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## The Bailey Controversy

### McCloskey's Back-and-Forth with Seth Roberts on the Bailey Controversy

Deirdre **McCloskey** wrote in an e-mail:

August 24, 2007

Dear Professor Roberts:

I imagine you are not longer open to persuasion on the Bailey/Dreger issue, having written yourself on it in no uncertain terms after reading Dr. Dreger's article and especially Mr. Carey's piece in the *Times*. People are like that, I know. They swallow a line hastily acquired — in this case the Bailey = Galileo, "transsexual activists" (e.g. Barres, Roughgarden, McCloskey, Conway, and other distinguished scientists) = The Inquisition — and then won't listen any more. It's one of the main supports for the culture of yelling we seem to have developed in the United States over the past couple of decades.

But in case you are more careful and thoughtful than your blog suggests, I attach a couple of attempts to persuade you that you've got the story wrong. Dreger is wrong, and what's more important in the long run a theory based on ignoring most of the scientific evidence, and appealing instead to the sort of prejudices about queers you praise in your piece, is wrong.

*Roberts promised a "reply."*

**McCloskey:**

Dear Professor Roberts:

I do not want a "reply." The world doesn't need smart-aleck replies. I want you to read and think, and to consider with proper self-criticism what you have done, giving weight to your doubts as much as to your prejudices.

On 24/August/07, Seth **Roberts**:

Dear Professor McCloskey:

Thank you for writing. I am happy to have complaints about my writing but it would help if you were more specific. What in my blog wasn't "careful and thoughtful"? When you say I wasn't careful you seem to be saying there are factual mistakes in what I wrote. If so, please tell me; I would like to correct them.

In your letter, you seem to say I have "swallow[ed] a line hastily acquired." This is puzzling, since in my blog I mention writing to you about Bailey's book draft many years ago. Surely thinking about something for many years isn't hasty. One of your attachments is the review you wrote for *Reason*. Another puzzle because I quote from this review in my blog.

In your article about Dreger's paper, you "deny that [you] worked 'to ruin Bailey professional and personally'" but this denial is incomplete and unconvincing. It's incomplete because you don't defend the letter you wrote to the State of Illinois complaining that Bailey had practiced medicine without a license. That is exactly trying to ruin someone.

And you don't convince me that causing to be filed an absurd human-subjects complaint against Bailey constitutes some sort of virtuous act. "Complaining through channels about mistreatment of his victims"! Please. It is another example of trying to ruin someone.

In your email to me, you write:

what's more important in the long run a theory based on ignoring most of the scientific evidence, and appealing instead to the sort of prejudices about queers you praise in your piece, is wrong.

This may be the big issue to you; it isn't the big issue to me. The big issue for me is free speech. Two professors (you and Conway) with great power tried to silence someone who said something they didn't like. I titled my blog posts on the topic "Can Professors Say the Truth?" The "truth" was not Blanchard's theory; it was that Blanchard had proposed a theory, a theory that Bailey accurately described. Blanchard said something; Bailey accurately reported what he said. The accurate reporting was the "truth". Somehow it was not enough for you and Conway that Blanchard's theory, if false, would eventually be discarded. Somehow it was not enough to attack the theory; you had to attack Bailey too, and in an awful way -- by filing absurd complaints with credulous and powerful bureaucracies.

On 25/August/07, Deirdre **McCloskey**:

Dear Professor Roberts:

You are not listening, which I rather expected you would not. You are satisfied with debating points rather than trying to get to the scientific truth. Is this your *modus operandi*, or are you for some reason wedded off-stage to Bailey behaviorism, say, or transphobia? I really would like to know where your indignant certitude about things you know practically nothing about is coming from.

"The big issue" for you is free speech. In what way have I or anyone else in this debate abridged anyone's free speech? We aren't the government. It's just confused to identify published complaints by private citizens about someone — justified in this case, but let's for the moment set the issue of the merits aside — with censorship or some other governmental act in violation of "free speech." People complain about other people all the time. For example, I complain about Paris Hilton.

Your confusion fits smoothly with your strange assertion, swallowed from Dr. Dreger's self-dramatizing piece published at bizarre length in a distinguished journal run by the chief Baileyite, that we have "great power." That's how the Bailey-as-brave-victim line, adopted by Mr. Carey of the *NY Times* from an uncritical reading of Dr. Dreger's assault on me and others, got going.

Hmm. In what does our great power lie? Professor Bailey, like us, is a senior, tenured professor. We objected to his work and to his behavior, through our writings and through channels. What exactly is the exercise of "great power" there? Isn't this power called "the power of the pen," and isn't that exactly the "free speech" you believe you are so courageously defending? The National Academy of Science, which published Bailey's unscientific book, and which has been taken over it would appear by a clique of Gay Gene theorists (I suppose it is an indirect effect of Bush's administration, but I don't know), is powerful. *That's* the hand of a governmental advisory body, great power indeed, right? We are a couple of professors not in sexology who objected to the mistreatment of some of our poor and ignorant friends, and objected to Bailey's theories and especially to his lack of interest in investigating the bulk of the actual scientific evidence on the matter, namely, any serious sample of the lives of gender crossers. Where's the power?

And how about *our* right of free speech? We complained to the licensing board about Bailey practicing psychology without a license and you regard that action as requiring defense. (One reason the board did not act, by the way, is that the physician-created statute of limitation on malpractice had run out. It has a notably short fuse.) We complained about his abuse of scientific subjects (it's his claim, not ours, that they were scientific subjects), to the proper authorities. The proper authorities took what you call an "absurd" complaint most seriously, and Bailey resigned from the chairmanship of his department. You regard our actions not as the "free speech" you believe you are defending but as attempts to destroy Bailey.

May I suggest that you are not making sense? Criticizing people in open forums and through channels is precisely what Dr. Dreger, and now the reporter for the *Times*, and now you, have done. That's fine. I do not call Dreger's hysterical letters through channels against Andrea James, or her Bailey-group subsidized piece which you have so completely swallowed, an attempt to "destroy" James or me. I call her action self-dramatizing and illiberal, and I call her writings unscientific and nonsensical, politically slanted pseudo-history. I do not call your blog retailing Carey's article an attempt to destroy me or to suppress free speech. I call it a silly remark about a subject you have no experience of.

What sort of double standard are you applying to my speech but not to your own? My criticism and complaint is "an attempt to destroy." Dreger's, the reporter Carey's secondary, and now your tertiary criticism and complaint are then. . . what? I say both are free speech, the duty of serious citizens in a democracy. Go to it. *Aux barricades* for a free press. But stop making these unsupported claims about censorship and destroying Professor Bailey's life.

Speaking of "destroyed lives," by the way, what about *our* lives and the lives of the gender crossers we sought to protect? My children have not spoken to me since I transitioned, in 1995. I have two grandchildren I have not been allowed to meet. One important reason is the sex, sex, sex theory, known in the field to be of little scientific merit, which Bailey defends with shallow evidence but which is attractive to ignorant outsiders hostile to gender crossers. More widely, the sex, sex, sex theory is one potent reason for transphobia and for the numerous violent deaths of gender crossers. You may consult GenderPak on the issue, if you can rouse some scientific curiosity about the actual facts of the matter. Or you can read the hate mail I have received since Carey's piece.

Let me ask you what you would do in a similar case. I don't know what your scientific work has been, but let's be symmetrical. Suppose an economist had written a book with a exiguous selection of evidence saying that psychologists were liars and sexual perverts, and refused to risk his theory in a serious scientific test by interviewing a wide range of psychologists. Suppose he found, by searching in places where prostitutes gather, some psychologists working as prostitutes, and concluded that psychologists tended to be prostitutes. Suppose the psychologists he interviewed were very eager to get The Letter that would, they believed in their innocence, give them, say, very valuable rights to trade on the New York Stock Exchange, and suppose the economist said he would write the letter if they would talk to him. Suppose he then in addition slept with one of the psychologists, and then used the "evidence" thus acquired to support his unscientific theories in a long book published with the government's imprimatur filled with anti-psychologist lore. First, kill all the psychologists.

What would you do about the economist's unscientific claims, let us say, on your blog? And would you also complain to the legitimate authorities about the economist's unprofessional and fraudulent behavior? When someone mugs you or a friend on the street, do you report it to the police? And would your just complaints against such a character be an attempt to ruin him? Or would it be fair comment in a free society and the exercise of the rights and duties of a citizen?

You may quote anything I write, in whole or in part. My pieces are posted on my webpage, [deirdremccloskey.org](http://deirdremccloskey.org). I expect, however, to be answered again with silly debating point. You have closed your mind on the issue, and are not open to evidence or to reason. It is a most unscientific stance. Shame on you. (That's called fair comment in a free society, dear, not an attempt to destroy you.)

#### Roberts:

Dear Professor McCloskey,

I'm glad to hear more of your side of the story. To answer your questions:

"In what way have I or anyone else in this debate abridged anyone's free speech?" By attacking someone -- Bailey -- who said something you didn't like. Fearful of future attacks from you or Conway or Andrea James, others will keep their mouths shut. The term is *chilling effect*. Here is *Wikipedia's* definition: "A **chilling effect** is a situation where speech or conduct is suppressed or limited by fear of penalization at the hands of an individual or group." *Wikipedia's* example is fear of a lawsuit -- which you have threatened ("I'm going to sue Bailey for defamation if . . ."). Minutes after I posted my second blog entry about the attacks on Bailey, the first post that mentioned you, I got an email from a wise friend. "There has been a big McCloskey/Bailey feud, I believe involving also lawsuits or the threat thereof," he wrote. It was a warning. He was worried.

"In what does our great power lie?" In four things: 1. Job security. Not only tenure -- you and Conway are near the top of your professions. 2. Money. 3. Respect. Your upcoming honorary degree, for example. A recent memoir by an esteemed economist praised you for your "courage." Conway's membership in the National Academy of Engineering. 4. Knowing how the system works -- in particular how to get powerful bureaucracies (such as Northwestern's) to do what you want. "We are a couple of professors not in sexology." Please. You and Conway are not average professors. What fraction of professors get honorary degrees? What fraction of engineering professors are in the National Academy of Engineering?

"What about our right to free speech?" You think calling your absurd complaints to credulous and powerful authorities "free speech" somehow defends them? I don't.

"What about our lives? . . . My children have not spoken to me since I transitioned, in 1995. I have two grandchildren I have not been allowed to meet." Yes, that is horrible. No one should be treated like that. But the fact that you have been treated badly doesn't justify doing something awful (your absurd complaints) to someone else.

How would I react if your scenario about psychologists came to pass? I would do nothing. I'm supposed to get upset that Person X asked Person Y for a letter and before Person Y wrote that letter he asked Person X to speak to him -- perhaps about the contents of the letter? On what planet is that wrong? I should react because someone "had sex with a psychologist"? I should be upset that the person "used the "evidence" thus acquired to support his unscientific theories in a long book"? We are at a curious place in intellectual history when a Distinguished Professor of this and that, soon to receive an honorary degree from a major university, thinks that a sane person might be upset that someone had sex with a psychologist.

Your complaints to powerful and credulous authorities, you say, were not absurd because they were taken seriously. ("They took what you call an "absurd" complaint most seriously.") Okay, here is why your complaints were absurd. 1. You and Conway complained to the State of Illinois that Bailey was practicing psychology without a license because he wrote letters on behalf of several persons who had come to him for help. He helped them! They came to him for help! To complain about this is absurd. To say your complaint "protects" anyone is absurd. To say what Bailey did

resembles "mugging" is absurd. No one seeks out a mugger and asks to be mugged. 2. You and Conway orchestrated the filing of human-subjects complaints against Bailey. These complaints assumed that persons mentioned in stories in Bailey's book were "research subjects" -- simply because they were in the book. Never before in the history of science had the subject of a story told to illustrate a point been thereby considered a research subject. Bailey's book is not a scientific monograph. It is not a piece of science. It is a trade book *about* science. When I or anyone else gives a lecture about a scientific subject, and tell a story from everyday life to make the conclusions come alive, do we need informed consent from everyone mentioned in the story? Of course not. No one has ever been required to do this. No one has ever done this. No one has ever even conceived of such a thing. The whole idea is absurd. Northwestern administrators may be credulous; I'm not.

Twice in your letter you combine two very different activities as if they are similar. "My criticism and complaint" is one example; "criticizing people in open forums and through channels" is the other. These two activities of yours were very different. Open-forum criticism, if factually correct, is fine with me. Absurd complaints to credulous authorities with the power to destroy someone's career are much much less than fine with me. When Dreger says you tried to "ruin" Bailey, she is referring to the absurd complaints. Not to the review in *Reason*.

**McCloskey:**

Dear Professor Roberts:

Criticizing someone is "abridging free speech"? Good Lord, how do you think the Constitutional Convention went? Have you listened to a political campaign? Have you participated in any scientific dispute? I guess not.

If Bailey is chilled, perhaps he should get out of the cold room. If one doesn't like the heat of real scientific disagreement, get out of the kitchen. Free speech is how science advances. It ain't beanbag.

You want to think of yourself as defending the weak. It's a silly thought, which you have adopted completely uncritically from Mr. Carey's journalism. You've in fact allied yourself to the most powerful and queer-hating forces in the society. Congratulations.

The "great power" is on the other foot. Relative to the Hispanic women he abused, Bailey had the power. Relative to Lynn and me (you never mention the other distinguished scientists involved, incidentally) *in sexology*, Ken Zucker has the power (which he has duly exercised, and which again you do not mention: perhaps it has not registered that he allocated 52 pages of his journal on sexual behavior to what the author described as history of science. Would you be the slightest bit suspicious if an editor in your field used his journal, unrefereed, in this way to defend his own views? Relative to Sex Scientists like Bailey and Zucker, and the reactionary and queer-hating people that Bailey, and now you, have inspirited (look at the blogs, dear), Lynn and I, as notable queers, do not have the power. Relative to the authority of *The New York Times* and its "Science" worshipping and queer-hating editors (though Carey himself, I think, is gay, which of course doesn't mean he's not queer hating!), the "power" of our articles is merely, as I said, a feeble one. The feeble power of truth against prejudice and ignorance and cowardice.

You simply won't listen to the claims of the other side. You won't read. You won't consider. Nothing *you* say can be mistaken. Dreger got her facts exactly right, you assume. I have to conclude that you are immovable and uncritical. Bad qualities in a scientist, though in truth not all that rare in science and scholarship as they actually are.

I recommend that you get out more. Listen to a philosopher and anthropologist, Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, who wrote a long time ago that what matters in science and scholarship is

our ability to engage in continuous conversation, testing one another, discovering our hidden presuppositions [in your case: sex, sex, sex is a true theory of queers; no Hispanic queer tells the truth; ordinary scientific disagreement abridges free speech], changing our minds because we have listened to the voices of our fellows. Lunatics also change their minds, but their minds change with the tides of the moon and no because they have listened, really listened, to their friends' [and enemies'] questions and objections  
— Rorty, "Experiments in Philosophical Genre," *Critical Inquiry* 9 (March, 1983); 545-565, p. 562.

Words to live by. You've given no evidence that you have listened, really listened, to anyone except the tiny group of sex, sex, sex folk, believing uncritically their recently constructed image of Bailey as Galileo. You've not done the homework, and apparently have no shame that you haven't.

Have I got you pegged right: Get a theory, any old theory, of gender crossing or of the Bailey Controversy, and stick with it, regardless of the evidence or logic, eh? Don't open your mind. Don't read. Don't listen, really listen. I know a lot of economists like this, intellectually closed; my sister tells me they are pretty common in psychology, too.

Sartre wrote in 1944 (*Anti-Semite and Jew*: it's the only book of his I have fully understood, and one the few of his writings I agree with) about a personality type:

there are people who are attracted by the durability of a stone. They wish to be massive and impenetrable; they wish not to change. Where, indeed, would change take them? . . . What frightens them is not the content of truth, of which they have no conception, but the form itself of truth, that thing of indefinite approximation (Sartre 1944, p. 18).

Until you've read, really read, my autobiography, say, or done other serious homework, listening, really listening, you're not going to find the truth. You're going to be stuck with your first impressions and your apparently very deep prejudices. I say again (I expect it will have no more effect than it has had before): shame on you for the socially bad and scientifically indefensible thing you have done.

On 27/08/07, **McCloskey**:

Dear Professor Roberts:

Having looked into it a bit I am very intrigued by your diet, and will buy the book and try it out.

You have a lot of nerve, however, to quote Bohr — "The common aim of all science" is "the gradual removal of prejudices" — and then *without* self-experimentation, without consulting people like me who *have* self-experimented, without examining any of the literature except the sort you like, to relay to the world your prejudices about gender crossers. A *lot* of nerve.

On 27/08/07, Seth **Roberts**:

Dear Professor McCloskey,

I'm intrigued. What self-experimentation should I have done?

Thank you for reading my book. Yes, Bohr's quote is relevant. Science does remove prejudices. Including the science in Bailey's book, I believe. I think Bailey's book will be a powerful force for tolerance, you think the opposite. Let history decide.

I am not anti-gender-crosser. Nor is Bailey -- but I wasn't appalled by what you and Conway did to him because I liked his book. I have defended [Holocaust deniers](#) and [praised a book with a generous view of creationism](#).

I don't deny the Holocaust and I'm not religious. I believe everyone deserves to speak, to be heard. Everyone. Without harassment or punishment.

The self-experimentation I should have done is dress as a woman? I did read *Crossing*, by the way, and wrote you about it.

On 28/08/07, Deirdre **McCloskey**:

Dear Professor Roberts:

Yup. That should be obvious to you. That it's not, and that you sneer at the idea, is indicative. No one who has not actually tried to pass in the other gender has any idea what it is like *not* to pass, how dangerous and embarrassing it is. No one who has not tried the experiment can have any idea how important it is to have nose jobs and the like. It's exactly out of such non-self-experimentation, and the lack of real empathy it implies, that the God-wants-you-to-be-thus, Clarke Institute torturing comes.

I don't remember our discussion about *Crossing*.

You think Bailey's book will be a powerful force for toleration? I suppose you've actually looked at the evidence, right? You've consulting the blogs, and you've read the hate mail? And your conclusion is . . . what? That a wave of transphobic filth stimulated by your blog and Carey's article will lead, somehow, to the promised land? You have here a questionable social theory, but let's hope you're right.

*Disagreement*, as you should well know from your own self-experimentation, is not the same as "harassment." Nor is *holding people to ethical standards in their scientific behavior*. We didn't "do" anything to Bailey. We exercised our rights as free citizens and as ethical scientists. That you were "appalled" shows that you got fired up by Carey's article (just as he wished) and didn't bother to inquire — as you easily could have done (you keep making a point of our previous e-mail relationship) but most assuredly did not before shooting off your ill-considered blog — with the principals. You wanted the story to be Bailey = Galileo, and were not going to let such silly things as evidence stand in the way. You've stoutly defended it ever since, with no heed to the evidence.

I'm not impressed that you praise Holocaust deniers, or that you give standing to naive creationism. It just shows what is evident in your defense of Bailey, that you are willing to encourage the worst in our society in aid of a simpleton's version of "fairness." You would have been "fair" to Goebbels and the Inquisition, the Ku Klux Klan and the first Chinese emperor. Your position of "Let them have *uncriticized* speech to advocate idiotic and harmful proposals" depends on people like Lynn and me exercising our free speech to criticize such people. You would be the first person the Nazis you defend would come for. No, actually, on second thought, you would be the second, after me.

Seth **Roberts** wrote:

Dear Professor McCloskey:

I don't "sneer" at the self-experimentation you propose. It has a long and admirable history.

I did not get "fired up by Carey's article." My blog posts on this topic appeared before his article.

I mentioned our correspondence about *Crossing* in my blog posts about this.

I didn't "praise Holocaust deniers" — I just think they shouldn't be harassed or silenced.

I don't mind criticism of Bailey — of course not. I mind attempts to ruin him — which is what your and Conway's absurd complaints to authorities

were.

Sincerely,

Seth Roberts

On 28/08/07, Deirdre **McCloskey**:

Dear Professor Roberts:

Let's make this a convergent series, by undertaking to answer in half the space as the last one. Your only — *only* — argument against our complaints about Bailey's behavior is to assert repeatedly, unadorned by evidence, that they were "absurd." Northwestern University did not think them absurd. They fired Bailey from the chairmanship; they investigated him for a year. The lawyer we consulted did not think them absurd; nor did the state licensing bureau. Alas, the statute of limitation had run out.

We did nothing to "silence" anyone. Get this: *we are not the government*. We *argued* with Bailey. We *complained* about his behavior. None of that constitutes "silencing," unless indeed poor, dear Bailey is too feeble for this world.

Seth **Roberts** wrote:

Dear Professor McCloskey:

Please see my earlier letter for a detailed explanation, including evidence, of why your complaints were absurd. No one has ever gone to a mugger and asked to be mugged. That's my evidence for your State of Illinois complaint. And no one has ever been considered a research subject because they were in a story in a trade book. That's my evidence for your Northwestern complaint.

When you say that Bailey left the chairmanship because of your complaints, you are wrong.

"We did nothing to 'silence' anyone." If you don't understand the term *chilling* effect, we are again at a curious point in intellectual history.

**McCloskey** wrote:

Dear Professor Roberts:

Anyone who is chilled by being challenged intellectually, I suppose you agree, doesn't belong in intellectual life.

Anyone who is chilled by being investigated for wrongdoing when he's done wrong is just a moral coward, as I reckon Bailey to be. You don't understand The Letter if you don't think the women were mugged. You've not walked in those shoes, or bothered to find out. You haven't read Bailey's book if you think the women were not "research subjects." He called them that, and bragged about it. *After* the book came out he said, oh, it was "only a trade book. Not science."

**McCloskey** wrote:

Dear Seth, we've grown so close,

OK, OK. You got your view of this, from Dreger, and are *determined* to stick with it. Fine. The next time you hear of a queer being murdered, think what you've done.

Love,  
Deirdre

## Complaint against J. Michael Bailey, July 29, 2003:

July 29, 2003

C. Bradley Moore, Vice President for Research  
Office of the Vice President for Research  
Northwestern University  
Rebecca Crown Center, Room 2-223  
633 Clark Street  
Evanston, Illinois 60208-1108

Dear Dr. Moore:

We wish to make a formal, registered complaint against the practices of J. Michael Bailey in the "research" for his book The Man Who Would Be

Queen. We would appreciate therefore official acknowledgment of receipt of this letter.

From what we can judge from a careful study of the book and from many discussions with some of the women involved, Professor Bailey has grossly violated the standards of science by conducting intimate research observations on human subjects without telling them that they were objects of study. He has mined the observations for slanted evidence in support of a classification theory he wished to prove, ignoring contrary evidence.

The resulting "scientific" claims in the book are so defamatory of gender variant people that they threaten the lives of many hundreds of thousands of gender crossers (and many millions of gay men: we here focus on the smaller group). The book is in particular an attack on our own persons and lives. For instance Professor Bailey diagnoses one of us, McCloskey, without having met her, as "autogynephilic," and labels "autogynephilia" a "disorder," evoking the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

The book is bad science. As it was put to the attendees at the July 19, 2003 conference in Bloomington, Indiana of the International Academy of Sex Research by John Bancroft, director of the Kinsey Institute and one of the most respected sexologists in the world, "Michael, I would caution you against calling this book 'science' because I have read it, and I can tell you it is not science."

Strangely, Professor Bailey has recently claimed (on his website, not in the book) that he was writing merely a personal memoir of experience in the sexual underworld. The claim is in flat contradiction to the publicity for the book by the National Academy Press, as "cutting edge research" and the rhetoric of the book itself. Professor Bailey asserts in the title, throughout the book, and in the publicity for it that his book is "scientific." (We have evidence that he was personally involved in the publicity by the John Henry Press, an arm of the National Academy Press.)

We wonder what the explanation is for him abandoning the earlier claims that the book was based on "original research." Professor Bailey refers to his research on "homosexual transsexuals" on page 177, book, noting that the subjects were brought to him by "Cher" (Anjelica Kieltyka). He refers therefore to doing "research" involving precisely the women who have brought complaints to your office.

Professor Bailey does not mention that the women came to him for interviews as part of obtaining letters of approval for gender reassignment surgery. That is, he used his offer of GRS letters to gain access to the most intimate facts of their lives (often misreported in the book, by the way: Bailey has admitted for example to salting his prose with fictions). He has retailed the lives of private people without their foreknowledge or permission under cover of "research" and "science." He told none of the women that she was a research subject. Professor Bailey, surely, cannot have it both ways—claiming the high moral ground of science while at the same time exempted from scientific standards of care in the handling of people's lives. Jerry Springer Meets John Bancroft is not a formula for science.

It may not be clear to everyone that Professor Bailey went well beyond a merely clerical error in neglecting to provide his human subjects with forms to sign. He did not tell the women what he was about. And he has trifled with their lives. The women involved are a vulnerable population (Professor Bailey has refused in his "research" to speak to middle-class gender crossers like ourselves, evidently because our lives would not fit his theory; or perhaps because we would not have been so easy to frighten into detailed "confessions" of the life-pattern Professor Bailey wished to detect.) The women are of course appalled and depressed by how Professor Bailey has used them. We hope you realize, for example, and share our dismay, that Professor Bailey enticed the women into his classrooms under the pretense of listening open-mindedly to their views. From various reports we believe he prepared the students to view the women on the contrary with contempt and closed minds, and afterwards evoked from the students the clichéd responses of homophobia and transphobia. Some indeed are reported in the book.

We believe that the three women we know who have recently filed charges against Professor Bailey are telling the sober truth. We are both very well acquainted with Ms. Kieltyka, and have both spoken for many hours with the woman called "Juanita" in the book. One of us has spoken at length with the other young woman—who, though used as a research subject in the same way as "Juanita," was dropped from Professor Bailey's "sample," apparently because she fits poorly into his theory. We believe that the reports by the women (including the parts we have been told of that have not been made public) are honest and credible.

The women have come forward now at considerable risk to themselves. They live anyway in "stealth," which is to say that their identities as transsexual women are not generally known. They fear that the hundreds of Northwestern undergraduates before whom they were paraded in the on-going freak shows in Professor Bailey's classes might recognize them. Professor Bailey has frightened one of them recently by repeated attempts to get hold of her, though he has been told she does not wish to speak to him. She has moved and changed her phone number.

Professor Bailey is quoted as portraying us as activists with an ax to grind "censoring" his writings (Chicago Tribune, July 29; he does not seem to grasp the difference between state censorship on the one hand and scientific and political disagreement on the other). We wish to make clear that as astonishing as Professor Bailey's mistreatment of his human subjects has been, in any case his "science" is in our opinion nonsense. To these scientific criticisms—less relevant to your deliberations than his misuse of human subjects, we realize—he has offered no replies, neither to us nor to his professional colleagues in sexology.

Professor Bailey's book claims to be the latest science on transsexualism. It is not, and reveals in numberless ways his willful ignorance of the phenomenon. He is for example not a member of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, the major professional association of scientists actively involved in the field. He has read little. He has ignored the range of transgendered experience—available for example a few blocks from his office in the person of Randi Ettner, the world's leading clinical psychologist specializing in the field (he does not appear to have read her book *Gender Loving Care*). The grossly stigmatizing design of the book's cover is typical of Professor Bailey's approach to "science."

The reputation of a great university has been put in jeopardy by Professor Bailey's use of its name and by his violations of its research safeguards. We are sure that Northwestern will treat our charges and those of the others more directly involved with the greatest care and consideration—care that Professor Bailey has so signally failed to exercise.

Sincerely,

Deirdre McCloskey  
UIC Distinguished Professor of Economics, History, and English,  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
Tinbergen Professor of Philosophy, Economics, and Art and Cultural Studies,  
Erasmus University of Rotterdam

Lynn Conway  
Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Emerita,  
University of Michigan  
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cc. Henry Bienen, President  
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## **Review of Bailey's *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, Reason magazine, November 2003: Queer Science: A data-bending psychologist confirms what he already knew about gays and transsexuals**

by Deirdre McCloskey

*The Man Who Would Be Queen: The Science of Gender-Bending and Transsexualism*, by J. Michael Bailey, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 256 pages, \$24.95

The primitive idea about gay men, shared by many Christian fundamentalists and other lovers of freedom, is that gays really want to be girls, or girlish. And the primitive idea about men who want to cross over to be girls is that they're really just gay, or just crazy.

Got it?

Gays are faggots, right? And former men like me who have changed gender, well. . . they're just extreme faggots, or sex-mad nut cases. Northwestern University psychologist J. Michael Bailey, whose new book has created quite a stir, believes both of these ideas.

"Most gay men are feminine," Bailey declares in *The Man Who Would Be Queen*, "or at least they are feminine in certain ways." The professor's gaydar can spot those Certain Ways from across the street—on the basis, for example, of the pronunciation a man gives the sound s: closer to the front of the mouth, like a woman's. OK, so it turns out Bailey is talking about most gay men. . . in America. . . in the late 20th century. . . or maybe just the ones he was able to find by asking around in Chicago bars. Fortunately, there are other tell-tale signs of homosexuality, such as a deep interest in clothing and show tunes—or, when it comes right down to it, a sexual interest in other men.

And from a long city block away Bailey can spot a real gender crosser—those are the pretty ones, the ones whom the professor feels are sexually "attractive." They're just an extreme form of gay men. He can distinguish them from former men who are not attractive to him, a type that, contrary to what they will say (they are all liars), experience "sexual arousal at the idea of themselves as women."

It's really quite simple, Bailey says. Weird born men (he doesn't talk about born women in the book) are driven by sex. It's either sex with other men or sex with themselves. Sex, sex, sex. "Identity" has nothing to do with it. You can think of Bailey as an identity politician's worst nightmare.

Bailey is attacking the by-now accepted scientific view that whom you love and who you identify yourself to be are not the same issue. Au contraire, says the professor. It's not that formerly male gender crossers have an identity of womanhood, felt or desired, the way you feel or desire that you want to be a lawyer, say, or a resident of Florida. Nor do the more feminine-looking (because earlier changed), pretty ones have such an identity. No "identity" about it. Both are driven by sex, because that's what men are ultimately interested in. Bailey calls gender crossers "men" throughout his book. Born a man, too bad. Like certain second-wave feminists, such as Mary Daly or Germaine Greer, Bailey is an essentialist. As the guys down at the Veterans of Foreign Wars post have always known, men are men and women are women. Period.

No one is surprised that Bailey's ideas have been seized on by the religious right. John Derbyshire, a homophobe who contributes frequently to *National Review* in print and online, wrote a nice piece about the book, drawing the moral: "Male homosexuality, in particular, seems to possess some quality of being intrinsically subversive when let loose in long-established institutions, especially male dominated ones" (where is Roy Cohn when we need him?). For God's sake, let's not let the queers loose.

If you hated the 1960s, and its "homosexual agenda" (thank you, Justice Scalia), you are going to love Bailey's theory. As the guys down at the VFW hall say, queers are just sissy guys; and a guy who wants to become a woman is either just another homo or just another loony. Bailey, to be fair, doesn't share all the scientific and political ideas of his allies the veterans, the homophobes, and the religious right. He wouldn't attack gays and gender crossers with a lead pipe, and I guess he doesn't think God hates fags. Some of his best buddies, after all, are gay or transgendered. Bailey is a very feeling guy. In fact, he spends a lot of time hanging around the less reputable gay bars in Chicago's Boys' Town. Doing research.

Bailey gets his research ideas from an outfit in Toronto called the Clarke Institute. The institute is one dusty corner of the academic study of gender, and until Bailey came along it wasn't doing very well. In 1985 the head of its clinical sexology program, one Ray Blanchard, a rat psychologist by training, devised a theory of "autogynephilia," a word and notion that ever since then he has been trying to float. According to Blanchard and his few



but loyal fans (among them Bailey), unpretty, late-changing, nonhomosexual gender crossers (me, for instance) have internalized a female love object (that is, they are still men wanting to have sex, sex, sex with women) and confused it with themselves. They aren't "really" women. Bailey summarizes it flatly in the book: "Autogynephilia can be considered a disorder."

The word disorder is meant to evoke the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the so-called DSM-IV (the Roman numerals are for the edition, like the Super Bowl). Bailey and his conservative friends hope to get "autogynephilia" into the next edition of the DSM (Roman numeral V), in order, I suppose, to prevent free people from doing what they harmlessly please. Great idea.

Until the 1973 edition of the DSM, homosexuality was such a "disorder," justifying electroshock therapy for queer kids in the 1950s and early '60s; it did not entirely recover from its illness until the 1986 edition. We let homosexuals get away with it after 1986, say the conservatives; lest the gender crossers get away with it, too. . . well, it's a little unclear what Bailey would recommend. He's been running away from his book in the months since its publication in April.

But there's no doubt what Bailey's conservative friends want, and will try to get through the book and its sponsorship by the National Academy of Sciences (on that last point hangs a tale; stay tuned). The conservatives want to return to the 1950s in a 2003 form, with summer camps to butch up the sissy boys and feminize the tomboys, with psychiatrists closing down gender reassignment programs (thus the sad case of Johns Hopkins), with gays back in the closet. Bailey is part of the conservative revolt against the "permissive" society—that is, a society in which you can do what you want if it doesn't harm someone else. Sexual conservatives are not libertarians.

At the time, 20 years ago, that the Clarke Institute up in Toronto really got going on Preventing Them, no one paid much attention, except the unfortunate Canadian gender-variant kids and adults who fell into its clutches and were subjected to "cures" by any "therapy" that came to mind. Bailey has some long, sweet passages warmly praising the institute's "therapists." He notes, without suggesting he would disagree, that many people, including his students (he asked them: it was part of his scientific study), declare "autogynephiles" inappropriate for gender change. Stop 'em.

The Clarke Institute cannot bear the thought of adult gender changers like me succeeding as just. . . women: Episcopalian church ladies and female college profs. So if you come to the institute old, they get you to believe you are an "autogynephile," and can't really hope to be anything else. The institute makes you go out full-time in drag with no hormones or facial surgery to make it possible to pass for an entire year. This would be suicidal in many American towns; I guess Canada is less violent. If you show up with nail polish or, worse, evidence of having started hormones on your own, you are punished, and your clock is turned back to zero, Bailey reports. The result is "men" (Bailey's term, remember) who can stand to run around as guys in gowns forever, thus assuring that Blanchard's theory will hold, at least for this "sample": Men are men; it's hopeless, guys; you will never be women.

The evidence for the institute's notion of "autogynephilia" backing up this psychological violence against its patients is pretty feeble. It's hard anyway to get a reasonable sample of gender crossers. Lynn Conway, a world-famous professor of electrical engineering and computer science emerita at the University of Michigan and member of the National Academy of Engineering, who transitioned in 1968 (she was fired by IBM for it but remade her life and became eminent in her field as a woman without revealing her past; it came out a few years ago) reckons on her Web site ([www.lynnconway.com](http://www.lynnconway.com)) that about one in every 400 born males will want to change gender. About one in 2,000—40,000 women—already have transitioned. Conway shows that the official numbers—one in 30,000, according to the DSM; one in 20,000, according to Bailey's book, although he's rapidly backing away from that estimate—imply absurdly low figures for completed gender crossers: in the U.S. about 800, which is a factor of 40 or so below the actual number. Where are they? You probably know one. Many just disappear into their target gender. Many others are fearful, not without reason, of being studied by "scientists" like Blanchard or Bailey.

Blanchard's hypothesis suffered the fate of science that can't be replicated, and that's based on narrow data tilted to make things come out right for the scientist proposing it. There's no shame in that. Most scientists are tendentious arguers for their pet theories, the check and balance being that other scientists resist. Almost everyone in the scientific study of sex and gender has checked and balanced and resisted the Clarke Institute's theory. It has proven to be wrong and has been laid aside by the mainstream of gender researchers. But contrary to the high school version of scientific method, old scientific theories never die; they just fade away.

Defending himself from the tsunami of criticism the book has generated, Bailey writes on his Web site ([www.psych.nwu.edu/psych/people/faculty/bailey/controversy.htm](http://www.psych.nwu.edu/psych/people/faculty/bailey/controversy.htm)): "At one time, gender patients with clear signs of autogynephilia were deemed inappropriate for [surgery]. They were denigrated as 'not true transsexuals.' These practices were harmful, hurtful, and wrong. Autogynephilic transsexuals are true transsexuals, suffering every bit as much from gender dysphoria [which means 'gender discomfort'; Real Scientists Do Greek] as homosexual transsexuals [the second of the two possible types in Bailey's universe] do. Autogynephilic transsexuals tend to be about as happy as homosexual male-to-female transsexuals with sex reassignment surgery. And both groups are much happier, on average, after transitioning."

Bailey doesn't say anything like this in the book. That omission is quite important for understanding why the book has frightened so many queers and delighted so many conservatives. Bailey does not say in the book that it's OK for people in a free society to express their gender identity—butch lesbian, say, or cowboy straight or womanly gender crosser. Instead he sidles up to the programs on the religious and psychiatric right that try (unsuccessfully, as he admits) to "cure" gender crossers and homosexuals.

Contrary to Bailey and his friends, the real science says that formerly heterosexual gender crossers are not sex-crazed lovers of self. Formerly homosexual gender crossers are not "just" homosexual men (with the emphasis on just and on sex: Bailey never refers to gay people as loving; love, it seems, is something he's a little weak on; in Bailey's mind it's all about sex, sex, sex). And regular, four-square, iron-pumping Ulysses-King David-Socrates-Rock Hudson-type homosexuals are not, as Bailey wants us to believe, "just" feminine guys. Real gender science, to repeat, says that who you are—being "feminine" or wanting to be—is not the same thing as whom you love. That's not too hard to understand. I love my dog. But that doesn't mean I want to become a dog.

Nonetheless, against most of the evidence and all the common sense, Bailey continues to maintain the rejected theory that one's identity and one's affectional preference line up the way the VFW guys think they should. Again, no special shame attaches. In the end, after all, much of science will turn out to be wrong, from Aristotle and Newton down to the single-strand hypothesis for DNA. If this weren't so, science would have advanced at lightning speed, and we'd already know everything.

Bailey writes charmingly and has the knack of suggesting that he's reporting from the front lines of Science, inserting a lot of personal "guesses" and "hunches" into the prose as though he were an actual Scientist with a lifetime of serious consideration of alternative hypotheses and tons of data behind him. You can imagine Bailey with a pipe and a lab coat advertising laxatives on TV. But in his case we have what the physicist Richard Feynman used to call "cargo-cult science": The book has the style of an informal talk with a Serious Scientist who is getting down and personal with you about his science. The stuff looks a little like science, the way the "airports" the highlanders of New Guinea constructed out of coconuts and palm fronds to get the American cargo planes to come back after the war looked a little like airports. It's even in the title of his book, that Science. But sadly, it's scientific nonsense.

Harsh words? Judge for yourself. Throughout the book Bailey makes a big deal of his academic position (his bosses at Northwestern seem to agree: they recently promoted this alleged violator of their own human-subjects procedures to chairman of the Psychology Department). All the way through the book he calls his findings "science." His main evidence for the femininity of gay men (aside from that study of how queers say the two Ss in science) is a Scientific study of personal ads in some gay newspapers. His other piece of "research"—and the only research this Researcher did on gender crossers—consisted of, first, long talks with one gender crosser in Chicago (named "Cher" in the book; I know her well; she's one of the people who have filed legal complaints against Bailey) and, second, short talks with a half dozen young Hispanic gender-crossing prostitutes whom Cher brought to Bailey under the impression he wanted to help them. It's a sample of convenience of, say, size seven (one was Cher herself, the only case of alleged "autogynephilia" Bailey has studied; the rest were the other type, of the two types allowed).

The sample was collected by what looks like a violation of federal law. Northwestern's Office for Human Research is investigating. No one was offered a human subjects form to sign, no one was told she was under study, and no one was told her story would appear in a book. The subjects were enticed by the offer of a document crucial for their gender change. Their lives were used in the book with brutal disregard for their feelings to titillate readers. Bailey even "studies" one of their weddings, to which he was invited as a guest.

That's the legal problem Bailey and his university now face, but the scientific problem they face is worse. The entire sample, representing the world's hundreds of thousands of gender crossers, just happens to live in Chicago. Six-sevenths of the sample are first-generation Hispanic Americans, most working as prostitutes and professional drag queens (Bailey dropped from his sample women who were not in sex trades). That's not a very good sample. If most of Bailey's data come from young Hispanic sex workers in Chicago, then he has not put his theory (namely, that gender crossing is about sex, sex, sex, because gender crossers are men, men, men) in much jeopardy.

Randi Ettner, a clinical psychologist who has written the best book on gender problems, *Gender Loving Care*, and who has seen hundreds of every conceivable kind, has an office in Evanston, a few blocks from Bailey's. Not interested, says Bailey in effect: Leave me alone with my two-category VFW theory and my half-dozen pretty girls off the streets of Boys' Town. He didn't want to talk with gender crossers like, say, me—exhibiting no "autogynephilia," working not as a prostitute but as a professor of economics (now, now: no jokes).

On his Web site (after the book was published) Bailey defends himself by saying that he wasn't really doing original research himself; he was relying on Blanchard. But you know what the scientific community thinks of Blanchard. So that doesn't quite work. And the book keeps emphasizing its Highly Scientific character. Bailey writes, for example, of "recruiting [in gay bars] research subjects for our study of drag queens and transsexuals" and about his own "recent research"; and so on throughout (emphasis added). Those who glory in doing Scientific Research had better have something to back it up. Bailey doesn't. At a July meeting in Bloomington, Indiana, of the International Academy of Sex Research, John Bancroft, director of the Kinsey Institute and one of the most respected sexologists in the world, stood up after Bailey's abbreviated talk and said sternly, "Michael, I would caution you against calling this book 'science' because I have read it, and I can tell you it is not science." Then he sat down, to stunned silence: The sexologists had finally gotten up the courage to resist Bailey, Blanchard, and the Clarke Institute.

Northwestern University seems to have a problem of this sort every 10 years or so. A member of their engineering school mightily embarrassed the place by becoming famous as a Holocaust denier. Now Northwestern has a homophobic, transphobe chair of its psychology department who allegedly violates human-subject review procedures to get dirt on the communities he wants to repathologize. Go Wildcats.

The book has outraged gays, lipstick lesbians, butch dykes, heterosexual cross-dressers. And formerly heterosexual crossers of gender like me: normal boyhood, repressed desires at age 11 in the repressed 1950s, 30 years happily married, two grown children (not talking to me yet: thank you, Professor Bailey and your pathologizing friends), successful, regular guy who decided to change at age 53, did so, and is now even more happy. In particular the book has annoyed academic gender crossers, of whom there are a surprisingly large number.

To name four: Joan Roughgarden, a famous professor of population biology at Stanford, who transitioned five years ago at age 52; Barbara Nash, a famous professor of geology at the University of Utah, who transitioned in 2001 at age 57; that famous Lynn Conway; and yours truly. The academics don't like Bailey's use of the mantle of Science to push a conservative, unscientific agenda worthy of National Review, or of The National Enquirer. They are up in arms; or at least up on the Web (at [www.lynnconway.com](http://www.lynnconway.com)). In July, Conway and I filed a formal complaint with Northwestern's vice president of research regarding Bailey's research conduct. That too is posted on the Web.

So is this statement by Ben Barres, a female-to-male gender crosser and professor of neurobiology and developmental biology at Stanford (yeah: the more eminent the university, the more relaxed it is about gender change: Roughgarden and Barres are not the only two at Stanford; and guess which provost helped them? Hint: she's not provost any more, and her first name is Condoleezza): "Bailey truly doesn't get the gender identity dissonance that transsexuals experience—it really is hard for people to understand what they haven't experienced themselves. I have talked with many MtFs

[male-to-female gender crossers] who have contacted me, and have listened to the feelings they have gone through their whole lives, and it is always an exact mirror of what I have experienced as an FtM. These MtFs have no reason to lie to me, as I have no power over what treatment they receive. For Bailey to say that most MtFs are primarily doing the gender change because of a fetish [that is, sex, sex, sex] rather than a true gender-identity issue just doesn't ring true to me, or to many other people that have worked in clinics taking care of many MtFs."

Bailey revives the long-dead notion—as scientifically dead as the psychoanalysis that spawned it—that gender crossers are repressed homosexuals. The revival is dumb on two counts. First, it's scientifically unpersuasive. Psychoanalysis ends up calling nearly everyone a repressed homosexual. Second, it's politically irresponsible. You might as well revive the long-dead notion that Jews are genetically programmed for making money.

Bailey adopts throughout an air of smirking knowingness, especially about gays. On the first page of the book he announces that his gaydar is infallible, that he can Spot 'Em: "Knowing [a man's] occupation and observing him briefly and superficially [is] sufficient, together, for me to guess confidently" that he was a sissy as a boy, is now gay-identified, and may well soon get gender reassignment surgery. He predicts of Danny, an actual 8-year-old living in a northern suburb of Chicago, that when he's grown up "on any October Sundays, he is more likely to be singing show tunes somewhere than to be cheering for the Chicago Bears."

Hey, that's really great, Professor, that you are able to "scientifically predict" little Danny's future, and in such an amusing way!

But consider. What exactly would be the point of "knowing" that Danny will become gay? Bailey never says. True, if one could know that Child X would otherwise become an ax murderer, or Saddam Hussein, intervention might be in order. But gay? Or, for that matter, a gender crosser? What exactly is the problem here? Isn't the "disorder" located in the society that worries about such nonissues rather than in the free person exercising her rights?

It would be like "knowing" that some 8-year-old Janey will grow up to be optimistic, or "knowing" that some 8-year-old Johnny will grow up to be interested in sports. Wonderful: What great Science. You are s-o-o smart.

Now: Why would you want to know such a thing? To prevent little Janey from being unreasonably optimistic, through therapy? To throttle back little Johnny's excessive interest in sports, through operant conditioning? Now answer the question when you do not have an intervention that works, like for being gay or being a gender crosser.

Let's assume Bailey got everything right about his informants. (Cher tells me he got much of it wrong; but he wouldn't listen when she told him so.) Suppose even (again contrary to fact, but let's be easy) that the Clarke Institute's failed theory is correct, 100 percent.

So? Why shouldn't a free person be able to express her notions of gender? (Gender expression—your right as a woman to wear pants, say—is the next frontier of this evolving revolution: see [www.gpac.org](http://www.gpac.org), the Web site for [brief explanation: GenderPak, devoted to freedom whatever your chromosomes or genitals].) And if changing one's genitals is considered a violation of God's law, why aren't nose jobs or cancer cures also abominations?

Ask the libertarian question: Why not? No fair just declaring without sensible argument that it's contrary to natural law. Or saying peevishly, "I can't understand such a desire." Neither can I understand why some people let themselves pay first-year depreciation on automobiles; or why other people write books in which they exploit for gain little boys interested in dolls and Hispanic women off the street desperate for a letter to allow gender surgery. But I'm not proposing to put these two disorders into the next DSM to prevent people from engaging in such behavior.

Bailey paints himself in the book and defends himself on his Web site as a helper of gender-varying people. Just what the doctor ordered. Get them help, for Lord's sake, through compulsory psychiatry backed up by the new DSM-V. It's like the old joke about the three most unbelievable sentences: "The check is in the mail"; "Of course I'll respect you in the morning"; and "I'm Mike Bailey, a follower of the Clarke Institute, and I'm here to help you."

Contributing Editor Deirdre McCloskey teaches economics, history, English, and communications at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her 1999 book *Crossing: A Memoir* was a New York Times Notable Book. Her latest book is a pamphlet, *The Secret Sins of Economics* (Prickly Paradigm Press, distributed by the University of Chicago Press).

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Letter published in the *Chicago Reader*

December 16, 2003  
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*Chicago Reader*

Dear Editor:

Dennis Rodkin (Reader Dec 12) writes as an advocate for the anti-transsexual theories in Professor J. Michael Bailey's recent, widely attacked book. Mr. Rodkin wants your readers to believe that gender crossers are pathetic nut cases. He wants you to believe that Professor Bailey's views, by contrast, are "scientific."

The crucial point, which Rodkin omits, is that practically no one in the scientific community believes the "science" in Professor Bailey's Silly Theory (let me be as slanted as Rodkin is, OK?). At the July meeting in Bloomington, Indiana of the International Academy of Sex Research, John Bancroft, director of the Kinsey Institute and one of the most respected sexologists in the world, stood up after Bailey's abbreviated talk and said sternly, "Michael, I would caution you against calling this book 'science' because I have read it, and I can tell you it is not science." Then he sat down, to stunned silence. Bailey resigned that afternoon from the secretaryship of the Academy.

Bailey portrays himself according to Rodkin as an "impartial social scientist," who looks at "aggregates," "lots of similar cases." According to Rodkin, Professor Bailey "has the goal of finding commonalities among groups of individuals."

You bet. Professor Bailey's "lots of similar cases" were a half dozen Hispanic drag queens and prostitutes he met in bars in Chicago. That's it. He threw out of the "sample" the one woman who was working as realtor rather than in the sex trades. Don't let facts get in the way of the ST (remember: Silly Theory) that such people are motivated by sex, sex, sex. The "commonalities" are derived from biased samples, ignoring most of the evidence, the evidence for instance of personal testimony or common sense or accurate accounting. The "aggregates" with which Bailey's Canadian guru works with are a few dozen people required to believe the ST to be allowed to change genders: that's how the Clarke Institute in Toronto works: vee have vays of making you believe. It's how Bailey works, too. (He is under investigation for having sex with his "sample," by the way, something Rodkin knew but did not report; The Chronicle of Higher Education reported it last Friday.) Bailey got the women in his "sample" to spill their guts by promising to write them a letter for their surgery. Vee have vays of making you testify.

I can tell you it is not science.

Rodkin has fallen for Bailey bigtime (despite the horrible picture of Bailey on the front page, worse even than mine: but love knows no reason). So he gets the core criticism of Bailey's methods wrong. I never said, as Rodkin claims, that "no one's more capable of understanding the phenomenon than the person who's been through it." Mr. Rodkin needs to check his tape. Lots of people, such as the overwhelming majority of gender scientists who reject the ST, understand the phenomenon. Randi Ettner, the Evanston psychologist and writer on the subject, for example, does. Read her excellent book, *Gender Loving Care*.

But Bailey and his little group of right-wing admirers claim that nothing can be learned from people who have been through it. Unless gender crossers agree with the ST, you see, they are liars or self-deluded. So much for their evidence. That's why Bailey feels no responsibility as a scholar to read anything or listen to anyone. He claims for example to have read my own book, *Crossing: A Memoir* (1999; available on amazon.com cheap; great read). But you can tell right away from his brief description of it in his own book that he hasn't. He repeats the lie in the interview: "Deirdre says he [get it: "he"] was really a woman inside. What does that mean really? What does it mean to say you were a man but you 'felt like a woman'?"

I said nothing of the kind. Yeah, I know: the ten-second take on gender crossers is that they are "women trapped in a man's body." But I'm telling you (and my book tells at greater length), that's not how I felt. (And no gender crosser I know tells me they felt the ten-second way; journalists impose it, Bailey adopts it; but it ain't science.) When I was a man I felt like one.

What it means to want to be something you are not is the commonest human experience, not "really" that difficult to understand. You were once a child, did not know "really" what it was like to be an adult, but wanted to be one. Got it? Not so difficult after all. Someone born in France doesn't "really" know what it's like to live in the United States, but immigrates. Someone who wants a better job doesn't "really" know what it's like to have an MBA, but goes to UIC to get one. And so forth.

Bailey defends himself from the charge of being homo- and transphobe by noting that his sex research has attracted unfavorable notice from some conservatives—who don't like any government-funded research into who gets horny from what. He doesn't mention (Rodkin does) that the right wing loves his opinions about homosexual men. And Bailey claims that he explicitly says in the book that he favors transsexuals. Uh-huh. It would be as though he spoke of heterosexual women thus: "They are driven by sex, sex, sex. But I favor them. They are inclined to enter prostitution. But I favor them. They need professional supervision. But I favor them. They are crazy fetishists. But I favor them." In the article Bailey's MO is well illustrated by the way he defends keeping gender crossing close to pedophilia in the manual of mental "disorders." Heh, "there's nothing immoral or harmful" about gender crossing at an advanced age, but there are "scientific reasons" for speaking of pedophilia in the same breath. Sure.

Mr. Rodkin's article is prurient without being honestly informative. A lot like Professor Bailey's book. The ST, which Rodkin swallows, is awfully silly. The genital surgery, for example, is in fact a minor matter for most gender crossers. If it is, how can love of one's own vagina motivate gender crossing? (And while we're at it, does that make born women into "autogynepheliacs"?) There's just a lot of such silliness in Bailey's book and Rodkin's article. The claim that getting the ST into the manual of mental "disorders" will "help" gender crossers in Canada by letting insurance pay for it, to give another instance, runs up against a pretty simple fact, which Rodkin and Bailey could have got right if they would actually listen: Dog Day Afternoon notwithstanding, the genital surgery is cheap; in the US it costs less than a small automobile; in Thailand it costs less than most digital cameras. And on and on. Bailey is not a Respected Scientist Bravely Speaking Out. He literally doesn't know what he's talking about.

I among many other people have made numerous scientific points against the ST (see my article in [Reason](#) last month). Bailey doesn't have answers. So he goes on diagnosing me and others at a distance. He means it to defame: if Deirdre "shows all the signs" of "autogynephilia," well, then her scientific arguments do not require an answer.

I'm going to sue Bailey for defamation if he calls me an "autogynephile" in print one more time. And the point here is that I'm going to win the case: the "diagnosis" is not accepted by most sex scientists; it's a dead theory that Bailey in his sad way goes on espousing, and using to attack people who won't go along with the ST. The correct theory is that some people want to be who they are not, and become so, harmlessly: adult, American, UIC MBAs, women.

The ST is not science. It's defamation, pure and simple.

Sincerely,

Deirdre McCloskey

UIC Distinguished Professor of Economics, History, English, and Communication University of Illinois at Chicago

## Exchange of letters, *Reason* magazine, December 2003:

Editor of *Reason*:

In her review and indictment of J. Michael Bailey's book ("Queer Science," November), Deirdre McCloskey uses no evidence to refute his findings. Furthermore, she fails to explain just how any of Bailey's theories would be harmful to the transgender community. McCloskey implies that Bailey has a "conservative" agenda because his sex research has led him to classify male-to-female transsexuals into two distinct categories. She provides no alternate theories or meaningful rebuttal, but instead lambastes Bailey for daring to study the issue. Perhaps McCloskey wants everyone to believe that there are male and female souls floating about that, through some trick of nature, are assigned to mismatched bodies. That is fine and good, but it isn't science. Her reaction to Bailey's research is the equivalent of a child covering his or her ears and screaming to avoid hearing the truth.

Bailey is not a Christian fundamentalist with a political agenda, nor is he homophobic. He is a psychologist looking to illuminate the mysteries of gender dysphasia. It is unfortunate that McCloskey, a supposed scholar, would respond in such an unscholarly fashion. It is also unfortunate that a woman who preaches acceptance takes arbitrary swings at institution like the Veterans of Foreign Wars, implying they are all homophobic yokels. McCloskey's article was not a review; it was a rant.

Ron Holsey

(a student of Bailey's, a student journalist)

McCloskey reply:

Editor of *Reason*:

I do provide evidence, for instance the evidence of my own life, and indeed of the Chicago women and children Bailey so brutally exploited to write his book (some of whom I know well). My view of gender crossing is the standard scientific one—not Professor Bailey's or it seems Mr. Holsey's. The "alternative theory" Mr. Holsey asks for is available in the numerous competent books and articles on transgender, few of which, I'm afraid, Professor Bailey has read (Mr. Holsey thinks that gender dysphoria, which means in Greek "a gender hard to bear," is spelled "gender dysphasia," which would mean "a gender unspeakable"; the slip gives an idea of the level of Scientific competence in the Bailey circle; though, come to think of it, his neologism is not such a bad one). Providing new evidence is the responsibility of people who want to change science. Bailey has none.

I do tell just how Bailey's theories would be harmful to the transgender community. For example, I explained that Bailey's theory is that it's all (transgender and homosexuality) about sex, sex, sex. Not about love or identity. Is that notion harmful? Most people would say so. I explained that Bailey's theories are used right now, up at the Clarke Institute, and at Johns Hopkins, to Stop 'Em. Harmful? Let me tell you.

I have no objection to anyone who wants to "study the issue." I wish Bailey had. I wish he had, for example, gone up the street in Evanston to the clinical psychologist Randi Ettner, who actually knows all kinds of gender crossers. I wish Bailey had any evidence for his theory. Alas, he does not.

I did not accuse Bailey of being a Christian fundamentalist. As a devout Christian myself, actually, I saw no sign of religious depth in his book. I said, what is true, that the homophobes and transphobes and, yes, the Christian fundamentalists of a certain sort are delighted by his book, and are even now actively conspiring to use it (and similar unscientific "research") to reverse the freedoms flowering since the 1960s. I suggest your readers do a Google search on Michael Bailey and John Derbyshire and Paul McHugh and the Human Biodiversity Discussion Group and see what comes up.

If Bailey and his friends do not want people to be upset by their work they should do better scientific work: it is not I but the head of the Kinsey Institute who called Bailey's book "not science," an opinion then repeated by the president of the main scientific and therapeutic group dealing with transgenders. My one regret—I thank Mr. Holsey for giving me a chance to repair some of the damage—is my ill-advised witticism about homophobic yokels at the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I apologize. Of course not all members of the VFW are to be classed with Bailey's friends on the conservative right. It was unfair of me to associate defenders of our freedom with such bitter enemies of it.

Sincerely,

Deirdre McCloskey

See also:

- [Crossing: A Memoir](#), 1999.
- [Published articles on gender](#)

Reviews

- "[The Metamorphosis](#)": Maxine Kumin's review of *Crossing NY Times*, 1999.

#### The Bailey Controversy

- [Back and forth with Professor Seth Roberts](#), 24 August 2007
- [Letter to the Times](#), submitted August 2007
- "[Politics in Scholarly Drag: Alice Dreger's Assault on the Critics of Bailey](#)," submitted to *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, August 2007
- [Transcript of a KOED debate](#), 23 August 2007
- "[Complaint against the practices of J. Michael Bailey](#) in the 'research' for his book *The Man Who Would Be Queen*," July 29, 2003.
- "[Queer Science](#)," McCloskey's review of Bailey's *The Man Who Would Be Queen*," *Reason* magazine, November 2003.
- [Letter published in the Chicago Reader](#), December 2003.
- [Exchange of letters](#), *Reason* magazine, December 2003.

#### Related articles (html)

- Robin Wilson: "[Leading Economist Stuns Field By Deciding To Become a Woman](#)," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 16 February 1996.
- "[From Donald to Deirdre: How a man became a woman and what it says about identity](#)," excerpt from *Crossing: A Memoir* (1999): *Reason* magazine, Dec 1999; *Chicago Tribune Sunday Magazine*, Jan 30, 2000.
- "[Before Deirdre there was Jane](#)," excerpt from *Crossing: A Memoir* (1999) (courtesy University of Chicago Press).
- "[Crossing Economics](#)," *The International Journal of Transgenderism* [a peer-reviewed electronic journal], 4 (3), July-Sept 2000.
- "[Queer Markets](#)," comment in Kevin G. Barnhurst, ed. *Media/Queered: Visibility and its Discontents*, forthcoming.
- "[Free to be she — or he](#)" *Globe and Mail*, 20 October 2007:

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