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Amanda Constant

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Examining the Term *Transgender* in Attitude Studies

Amanda Constant

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Dr. Kathleen Bailey, Thesis Director

Dr. Arnaa Alcon, Committee Member

Dr. Beverly Lovett, Committee Member

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to review the consistency of definitions used for the term *transgender* in instruments for studies measuring attitudes towards transgender individuals. Scales and measurements used to examine attitudes towards individuals that identify as transgender often do not include a clear definition of the term. There is a lack of consensus on the definition of the term *transgender* if a definition is presented at all. This is a threat to the validity of attitude studies and perpetuates confusion through misinformation, or lack of information. The rate of discrimination and violence this population faces is distressing. In the 2011 National Healthcare Disparities Report, transgender individuals who are visibly gender non-confirming were found to be more likely to experience violence in a variety of settings. Transgender individuals were also found to be at a greater risk for HIV and suicide attempts (The GenIUSS Group, 2014). Where there is a dearth of empirical research on this population, strong empirical studies are needed. Assessments of attitudes toward this population are a step to quantifying the problem of discrimination and subsequently, addressing it. This paper presents a systematic review of studies that measure attitudes toward transgender individuals. The goal of this study is to discern how and if definitions are used for the term *transgender* in current attitude and survey research.

Keywords: Transgender, Attitude Toward Transgender, Social Constructionism

Introduction

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) discrimination and the social injustices they face are still large and prevalent issues in the United States. Many Americans believe that LGBT individuals have equal rights with the recent Marriage Equality Act. In a survey completed by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD, n.d.), 50% of non-LGBT responders stated they believed LGBT individuals had the same rights as anyone else, 27% of non-LGBT respondents stated acts of violence against transgender people are not at all serious (Berrier, 2015) One way of addressing issues of discrimination and harassment in environments like the workplace, schools and in healthcare, is to examine the attitudes and cultural sensitivities of the non-LBGT individuals providing the services or working in these environments. Non-LBGT individuals know little or nothing about what transgender lives and individuals look like (Berrier, 2015). There is a lack of information and research on transgender lives and the challenges they face.

This paper will examine several survey instruments of attitude studies and how these instruments define *transgender*. The survey instruments included examine attitudes of non-LBGT service providers, members of law enforcement, medical professionals and college students toward transgender individuals. Establishing a clear and consistently used definition of the term *transgender* that is easily understood by the general population would have many implications for improving the state of transgender social justice.

Scope of the Issue

The Williams Institute, as part of UCLA, completed a study to examine how many people identify as LGBT. This study estimates that 0.3% or 697,529 adults in the United States are transgender and 3.5% of the population is LGB. Surveys of LGBT individuals in the U.S. and findings in two population surveys conducted in Massachusetts and California were used to come up with this estimate (Gates, 2011).

Large-scale studies of transgender individuals are limited. Of those studies, *Injustice at Every Turn: the National Transgender Discrimination Survey* examined the experiences of 6,450 gender non-conforming and transgender individuals. The respondents represented all 50 states, the US Virgin Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. This study revealed many of the challenges and outcomes transgender individuals face as result of discrimination, transphobia and violence. *Injustice At Every Turn* was an eight-month project funded by the Network for LGBT Health & Equity. Over 7500 individuals responded to the 70-question survey from all over the United States. Many respondents utilized an online survey option, some responded by letter mail. Respondents came from varying backgrounds; college students, low-income individuals, transgender individuals and gender non-conforming individuals. The study found that 41% of respondents reported attempted suicide (Grant, et al, 2011). This rate increased for individuals experiencing marginalization or discrimination in areas of work and school, and for those who had experienced physical assault or were low income. The unemployment rate for transgender or gender non-conforming individuals is double that of the general population and this rate increases two fold for transgender or gender non-conforming individuals of color (Grant et al, 2011). A high number of respondents (90%) stated they experienced harassment, mistreatment or discrimination, or took extra steps to avoid it, in the

work place. Those who were unemployed experienced higher rates of homelessness, drug use and working in high risk jobs like selling drugs or sex work. Rates of attempted suicide were also high for individuals who had lost a job due to discrimination or harassment. The same survey yielded a high number of K-12 students who experienced harassment in school. 78% of respondents reported harassment and 35% experienced physical assault (Grant et al, 2011). Respondents who experienced harassment or violence reported worse health, and difficulty performing in school (Grant et al, 2011). It is apparent from the above information that transgender individuals experience many challenges and sometimes devastating outcomes as a result of the discrimination they face.

Literature Review

The term *transgender* has been evolving for over 70 years. In 19th century Vienna, a scientist named Richard Von Krafft-Ebing began taking a closer look at sexuality and sexual impulses of adults. It was Krafft-Ebing's belief that an individual with a sexual experience or identity that differed from heterosexual adults was diseased or psychotic. According to Krafft-Ebing, homosexuality also meant gender variance (Stryker & Whittle, 2006). For example, if a man were sexually attracted to other men, he must take on qualities of a woman and vice versa. Kraft-Ebing developed several descriptors for the different levels of gender and sexuality variance he encountered in his research. "Metamorphosis sexualis paranoiac" described individuals who desired to transition from one gender to another. Kraft-Ebing considered these individuals to be disturbed and their desire to transition to be psychotic (Stryker & Whittle, 2006). Transexuality, transvestitism and transgender individuals were viewed as pathologic until the last revision of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 2013. This

change would begin in the early 20th century with a German sexologist named Magnus Hirschfeld (Heath, 2006).

Magnus Hirschfeld was one of the first who stopped using gender identity differences in the medical profession as pathology. He also began to separate individuals with gender identity differences and individuals who identify as homosexual. A common belief at the time was that sexual identity and gender identity were linked. For example if an individual began to transition, their sexual preference would change to match their gender. Hirschfeld believed they were mutually exclusive.

The word transvestite can be broken down into two parts with roots in Latin, *trans* meaning moving across and *vestis* meaning clothing. This term is used to describe individuals who feel a sense of well-being when they are dressed in the garb of their opposing sex (Heath, 2006). This word is still used today when referring to those who engage in cross-dressing though it can also be viewed as a pejorative term when referring to transgender individuals, trivializing their experience.

The word *transsexual* was introduced to the medical community in 1949 and became publically used in the 1960's. US physician David Cauldwell and Dr. Benjamin, in 1949, began using the word *transsexual* to clarify the difference between an individual who belonged to the opposite sex in which they were born, and a transvestite. A psychiatrist of Columbia University, John Oliven, felt the term *transsexual* was misleading as the process had nothing to do with the sexuality of an individual. He instead sought to use the term *transgender* in his book *Sexual Hygiene and Pathology* (Stryker & Whittle, 2006).

Virginia Prince helped popularize abbreviations for transsexual individuals (TS) and for transvestites (TV). This would present a challenge when she attempted to popularize the use of

an all-inclusive or umbrella term, *transgenderist*. Prince coined the term *transgenderist* in an attempt to differentiate between *transsexual*, someone who wishes to transition surgically and an individual who did not want to transition surgically but identified as a gender different from their sex. Prince introduced the term *transgenderist* to the public in her national magazine *Transvestia* as one of three terms, including transvestites and transsexuals. Each term was created in order to differentiate between individuals who expressed gender identity in a unique way. Transsexual individuals underwent hormonal or surgical treatment; transvestites dressed in the clothing of the opposite sex and transgenderist individuals identified with a gender different from their sex but didn't necessarily want to transition medically. The term *transgenderist* continued to evolve as an umbrella term that covered transvestites and transsexuals (Stryker & Whittle, 2006). Prince attempted to alter the construct by removing the sexual connotation the term *transvestite* carried with it. Prince developed the term *femmiphile* for men who enjoyed presenting as female in a nonsexual manner. This term did not catch on and would be eventually replaced with *crossdresser* instead of transvestite. Discrepancies in terminology have been an ongoing issue for over 70 years.

The *trans* part of transgender, in the early 90's, became more than meaning, *to cross*: it was about moving through, and beyond, traditional gender boundaries and norms. It was initially used to describe individuals whose social gender identity was not congruent with their natal sex. The term *transgender* became more widely used and took on the comprehensive quality it has today. The definition of *transgender* continued to evolve. In the early 90's, the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment added to the umbrella to include anyone in the process of transitioning in addition to those who did not want to transition, transsexuals and cross dressers. In the late 90's, transgender was added to the mission statement for the National

Gay and Lesbian Task Force (Stryker, 2008). According to Beemyn and Rankin (2011), there are more than 100 different descriptors for gender identity. In their survey, some individuals stated there were no words available to describe them. The term *genderqueer* has evolved to separate from the term *transgender* as a way of differentiating from those who will transition or have moved from one normative gender to the other, though transgender as it is defined today includes *genderqueer* individuals.

During the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights in 1993, activists and local communities advocated for the inclusion of *transgender* to the title of the march. When the vote did not pass, The Transgender Nation protested the march. This protest gave transgender groups the notoriety necessary to get their voices heard in public events such as the commemoration of the Stonewall Riots. It was only a year later before many Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights groups began adding the *T* for transgender to their names (Stryker, 2008). While this was certainly a step in a positive direction for transgender individuals, many organizations did little more than add to their names instead of addressing transgender concerns. During this time, LGB individuals regarded the term *transgender* as a new category or noun for any individuals who did not identify as “gender normative” male or female instead of the desired use of the term as an adjective or descriptor (Stryker, 2008). The evolution of the term *transgender* continues today.

Current state of the term

Today, the term *transgender* is prevalent in the media in the US with television programs like *Transparent* and *Orange is the New Black*, celebrities like Laverne Cox and Caitlyn Jenner, and in films like *Dallas Buyers Club*. Author Janet Mock released her memoir, *Redefining Realness* in 2014 where she discusses her journey as a transgender individual. In most cases,

cisgender white men, instead of using transgender actors, are representing transgender individuals. Misrepresentation of transgender lives is an ongoing problem in the media. Studies show the media is the primary source where cisgender individuals get much of their information on transgender lives (Stryker, 2008).

Quantitative descriptions of transgender lives are hard to come by due to the difficulty of acquiring data. Sample surveys would be challenging, as obtaining sample sizes needed would be difficult as often this population chooses to remain hidden. The definition of the term *transgender* poses another challenge to quantitative research. A universally agreed upon and comprehensive term could help researchers formulate the questions needed to survey this population and reinforce the validity of the survey instruments. Lastly, defining transgender is difficult due to the broad spectrum of gender nonconformity.

In many cases today the term *transgender* is still used as a noun or a category to which someone belongs instead of the preferred descriptive usage. GLAAD's media reference guide provides an excellent example of how one can consider the term as an adjective "Susan is a transgender woman". If a person needs further clarification, one can state that Susan was designated a man when she was born and began her transition 15 years ago (GLAAD Media Reference Guide, 2014). Sharing this information can begin to change the current understanding of what it means to identify as transgender.

Transgender is a term that encompasses an individual whose gender identity or expression differs from the one that person was born with. There are many different identities associated with the term *transgender*. Some of these identities include but are not limited to: gender-fluid, gender non-conforming, transsexual, gender queer, intersex, etc. (GLAAD n.d.). The ambiguity in this very definition combined with a lack of research to support a clear

definition poses a challenge in educating and spreading awareness about this oppressed population (Reisner, et.al 2013). The transgender community, in recent years, has been receiving more attention than ever before. The number of American's reporting they personally know a transgender person has doubled from 8% to 16% (GLAAD n.d.). Despite this new trend, there is still a dearth of research and treatment for the mental health and social issues that transgender individuals face. In a survey of non-LGBT American's on awareness and perception of LGBT issues, 27% of responders reported that acts of violence against transgender individuals are not a serious or prevalent issue (Berrier, 2016). In a separate survey of transgender individuals, 53% of responders stated they have been victims of violence or harassment in public accommodations (Grant et.al, 2011). Research data on attitudes and perceptions regarding transgender individuals illuminates a need for public education on transgender discrimination and oppression. This study seeks to demonstrate a need for a strong definition for the term transgender.

Social Constructionism

Social constructionism is a sociological theory of knowledge developed in 1966 and introduced to the public in the book *The Social Construction of Reality* by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. Social constructionism views language as a mechanism for building social worlds as a necessary pre-condition for thought. A framework of meaning for categories and concepts that shape human thought are built using language. When individuals share these ideas, the world begins to take shape and this manifests in real consequences for people in a society (Burr, 2015). Applying these theories to the current discourse around the term *transgender* amplifies the need for a clear definition of the term. Language regarding the transgender community has experienced rapid evolution in the last 70 years. *Transgender* has grown from pathology to an adjective that serves as an umbrella for many identities. Social constructs have

implications for what is socially acceptable and how people treat others, which is to say they are directly related to social injustice and discrimination. Social constructionism calls the normative categories “man” and “woman” into question. Sex is assigned at birth according to reproductive organs, but with gender reassignment surgeries these two categories become less distinct and less final (Burr, 2015). Social constructionism says that the categories and concepts we accept as truth, or a reflection of reality, are specific to, and products of, the culture and tie into the history in which they exist. The social arrangements that are prevalent during the time also affect the social construct (Burr, 2015). Transgender individuals remain largely hidden, in part because of fear of discrimination.

Michel Foucault, a French philosopher and social theorist posits the way members of a society talk and think about a social construct like gender or sexuality and societal representation of these constructs. These constructs affect the way people are treated (Burr, 2015). Constructs are built by the culture of a society. Social constructs like race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation are difficult to clearly define as their meaning can vary depending on the reality in which the construct exists. Researchers may needlessly limit the pool of participants by using narrow or unclear definitions for *transgender* or *transsexual*. An example of this is defining *transsexual* as only individuals who have had gender reassignment surgery when many transsexual individuals choose not to. Clear definitions are key to sampling methodology in research studies and thus have a direct effect on policy and interventions that result from those studies (Primacare Protocol for Transgender Patient Care). Population surveys that gather information on social justice issues like poverty rates, suicide rates, income, unemployment rates do not gather data for transgender individuals. This weakness in transgender research exacerbates the marginalization this population faces.

Method

A systematic review was chosen as the model for this paper. Systematic reviews are often performed in the medical field. They help to synthesize all of the available literature and research on a particular topic (Uman, 2011). The Cochran Collaboration, a group of 31,000 specialists, performs a large number of the systematic reviews in the medical community. This paper follows the eight guidelines the Cochran Collaboration developed for systematic reviews. The guidelines are as follows; define the question and criteria for inclusion, search for the studies, select the studies and collect data, assess risk of bias, analyze data, address reporting bias, present results in a table, interpret results and draw conclusions. This method was chosen because of its scientific method and efficacy in selecting articles for inclusion in a study. A weakness of systematic reviews using the Cochran method is the inclusion of poorly done studies. This is common in the medical field due to a high volume of research carried out by individuals seeking to further their careers, not necessarily doing research for the sake of learning (Higgins et al, 2012). This weakness may not apply to this study, as there is a lack of research of and for transgender individuals.

Studies measuring attitudes of adults on transgender or LGBT individuals in a variety of settings were chosen for this review. Measures that were part of the criteria for inclusion are; scales, questionnaires or surveys. Studies must have been completed after 2005. There was a limited result for attitude studies on specifically transgender individuals, so the search was broadened to include LGB individuals as well. The study had to include information on the formulation of the measurement included.

The goal of this review is to examine the measurements used to discern whether a definition for transgender was present and how it was defined.

The initial search yielded 149 results; after duplicate studies were removed and non-relevant studies were removed the total came to 54 studies. Abstracts were reviewed which narrowed the total to 31 studies. After carefully reviewing the full text, especially the methods section for measurements used, a total of 10 studies were found to be most relevant to the purpose of this review and fit the necessary criteria. The initial inquiry for these studies included the following keywords, each used in its own individual search: “transphobia scale”, “attitude toward transgender” and “transgender”. The Ebsco search engine was used to look for tests and measurement articles. The databases chosen for their relevance to the topic were as follows: MEDLINE, Military and Government Collection, PsychARTICLES, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, PsychINFO and SocINDEX with Full Text. Some articles were available for review, while some were obtained through inter-library loan.

Results

Instrument Description

Of the studies chosen a total of five different categories of instruments were used including: surveys, scales, questionnaires, Likert type scales and a feelings thermometer. The first study used the revised version of the Genderism and Transphobia Scale (GTS), which has been used in several studies since its inception. This survey is answered on a Likert type scale. The GTS has been revised on two occasions to produce two similar scales called the GTS-R (revised) and the GTS-SF (short form). This study focused on the GTS-R as it was the most relevant version of the scale. This is the only instrument featured in this study that has gone through a documented revision process. This study did not provide a definition for transgender.

The second study used a modified version of an established scale called the Attitudes Toward LGBT Patients Scale (ATLPS). This scale was initially developed to survey attitudes of

medical professionals toward people with AIDS. This instrument was revised, questions that were irrelevant to the study were omitted, and some of the language was altered to better fit the needs of the survey. Questions are answered on a Likert type scale. This study did not provide a creation document for the instrument or a definition for the term transgender.

The third and fourth studies used the instrument Survey Monkey in order to survey their target audiences. Survey Monkey is a web-based survey solutions company where researchers can create simple to complex surveys to reach responders from across the world. The third study supplied the instrument and discussed the creation process but did not supply a definition and did not undergo a revision process. The fourth study did supply a definition but did not revise their tool or supply a creation process document for their instrument.

The fifth study used a feelings thermometer. This is used to gauge how favorably (or warmly) or how unfavorably (or coldly) one feels about a topic. This study did not provide a creation document for the instrument used. No definition for the term transgender was present.

The following four studies (6-9) used Likert type scales and survey questions as their chosen instruments. All four studies did not provide a definition for transgender nor did the instrument undergo a documented revision. The seventh study, which assessed substance abuse professional attitudes toward transgender, provided a creation document for their instrument. The last study used a revised version of the Attitudes Toward Transgender Individuals (ATTI) scale. This study provided a definition that accompanied the instrument when delivered to the respondents. This study did provide a creation document for the instrument.

The study results are presented in Table 1 below.

Study	Type	Table 1.		Results	
		Definition Provided	Intent of Assessment*	Creation Document	Revision
1 GTS-R	Likert Scale and Survey	No	1	Yes	Yes
2 ATLPS	Likert Scale and Survey	No	2	No	Yes
3 VA Survey	Survey Monkey	No	1 & 3	Yes	No
4. Law Enforcement Personnel	Survey Monkey	Yes	1 & 3	No	No
5. Heterosexual Attitudes	Feeling Thermometer	No	1	No	No
6. LGBT Curriculum	Likert Scale and Survey	No	2 & 5	No	No
7. Implicit Substance Abuse	Likert Scale and Survey	No	2	Yes	No
8. Attitude of Parents	Likert Scale and Survey	No	1	No	No
9. School psych	Likert Scale and Survey	No	1	No	No
10. ATTI	Scale and Survey	Yes	1	Yes	Yes

*Note. 1. Attitude toward transgender. 2. Attitude toward LGBT. 3. Awareness of transgender. 4. Knowledge of transgender. 5. Knowledge of LGBT.

Findings

Definition. Of the ten studies chosen, two studies provided definitions of *transgender* to their respondents. The two studies that supplied definitions provided them in accompaniment to the instrument. The Journal of Law Enforcement provided the following definition for the term *transgender*:

“For the purpose of this survey, the term *transgender* refers to people who have a gender identity (the sex one feels or intrinsically believes oneself to be) or have a gender expression (how one dresses, behaves or talks) opposite from the sex given at birth (typically based on the appearance of a new-born baby’s genitals). Some transgender

individuals will take hormones or undergo surgery to make their bodies match their cross-gender identity, but this is not always the case.”

This term appeared in the section titled “Awareness of Transgender Individuals” after the respondents answered questions that tested their prior knowledge. This intent of the study was to examine the attitudes, knowledge and awareness that law enforcement personnel have regarding transgender individuals that they serve in their communities.

The second study utilized the instrument titled Attitudes Towards Transgender Individuals (ATTI scale). Participants were provided with the following definition of the term *transgender*:

“Transgendered people are those whose gender identity (sense of oneself as a man or a woman) or gender expression (expression of oneself as male or female in behavior, manner, and/or dress) differs from conventional expectations for their physical sex. Transgendered people include pre-operative, post-operative, and non-operative transsexuals who feel that they were born in to the wrong physical sex as well as those who cross-dress to express an inner cross-gender identity”

The study did not identify when or where the definition was presented. The study stated the intent of including a definition was to assist those with limited experience with transgender individuals. The purpose of this study was to assess transgender related stigma separate from discrimination and violence.

The two studies that offered definitions to their respondents surveyed attitudes towards transgender individuals specifically. None of the studies that surveyed attitudes towards LGBT distinguished *transgender* from the acronym nor did they attempt to define it. Two studies (1 & 2) underwent revisions and still did not include clarification or a definition of the term

transgender. The 6 likert scale instruments did not include a definition for *transgender* in the instrument or in the article. The GTS-R instrument had definitions for *transphobia*, *genderism* and *gender-bashing* which included the term *transgender* but did not define *transgender* explicitly.

Discussion

Of the ten studies and instruments examined in this review, only two explicitly defined the term *transgender*. Three studies that surveyed attitudes toward LGBT individuals only included transgender because it exists in the acronym. These studies made no specific reference to transgender individuals to their participants. This is potentially problematic because the information gathered is being used to assess whether it is necessary to provide cultural competency and sensitivity trainings to those providing care and service to transgender individuals. Attitude studies are also being used to assess correlations of discrimination and transphobia. The assumption GLAAD states is that much of the general population receives its information about transgender lives from the media alone (GLAAD, n.d.). As previously stated, the image of transgender individuals in the media is not reflective of what most transgender lives look like. It is important to include a definition or another vehicle to help respondents of attitude studies reflect on, and understand the term *transgender* so the results of the studies can be quantitatively compared.

The Attitude Toward Transgender Individuals scale was used in conjunction with a definition the authors describe as “broad” which can be helpful for those who have limited understanding of transgender lives. A limitation of the study is the assumption that individuals may rely on their hetero-normative and gender-normative ideas of a sexual minority group, which can influence attitude outcomes negatively (Walch, Francisco and Shingler, 2009).

The study performed by the Journal of Law Enforcement was the second of two studies that included a definition of transgender as part of their survey instrument. This definition was provided to participants as part of the survey instrument. Of the 62 total respondents, 42% stated they knew nothing or had little knowledge of transgender needs in law enforcement settings.

One study assessing school psychologist attitudes and knowledge toward transgender youth revealed that having prior knowledge and training on transgender issues yielded more positive attitudes for the psychologists. Positive attitudes also yielded a higher willingness to advocate for change and assist transgender youths. There is a general lack of data regarding attitudes towards transgender students. The authors cited this in their study as a limitation and an area for future research (Bowers et al, 2015). It was necessary to broaden the search to attitudes toward LGBT individuals, as there were few studies that assessed attitudes towards transgender individuals only.

The definitions provided to respondents in two of the surveys are long, complex and do not cover all of the subgroups in the term *transgender*. A possible solution that would fulfill a dual purpose is including a transgender status question as part of the demographics survey in attitude studies. As individuals respond, they can begin to think about how they define themselves in terms of gender. The single-item question defines the term *transgender* and serves as a demographics question, which could be incorporated in a number of different research studies. One such transgender status question developed by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health includes a brief definition in the question and supplies additional clarification should an individual require it (Conron, 2012). This is illustrated in Appendix 1.

The findings of this systematic review illuminate the lack of a consistent definition and utilization for the term *transgender*. A lack of sensitivity and cultural competency training on

transgender individuals was evident across all studies included in this review in various settings. Establishing a need for these trainings begins with attitude studies. A narrow and simplified definition for *transgender* could help heterosexual and cisgender individuals understand the term and provide more valid results of attitudes. A single-item demographics question could serve two purposes in attitude studies and other research. The result of attitude studies has an impact on establishing a need for sensitivity trainings and education on transgender individuals. Knowledge and training yield more positive attitudes, which may have an effect on the care provided to transgender individuals (Kelley et al, 2008). Social constructionism states that the way members of a society think and talk about a construct such as gender or race affects how the people belonging to that construct are treated. Studies have shown congruent results in that the more knowledge and awareness service providers have regarding transgender individuals, the better care they will provide (Kelley et al, 2008).

Using this single-item question could help heterosexual individuals think about how they identify themselves and perhaps think empathetically about how transgender individuals identify. It is feasible to include in attitude studies because the gender of the respondents is recorded anyway. The question is accompanied by additional information if the respondent needs it such as the clarification of the term *transgender* and *gender non-conforming*. The definition of *transgender* in this example is abstract enough that it does not exclude most gender atypical individuals. It also includes an example of what transgender is, rather than only defining it. The clarification on both terms utilizes the word *some* to indicate that not all transgender or gender non-conforming individuals will identify with the statement. This is an important distinction because it acknowledges that not all transgender individuals express their gender in the same way.

The word *transgender* has evolved into an umbrella term that encompasses many subgroups of gender non-conformity. Just because an individual can be described as transgender, does not mean they identify as transgender. The current nature of the term *transgender* may make it less viable to define and use in terms of identification. Separating some of the subgroups out from the term may strengthen it. Genderqueer is one such category that is included in transgender but can also function as a separate identifier. *Gender non-conforming* can serve the purpose the umbrella term transgender is now meeting and reduce some of the complexity of the term. It can be included in transgender but not be its major aspect. Transgender as an identification has gained momentum in the area of social justice and fighting against discrimination. Losing or not using the term could hurt progress.

This review is not without limitations. Author of the studies and instruments were not contacted for clarification. This would have been helpful to discern whether the authors defined the term transgender, but did not document it, and to obtain creation documents of the instruments used in the cases where one was not available. This review assumes if there is no explicit definition present that one was not provided at all. In several studies, some unintentional sampling bias occurred where individuals who participated may have had an interest and more awareness of LGBT and transgender lives. Samples of many of the studies may not be representative of the general population.

Further research should focus on developing a universally agreed upon, clear, and comprehensive definition for understanding the term *transgender*, such as the single-item demographics question. Studies can then provide this to their participants to help them understand the term and to acquire demographic information including transgender individuals rather than only surveying those who are either male or female. Educating the general

population, especially those providing care and services will promote knowledge, awareness and positive attitudes and thus better care and advocacy.

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Appendix 1

Transgender status single-item protocol

Taken from the Massachusetts Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

Some people describe themselves as transgender when they experience a different gender identity from their sex at birth. For example, a person born into a male body, but who feels female or lives as a woman. Do you consider yourself to be transgender?

- Yes, transgender, male to female
- Yes, transgender, female to male
- Yes, transgender, gender non-conforming
- No

Note—Additional information for telephone interviewer if asked about definition of transgender:

Some people describe themselves as transgender when they experience a different gender identity from their sex at birth. For example, a person born into a male body, but who feels female or lives as a woman would be transgender. Some transgender people change their physical appearance so that it matches their internal gender identity. Some transgender people take hormones and some have surgery. A transgender person may be of any sexual orientation – straight, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Note—Additional information for interviewer if asked about definition of gender non-conforming: Some people think of themselves as gender non-conforming when they do not identify only as a man or only as a woman.