifically dolls—and play contently with them. They were more interested in dolls than in any of their other toys. Their mother got them their own Cabbage Patch Kids and Barbie dolls for Christmas when Rey was five. She was reluctant to violate that norm at the time but she told their sister that it was to help them "get it out of their system." Rey remembers that their mother also painted Rey's brother's toenails after repeated requests. Rey's memories regarding gender as a young child were such that Rey did not glean joy from the activities that boys were "supposed to do." Rey was aware that they were physically a boy at that time. But, not wanting to engage in boys' activities, as was expected by Rey's extended family and broader community, felt odd and disjointed to Rey, even in early childhood.

11 Rey in Middle Childhood

When Rey was in elementary school, their mother encouraged them to play basketball. Rey says that this period of time stuck out to them because they had a strong feeling that they did not want to participate, for two reasons. First, Rey was not very good at it, and second, Rey "did not want to hang out with a bunch of dudes." At the time, Rey did not understand why, but they knew that they did not have the same motivation as Rey's teammates, nor did Rey feel like part of that team or the culture of that community. Rey felt out of place, confused, and frustrated that they were required to participate. It was at that time that Rey became exposed to traditional male gender norms of showing physical strength, aggression, and competition. Simultaneously, Rey noticed that their family and community expected Rey to conform, happily and naturally, to those norms.

One part of Rey's identity that did feel true and natural at that time was their identity as a Black person. At that age, Rey lived in Black neighborhoods, went to an African Methodist Episcopal Church, and went to predominantly Black schools. The music their family listened to, the food they ate, the shows they watched, and the jokes they made appealed to Rey, bringing an unconscious sense of belonging. At the same time, homophobia, heterosexism, distaste for gender nonconformity was commonplace in their Black community. Even though Rey was young, there seemed to be a lot of things Rey liked doing that "might be okay for those white people, but Black boys just can't be doing stuff like that."

The difference between girls' play and boys' play was starker in elementary school than it was when Rey was a preschooler or toddler. Rey did not like boys' play, interests, or attitudes. It was not just about lacking an interest in sports: to Rey, masculine clothes were ugly, and the thought of engaging in competitive physical activity was unappealing. Rey embraced glamour and was interested in design and fashion but "did not identify with being a girl; just not a boy." Still, Rey regrets that they did not advocate for engaging in their traditionally feminine interests as a child and wonders if the social anxiety and self-doubt Rey often experiences as an adult would be better if they had been more validating and expressive with their true self.

Rey talked of the time when Rey "accidentally came out" to their mother. They were in the car, looking through a clothing catalog when Rey thought to themselves, aloud, "Oh, he's cute!" Rey got a look from their mother in the rearview mirror and immediately regretted momentarily forgetting to manage their growing romantic interest in, and attraction to, boys.

12 Rey in Late Adolescence

High school was a remarkable time of identity formation for Rey. During high school, Rey's gender, racial, and sexual orientation identities became clearer. Rey remembers being generally unhappy in high school. Their parents divorced when

Rey was in elementary school and, at the time of high school, lived in two different states hundreds of miles away from each other. Rey attended high school in the two states and hated both. For a period of time, Rey and their brother lived with their father in the northeast, the predominantly Black community that Rey grew up in. For another period of time, Rey and their brother lived with their mother in the South. They lived in a county that was upper-middle class, predominantly white, and, even in the mid-2000's, riddled with racism.

In the predominantly Black high school, Rey and Rey's brother were not two of the "cool kids." The community in general was very materialistic and having the latest sneakers or wearing expensive clothing brands was the primary form of achieving high status for adolescents. Rey's father could not afford to buy them the latest sneakers, nor did they have expensive clothing. To Rey, their clothes were disappointing, non-affirming, and "hideous." Their father only bought them traditionally masculine clothes which came from a bargain store which lacked creativity and glamour, from Rey's perspective. Additionally, there might have been a few openly nonconforming male students but otherwise, most of the students were supremely homophobic. In animosity, the male students called each other slurs like "faggot" and "pussy," deriding any deviations from aggressive masculinity. Similar to Rey's experience of being on the basketball team, Rey remembers disconnecting from all aspects of that high school culture and sometimes missed class to avoid judgment or bullying from their fellow students.

Rey says that they were relieved to leave that school when they went to go live with their mother in the South. Unfortunately, that relief was short-lived. Rey says that the homophobia and aggressive anti-gay behaviors were not as blatant at the new school. However, subtle racism and racial microaggressions were unavoidable. Out of 150 students, there were only four African Americans at Rey's new high school. Rey says that the racism was not explicit, it was more about exclusivity, devaluing the experience of African Americans and prioritizing the world of whiteness. Again, Rey felt so disconnected from the students that they did not engage or participate in school. Rey remembers their romantic attraction to boys being more prominent at the new high school. Rey found other boys who were attracted to them and those were the first validating experiences Rey had that were related to sexual orientation. In elementary school and throughout high school, Rey identified as a boy. Eventually, in high school and shortly after, Rey identified as a "gay boy." Rey emphasizes, however, that they were "way more focused on being a Black kid in a white school than on being gay."

13 Rey in Early-Adulthood

Rey spent their late-teens and early-20s identifying as a gay man living in Los Angeles. Rey used mobile phone apps like Grindr and Adam for Adam—apps known in the gay community for meeting other gay men and prompting sexual relationships. Rey says that Rey learned a lot about Rey's identity according to their

experiences on those social networking "hookup" apps. Primarily, Rey observed rampant racism on the dating apps for gay men (See Hutson et al., 2018). Often, users are sorting by race, eliminating people of color from their search results and feeds, to communicate only with white users. Additionally, in many white and non-white users' profiles, they include comments like "No Blacks," or "No Asians." When Rey would attempt to contact some of these users they would "auto-block" Rey after Rey said "hello." Or, they would ignore several of Rey's messages until Rey wrote, "Just say you're not into Black guys." Rey said that the user would then respond with long paragraphs explaining how they are not racist. To Rey, it felt very racist.

The process of engaging in social contact validating one aspect of Rey's identity was interrupted and ruined with the reminder of how they were devalued because they are African American. Rey became resentful of the apps and of the racist behaviors and microaggressions that seemed so common among its users. Over time, Rey drifted away from identifying as a gay man, as that did not quite fit Rey's understanding of themself. One thing that Rey was able to benefit from on the apps was meeting and interacting with people of non-binary or transgender gender identities. Rey says that they used to think that non-cisgender people were "weird." Rey emphasizes that the dislike for those identities at that time was not rooted in any self-hate or denial of Rey's own non-binary gender identity. Rey believes that they were ignorant of the concept of a non-binary gender identity and the "rules" that did or did not come with that identity. Rey would read profiles for non-binary users and identify with their philosophies or approaches to life and dating.

After spending years of identifying as a gay man, Rey began to think about themselves as a pansexual, gender non-binary person. Rey slowly allowed themselves to imagine the feeling of wearing high-heeled shoes, beautiful dresses, and having long, flowing hair. Rey said that so much more of their life made sense after finding the "non-binary" and spectrum-oriented concept for their persistent gender identity and removing the idea that they were "sick" for wanting to live that life.

Rey continues to identify as non-binary and does not label their sexual orientation. Rey is often perceived as a cisgender male in their clothing and personal grooming, but they have confided in some of their closest family members that they want to be glamorous in feminine fashion and wear makeup. Rey clarifies that they do not want to live as a woman and does not identify as transgender. However, Rey wishes that they had disposable income to spend on glamorous, inspired clothing and shoes. Rey believes that if they had more money, their wardrobe would have a wide selection of clothing that is traditionally associated with women. Rey remarks that validating that aspect of their identity would involve money for laser hair removal, hair weaves or wigs, men's-sized high-heeled shoes, different types of feminine attire. Rey also says that it would take courage to "put myself out there like that" and dreams about exploring that part of their identity as they get older.

14 Conclusion

In the beginning of this chapter, we asked readers to consider Dozono's perspective of arriving in a place of thinking about gender as "how strange and particular one's own contexts and assumptions are, amidst a vast array of interpretations of reality" (2017, p. 426). We hope it is clear from this reading that there are a vast number of interpretations of gender that are wholly valid and healthy–to think of one or another experience of gender as "correct" is to ignore the expansive diversity of how human life can be lived and *is already lived* in many cultures. The consequences of ignoring these realities have violent repercutions for transgender and gender non-conforming people. The field's gradual transition to incorporating the experiences of those who live outside of and beyond the gender binary is a step in the right direction. However, as readers will note, the disruption of dominant theories and the proliferation of more expansive gender theories leaves many questions open for empirical debate. For example, we know little about how the psychological experience of gender is instantiated in the brain or the exact mechanisms through which gender identity becomes established in the human psyche. Although we understand that culture informs how people arrive at their own gender labels, the biological, environmental, and epigenetic reasons why certain individuals and not others resist their socialization is a nascent field.

The evidence presented in this chapter documents the slow changing tide of how gender is understood by social scientists. We emphasize how the field has grown primarily through the work of queer scholars of color who point out that gender identity develops over time within a social context, particularly the culturally specific ideologies and hierarchies in which people live. As awareness of gender variance grows in the social sciences, we hope to see the field grow in rigor and breadth by doing away with theories that reflect only a tightly circumscribed range of possibilities of what gender can be. Integrating the perspectives of queer, trans, and non-genderconforming people of color into the canon of gender identity theory will be central to this pursuit.

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