Gender Dysphoria from a Non-binary Perspective

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Beyond the Sex/Gender Binaries

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- So I’ll try to define terms more inclusively than in the American Psychiatric Association’s *DSM-IV-TR*, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fourth Edition, Text Revision, and other standard sources.
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- secondary sex characteristics, and
- brain structure as influenced by prenatal sex hormones.
Finger-length Ratios

A *finger-length* ratio is computed by dividing the length (tip to bottom of crease) of the index finger by the length of the ring finger.

In this example, we get $\frac{76.25}{75.5} = 1.01$, which is significantly above the straight female average of 0.974.
Finger-length ratios are positively correlated with prenatal estrogen/testosterone ratios.

![Graph showing finger-length ratios distributions for straight males and straight females.](image)

**Finger-length Ratio Distributions**

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Sex Diversity

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- Most of us are blind to sex diversity.
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- body language,
- dress style, etc.
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• Male and female bell curves for most traits almost completely overlap.
• There are many genders—not even a gender continuum (a person can be nurturing and aggressive, or non-nurturing and non-aggressive, etc.).
• Thus gender is multi-dimensional.
Gender Branding

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- Branding is both positive and negative.
- Branding has a major impact on our lives.
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- If brought up by aliens, how could a baby have a sense of being “male” or “female”?
- As children, we intuit/learn our gender identities by comparing ourselves with others, consciously or unconsciously.
Gender Attribution

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- But it could be more open-ended process of paying attention to someone, more fully understanding who they are, what their gender attributes are.
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- Rigid gender roles are only possible when there are a small number of branded genders.
- If we acknowledged gender complexity, it would be much harder to assign fixed gender roles.
- A person’s actual *gender expression*—the way sie expresses hir gender—may be inconsistent with the gender role assigned to hir.
Gender Dysphoria

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Transsexualism

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**Inclusive:** *Transsexualism* is gender dysphoria, coupled with a desire/plan to make physical and/or social changes to ameliorate that dysphoria.
Transsexualism may be prenatally determined to some extent:

- Straight males (mean 0.954)
- Male-to-female transsexuals attracted to women (mean 0.970)
- Straight females (mean 0.974)
Origins of Gender Dysphoria: How Others See Us

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- We may be uncomfortable with our own bodies because we think others will only see and relate to us as we wish if our bodies conform to their brand-based expectations, in which sexes and genders must go together.
Origins of Gender Dysphoria: How We See Ourselves

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• Of course, most transsexuals feel the need to make at least some bodily changes, in order to feel good about their bodies.
Ameliorating Gender Dysphoria: Recognizing Gender Diversity

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- But, if 10-20% of the population were known to have sexes other than male/female, and if we knew that a person’s sex couldn’t be reliably determined by a cursory look at hir body, we would have to look deeper to understand a person’s gender.
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- Recognizing gender diversity would encourage the breakdown of gender branding.
- Having our genders recognized would lessen gender dysphoria.
Ameliorating Gender Dysphoria: Transformation

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- But some people find making such transformations impossible, impractical or undesirable.
Ameliorating Gender Dysphoria: Living Outside the Gender Binary

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- How are we to recognize intergenders, so we can support them?
Ameliorating Gender Dysphoria:
Expressing Allegiance to a Gender Brand

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• How far this can stretch is debatable—if a feminine person with a masculine body uses gender expression to express a female gender identity, could people relate to her appropriately?

• But already some transsexuals who can’t or don’t want to pass are finding more acceptance in society by expressing their allegiance to a gender brand.

• Fortunately, many transsexuals and their partners find that genitals and secondary sexual characteristics are far less relevant than how we use and think about them, and than our gender aggregates.