

Dreger's Defense of J. Michael Bailey: The Peer Commentary Papers Tear It Apart

A Report by Lynn Conway

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Background and introduction:

In 2003, [J. Michael Bailey's](#) book *The Man Who Would Be Queen* was published by the [National Academies Press](#) (JHP imprint). The book denied the existence of gendered identities and proclaimed as a scientific fact that all transitioned women were either (i) gay men who had undergone SRS in order to attract and have sex with large numbers of straight men or (ii) mentally-ill sexually paraphilic men who had undergone SRS in order to heighten their autosexual thrills.

Widely perceived as [unscientific, transphobic and cruelly defamatory](#), the book led to storm of protest all across the trans community. News and events of the escalating protest were documented in two widely-read trans-blogs: (i) "[The BBL Clearinghouse](#)" maintained by [Andrea James](#) and (ii) "[An Investigation of the Publication of J. Michael Bailey's book on Transsexualism by the National Academies](#)" maintained by [Lynn Conway](#).

Questions were raised about Bailey's research conduct. A number of his research subjects were located. Those women soon discovered that Bailey had written about intimate details of their lives in his book without their permission, and had ridiculed them in the process. With the help of [Deirdre McCloskey](#), [Andrea James](#) and [Lynn Conway](#), the women [filed complaints at Northwestern University](#), leading to a [formal investigation](#) of Bailey's research conduct. [Bailey subsequently stepped down](#) as Chair of the Psychology Department at Northwestern in November 2004, his career in disgrace and, in his own words, his life "ruined".

These events stung the dominant old-guard conservatives in the sexology and psychology community, i.e., people such as [Zucker](#), [Blanchard](#), [Lawrence](#), [Cantor](#), [LeVay](#), et al, among whom Bailey had been a minor hero. Their anger simmered for years, and they finally struck back in 2007 by mounting a massive personal defamation attack on the three transwomen who'd helped Bailey's research subjects file complaints.

The attack came in the form of a self-proclaimed 'scholarly history' of the controversy, written by Bailey's Northwestern co-worker and intersex activist [Alice Dreger](#). Dreger collaborated closely with Bailey on its fabrication during the entire 2006-2007 academic year, [a year in which Bailey taught no courses at Northwestern](#).

Dreger's report was quickly recognized by all parties as a one-sided 'defense of Bailey'. In it she deflects attention away from Bailey's book and the massive trans community protest, and caricatures the entire controversy as nothing more than a vicious effort by three rather witch-like women to "ruin the life" of a brilliant scientist. In doing so, she stoops to new lows as a dirty-trickster by misquoting sources, exploiting sleazy innuendos and fabricating entire story-episodes in order to defame the three women.

Dreger's defense was hailed by the old-guard sexologists. It provided a narrative that explained their pain, and Dreger became their heroine. [Zucker e-mailed huge numbers of psychologists](#), announcing the report would be published in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior* (ASB) Although [Zucker](#) controls the ASB as editor in chief and both Bailey and Lawrence sit on his editorial board, he showed no concern about the blatant conflict of interest involved. [Dreger posted the entire report on a Northwestern University website](#) a full year before its publication, and Bailey and Dreger have been [hyping it in the media ever since](#).

Such deeds do not go unpunished: Many of Dreger's peers began quietly writing commentary papers about Dreger's report in order to critique it and put it into proper perspective. The resulting twenty-four peer commentary papers have just been published alongside Dreger's defense of Bailey in the [June 2008 Issue of the ASB](#). As you will see, [the large majority of the peer commentary papers are highly critical of Dreger's work](#).

Not surprisingly, Zucker and Dreger did not announce or make freely available the Peer Commentary Papers in the same jubilantly aggressive manner as they did Dreger's report. You must instead order them from Springer-Netherlands, at a cost of \$32.00 each! The unfairness of this abuse of scientific-establishment power should be obvious to even the most naive bystander.

Given this situation, we are unable to post PDF's of complete Peer Commentary Papers because of copyright concerns. However, we have posted excerpts from the papers under the rules of "fair use". The excerpts reveal the breadth and depth of the peer criticisms of Dreger's report, especially regarding the obviously biased, one-sided nature of her reporting.

Accessing the peer commentary papers (PCPs):

The sections below link to and provide excerpts from the papers in the [June 2008 Issue of the ASB](#) (numbered in alphabetical order). The issue opens with an introduction by Zucker (26), followed by Dreger's defense of J. Michael Bailey (8), followed by 24 peer commentary papers (PCPs) that critique Dreger's work. On a close reading we find that:

[Fourteen PCP's are critical of Dreger's report](#) (2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 24, 25).
(including some from prominent clinicians)

[Five PCPs are supportive of Dreger's report](#) (9, 11, 12, 14, 20).
(including those from Lawrence and from Dreger herself)

Of the remaining PCPs, two take neutral stances (1, 6,) and three are on topics other than the report (5, 21, 22)

[We've grouped the papers by type in "List of Papers" below](#). The titles link to excerpts from the papers, while the numerals link to Springer-Netherlands webpages for citing and ordering the papers (cite by author, title, *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, June 2008).

Example quotes from the Peer Commentary Papers:

Even without access to complete PCP's, you can locate and quote many important criticisms of Dreger's defense of Bailey from the [excerpts below](#), citing the corresponding ASB peer commentary papers as your sources.

Here are some examples, with links to further excerpts below:

"What does he mean by truth? Does he mean scientific evidence or religious belief? Dreger commented on Bailey's book as

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follows: "Using stories in this way is not science—it doesn't even rise to the level of bad science..." I agree with her on that point. And why is he apparently no longer concerned about causing someone pain?" - [John Bancroft](#)

"Dreger and others express concern about the chilling effects of transactivism on free speech, but they forget that the only free speech being affected is overt bigotry of the most egregious kind. Why are so many psychologists so passionate in their defense of bigotry? Why aren't they at least as concerned about the chilling effects that this bigotry has on a whole oppressed group of people?" - [Ben Barres](#)

"Dreger observes that Bailey uses the feminine pronoun to refer to post-SRS transsexual women and at least in this way does not invalidate transwomen. She neglects to mention the obvious point, however, that the two major categories into which he inserts transwomen characterize them as men . . ." - [Talia May Bettcher](#)

"Bailey's thesis is that underneath all that false talk of "identity" is a disturbing and yet titillating reality. And forget what transwomen have to say about the personal importance of gender to them: They are liars anyway. I hope I do not need to belabor why this was rightfully perceived as highly transphobic; certainly the fact Bailey countenances SRS goes no distance toward undermining that fact. I don't think Dreger has shown otherwise." - [Talia May Bettcher](#)

"A reading of his book attentive to the erotics between Bailey and the MTFs he writes about suggests an exoticizing desire on Bailey's part for the characters that populate his study. I point this out not to comment on Bailey's personal proclivities but instead to situate his promotion of Blanchard's typology—which Dreger implies "liberates" MTF sexuality—in the context of his participation in an exoticizing, dehumanizing discourse on MTF sexuality. We should be all the more skeptical that something "liberatory" emerges from Blanchard's typology given this juxtaposition in Bailey's book." - [Nicholas L. Clarkson](#)

"As Dreger's history recounts, matters deteriorated rapidly after the publication of TMWWBQ as the blowback against Bailey and his book was mobilized. In her judgment, these attacks went beyond the limits of civilized debate in academic circles. That this blowback has come to include her was apparently one of the stimuli that motivated her to write her version of the events involved. That her "objectivity" might have been influenced by becoming collateral damage in the conflict over Bailey and TMWWBQ is not addressed in any detailed way. I believe that she could have expanded on this question of motivation." - [John H. Gagnon](#)

And here is the nub of the problem—in 52,000 words, Dreger's entire discussion of the social and political context comprises one solitary paragraph about the oppression of trans people and a few comments such as that Bailey's portrayal of transwomen "seems unlikely to cause an outpouring of admiration or acceptance." She has little or nothing to say about: the difficult struggle for trans people's rights; complex interactions with struggles for gay, women's, and intersex people's rights; the intense transphobia of the U.S. religious right; battles for health insurance coverage and the associated interrelation with race and social class; or unequal power relations between trans people and psychiatrists as "gate keepers" for access to SRS. In this context, the threat to trans people posed by Bailey's book starts to look very real and very urgent." - [Riki Lane](#)

"Dreger appears to take great pains to vindicate Bailey for charges of ethics violations, and this is the least convincing part of the lengthy article. . . Dreger's attempt to vindicate Bailey, particularly by vilifying several prominent transwomen, was unconvincing, at best, and superficial and institution-serving at worst. The thought process, "If I did it, it wasn't wrong" and, "Oh, by the way, I didn't do it because it doesn't meet the definition" is the same kind of antisocial thinking I see in the inmates of the local county jail, with whom I do group therapy twice a week." - [Robin M. Mathy](#)

"Dreger has written a political brief. One more typical example. By her own evidence—she asked Bailey (and he wouldn't answer) if Bailey had slept with an object of his scientific study. Much later she enthusiastically reviews the "proof" Bailey offers against the direct and precise testimony of Juanita that he had sex with her. The proof is shallow. That is how one might characterize Dreger's tedious and tendentious "scholarly history." Lengthy but shallow." - [Deirdre McCloskey](#)

"In the introduction, Dreger expresses the hope that her reconstruction of events will "calm and even quell some of the tensions that persist." This seems strangely naive. It belies a belief that makes you wonder if Dreger fully comprehends the profundity of what really happened. This was not a story of misunderstanding or star-crossed characters. This was not a story in which a messenger arrived a minute too late with a missive that would have forestalled a tragedy. This is a darker, less hopeful story. Flaws on either side notwithstanding, the two forces clashing in this drama have radically opposing ideas about the path to truth, whatever that truth may be. That is why Dreger's careful telling of the "facts" is unlikely to be successful in quelling anything at all. Actually, it is more likely to reveal her ultimate allegiance to one side—Bailey's." -

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[Marta Meana](#)

"With all due respect to Dreger, was she the correct person to tell this story? She admits she was not unbiased. She has been attacked by the same detractors as Bailey and she has her own political agenda." - [Charles Moser](#)

"As I am writing this commentary, Bailey is taking part in radio interviews (August 22, 2007; <http://www.kqed.org/epArchive/R708221000>), giving interviews to the press (New York Times, August 21, 2007), and calling one critic "...a big fat ugly liar, and I am thinking of suing her" (Bailey to Sexnet, p.e.c., August 22, 2007). This only reinvigorates the opposition. In my opinion, Bailey is not clearing his name, but fomenting further controversy." - [Charles Moser](#)

"Dreger asked, "How could there be so much smoke and so little fire"? The same could be asked of Dreger. Did she uncover a pattern of lies and false allegations? No, the allegations were basically true; they just did not constitute any formal misconduct." - [Charles Moser](#)

"Dreger describes herself as an historian, a bioethicist, and a "queer activist." In this essay, she fails at all three. She has described the Bailey controversy myopically, without placing it in its larger sociocultural context. She ignores the history of queer activism and its relationship to psychiatry. She is particularly oblivious to changes in the emerging transgender movement. The transgender community, and the professionals who work within it, are in the midst of a revolution, but Dreger hasn't noticed. Under a veneer of neutrality, Dreger has aligned herself with the conservative rearguard of professionals, not realizing that changes in the field are already rendering much of that rearguard obsolete. Shocked by some of the tactics, she has missed the symbolic significance of the uproar over TMWWBQ." - [Margaret Nichols](#)

"The deficits in Dreger's historical, ethical, and political analyses of the Bailey controversy lead her to fundamentally flawed conclusions. Dreger portrays Bailey as an impartial "truth-seeking" scientist who courageously espoused "politically incorrect" views and was unfairly maligned by a tiny group of crazed transwomen. She implies that Bailey's freedom of speech has been abridged, forgetting that the right to free speech, which can legally be infringed only by the government, entitles one to a voice, not to a forum, and not to grant funding, public speaking appearances, or book awards. Not that Bailey has lost these forums. Thanks to Dreger, even the New York Times has painted him as a beleaguered hero (Carey, 2007)." - [Margaret Nichols](#)

"Perhaps the most striking oversight in Dreger's article (given her position as a bioethicist) is that she eagerly defends academic/scientific freedom of expression without ever engaging in the equally important issue of academic/scientific responsibility. . . . The fact is that when a self-appointed "expert" like Bailey claims that transsexual women transition for purely sexual reasons, and that they are lying if they state otherwise, people will believe him because of his academic/scientist status. For this reason, it is disturbing that Dreger would exonerate Bailey of most of the scientific misconduct charges made against him primarily on the basis that his book was not "science," without ever taking him to task for misrepresenting his book as "The Science of Gender-Bending and Transsexualism" in the first place." - [Julia Serano](#)

"In addition to limiting transgender narratives, psychomedical oppression has sparked fear and distrust among transsexuals (Meyerowitz, 2002). Like other academics before him, Bailey chose to disregard how transgender people conceptualized their own experiences and identities. While the collective outrage against TMWWBQ may have given the book more attention than it deserved, Bailey's book was another insult symbolic of many past injuries. Trans people felt used, misled, and misrepresented. Their responses, considered in historical context, are understandable and in many cases justifiable. This history also speaks to why Dreger obtained information from all the sexologists she wanted to interview, while key transwomen refused to participate. Ultimately, Dreger fails to seriously consider how the history of psychomedical gatekeeping and oppression informed the backlash" - [Elroi J. Windsor](#)

"Dreger strings together facts, however circuitously, to incorporate the other side, to frame the history as the almost "Galileo-like" struggling of truth-seeking scientists against seemingly powerful "fundamentalists." She notes the uniformity of opinion in the peer-reviewed psychology publications that support Blanchard's model in a way that legitimates Bailey's lack of serious consideration of alternatives. She does this despite how the "peers" who review (psychologists and psychiatrists) are likely others in the same position of enormous power to diagnosis and authorize HRT/SRS for the other peer group (transgendered persons). Dreger fails to note how this uniformity among peers is strikingly different from the vibrant ongoing debates in nearly every other research area of psychology. She does not consider shared biases by pro-autogynephilia researchers that may lead to their conformity. . . .The possibility of groupthink is never considered " - [Madeline H. Wyndzen](#)

List and links to papers in the June 2008 ASB:

Introduction by Zucker, followed by Dreger's defense of J. Michael Bailey:

26. Kenneth J. Zucker, "Introduction to Dreger (2008) and Peer Commentaries", *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol.37, No. 3, June 2008, p365.
8. Alice D. Dreger, "The Controversy Surrounding The Man Who Would Be Queen : A Case History of the Politics of Science, Identity, and Sex in the Internet Age", *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol.37, No. 3, June 2008, p366-421. [[PDF on NU website](#)]

Peer Commentary Papers Critical of Dreger's Defense:

2. [John Bancroft, "Lust or Identity?"](#)
3. [Ben A. Barres, "A Response to Dreger's Defense of the Bailey Book"](#)
4. [Talia Mae Bettcher, "Pretenders to the Throne"](#)
7. [Nicholas L. Clarkson, "Trans Victims, Trans Zealots: A Critique of Dreger's History of the Bailey Controversy"](#)
10. [John H. Gagnon, "Is This a Work of Science?"](#)
13. [Riki Lane, "Truth, Lies, and Trans Science"](#)
15. [Robin M. Mathy, "Cowboys, Shepherders, and The Man Who Would Be Queen : "I Know" vs. First-Order Lived Experience"](#)
16. [Deirdre McCloskey, "Politics in Scholarly Drag: Dreger's Assault on the Critics of Bailey"](#)
17. [Marta Meana, "The Drama of Sex, Identity, and the "Queen""](#)
18. [Charles Moser, "A Different Perspective"](#)
19. [Margaret Nichols, "Dreger on the Bailey Controversy: Lost in the Drama, Missing the Big Picture"](#)
23. [Julia Serano, "A Matter of Perspective: A Transsexual Woman-Centric Critique of Dreger's "Scholarly History" of the Bailey Controversy"](#)
24. [Elroi J. Windsor, "Accounting for Power and Academic Responsibility"](#)
25. [Madeline H. Wyndzen, "A Social Psychology of a History of a Snippet in the Psychology of Transgenderism"](#)

Peer Commentary Papers Supportive of Dreger's Defense:

9. [Alice D. Dreger, "Response to the Commentaries on Dreger \(2008\)"](#) (See also Dreger's earlier blog-response)
11. [Brian A. Gladue, "Gender Identity Politics, Human Subjects Issues, and the "Law of Unintended Consequences""](#)
12. [Richard Green, "Lighten Up, Ladies"](#)
14. [Anne A. Lawrence, "Shame and Narcissistic Rage in Autogynephilic Transsexualism"](#)
20. [Bruce Rind, "The Bailey Affair: Political Correctness and Attacks on Sex Research"](#)

Peer Commentary Papers Neutral re Dreger's Defense:

1. [Jonathan M. Adler, "Two Modes of Thought: The Narrative/Paradigmatic Disconnect in the Bailey Book Controversy"](#)
6. [Antonia Caretto, "Dreger's Adventures"](#)

Peer Commentary Papers on other topics than Dreger's Defense:

5. [Ray Blanchard, "Deconstructing the Feminine Essence Narrative"](#)

21. Seth Roberts, "McCloskey and Me: A Back-and-Forth"

22. Amir Rosenmann and Marilyn P. Safir, "Sex, Sexuality, and Gender Dichotomized: Transgender Homosexuality in Israel"

Peer Commentary Papers Critical of Dreger's Defense:

"Lust or Identity?"

John Bancroft

[Archives of Sexual Behavior, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p.426-428.](#)

Excerpt:

"I was, therefore, particularly disturbed by the final paragraph of Dreger's essay in which Bailey explains what he has learned from this controversy: "It has taught me, albeit the hard way, the value of truth. I think that before, sometimes, I used to hesitate to say true things out of concern that the truth would cause someone pain. But Conway et al. took away any remaining inhibitions I had against telling the truth." What does he mean by truth? Does he mean scientific evidence or religious belief? Dreger commented on Bailey's book as follows: "Using stories in this way is not science—it doesn't even rise to the level of bad science..." I agree with her on that point. And why is he apparently no longer concerned about causing someone pain?" . . .

"A Response to Dreger's Defense of the Bailey Book"

Ben A. Barres

[Archives of Sexual Behavior, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p.429.](#)

Excerpts:

"In regard to Dreger's defense of Bailey, I did not feel that it was balanced or factual on a great many points. She neglected to point out, for instance, that Bailey chose to present the information in his book in the most sensationalist, insensitive, misleading, and humiliating way possible, utterly denying transgendered people the respect they are due as human beings. This is not simply a harmless academic debate. The welfare of a whole group of people is at stake. It is one thing to defend responsible free speech, but it is quite another to defend overt bigotry. Are transgendered people low socioeconomic liars and shoplifters especially suited for work in the sex trades? Such claims, under the guise of high quality science, engender and maintain the oppression, ostracism, and violence that transgendered people face." . . .

Dreger and others express concern about the chilling effects of transactivism on free speech, but they forget that the only free speech being affected is overt bigotry of the most egregious kind. Why are so many psychologists so passionate in their defense of bigotry? Why aren't they at least as concerned about the chilling effects that this bigotry has on a whole oppressed group of people?" . . .

"Pretenders to the Throne"

Talia Mae Bettcher

[*Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p.430-433.](#)

Excerpts:

"Dreger admits several respects in which TMWWBQ is likely to disturb. Since she underplays these points, I discuss some in greater detail. . . .

The outrage principally involves the concern that Bailey's book aims to invalidate the identities of transwomen. Dreger, however, erases the main way Bailey's work is invalidating to transwomen by representing the central issue as nothing but a theoretical dispute.

According to Dreger, much of the dispute concerns Bailey's rejection of a particular theoretical model of transsexuality ("the feminine essence narrative"). . .

By pitting Bailey's version of Blanchard's theory against the "feminine essence narrative," Dreger obscures the way Bailey's account involves more than a mere theoretical disagreement. Once we recognize the existence of personal import of gender, we can see why Bailey's account might wound or invalidate that sense of personal import in a way that is quite independent of any theoretical disagreement about the nature and etiology of the phenomenon of personal import.

Dreger observes that Bailey uses the feminine pronoun to refer to post-SRS transsexual women and at least in this way does not invalidate transwomen. She neglects to mention the obvious point, however, that the two major categories into which he inserts transwomen characterize them as men (Bailey, 2003, p. 146). . .

Moreover, Bailey (2003) expects this terminology to apply to transwomen even after SRS. Thus, he speaks of "autogynephiles" as men who have made their bodies conform to their images of women (p. 168). The idea is surely that the men trapped in male bodies have now become men in female bodies. While Dreger does recognize Bailey as a skeptic about gender identity, she does not take the time to point out why this attitude might be experienced by transwomen as invalidating. It literally means, as far as I can tell, their own sense of who they are doesn't count for anything.

Dreger rightfully observes, "One gets the clear sense from the book that all transsexual narratives are deeply suspect—or just plain false—unless they fit Blanchard's theory and Bailey's reading." Unfortunately, because Dreger mischaracterizes the invalidation of the personal import of gender as a mere theoretical dispute, she cannot capture the close link between the representation of transwomen as liars and the invalidation she herself erases. In Bailey's view, post-operative "non-homosexual transsexuals" are really erotically obsessed men in female bodies while post-operative "homosexual transsexuals" are really highly feminine men attracted to straight men in female bodies. Because Bailey believes transsexual women tend to lie or misrepresent, nothing a transwoman can say contests this theory. Alas, the main way to determine personal import is to rely on first person narratives. Since Bailey casts doubt upon the reliability of such avowals of gender import, there is no way it could ever be taken seriously in his theory. This is to say: Personal import is first theoretically erased and then any evidence for its existence is banished by discounting first person narrative and avowals. In this way, invalidation and silencing go hand in hand. .

Bailey's thesis is that underneath all that false talk of "identity" is a disturbing and yet titillating reality. And forget what transwomen have to say about the personal importance of gender to them: They are liars anyway. I hope I do not need to belabor why this was rightfully perceived as highly transphobic; certainly the fact Bailey countenances SRS goes no distance toward undermining that fact. I don't think Dreger has shown otherwise." . . .

"Trans Victims, Trans Zealots: A Critique of Dreger's History of the Bailey Controversy"

Nicholas L. Clarkson

[*Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p.441-443.](#)

Excerpts:

"My central critique of Dreger's history of the Bailey controversy is that she focused on the personal attacks against Bailey instead of critiquing the substance of Bailey's book itself. . .

Outside the clinic, MTF sexuality is socially situated in a context of "she-male" porn and other exoticizing spectacles. This fetishization of pre-op MTF bodies—female bodies with penises—has been remarked upon extensively by trans women and is often referred to as "tranny chasing." This exoticizing reduces MTFs to sex objects, denying them personhood and autonomous eroticism. Bailey actively participates in this exoticization of trans women by using the word "exotic" to describe MTFs—mostly MTFs of color (p. 141, for example)—and saying that "transsexuals lead remarkable sex lives" (p. x). A reading of his book attentive to the erotics between Bailey and the MTFs he writes about suggests an exoticizing desire on Bailey's part for the characters that populate his study. I point this out not to comment on Bailey's personal proclivities but instead to situate his promotion of Blanchard's typology—which Dreger implies "liberates" MTF sexuality—in the context of his participation in an exoticizing, dehumanizing discourse on MTF sexuality. We should be all the more skeptical that something "liberatory" emerges from Blanchard's typology given this juxtaposition in Bailey's book. . .

A second major issue in Dreger's recounting of these events and in Bailey's book itself is the relationship between trans people and psychologists/sex researchers. Dreger dismisses the legitimacy of Kieltyka's complaints about Bailey's portrayal of Kieltyka as an autogynephile because she maintained a friendship with Bailey after she knew he thought of her as an autogynephile. Dreger also points out the "irony" of Conway, McCloskey, and James using Bailey's letters for transwomen's surgeries as evidence against him, suggesting that trans people should be grateful for psychological approval of their transitions and not question a psychologist's positions on other trans issues. Furthermore, Dreger discusses the "fear" and unwillingness of sex researchers to study trans issues as a result of McCloskey, Conway, and James' response to Bailey. First, the claim that few people are researching transsexuality is an overstatement. Much substantive work on trans issues is being conducted in a number of disciplines. Second, trans people do, in fact, need validation and sex researchers are in a position of "scientific" authority that could provide this affirmation. Third, the trans community should not be expected to gratefully submit to a medical gaze simply for the sake of receiving letters authorizing surgery or being "studied," with no say in the research questions, the uses of research, or critiques of the conclusions of sex researchers. . .

Dreger goes on to point out that the scientific/psychological study of trans people has been yet another casualty of the McCloskey, James, Conway backlash. This commentary rests on the assumption that having sex researchers study us is unequivocally good. We must pause here to ask if we want the "help" of the people who think of us as "too unstable and dangerous to bother with." . . .Furthermore, science does not take place in a moral and political vacuum and should more carefully consider the effects of studies on trans people and other marginalized groups rather than legitimating such studies through claims to "scientific truth."

I imagine that Dreger would agree with my arguments that trans people should have some voice in what sort of research is done on us, that we should not be expected to gratefully submit to whatever medical gaze surveys us. I do not argue that Dreger completely ignores these issues in her history. However, her choice to focus on the personal attacks rather than detailing and delving into the historical and political issues around Bailey's book and, by extension, Blanchard's theory, significantly marginalizes legitimate critiques of the book from a trans perspective. Dreger tells us early in her article that trans rights are important to her. In making the historiographic choices she did, she missed an opportunity to intervene in damaging discourses on transsexuality. . ."

"Is This a Work of Science?"

John H. Gagnon

[*Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p.444-447.](#)

Excerpt:

"As Dreger's history recounts, matters deteriorated rapidly after the publication of TMWWBQ as the blowback against Bailey and his book was mobilized. In her judgment, these attacks went beyond the limits of civilized debate in academic circles. That this blowback has come to include her was apparently one of the stimuli that motivated her to write her version of the events involved. That her "objectivity" might have been influenced by becoming collateral damage in the conflict over Bailey and TMWWBQ is not addressed in any detailed way. I believe that she could have expanded on this question of motivation." . . .

"Truth, Lies, and Trans Science"

Riki Lane

[Archives of Sexual Behavior, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p.453-456.](#)

Excerpts:

"Dreger sets worthy goals of defending free debate and reducing tensions, but can this article achieve them? Dreger's personal involvement directly contributes to the one sided nature of her story. No "objective" unbiased position is possible, but her acting to stop James speaking at Northwestern University made it inevitable that many of Bailey's opponents would not participate. James' action in posting sexualized pictures of Bailey's children was disgraceful, but does it follow that she had no right to speak on campus 3 years later? Dreger shows no reflexivity here: no self-awareness that her actions to "no-platform" James are similar to the tactics she ascribes to Bailey's opponents in their attempts to shut down discussion of Blanchard's theories.

Dreger's inability to "fathom" the depth of the transwomen's anger derives from the central weaknesses of her article: the absence of sociopolitical and scientific context. After succinctly citing the comments that were found most offensive, Dreger softens the story with some kind remarks Bailey makes about Kieltyka and his support for sex reassignment surgery (SRS) and concludes that he has a "mixed tone" about trans people. This crucial link from "exegesis" to "backlash" is fundamentally flawed as the negative overwhelms the positive in this mixed tone. I cannot see how anyone reading these passages would form a positive image of transwomen: Dreger's summary of Bailey's (2003) Part III has 10 paragraphs of offensive quotes and four that are more sympathetic. What she fails to do is to sum up Bailey's (2003) overall picture of transwomen as either: low IQ, low class, shoplifting, gay men who are "especially suited to prostitution" (p. 185) and prefer casual encounters with attractive men to committed relationships; or neurotic, bizarre, obsessed, lying, straight men sexually excited by the idea of themselves as women.

Painting that picture is left to the angry transwomen and is very sketchy. Despite many pages describing their actions, only a few paragraphs describe their reasons for being so angry. James' and Conway's views are available on their websites, including a tightly argued article by Roughgarden. Dreger could easily have cited explanations such as: This protest will not disappear. At stake is the possibility of transgendered women being able to live dignified, productive and loving lives in today's Western society. Few would support equality of opportunity for people of varied gender expression if science concluded that transgendered people were but prostitutes and fetishists. (Roughgarden, 2004)

And here is the nub of the problem—in 52,000 words, Dreger's entire discussion of the social and political context comprises one solitary paragraph about the oppression of trans people and a few comments such as that Bailey's portrayal of transwomen "seems unlikely to cause an outpouring of admiration or acceptance." She has little or nothing to say about: the difficult struggle for trans people's rights; complex interactions with struggles for gay, women's, and intersex people's rights; the intense transphobia of the U.S. religious right; battles for health insurance coverage and the associated interrelation with race and social class; or unequal power relations between trans people and psychiatrists as "gate keepers" for access to SRS. In this context, the threat to trans people posed by Bailey's book starts to look very real and very urgent. . ."

"Cowboys, Shepherders, and The Man Who Would Be Queen: "I Know" vs. First-Order Lived Experience"

Robin M. Mathy

[Archives of Sexual Behavior, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p.462-465.](#)

Excerpts:

"Dreger appears to take great pains to vindicate Bailey for charges of ethics violations, and this is the least convincing part of the lengthy article. Virtually all practicing psychologists adhere to the American Psychological Association code of ethics, and my

reading of TMWWBQ and Dreger's article leads me to believe that Bailey violated a number of ethical standards regarding human relations. Section 3.04 (Avoiding Harm) reads, "Psychologists take reasonable steps to avoid harming their clients/patients, students, supervisees, research participants, organizational clients, and others with whom they work, and to minimize harm where it is foreseeable and unavoidable" (emphasis added). There is no doubt that Kieltyka, at least, was harmed by Bailey's research, and that harm was reasonably foreseeable and avoidable. That Bailey repeatedly permitted Kieltyka to undress in his classroom and promulgated her exhibitionism in pornographic videos suggests to me that he had prurient interests that transcended any educational benefit to his students. How any dean of a well-respected research institution could permit such decadent behavior in the guise of pedagogy is simply astonishing. . .

Deconstruction is the method of choice for postmodernists (Gross & Levitt, 1998). Dreger's article is simultaneously a deconstruction of the controversy and an apparent effort to vindicate the book's author. In postmodernist scholarship, legitimate claims to epistemic authority and a right to be heard are based primarily upon the first-person narratives of the oppressed, in this case transgender women. Neither Dreger nor Bailey are members of this oppressed group, and neither have first-person narratives that can make a legitimate claim to an epistemic authority that would help one understand the intense furor over TMWWBQ and Bailey's unethical behavior in this case. . .

Dreger's attempt to vindicate Bailey, particularly by vilifying several prominent transwomen, was unconvincing, at best, and superficial and institution-serving at worst. The thought process, "If I did it, it wasn't wrong" and, "Oh, by the way, I didn't do it because it doesn't meet the definition" is the same kind of antisocial thinking I see in the inmates of the local county jail, with whom I do group therapy twice a week. . ."

"Politics in Scholarly Drag: Dreger's Assault on the Critics of Bailey"

Deirdre McCloskey

[*Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p.466-468.](#)

Excerpts:

"Dreger defends Bailey's failure to request permission to use the women's lives as he does in his book by agreeing with Bancroft that the book isn't science. This is how Bailey defended himself on his website after the book came out, despite the heavy we-are-scientists rhetoric in the book itself. Yet, Dreger treats with the utmost respect Bailey's generalizations on the basis of a half-dozen gender crossing prostitutes. She can't have it both ways. Either he was doing rigorous science and therefore violated the norms of science or, he was doing casual journalism, and his views do not deserve the attention she uncritically gives. . . When Dreger wants to defend Bailey, it's "oh, he was just doing a journalistic book." When she wants to admire his science, it's "gosh, what persuasive scientific generalizations that gaymen lisp and gender crossers are in it for sex, sex, sex."

But set aside Bailey's theory. Dreger's essay is mainly not about the science. It is an exercise in political advocacy. She fashions it as a sober inquiry into the ethics of the reaction to Bailey's book (though by the way she appears not to know anything about ethical theories and cites none of them). It's not. It's a very long brief for Bailey, right down to touching stories about Bailey's children (e.g., "Bailey's family and friends privately rallied around him") . . . So the issues between us are political. I am described by Dreger as a "transgender activist." James, who can certainly be described that way, plays a big part early on, complete with unsubstantiated suggestions that she is somehow physically dangerous. Dreger then describes at great length Kieltyka's "remarkable sex life." The idea is to lead with a heavy dose of the strange—consistent with the characterization early in the essay of everyone involved against Bailey as weird and dangerous and "activists"—and to leave for much later the sober gender-crossing scientists who have taken exception to Bailey's theories. Only very late in the paper do we discover that eminent scientists like Roughgarden are part of the nutty "transgendered activists" she is going after. . .

At various points, Dreger complains that Blanchard, Bailey, and Lawrence (described sympathetically as a "physician-researcher": no "activists" work on the Bailey side of the street) are "lumped together. . . as a single, uniformly dangerous beast." If it's a bad idea to lump together three people who are old friends and collaborators in forwarding Blanchard's unsubstantiated theories, what's this about calling us all on the other side "transgender activists"? I deny in particular that I worked "to ruin Bailey professionally and personally" or "to make Bailey as personally miserable as possible." I disagree with Bailey's theories and have explained repeatedly why I disagree, in print, and here again. I think his theories will result in more dead queers and I've said so (there's some "actual damage done to people"). I think his behavior from beginning to end has been disgraceful and unscholarly, and I've said that, too. What's the beef? Isn't it appropriate to criticize such work and such a person? Not according

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to Dreger's ethics. I am supposed to have done something wicked by complaining through channels about Bailey's mistreatment of his victims. Dreger wrote to the appropriate parties through channels to try to persuade Northwestern's Rainbow Alliance not to invite James to speak. I did similarly. Ask again: What exactly is wrong with requesting that a book attacking gender crossers be removed from a nomination for a book prize by an organization that defends gender crossers? . . .

Dreger has a gift for self-dramatization. She portrays herself as a courageous defender, who is legitimately concerned she will suffer "personal harassment for researching and publicizing this history." She portrays herself repeatedly as writing "scholarly history" (the phrase is used four times, as though by saying that you are doing historical scholarship you can make it so). She needs to write, she says, because misunderstanding of the Bailey controversy "are adversely affecting many people's lives and actions? . . .

It was apparent from the outset that Dreger was determined to tell the story as though Bailey were Galileo (she in fact uses the image, though jocularly; Blanchard is Copernicus; she, I guess, is Newton) and as though I were among the papal inquisition confining him to house arrest. The power positions of the people involved make the Bailey as-victim story bizarre. Bailey is a tenured professor at a major university, defended stoutly by its bureaucracy; the two "activists" on which Dreger spends by far the most time (James and Kieltyka) have only the feeble power of words.

Dreger has written a political brief. One more typical example. By her own evidence—she asked Bailey (and he wouldn't answer) if Bailey had slept with an object of his scientific study. Much later she enthusiastically reviews the "proof" Bailey offers against the direct and precise testimony of Juanita that he had sex with her. The proof is shallow. That is how one might characterize Dreger's tedious and tendentious "scholarly history." Lengthy but shallow."

"The Drama of Sex, Identity, and the "Queen"'"

Marta Meana

[*Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p.469-471.](#)

Excerpt:

"In the introduction, Dreger expresses the hope that her reconstruction of events will "calm and even quell some of the tensions that persist." This seems strangely naive. It belies a belief that makes you wonder if Dreger fully comprehends the profundity of what really happened. This was not a story of misunderstanding or star-crossed characters. This was not a story in which a messenger arrived a minute too late with a missive that would have forestalled a tragedy. This is a darker, less hopeful story. Flaws on either side notwithstanding, the two forces clashing in this drama have radically opposing ideas about the path to truth, whatever that truth may be. That is why Dreger's careful telling of the "facts" is unlikely to be successful in quelling anything at all. Actually, it is more likely to reveal her ultimate allegiance to one side—Bailey's." . . .

"A Different Perspective"

Charles Moser

[*Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p.472-475.](#)

Excerpts:

"It is important to realize that Bailey did field research for TMWWBQ without IRB approval, did not obtain informed consent from his "subjects," and he did engage in activities that could be construed as practicing psychology without a license. All these acts were judged not to be a violation of law, ethics, or university rules. The complaints were not spurious; they also were not actual violations. . . .

A Different Perspective on Dreger

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With all due respect to Dreger, was she the correct person to tell this story? She admits she was not unbiased. She has been attacked by the same detractors as Bailey and she has her own political agenda.

Dreger is a prominent figure in the Intersex movement; I was surprised there was no discussion about the friction (to put it mildly) between the Intersex and Transsexual Movements. The diagnostic criteria for Gender Identity Disorder (Transsexuality) in the DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) specifically omit individuals with a physical intersex condition. Nevertheless, as Dreger notes, some people (both transsexual and professional) believe that transsexuality is a type of neurological intersex condition. Some intersex activists are quite dismissive of this possibility and point to the Autogynephilia theory as a way of distinguishing and distancing themselves from transsexuals.

Dreger (1998) has stated: "...the experiences and advice of adult intersexuals must be solicited and taken into consideration. It is incorrect to claim, as I have heard several clinicians do, that the complaints of adult intersexuals are irrelevant..." If one were to replace the term "intersexuals" with "transsexuals" in the above quote, it would suggest that Dreger would be critical of Bailey for ignoring the transsexual activists' perspective and complaints. Dreger seems to be inconsistent in her admonitions about the right to self definition. . . .

A Different Perspective on How to Manage "Controversies" in the Future

As I am writing this commentary, Bailey is taking part in radio interviews (August 22, 2007; <http://www.kqed.org/epArchive/R708221000>), giving interviews to the press (New York Times, August 21, 2007), and calling one critic "...a big fat ugly liar, and I am thinking of suing her" (Bailey to Sexnet, p.e.c., August 22, 2007). This only reinvigorates the opposition. In my opinion, Bailey is not clearing his name, but fomenting further controversy. . .

Epilogue: A Different Perspective

Dreger asked, "How could there be so much smoke and so little fire"? The same could be asked of Dreger. Did she uncover a pattern of lies and false allegations? No, the allegations were basically true; they just did not constitute any formal misconduct. . .

"Dreger on the Bailey Controversy: Lost in the Drama, Missing the Big Picture:

Margaret Nichols

[*Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p.476-480.](#)

Excerpts:

"Dreger describes herself as an historian, a bioethicist, and a "queer activist." In this essay, she fails at all three. She has described the Bailey controversy myopically, without placing it in its larger sociocultural context. She ignores the history of queer activism and its relationship to psychiatry. She is particularly oblivious to changes in the emerging transgender movement. The transgender community, and the professionals who work within it, are in the midst of a revolution, but Dreger hasn't noticed. Under a veneer of neutrality, Dreger has aligned herself with the conservative rearguard of professionals, not realizing that changes in the field are already rendering much of that rearguard obsolete. Shocked by some of the tactics, she has missed the symbolic significance of the uproar over TMWWBQ. . .

As a bioethicist, Dreger ducks the big issues by hiding behind legalistic arguments. She skirts the question of whether Bailey slept with any of his subjects by giving Clinton-esque arguments about what constitutes "sex," concluding that, even if sex occurred, it's technically not a violation of ethics. She used similar arguments to explain Bailey's conflicts with Northwestern University, the allegations about informed consent, and the complaint to the Board of Psychological Examiners. She does not address the power differential between Bailey and the trans people he trotted out to shock and titillate his human sexuality classes, or the ethics of "befriending" such people, who are unsophisticated about academia and research, only to turn around and write about them in ways that make them look like psychologically crippled freaks. This behavior may be technically ethical but it is morally repugnant. Most significantly, Dreger fails to see the larger impact that books like this one have on society's treatment of transgendered people. . .

The deficits in Dreger's historical, ethical, and political analyses of the Bailey controversy lead her to fundamentally flawed conclusions. Dreger portrays Bailey as an impartial "truth-seeking" scientist who courageously espoused "politically incorrect" views and was unfairly maligned by a tiny group of crazed transwomen. She implies that Bailey's freedom of speech has been abridged, forgetting that the right to free speech, which can legally be infringed only by the government, entitles one to a voice, not to a forum, and not to grant funding, public speaking appearances, or book awards. Not that Bailey has lost these forums. Thanks to Dreger, even the New York Times has painted him as a beleaguered hero (Carey, 2007) . . ."

"A Matter of Perspective: A Transsexual Woman-Centric Critique of Dreger's "Scholarly History" of the Bailey Controversy"

Julia Serano

[*Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p.491-494.](#)

Excerpts:

"The first rule of thumb when conducting a historical analysis—particularly one involving any backlash or tipping point event—is to provide the necessary background and the sociopolitical context in which the involved parties are situated within in order to understand the underlying forces that helped to shape the ways in which people reacted and events unfolded. In her lengthy article, Dreger devotes approximately 14 pages to Bailey's conceiving and writing the book and the subject matter contained therein, 17 pages to describing the backlash against the book (with an overwhelming emphasis on purported attempts by a handful of trans activists to "ruin" Bailey), and 13 pages to clearing Bailey of most of the charges of misconduct that were made against him. In other words, it is primarily a Bailey-centric reading of the controversy. . .

Because Dreger is either ignorant of, or unconcerned by, the ways in which trans women have been historically and institutionally marginalized in society and within psychology, her accounts of the trans community's reaction to Bailey's book are superficial and patronizing. For example, she dismisses trans people's accusations that Bailey's views and his book are "transphobic" by claiming that he advocates sex reassignment for transsexuals and he genuinely likes trans people. This belittles trans people's legitimate concerns that Bailey's book (1) is highly pathologizing, reducing trans womanhood to the status of a paraphilia, (2) encourages readers to think of trans women as either "homosexual" or "autogynephilic" men, thus fostering the idea that our female gender identities are not to be taken seriously, (3) routinely and extensively sexualizes trans women and encourages a largely trans-ignorant lay audience to do the same, and (4) he positions himself as an authority on transsexuality and repeatedly claims that trans women whose experiences and perspectives contradict his "expert opinion" must be purposely trying to deceive or mislead others. . . The fact that Dreger (who is non transsexual) so thoroughly dismisses trans people's concerns about Bailey's book strikes me as insensitive at best and condescending at worst. . .

The backlash against Bailey's book was a tipping point event, one that was enabled by a decade of trans activism during which trans people finally began to gain a collective voice and to redefine themselves in non-pathological ways (e.g., as transgender or gender variant). There was a broad consensus within the community that Bailey's book demeaned and misrepresented trans women's lives and countless trans people and allies expressed their opinions on this manner in legitimate ways (e.g., by writing critiques of the book, signing petitions, writing letters to editors, and so on). Dreger belittles this legitimate community effort by exaggerating the number of trans people who support Bailey's claims (in my experience, such people represent a very small yet vocal minority within the community) and by focusing almost entirely on the actions of three individuals (CJM).. .

Perhaps the most striking oversight in Dreger's article (given her position as a bioethicist) is that she eagerly defends academic/scientific freedom of expression without ever engaging in the equally important issue of academic/scientific responsibility. . . . The fact is that when a self-appointed "expert" like Bailey claims that transsexual women transition for purely sexual reasons, and that they are lying if they state otherwise, people will believe him because of his academic/ scientist status. For this reason, it is disturbing that Dreger would exonerate Bailey of most of the scientific misconduct charges made against him primarily on the basis that his book was not "science," without ever taking him to task for misrepresenting his book as "The Science of Gender-Bending and Transsexualism" in the first place. . .

Bailey's book claims to provide a scientific basis for three of the most commonly repeated sexualizing stereotypes of trans women: that we are either perverted men who "get off" on the idea of being women, gay men who transition to female in order to pick up straight men, and/or that we are "especially well suited to prostitution" . . . The cavalier way in which Bailey forwards these sexualizing stereotypes with no concern for the profound negative impact they have on trans women's lives is scientifically

irresponsible and a misuse of the institutionalized power that he holds over trans people as a psychologist. The fact that Dreger does not consider this institutionalized erasure of trans women's identities, perspectives, and concerns to be ethically important is troubling in its own right. . ."

"Accounting for Power and Academic Responsibility"

Elroi J. Windsor

[*Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p.495-497.](#)

Excerpts:

"Due to space limitations, this commentary highlights just a few important oversights that compromise Dreger's conclusions, specifically the issues of imbalanced representations, ignoring academic responsibility, and downplaying histories of power differences between trans people and the academics who study them.

An issue apparent throughout Dreger's account is the unevenness of perspectives. During her investigation, Dreger maintained close contact with major players in this controversy—particularly Bailey and Kieltyka—and gained numerous insights from them. Remarkably, she was also able to interview every sexologist she approached. The information she obtained from these sources was invaluable, but it outweighs what she might have acquired from the transwomen that launched the backlash. Dreger's discussion of the problems she encountered with securing the critics' cooperation for her article helps readers understand why she was unable to present their views directly, and also why they declined to participate. However, Dreger minimizes the ways that relaying their ideas solely through static, secondary, and dated sources affected her analysis.

In addition to the disproportionate quantity of perspectives, Dreger's descriptive writing of these groups appears dissimilar. In the account, Dreger reveals detailed personal histories about Bailey's critics, portraying many of them as troubled. Yet, descriptions about Bailey's personal life lack this prejudicial language. Readers never encounter any salacious specifics concerning his sexual proclivities that may have informed his interest in studying trans people. This omission occurs despite Bailey's admitted sexual attraction to some transwomen, including his flirtations with Juanita, with whom he was accused of having sex. Dreger's empathy for Bailey's plight contrasts with her less sympathetic and occasionally condescending portrayals of Conway, James, and McCloskey. Dreger faults these critics for targeting the messenger and not his messages, yet the imbalance within her article suggests that she does the same. This imbalance colors Dreger's conclusions regarding Bailey's infractions

Dreger presents a convincing case for conceiving of TMWWBQ as a popularization. She demonstrates that as an unscientific work that lacked systematic inquiry, it did not qualify as human subjects research and therefore Bailey did not violate research standards. While this assessment is persuasive, Dreger ignores broader issues of academic responsibility. Dreger notes that Bailey asserts wild generalizations about transwomen's lifestyles and occupations, highlighting the most offensive parts that sparked the backlash. Regrettably, she avoids problematizing the way Bailey presented TMWWBQ under the guise of scholarly inquiry. . . . By not holding Bailey more accountable, Dreger's exegesis lacks an analysis of the ways power shaped the controversy.

Dreger rightly acknowledges the shift in power when Bailey became subjected to a critical backlash. She also recognizes that his most vocal opponents likely felt relief and possibly pleasure in turning the tables by charging Bailey with misconduct. A major weakness of Dreger's account is that she neglects to fully unpack how these responses emerged within a long history that has shaped relationships between academics and the transsexuals they study. . .

Psychomedical gatekeeping inspires restrictive narratives because transsexuals typically must secure professional authorization before medically altering their bodies with hormones and surgeries (Green, 2006; Meyer et al., 2001). Dreger neglects to interrogate that transsexuals feel the need to convey particular narratives due to this gatekeeping. . . . That some transsexuals utilized Bailey as an authority whose credentials could facilitate their access to these services warrants closer inspection. Without doubt, many felt indebted to mollify him. However, Dreger does little to challenge Bailey's assumption that transsexuals simply lied about having a sexual fetish. She deemphasizes how this uneven power dynamic may have functioned in the interactions between Bailey and the transwomen whose stories he used.

In addition to limiting transgender narratives, psychomedical oppression has sparked fear and distrust among transsexuals (Meyerowitz, 2002). Like other academics before him, Bailey chose to disregard how transgender people conceptualized their own experiences and identities. While the collective outrage against TMWWBQ may have given the book more attention than it

deserved, Bailey's book was another insult symbolic of many past injuries. Trans people felt used, misled, and misrepresented. Their responses, considered in historical context, are understandable and in many cases justifiable. This history also speaks to why Dreger obtained information from all the sexologists she wanted to interview, while key transwomen refused to participate. Ultimately, Dreger fails to seriously consider how the history of psychomedical gatekeeping and oppression informed the backlash. . .

To expect that the "deviants" one studies have no say in the analysis is an antiquated conception of research. The historical colonization of trans bodies likely affected the relationships Bailey had with transwomen. All things considered, perhaps there is no love lost from those sex researchers Dreger interviewed that have sworn off transgender people as "too unstable and dangerous to bother with."

Overall, the lack of close examination of these important issues is surprising, especially given that Dreger mentions how queer theoretical techniques might easily expose the assumptions that inform Bailey's study. Here, Dreger's point would be strengthened had she suggested that we must also consider the erotic components of cisgender people's sexualities. Surely, cisgender people integrate their gendered bodies in their erotic selves, and if they did not have their existing, preferred genitalia, they might imagine that they did. But Dreger leaves unexamined the limitations of Bailey's heteronormative study of atypical or marked groups, while normative groups assume naturalness and remain unquestioned.

Searching for a singular Truth is important to both Dreger and Bailey. Indeed, Dreger's account concludes by quoting Bailey as he wistfully muses the lessons of truth. In an era where positivist science dominates popular conceptualizations of reality, the quest for truth never ends. Acknowledging the possibility of multiple truths is futile for such scholars. Still, when considering the interactions between the researcher and the researched, the controversy and the critique, judicious scholars must ask: exactly whose truth has been told?"

"A Social Psychology of a History of a Snippet in the Psychology" of Transgenderism

Madeline H. Wyndzen

[*Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p. 498-502.](#)

Excerpts:

"Dreger's opening remarks gave me hope for someone to succeed where I failed. She suggests that a scholarly history could lessen persistent tensions. I admire interdisciplinary work and hoped for her success at combining psychology with history. But as I read the coming pages, disillusion grew. I realized that I had read it before; it rehashes the pro-autogynephilia side. How could someone with such scholarship in writing history be pulled so much by one side that she misses so much of the other? To help answer this question, I fill in some gaps in Dreger's history and offer tentative explanations using social psychology. . .

Dreger notes that "no sexologist refused my request for an interview" after dedicating pages to the unwillingness of three anti-autogynephilia transgendered women to help. This could easily lead readers to the impression that sexologists are honest people whereas those transgendered women are not. As a consequence of the fundamental attribution error, we typically over-attribute others' behavior to traits and neglect circumstances (e.g., Ross, 1977). When Dreger made the decision to define the story as about Bailey, she made many sexologists eager to talk as it makes their side look good in light of some over-the-top misbehavior; the same situation led the other side to be reluctant. Her choice dramatically influences how we appear. . .

Opposition to autogynephilia is clearly an element in the backlash against Bailey's book. But is it the central element? The history of reactions does not support this inference. Those with alternative life stories have never experienced even a minor backlash and some who disagree with the feminine essence model also disagree with Blanchard's model. Saying that we have cross-gender fantasies does not provoke a backlash either. The backlash occurred only when transsexuality was explained as only caused through sexuality and when this explanation trivialized other causal mechanisms. Bailey went further than Lawrence to suggest transsexuals lie when they disagree with him. The result was a stronger backlash.

"Most gender patients lie" (Bailey, 2003, p. 172). The beginning of the backlash is best summarized by this quote by Bailey of someone he calls an "ace gender clinician." This accusation is very serious in this circumstance. Unlike other groups Bailey criticizes in his book (i.e., bisexual men, social constructivists, psychologists who do not endorse Blanchard's model),

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transgendered persons are stigmatized by being labeled mentally ill for being who they are. . .

Dreger incorporates far more details underlying both the pro- and the anti-autogynephilia sides into her writing than perhaps anyone else. It is a great credit to her data collection abilities. Her bias is not primarily in the facts, but in the *framing*, how she organizes and presents the facts. . . I previously discussed two framing effects that may bias readers' understanding of the history. First, Dreger focuses on Bailey's plight. Second, she accepts Bailey's frame of the scientific debate as between Blanchard's model and a "feminine essence" model. I now examine her acceptance of the pro-autogynephilia frame of the social controversy: scientists versus activists.

If a man sought therapy due to unhappiness over his attraction to other men, a therapist would likely diagnose him with depression. If a transsexual sought therapy due to unhappiness over his or her biological sex, a therapist would almost certainly diagnose him or her with Gender Identity Disorder. Whereas gaymen are diagnosed *for how they suffer*, transsexuals are diagnosed *for who they are*. I find the mental illness labels imposed on transgenderism just as disquieting as the label that used to be imposed on homosexuality. Similar to antiquated ideas suggesting that homosexuality is a deviant sex drive, Blanchard (1989, 1991) proposed that transsexuality is a mis-directed form of either heterosexuality (named "autogynephilia") or homosexuality. Rather than asking the scientifically neutral question, "What is transgenderism?" Blanchard (1991) asks, "What kind of defect in a male's capacity for sexual learning could produce... autogynephilia, transvestitism...?" (p. 246). Beginning with these unscientific value judgments is insensitive toward transgendered persons and leads to invalid scientific conclusions by reducing people to stereotypes. . .

Dreger strings together facts, however circuitously, to incorporate the other side, to frame the history as the almost "Galileo-like" struggling of truth-seeking scientists against seemingly powerful "fundamentalists." She notes the uniformity of opinion in the peer-reviewed psychology publications that support Blanchard's model in a way that legitimates Bailey's lack of serious consideration of alternatives. She does this despite how the "peers" who review (psychologists and psychiatrists) are likely others in the same position of enormous power to diagnosis and authorize HRT/SRS for the other peer group (transgendered persons). Dreger fails to note how this uniformity among peers is strikingly different from the vibrant ongoing debates in nearly every other research area of psychology. She does not consider shared biases by pro-autogynephilia researchers that may lead to their conformity. . . The possibility of groupthink is never considered. . .

Dreger may honestly see herself as neutral in this conflict. Yet, I note at least three ways in which she chooses the proautogynephilia frames without serious consideration of their validity. . . In all likelihood, Dreger has spent much more time hearing and experiencing these events from the pro-autogynephilia side's vantage point (e.g., her conflict with James, the overwhelming willingness of sexologists to speak with her). This may not be her fault. I hope her essay can help others who write oral histories become conscientious of the correspondence bias and aware of the importance of spending an equal amount of time and effort seeing a conflict from each sides' perspective. . ."

Peer Commentary Papers Supportive of Dreger's Defense:

"Response to the Commentaries on Dreger (2008)"

Alice D. Dreger

[Archives of Sexual Behavior, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p.503-510.](#)

Introduction and comments regarding Dreger's Response:

Upon first reading the peer commentary papers, Dreger proclaimed that "it just made me nuts" - leading her to stomp her feet and hurl public insults at their authors:

"I was reading the 24 [commentaries](#) written in response to [my tome](#) on the history of the Bailey book controversy. And so many scholars had so many basic facts wrong, it just made me nuts. (Still does. I'll say so in my formal

response.) I can't believe that professional scholars can be that sloppy when it comes to publishing work in a scholarly journal. I mean, don't they care?" - Alice Dräger, [blog entry of January 7, 2008](#)

In her Response to the Commentaries, Dräger sidesteps the peer criticisms with a lengthy smokescreen of rhetorical meanderings that give the impression she's defending against them. She then renews and heightens her attack on the three transwomen, libeling them by now openly accusing them of filing false charges against Bailey and then caricaturing them as suffering from autogynephilic "narcissistic rage" (a disorder conveniently written up in [Anne Lawrence's PCP](#) just in time to be exploited in Dräger's PCP).

Meantime, Dräger is apparently clueless about how her peers are talking about her behind her back. At WPATH 2007 many whispered "What on earth has happened to Alice Dräger?" as they reflected on Dräger's strange defense of the indefensible.

As Dräger now enters her third year of impassioned defense of J. Michael Bailey and employs increasingly irrational tactics, such questions are no longer whispers but are out in the open: What kind of emotional attachment and mental breakdown would lead Dräger into acting-out this way, for this long and with this level of uncontrolled rage? And to collaborate with self-diagnosed mentally-ill sexual paraphilic Anne Lawrence on defaming Bailey's critics as being mentally ill? To many observers Dräger and Lawrence appear to be the ones who've experienced narcissistic injuries, as they now project their rage onto others.

Excerpts:

"I think what some of these critics simply don't get—or perhaps don't wish to admit—is that, no matter how reprehensible Bailey's book was believed to be, it would not justify the production, broadcasting, and filing of essentially false charges against Bailey by Lynn Conway, Deirdre McCloskey, and Andrea James to multiple authorities. Some have tried to argue that I should have told this as more of a "he said- she-said" story, wherein one alleged personal affront was answered with another (see, e.g., Lane; Nichols). But to do so would be to obscure the critical fact that what three of the she's said in this case were essentially falsehoods—damaging falsehoods reported to people in positions of significant power. . .

Brian Gladue may well be correct in his suspicion that the Bailey controversy has resulted in yet more mission-creep on the part of institutional review boards (IRBs). If it is the case, that would be ironic since, as I showed in my essay, the merit of the charges made against Bailey was, in fact, so very low. As Gladue hints, there ought to be a better way to deal with the sorts of things that happened here than to make researchers subject to yet more regulatory scrutiny. My essay suggests sometimes effort would better be spent subjecting accusers (especially those not even involved with the supposed "research") to more scrutiny. . .

Anne Lawrence independently arrives at the same conclusion regarding the role of narcissism and especially narcissistic rage among some of Bailey's biggest critics, but goes beyond, delving into the clinical literature to propose that narcissistic disorders may be common among the transsexuals she calls autogynephilic. In a subtle critique of Bailey's book, Lawrence "also suggest [s] that clinicians and scholars [...] try to avoid inflicting" narcissistic injury, especially since it results in harm to all involved. Although Lawrence and Meana differ on "autogynephilia," both made me realize that, to understand the history of this controversy, one really must understand the personalities of the major players. I had the strangest reaction while reading Lawrence's essay: I found myself cringing and nodding at the same time. Nodding in part because, by the time I read Lawrence's piece, a number of strangers had already written to me to say they found Bailey's critics' behaviors to be explicable only as narcissistic rage. That said, Lawrence's is, by far, the most scholarly exposition of this I have encountered. . . .

I think, as we activists seek a more just world, it is critical that we be intolerant not only of foolishness masquerading as authority, but that we be intolerant of foolishness masquerading as progressivism. Let us hold ourselves to the same standards we hold those we seek to change. Thinking you are right is never an excuse for acting wrong."

[Comment: Dräger should go stand in front of a mirror, and read that last sentence to herself.]

"Gender Identity Politics, Human Subjects Issues, and the ‘Law of Unintended Consequences’”

Brian A. Gladue

[*Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p. 448-450.](#)

Excerpts:

"One of the main charges against Bailey was that his book (TMWWBQ) was a research project involving unconsented subjects and research data gathered without a priori IRB review and approval. As Dreger accurately analyzed and concluded, this is an empty accusation without foundation or merit. First, Dreger outlines the various practical and regulatory considerations demonstrating that the Bailey book was not research (that is, not a systematic investigation intended to contribute to generalizable knowledge), a position previously noted by the then Director of the Kinsey Institute, John Bancroft ("Michael, I have read your book and I do not think it is science"). And even if the background for the book were a scientific research undertaking, federal regulations allow for such research to be conducted without IRB review under the so-called Exempt categories in which formal IRB review is not required. This is that set of research activities Dreger noted as ethnographic research, oral history, historical research, and so forth. . . .

Frankly, IRBs generally are busy enough and do not need the extra business and burden of evaluating minimal risk human interactions that are not in and of themselves scientific research. So, where was the outcry from genderists and journalists and bloggers about opening this regulatory door and begging for more unneeded IRB oversight and "mission creep" into their discipline's scholarly areas? . . .

There is a triple irony at play in the Conway-Bailey affair that will probably have unintended consequences and repercussions for years to come. First, it is hugely ironic that social activists and social scientists/life historians would even argue that Bailey should have obtained IRB review for his book. For years, these groups of scholars and academics have chafed under the regulatory burden of IRB reviews. . . .

A second irony is that such highly public character assassinations and scandalous accusations (sexual relations with research subjects, not consenting subjects, not getting IRB approval, etc.) tend to make things worse, not better, for sexology. Good for tabloid copy, but rarely do such campaigns enhance the public image of science disciplines. By relentlessly attacking Bailey's book and methods by any means necessary, his critics may have over-played a hand. Every time a sexologist gets attacked in such a manner, especially by university based liberals, it draws a lot of negative attention and provides long-term fuel for opponents of sex research. Dreger notes that Blanchard and others are concerned that ever fewer students and faculty will consider research in transsexuality, perhaps even sex research in general. Add to that the flat-to-shrinking amount of funding support for sex research . . .

Finally, there is the irony that false but frenzied accusations often call attention to problems that do not need addressing. Flogging the Internet and professional conferences with the notion that sexologists conduct research without consenting subjects raises specters of renegade mad scientists engaged in ethical misconduct. Eventually, such exaggerated propaganda can filter up to regulatory agencies and legislatures. Behind every regulation or guidance regarding, in this case, human subject research is an act or perception of someone's misconduct. As some say in IRB Land, "behind every reg is a screw-up (or the fear of one)." Dreger noted, even when there has been no malfeasance or inappropriate conduct, if you make enough racket long enough, people begin to wonder if there is something to it all. Hence, we can probably expect a tightening, not relaxing, of human subjects regulations regarding ethnographic studies and oral history research, and not just in sexology. . . .

Recently, OHRP issued a federal agency Notice for Public Comment on revisions to regulations associated with human subject research. Typically, such notices are a prelude to a change in regulations, with such change likely to occur within the following year. In this latest Notice, OHRP has indicated it will expand regulatory oversight for research that needs to be reviewed by an IRB as follows (changes noted in italics): Research (a) on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, *affective states*, *interpersonal relationships*, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior); or (b) *employing methods commonly used in social, behavioral, epidemiologic, health services and educational research (including, but not limited to, survey, interview, oral history, participant observation, ethnographic, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methods)* . . .

"Lighten Up, Ladies"

Richard Green

[Archives of Sexual Behavior, Vol.37, No. 3, June 2008, p.451-452.](#)

Excerpts:

"Dreger's meticulously detailed and documented essay is on remarkably even terrain, considering the steep slope on which the events are perched. My concern here is not with the strengths or weaknesses of the Blanchard studies or the Bailey book. Rather, it is with the vortex of vitriol, the unrelenting campaign of character assassination. . .

And, why the furor over whether the need to change sex includes, for some, an eroticized component? Except for the odd asexual, human beings are erotically aroused by a vast array of stimuli, including cannibalizing a sex partner met on the Internet. By comparison, the eroticized image by a male of a female body (not all that uncommon, albeit not usually of oneself) is pretty tame stuff.

Further, how many professionals remain convinced that to qualify for sex-change a person must fit the Cinderella history of Christine Jorgensen? And who knows whether her life story was entirely factual? . . .

On a more general issue, I take exception to the Dreger article characterization of research as the systematic investigation, including research development, testing, and evaluation, designed to contribute to generalizable knowledge, and only then subject to protection of human subjects. A scholarly study may differ from a scientific one welded to that definition but still impact its subjects. Stoller's (1973) epic "Splitting: A Case of Female Masculinity" was a 395 page case study of a woman convinced that she had a penis. It was seven years of interview transcripts. It was not generalizable. There was no hypothesis testing. But his subject required (and received) protection. . . .

In an otherwise painful reading of the Bailey ordeal, one point brought a smile. Dreger may have stumbled onto a means of generating considerable income. She has the seed for a new Monopoly game for gender dysphorics, beginning with the "Get Out of Male Free" card." . . .

"Shame and Narcissistic Rage in Autogynephilic Transsexualism"

Anne A. Lawrence

[Archives of Sexual Behavior, Vol.37, No. 3, June 2008, p.457-461.](#)

Excerpts:

"One of the most important contributions made by Dreger's article is her description of the extraordinary lengths to which some of Bailey's male-to-female(MtF) transsexual opponents went in their attempts to discredit him, his book, and his ideas. By Dreger's account, their campaign against Bailey continued for at least two years after the publication of *The Man Who Would Be Queen* (TMWWBQ; Bailey, 2003). . .

In this essay, I argue that much of the MtF transsexual campaign against Bailey can be understood as a manifestation of narcissistic rage. It is no coincidence, I believe, that most of Bailey's principal opponents fit the demographic pattern associated with nonhomosexual MtF transsexualism (see Lawrence, 2007). I propose that nonhomosexual (i.e., presumably autogynephilic) MtF transsexuals are probably at increased risk for the development of narcissistic disorders—significant disorders in the sense of self—as a consequence of the inevitable difficulties they face in having their cross-gender feelings and identities affirmed by others, both before and after gender transition. As a result, many autogynephilic transsexuals are likely to be particularly vulnerable to feelings of shame and may be predisposed to exhibit narcissistic rage in response to perceived insult or injury. . .

It is certainly not difficult to find evidence of narcissistic personality traits, including a sense of entitlement, grandiosity, and lack of empathy (APA, 2000), in some of Bailey's principal MtF transsexual opponents. Perhaps the most obvious of these is a sense of entitlement, the belief that one is deserving of special treatment. This is evident, for example, in their outrage that Bailey

described them in a way they felt was inconsistent with their identities and in their belief that Bailey had an obligation to address what they believed to be evidence for a “third type” of MtF transsexual. A sense of entitlement is also evident in the demand some of them made that the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association conduct an investigation of Bailey. . .

Why did so many of Bailey’s MtF transsexual opponents appear to experience TMWWBQ as inflicting narcissistic injury? Bailey’s presentation of Blanchard’s concept of autogynephilia, and the transsexual typology and theory of transsexual motivation associated with it, seems to have been the real focus of most of the anger directed against the book. In oversimplified form, Blanchard’s theory might seem to imply that nonhomosexual MtF transsexualism is little more than sexual fetishism. Because most of Bailey’s principal opponents fit the demographic pattern associated with nonhomosexual MtF transsexualism, Blanchard’s ideas probably seemed utterly inconsistent with their sense of self. . .”

[Comment: Here we see Lawrence, a self-diagnosed autogynephile (a sexually-paraphilic mentally-ill man under Bailey's pronouncements), projecting disordered personal feelings such as 'autogynephilic rage' onto all those who criticize Bailey.]

"The Bailey Affair: Political Correctness and Attacks on Sex Research"

Bruce Rind

[*Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol.37, No.3, June 2008, p.481-484.](#)

Excerpts:

"The discourse of the psychiatrist has been an especially powerful one, especially with regards to persons on the sexual periphery, and so we might expect sexually peripheralized persons or groups to strike back discursively, and stridently so, if they have the opportunity. That is simply the politics of discourse and power that Foucault described well.

On the other hand, keeping in mind that explaining is not excusing, in sexological science it will not do to stand by as its knowledge is corrupted by political argumentation and ideology. The same can be said for academia more generally and for professional publications tied to academia, where objective truth and its pursuit should take priority over politics. When activists conspire to “infiltrate and take out” or to “vector and destroy” a social scientist solely or principally for political reasons, then that strikes against academic freedom. In Dreger’s account of the attacks, there was no indication that the trans activists were disputing Bailey’s ideas for anything other than political reasons. . . . Only subjective realities and fears of damaged images were put forth. The practical objection to their behavior, aside from its injuriousness to Bailey the researcher, is that it acts against the pursuit of objective truth, which needs room within a dialectical exchange to emerge.

A larger problem above and beyond the activists’ politicking was the easy acceptance they found among others in academia and the media, who took up the activists’ political cause and disseminated it, to the detriment of Bailey, science, and the pursuit of objective truth. After a long history of oppression, transsexuals have at long last achieved at least one set of allies—diversity-embracing progressives in academia and their counterparts in the liberal media—who are “politically correct” on racial, sexual, and gender issues. . .

Problematically, the politically correct “truths” thus generated became injurious to scientific activity and academic freedom. . .

Dreger, who identifies herself as a longstanding advocate of transsexual causes, analyzes whether Bailey’s book was derogatory towards transsexuals. If she judged that it was, she presumably would have pounced on him as other transsexual advocates had. Given that she found that Bailey had not been derogatory or guilty of any other serious complaint, it seems that it would have been appropriate to offer suggestions on sanctions against the aggressors in the Bailey affair as a matter of fairness and balance, because they were derogatory towards Bailey. . .”

