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Considering Lesbian Identity
from a Social–Psychological Perspective:
Two Different Models of “Being a Lesbian”

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One long-standing project within lesbian studies has been to develop a satisfactory working definition of “lesbian.” This article proposes two new models of a definition using principles of social psychology. Each model (a) utilizes the premise that gender lacks a categorical essence and (b) separates behavioral adherence to cultural stereotypes of femininity and masculinity from one’s gender self-categorization. From these premises, I generate and critique two internally coherent models of lesbian identity that are inclusive (to different degrees) of various gender identities. For each model, the potential inclusion of trans men, trans women, genderqueers, and lesbian-identified cisgender men is evaluated. The explanatory power of these models is twofold. One, the models can serve as theoretical perspectives for scholars who study the intersection of gender and sexual identity. Two, the models can also characterize the everyday experience of people who have tacit working definitions of lesbian identity.

KEYWORDS   lesbian, gender, identity, cisgender, transgender, genderqueer

For the past 20 years in lesbian studies, there has been a recurring interest in providing a working definition of the term “lesbian” and the identity (or the set of identities) associated with that term (see Diamond, 2003; Stein, 1997; Stuart, 2006; Walker, 1993; Weston, 2009). Various perspectives in diverse fields of scholarship have been recruited to answer this question. Yet, the progress appears piecemeal. As one can glean from the references provided above, a new insight appears nearly every four years, but these insights
rarely result in overarching, workable, detailed models of how to broaden the scholarly understanding of “lesbian identity.” In the meantime, outside the academy, lesbians in various interacting communities—whether scholars or not—confront the working definition of “lesbian” on a daily basis. Whether the considerations are as local as “Who do we invite to the lesbian potluck?” to as broad reaching as “How do we define lesbian for inclusion in our Dyke March?” everyone is dealing with the definition issue. Often, people are providing their own tentative definition of “lesbian” in order to get real-life work done outside the academy. Inside the academy, the issues are surprisingly similar. Some issues are analogous to the “local” issue referenced above (e.g., “who can identify as a lesbian to be part of our academic society or professional organization?”), while a comparatively broader set of issues concerns how one recruits participants for social and behavioral science studies (e.g., “who counts as a ‘lesbian’ for this research project?”). As a social/personality psychologist, I find the definition of any social category both inside and outside the academy to be of central importance. In order to conduct surveys or experiments using human volunteers, I have to provide my own working definition of who counts as a lesbian so that these individuals can be included in my research projects. I also identify as a lesbian, and thus my potential inclusion (as well as the inclusion of others) in a variety of community events is of great personal relevance. The goal of this article is to address the assumptions within the previous working definitions of “lesbian” and to provide a new working definition of “lesbian” that is both academically and socially relevant, and consistent with our most current scholarly understanding of what gender is as social–psychological phenomenon.

A working definition of the term “lesbian” might begin at the deceptively simply starting point of gender. A “lesbian” is a “woman who is emotionally, intellectively, and sexually attracted to other women.” Yet, as the field of transgender studies has shown, the definition of “woman” or “man” is not as simple as it might first appear. In particular, there are two broad ways in which people experience gender identity: cisgender and transgender. Cisgender is remaining on the same side of the gender that a person was assigned at birth. (Cis is the Latin root to “remain on the same side as”). Most individuals identify as cisgender but do not mark their identity as such in language because it is culturally normative for birth-assigned and adult gender identity to be the same. Transgender is transitioning from one’s birth-assigned gender to another gender or to another understanding of gender (Trans is the latin root “to move across or beyond”). According to many scholars (e.g., Factor & Rothblum, 2008), there is a transgender spectrum of identities that includes trans men (those who transition from female to male; also FTMs), trans women (those who transition from male to female; also MTFs), and genderqueer individuals (those who transition to a gender identity that is not entirely male or female). Thus, individuals identifying as (a) both genders simultaneously, (b) as gender neutral (i.e., neither gender
Lesbian Identity from a Social–Psychological Perspective

option), or (c) as a psychologically transitioning their personal sense of
gender identity (e.g., from male to female) but behaving in a manner that is
not consistent with social stereotypes associated with that gender group are
all classifiable as genderqueer.

Thus, the issue of who counts as “woman” needs resolution before one
can satisfactorily define “lesbian.” Given the existence of transgender spec-
trum identities, one should endeavor to create a model of gender identity
that is inclusive of both cis- and trans-gender experiences. One attempt at
resolution is to focus on self-definition. In this case, a “lesbian” is anyone
who self-identifies as such. Importantly, Weston (2009) has offered a cri-
tique of several social science approaches to defining “lesbian” behaviorally
and based on self-identification. The thrust of Weston’s critique is two-fold.
One, scholars lose too much information by focusing only on behavior (see
also, Diamond, 2003). Two, Weston (2009) argues that scholars may include
definitions that are counter to commonsense understandings of the term.
One such case would be lesbian-identified cisgender males (i.e., those who
were born as males and still identify as male [and therefore are not on the
transgender spectrum of identity]).

As a social/personality psychologist, I appreciate the limitations that
self-identification has. Nonetheless, focusing on self-identification is a reli-
able way to uncover the aspects of the individual consciousness (psyche) in
which psychologists tend to be interested. Accordingly, while I agree with
the tenor of Weston’s (2009) critique, I believe that Weston’s analysis was
not nuanced enough in its consideration of the interplay between and the
socially shared meaning of any category and its representation within an
individual consciousness. My intent is, therefore, to provide an account of
such an interplay that reveals how self-identification can be an effective basis
for characterizing lesbian identity, with appropriate logical limits. The logical
limits are the social constraints in which self-identification exists. To enu-
merate my position, I recruit aspects of queer theory, Berger’s (1963) social
construction thesis, insights from transgender studies, as well as perspectives
from the areas of developmental and social psychology.

Returning to the working definition of lesbian identity provided at the
outset, “women who are emotionally and sexually attracted to other women,”
this definition not only allows cisgender women to be candidates for inclu-
sion in the identity, it may also be viewed as restricting lesbian identity to the
sole purview of cisgender women if one does not take insights from trans-
gender studies seriously. To counter the narrow view of lesbian identity,
scholars have argued for the inclusion of trans and genderqueer identities
into lesbian social spaces (Green, 2006; Stuart, 2006), implicitly based on
the argument that cisgender individuals should be aware of their relative
privilege with respect to individuals on the transgender spectrum. In the
working definition, it is worth noting that by simply reframing “woman” as
referring to “female-identified individuals” one is now able to include others
who are not cisgender women but are nonetheless female-identified. Yet, to more fully appreciate that individuals can be female-identified without being assigned a female gender at birth, one needs to understand the ways in which gender is a socially constructed phenomenon.

GENDER AS PERFORMATIVE

Philosopher Judith Butler (1990) is well-known for the thesis of gender performativity. It is beyond the scope of this article to critically engage this concept. Instead, I extract specific insights from the thesis, recognizing that the extraction may not recover the full range of implications intended by Butler’s thesis. The important insight that is associated with the idea of gender as performative for my arguments is that, contrary to popular belief and even some social scientific conceptions, gender is not a natural kind category with a deep, abiding essence that gives rise to it. Instead, gender is intertwined with sex-assignment at birth. Sex-assignment is based on a socially sanctioned authority’s judgment about the appearance of the external genitalia at birth. Contrary to popular wisdom, human genitals are not uniformly organized into prototypic vulva and vaginas and prototypic penises and scrotum. External genitalia in humans are homologous, developing from the same set of structures, and therefore differ by degree of sensitivity to specific hormones (cf. Hines, 2004). Consequently, medical professionals in many industrialized countries use Prader scales to make judgments about whether certain genital structures are closer to a vagina and vulva or more like a penis and scrotum (see, e.g., Hines, 2004). Of course, in some cases, a determination cannot be made by some medical or cultural standard, and the consequence is the condition referred to as intersexed. Moreover, from genetics, there are more than simply two chromosomal arrangements: XX and XY. In point of fact, there are least five major chromosomal arrangements (XX, XY, XXY, XYY, XXX and X0), which can also vary independently of hormone sensitivities (Crooks & Baur, 2008). Accordingly, the two-category gender system so prevalent in many cultures is not the result of two neatly distinguishable genetic or physical patterns. Instead, the gender binary is a sociocultural overlay on top of genetic and physical variegation.

Given the description above, the idea that gender is performative gains rhetorical force because the idea of gender is only meaningful or sensible under a certain set of sociocultural expectations, which prescribe the performances that count as gender. Directing performativity to the question of “female identity,” one might argue that every experience of female identity—from cisgender to transgender—is participation by individuals in the social construction of that concept. In effect, there is no underlying essence to being female to which a cisgender experience could be meaningfully tied.
Instead, individuals create the sense of what it means to be a part of a female identity (or any other gender identity).

It is important to note that my use of gender as performative does not imply that gender is simply playing that role in a social context. Returning to the idea of psyche (as defined earlier), one’s personal sense of being part of the category of “female” is central to my analysis. Consequently, gender as performative is, at base, a statement that the experience that is called “gender” is accessible to all as a part of the social fabric of a certain culture at a certain time and in a certain place (cf. Berger, 1963). Butler (1990) implies this same point when she discusses the use of drag as way to make visible the performance of gender. To the extent that gender is accessible to everyone within a particular sociocultural epoch, I argue that being assigned at birth (by someone else) to a female gender category should not be privileged over other experiences of female gender categorization (e.g., arriving at this self-categorization later in life) because all adults who identify as female are united on the dimension of having a felt-sense or individual consciousness of the self as “female.” Whether this felt-sense is consistent with birth assignment appears to be an ancillary issue for the sake of characterizing one’s present and socially informed sense of identity.

THE STANDARD STORY OF GENDER IDENTITY FROM DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

In addition to the performativity analysis, there is another source that argues that gender is experienced as a cultural phenomenon that is later personalized. The standard story of how gender identity develops in childhood derived from developmental psychology research tacitly supports the idea that gender is experienced as something other than an essence, and later results in a felt-sense of identity. The standard story, extractable from any introductory textbook of developmental psychology, human sexuality (e.g., Crooks and Baur, 2008), or from many scholarly reviews (e.g., Bussey & Bandura, 1999), is that (a) children are assigned a gender at birth (based on the appearance of their external genitalia); (b) children label themselves as “female” or “male” by age 2; (c) children internalize the sense of being “female” or “male” by age 5, and, at the same time, learn gender stereotypes that are expected for their gender group; (d) and, finally, children settle on gender stereotypical or nonstereotypical behavior by puberty (age 12 and up). What is interesting about this standard story is that the sense of being female or male is not believed to solidify until the age of 5 years (see also Egan & Perry, 2001). This proposition is also consistent with Berger’s (1963) social construction thesis in that individuals must first learn then internalize socially communicated information, such as social categories. The standard story of gender identity in developmental psychology is heavily biased toward
cisgender populations, which is why the discussion rarely includes trans
spectrum gender identity. Nonetheless, research by Factor and Rothblum
(2008) provides insights from transgender and genderqueer populations re-
garding the time of and personal narratives about changes from assigned
gender categories. These insights are completely consistent with the standard
story of the development of gender identity because they follow the same
logic of individuals personalizing gender categories over time. In this way,
everyone is dealing with the “performativity” of gender—irrespective of their
starting point in this process. When considering lesbian identity, if everyone
is dealing with culturally bound definitions of what it means to be “female”
and some people eventually internalize the sense of being female, should we
only consider those who were assigned this identity at birth and remained
on the same side of that social assignment as the valid category members?

GENDER ROLE ADHERENCE AND GENDER
SELF-CATEGORIZATION

As evinced by the last step in the standard story of gender identity devel-
opment, it is argued that children behave either consistently with or outside
of the roles or social expectations tied to their birth-assigned gender while
they move into adulthood. Yet, for this statement to make sense, one needs
to logically separate the felt-sense of gender identity (viz. gender categoriza-
tion) from gender roles. Thus, girls who behave in ways not expected for
the group designated “girls” can only be considered “tomboys,” for instance,
if one grants the separation between a categorization into “girl” as a gender
group and how one behaves when considering other people’s expectations
for that group.

Social/personality psychologist Sandra Bem used the same implicit sep-
aration of gender self-categorization and gender role adherence to develop
her theory of psychological androgyny for adults (Bem, 1981). Bem had
two major assumptions within this theory. One assumption was to sepa-
rate the dimensions of masculinity and femininity as stereotyped social roles
so that people could vary independently on both. The result of this two-
dimensional conceptualization, is that, psychologically, people can be: (a)
androgynous (high in both masculine and feminine stereotyped attributes),
(b) feminine (high in feminine stereotyped attributes, but low in masculine
attributes), (c) masculine (high in masculine stereotyped attributes, but low
in feminine attributes), or (d) undifferentiated (low in both attributes) (Bem,
1981). When developing her classification system of a person’s location in
the two-dimensional space of masculinity and femininity, Bem used a per-
son’s self-categorization in terms of gender (and one may presume largely
cisgender) to develop her classifications of sex-typed (e.g., women who are
high on the femininity dimension but low on the masculinity dimension) and
reverse-typed (e.g., women who are high on the masculinity dimension but low on the femininity dimension) (Bem, 1981). Accordingly, for Bem masculinity and femininity stereotype endorsement as social roles are necessarily separable from (and even independent of) one’s gender self-categorization.

In much of the lesbian studies literature of the past 20 years, there has been a similar appreciation of the separation of gender role adherence and gender self-categorization. For example, scholars have considered the dynamics of female masculinity as well as female femininity in terms of “butch” and “femme” classifications. While lesbians from Generation X and more recent generations may be less personally identified with such terms (Weiss, 2007), their meanings are not lost on these generations. Those who are female-identified can express a range of culturally-bound behaviors and tendencies that are associated with masculinity and/or femininity social roles in a specific culture. In this manner, one can already see the same premise as employed by Bem at work in different scholarly understandings of how gender roles intersect with the idea of gender self-categorization as “female.”

Nonetheless, there was an important historical tension between female masculinity in both butch and trans male identities (Hale, 1998; Weiss, 2007). Briefly, the tension concerns whether one’s gender identity is necessarily tied to social roles. At this point, the insights outlined earlier can be applied. To the extent that gender is performative it must be equally performative across cisgender “butch” women and transgender men. However, the key difference between these groups is not “masculine” social roles in which these individuals may engage. Instead, the difference is in the felt-sense of gender, categorizable as “female” (cisgender butch women) and “male” (trans men). Accordingly, one’s felt-sense of gender identity can be different even if some of the stereotypes and social roles associated with the groups overlap.

INTEGRATING THE INSIGHTS ABOVE

To summarize, if gender lacks an essence with is continually socially constructed (cf. Butler, 1990), and it is separable from the social meanings of masculinity and femininity (cf. Bem, 1981), then the experience of being “female” should be experientially driven with a culture and accessible to those who were assigned female at birth and to those who identify as female later in life. In this case, gender categorization is truly social–psychological to the extent that the meaning of gender is socially derived and one’s self-categorization in terms of gender is psychological (or individually focused). Here, anyone’s gender identity as female is equally “valid” across cisgender and transgender spectrum trajectories because the difference is one of a timeline, not anything fundamental.
or exclusive to one group over the others. Recall, that Butler (1990) implies
and the standard story from developmental psychology argues that gender
becomes internalized over time. Consequently, one cannot easily dismiss
an internalized experience of a female identity simply because it did not
co-occur with a birth-assignment to this gender. This new insight leads
one to consider two possibilities regarding gender identity as it intersects
with lesbian identity. One possibility is that one’s current gender identity as
female and attraction to others identified as female are the basis for defining
oneself and others as lesbians. The other possibility is that one’s identity at
any time during one’s life can be the basis for identifying as a lesbian.

TWO MODELS OF “BEING A LESBIAN”

Both of the possibilities enumerated above can be turned into models of
“being a lesbian.” One model will be termed the current identity model and
the other will be termed the life-course identity model. The two models have
a set of common assumptions even though they have a critical divergence
in terms of how important current gender identity is. One of the common
assumptions is that self-identification in terms of gender is indicative of
one’s felt-sense of self (psyche). As stated previously, gender identity is not
whether people behave consistently with culturally prescribed gender norms;
instead, gender identity refers to how individuals personally and socially
refer to themselves. The most straightforward example in most cultures is
the use of gender pronouns. In a binary gender system, there are only two
commonly used pronouns. This means that a person will consider oneself
female or male by using “she/her/hers” or by using “he/him/his,” respectively.
The use of small caps font indicates that the internal expression does not
always use pronouns; instead, one’s internal dialogue rarely assumes the
third-person linguistic form, but is still conveying a sense of self as a part
of a gendered category. Herein, one can have an interesting disconnection
between internal self-reference and external reference as other people view
the self. For instance, a person can have an internal identification as “female,”
but not have others interpret this person that way. Instead, observers may
refer to this person as “he” or “him.” Nonetheless, both identity models being
proposed argue that it is the personal sense of self that is paramount—not
how one is interpreted by others. The focus on personal sense recovers
the standard story from development psychology about internalization of
gender identity, which, is by definition, a private act, but whose content is
publicly informed.

The second common assumption between the current identity model
and the life-course identity model is therefore that gendered pronouns are a
useful way to communicate the personal sense of self to others. When one’s
gender pronoun is used in a social interaction in a manner that is consistent
with internal identity (at least one’s identity in the present), then one has
demonstrated the primacy of internal identity insofar as the individual had to
reveal the internal understanding to the external world. The third common
assumption is that the social conceptions of masculinity and femininity are
separable from the gender self-identity process. Again, Bem (1981) provided
this insight when she argued that masculinity and femininity are not two
opposite ends of the same dimension, but are, instead, two separate dimen-
sions. This allows a person to adhere more or less to feminine and masculine
gender stereotypes while still having a female identity.

The current identity and life-course identity models differ in their specific
construal of current gender identity. The current identity model is crucially
dependent on the premise: the self is not appropriately definable as “past
self.” In this way, the current identity model tacitly argues that who one
is now is more important than who one was or might have been in the
past. This premise has rhetorical force to the extent that it will also correlate
with chronological age and the sense of identity assumed in adulthood (and,
this is especially so for transgender and genderqueer persons; see Factor &
Rothblum, 2008).

The life-course identity model subsumes the current identity model’s as-
sumptions but diverges from it by expanding the range of included identities.
The first assumption of the life-course model is that current gender identity
is only partially indicative of one’s self-picture; conceptual space is made
for the contribution of previous gender identities. This conceptual space for
the previous gender identity(ies) leads to the second assumption: the self
is definable as past self too—or, better, as a composite of past and present
gendered selves. The notion of “definable” is important because it allows
one to “opt in” or “opt out” of using the past self to define one’s gender
identity and thus one’s sexual identity.

Lesbian Identity Inclusions

Returning to the working definition of lesbian, each identity model allows
for the delineation of who can be coherently defined as a lesbian. For the
current identity model, the following groups are able to be included in
the definition: (a) cisgender women, (b) trans women, and (c) the subset
of genderqueers who identify as female (see Table 1). The basis for each
inclusion follows. Even though cisgender women have had a female identity
since birth assignment, it is the current identity that counts for this model.
Similarly, although trans women were not gender assigned female since birth,
the fact that their current gender identity is female is the basis for inclusion.
Finally, the subset of genderqueers who identify as female also are countable
as lesbians because, irrespective of birth assigned or previously held gender
identities, their current gender identity is female.
TABLE 1 Included and Excluded Gender Groups on the Two Models of Lesbian Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Gender Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Current Identity (inclusions) | Cisgender women  
|                        | Transgender women  
|                        | Genderqueer—female-identified                                               |
| Current Identity (exclusions) | Cisgender men  
|                        | Transgender men  
|                        | Genderqueer—gender neutrals  
|                        | Genderqueer—male-identified                                                  |
| Life-Course Identity (inclusions) | Cisgender women  
|                        | Transgender women  
|                        | Transgender men  
|                        | Genderqueer (all identities—so long as they identified as female at one point) |
| Life-Course Identity (exclusions) | Cisgender men |

The life-course identity model has a comparatively larger set of inclusions. In addition to the three groups listed above, the life-course identity model can include: (a) trans men, (b) the subset of genderqueers who are male-identified currently (but were female-identified at some point in the past), (c) and the subset of genderqueers who are currently “gender neutral” (but were female-identified at some point in the past; see Table 1). The basis of inclusion is that at one point in time (whether birth assigned or at some point after birth assignment), the individual had the felt-experience of being “female” as a gender identity and continues to define the self, in part, using this past female gender identity.

Lesbian Identity Exclusions

Based on their divergent assumptions, each model also has a different set of exclusion criteria for who counts as a lesbian. Because the current identity model argues that only current identity is important, three experiences of gender identity are excluded: (a) trans men, (b) gender neutrals or those opting out of gender classifications altogether, and (c) lesbian-identified cisgender males (see Table 1). Trans men are excluded because their current identity is not female. Under the current identity model, it does not matter that their previous gender identity might have been female. Gender neutrals are excluded because they do not have a current female identity; and, again, it is irrelevant under this model whether they had one in the past. Lesbian-identified cisgender males are also excluded because their current gender identity is not female.

The life-course identity model only excludes lesbian-identified cisgender males (see Table 1). With its reliance on past or present gender identification, the only group listed that has never had and does not now have a female
gender identity is cisgender men, by definition. Trans men and current gender neutrals can be included to the extent that their past individual gender identities included female at one time. However, trans men and current gender neutrals can “opt in” or “opt out” of a lesbian identity. This opting ability is logically meaningful because even if they have an attraction to those who are female-identified, some trans men may experience their sexual identity as heterosexual men. Similarly, some individuals who are gender neutral may experience their sexual identity as “queer,” “pansexual,” or some other term indicating gender neutrality as informing a sexual identity.

**CONCLUSIONS**

These two models of being a lesbian are internally coherent and demonstrate that is possible to consider female identity as a basis for lesbian identity without creating a bias that only benefits cisgender women. Although the privileging of cisgender identity exists to define female identity (cf., Green, 2006; Weiss, 2004), and by extension lesbian identity, any position that reserves lesbian identity for only cisgender women has to defend its premise. Specifically, such a position would have to develop a logically defensible argument that can meaningfully exclude other felt-senses of being female that occurred after being assigned to another gender category at birth. As argued throughout this article, the felt-sense of being female (in the past or present) is presumably shared across all experiences of female identity, and the most consistent and defensible meaning of this social category from a social science perspective.

At the time of writing this article, I could find no compelling reason within the logical structure of each model to choose one of the new models of gender identity over the other. Consequently, each was presented and critiqued. It is clear that the life-course identity model is more inclusive as compared to the current identity model. For the social and academic pursuits in which people are interested, more inclusiveness may be an appropriate reason to choose this model over the other. Nonetheless, the current identity model is inclusive (albeit to a lesser extent) of transgender spectrum identities and may be compelling in that it features simplicity and regularity. With a current identity model, one could make the universal statement “she is a lesbian” because only those currently identified as female (and thus presumably only using female gender pronouns) would be included. By comparison, on a life-course identity model, one would indicate “he is a lesbian” for trans men and genderqueer males, and “ze is a lesbian” (or “they are a lesbian”) for gender-neutral lesbians, in addition to “she is a lesbian” for cis women, trans women, and genderqueer females. However, in everyday life, and for academic research purposes, people may be happy to accommodate the panoply of pronoun usages to be more inclusive of all experiences (past
and present) of female gender identity. Thus, aspects of the life-course identity model may already be present (to some degree) in how a number of lesbian social events are structured inside and outside the academy.

As implied in the foregoing statement, in addition to being ways that scholars can organize social–psychological experience, these models may reflect working understandings for people’s psychological experiences in their everyday interactions. As a social/personality psychologist, I am interested in studying the ways in which people use subjective definitions of social categories in order to interpret and use information about others in the real world. It is easy to imagine that that people may prefer one of these models to the other—even without being explicitly aware of this tendency. Some conversations among lesbians may take the general form of “now that our friend is transitioning to being male [i.e., from female to male identity], can he still be a lesbian?” The answers to this query could be organized around the current identity or life-course identity models. One lesbian might say, “Well, I don’t know because isn’t being a lesbian about being a woman [female-identified]?” The lesbian making this claim does not have to be referring to only cisgender women, as enumerated earlier. Yet, another lesbian in the conversation may reply, “I think that’s fine. Our friend was a lesbian before the transition. What has really changed?” This lesbian is not necessarily making light of a pronoun transition or even a medical transition. Instead, this lesbian could simply be referring to the implications of the life-course identity—the new gender identity does not negate the old one. In this manner, various research programs in anthropology, communications, gender studies, psychology, and sociology may be able to use both the current identity and life-course identity models to characterize the assumptions of everyday conservations about and considerations of lesbian identity.

Finally, the current identity and life-course identity models can be applied to other sexual identities and orientation groups. Of course, this article focuses on lesbian identity as part of a larger issue on advances in lesbian studies, but the insights derived and developed here are not exclusively tied to this group. Using these models for other sexual identities may also allow for more cross-talk between lesbian studies and other disciplines. Thus, it is my hope that the two models of being a lesbian presented here provide a useful theoretical and practical method by which to integrate our most current understanding of gender identity with sexual identity. Furthermore, I hope that this approach, others like it, and responses to it, will help usher in more advances in lesbian studies in the near future.

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CONTRIBUTOR

**Charlotte Chuck Tate** is a social/personality psychologist and Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at San Francisco State University. She is an openly trans woman who is also a soft-butch dyke. She holds a Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Oregon. One of her main research interests focuses on the psychological processes that support the felt-sense of gender identity for cisgender, transgender, and genderqueer populations.