

With the publication of “The Development of Transgender Studies in Sociology” in 2017, Schilt and Lagos provided sociologists with a summary of some of the ways our discipline has approached transgender populations and experiences over the past half century.¹ Beginning with Garfinkel’s work in 1967; (Schilt 2016), they outline how transgender studies in sociology emerged as an attempt by sociologists to use transgender cases to de-construct and problematize sex, gender, medical, and other forms of essentialism from the 1970s to the 1990s (Ekins and King 1999; Kessler 1998; West and Zimmerman 1987). They further mapped how transgender studies in sociology shifted to examinations of transgender people and experiences as sociologically important in their own right from the early 2000s to present (Namaste 2000; Schilt 2010; Vidal-Ortiz 2002). In so doing, they called for greater incorporation of transgender studies throughout sociology as a whole and as a method for expanding the contours of how sociologists methodologically and theoretically approach our work.

This special issue takes this history and these observations as its inspiration. Recognizing the historical erasure of transgender populations and experiences throughout the history of our discipline alongside the increasingly visible, vibrant, and innovative transgender studies within sociology in recent years (Schilt and Lagos 2017), I approached this special issue as an opportunity to expand emerging transgender studies in sociology at present. As I’ve proposed with co-authors elsewhere (see, e.g., Simula, Sumerau, and Miller 2019; Sumerau, Cragun, and Mathers 2016; Sumerau and Mathers 2019), I also sought to facilitate sociological recognition of some ways greater incorporation of transgender studies into sociology can expand the contours, norms, and assumptions of our discipline (see also Pfeffer 2014; Serano 2007; Vidal-Ortiz 2002). Especially as a non-binary trans woman navigating both sociological and interdisciplinary transgender studies over the past decade (Sumerau 2019), I also sought to highlight social locations and experiences less common in published sociological transgender studies to date.

To this end, each of the articles in this special issue builds upon recent insights from emerging transgender studies in sociology. Recent sociological studies, for example, consistently demonstrate that transgender people face significant inequalities in familial (Meadow 2018; Pfeffer 2017; Travers 2018) ; religious (Moon, Tobin, and Sumerau 2019; Sumerau, Mathers, and Cragun 2018; Sumerau, Mathers, and Lampe 2019); occupational (Connell 2010; Schilt

2010; Yavorsky 2016); medical (Johnson 2019; Lampe, Carter, and Sumerau 2019; Shuster 2016); and public (Abelson 2019; Mathers 2017; Rogers 2019) contexts. They also demonstrate difficulties and resistance transgender people experience when seeking to negotiate and present non-cisgender identities in public and private interactions (Darwin 2017; Garrison 2018; Shuster 2017). As I've noted elsewhere (Sumerau and Mathers 2019), the combination of such studies shows how cisheteronormativity, or an ideology that assumes and expects all people to be cisgender by demonizing any possibility of other sex and gender options, shapes the entirety of contemporary U.S. social relations.

At the same time, recent transgender studies in sociology focus on cisgender people's interpretations and responses to increasing transgender visibility in society (Stone 2018). These studies demonstrate how existing legal (Westbrook and Schilt 2014), educational (Nowakowski, Sumerau, and Mathers 2016), medical (Johnson 2015), media (Zamantakis and Sumerau 2019), religious (Sumerau, Cragun, and Mathers 2016), and scientific (Magliozzi, Saperstein, and Westbrook 2016) representations of the social world often create and enforce cisheteronormativity through the devaluation or erasure of non-cisgender possibilities. They also, quantitatively (Cragun and Sumerau 2015) and qualitatively (Mathers, Sumerau, and Cragun 2018), find that cisgender people often define and respond to transgender populations in negative ways while mobilizing the same cisheteronormative messaging of legal, educational, medical, media, religious, and scientific authorities to justify such beliefs (Cragun and Sumerau 2017; Schilt and Westbrook 2009; Sumerau and Cragun 2018). Much like prior studies of privileged racial, sexual, and other privileged populations, such studies reveal how cisgender privileges and norms are created and enforced throughout contemporary U.S. society.

Even as transgender studies have gained increasing attention in sociology and society more broadly, there has, as yet, been less attention to the diversity of transgender populations or the ways intersections of race, class, sex assignment, sexuality, age, and other social locations impact both cisheteronormativity and transgender people's experiences navigating cisgender-based prejudice and discrimination (but see Sumerau and Mathers 2019; Sumerau and Grollman 2018; Vidal-Ortiz 2008; zamantakis 2019). In fact, review pieces have increasingly called for intersectional analyses of transgender populations as well as explorations of transgender experience in relation to a broader array of social institutions, locations, and contexts (see also Collier and Daniel 2019; Nowakowski et al. 2019; Rodriguez 2019; Schilt and Lagos 2017; Vidal-Ortiz 2009; de Vries 2012; Worthen 2013). Although recent years have witnessed much more sociological attention to transgender populations and topics, these studies remind us that many aspects of transgender diversity and experience remain

mostly invisible within the existing theoretical and methodological norms of our field (Westbrook and Saperstein 2015).

It is with all these things in mind that each of the articles in this special issue expands the terrain of transgender studies in sociology. In some cases, this involves examining how race, class, sexuality, and other social locations intersect with transgender people's experiences in contemporary U.S. society (Vidal-Ortiz 2009). In other cases, this focus finds voice in explorations of organizational and institutional contexts, such as the military, that have received little attention in recent sociological studies of transgender populations and experience (Sumerau and Mathers 2019). Although the manner wherein these articles expand existing transgender studies in sociology varies, in each case, the articles in this special issue build upon the ongoing development of sociological transgender studies by directing attention to the operation of cisnormativity and the negotiation of this systemic pattern of inequality by transgender people throughout their lives within contemporary U.S. society.

To this end, this special issue opens with Mael Embser-Herbert's analysis of trans experience in the military in relation to shifts in U.S. federal policy. In "Welcome! Oh wait...": Transgender Military Service in a time of Uncertainty," Embser-Herbert examines how transgender service members navigate uncertainty related to conflicting U.S. government calls for banning or including transgender people in the armed forces. In so doing, Embser-Herbert explores how structural contexts influence the ways transgender people—and transgender service members specifically—"do transgender" (Connell 2010), and possibilities for sociological research into the social construction of the armed services as well as who can and cannot serve in these institutional spheres. This work also asks sociologists to consider the complex interplay of structure and agency in transgender lives (see also Vogler 2019).

Further shedding light on the ways societal factors, structural contexts, and experiences impact the interpersonal lives of transgender people, Jackson Shultz draws on participation and observation in a support group for trans masculine survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence in "Supporting Trans-masculine Survivors of Sexual Assault and Intimate Partner Violence: Reflections from peer support facilitation." Specifically, Shultz examines the ways trans masculine survivors make sense of violence, and methods whereby practitioners may better serve such populations. Further, Shultz discusses some ways violence impacts transgender experience in U.S. society alongside insights that may improve socio-medical attempts to care for, support, and respond to transgender survivors of such violence.

Alongside the aforementioned articles seeking to expand sociological transgender studies into social contexts less often captured in our field, the next two articles in this special issue emphasize intersections of race, class, and

other social locations in transgender experience. In “Multiplicity, Race, and Resilience: Transgender and Non-binary People Building Community,” Amy Stone, Elizabeth Nimmons, Robert Salcido, and Phillip Schnarrs demonstrate how race, class, and immigration status inform the experience of transgender and non-binary people seeking community. Specifically, they highlight the ways transgender and non-binary people’s own multiple locations within systems of race, class, and gender shape the ways they seek, form, and experience different communities and networks within their lives. Further, their work highlights the complexity and impact of social locations upon the processes whereby transgender and non-binary people experience themselves and others. To this end, they draw attention to the ways race, class, gender, and other social locations may shift what community means and how it develops for transgender and non-binary people in the United States at present.

Speaking to similar complexities in transgender identities and experience, Shantel Buggs utilizes the case of an immigrant trans woman of color to examine the racial, sexual, and national contours of romantic relationships, dating, and sexual desirability. Throughout “(Dis)Owning Exotic: Navigating Race, Intimacy, and Trans Identity,” Buggs explores the ways intimacy and desire become complicated within racial, gendered, and national logics within the dating experiences of trans people of color. Providing empirical responses to recent calls within sociological transgender studies for analyses of trans people of color’s romantic and sexual experiences (see zamantakis 2019 for review), Buggs outlines some ways trans people of color may navigate complicated racial and gendered expectations, socially constructed notions of desire and attractiveness, and racial and gendered assumptions as they seek to pursue and form romantic and sexual relationships in the United States. Buggs thus calls for examinations of the myriad ways race and racism may impact transgender people’s sexual and romantic lives.

The intricacies of intersections between race, sexualities, and trans experience find further voice in Mashoula Capous-Desyllas and Victoria Loy’s exploration of the experiences of transgender sex workers. Specifically, Capous-Desyllas and Loy examine how the intersecting race, class, sexual, and gender identities of the trans sex workers they studied shape aspects of their work as well as their efforts to navigate personal, professional, and health-related aspects of their lives in “Navigating Intersecting Identities, Self-Representation, and Relationships: A qualitative study of trans sex workers living and working in Los Angeles, California.” To this end, Capous-Desyllas and Loy demonstrate how trans sex workers embody racial, gendered, and sexual selves to *both* access the potential and benefits of sex work *and* navigate the structural and interpersonal challenges of sex work. In so doing, their analyses encourage further sociological study of the complexities in transgender experience within and

beyond sex work while emphasizing the importance of the body in such endeavors.

The emphasis on embodied transgender experience also finds voice in the final article in this special edition. Specifically, S.E. Frank utilizes online ethnography and interviews with transgender and genderqueer people to examine discourse about menstruation within transgender communities in “Queering Menstruation: Trans and Genderqueer identity and body politics.” In so doing, Frank demonstrates how trans and genderqueer people negotiate menstrual products, segregated restroom facilities, and healthcare norms to make sense of menstruation in relation to their own sex and gender identities, experiences, and needs. In this way, Frank expands upon emerging scholarship on transgender health and embodiment by outlining the ways health experiences normatively coded as only feminine or masculine represent sites of sex, gender, sexual, and health politics where transgender people must, as Johnson (2019) suggests, reject, reframe, and/or reintroduce existing concepts in ways that make sense beyond cisnormative bodily and medical norms, assumptions, and expectations.

Taken together, the articles in this special issue support recent proposals for further developing transgender studies in sociology by expanding existing sociological studies of transgender populations and experiences through analyses of social contexts and locations less often found in existing literature. Responding to calls for greater incorporation of both intersectionality and attention to varied social contexts (see, e.g., Abelson 2019; Schilt and Lagos 2017; Vidal-Ortiz 2009), the articles in this issue raise many important questions for transgender studies in sociology specifically and sociology itself more broadly. They also offer continued empirical support for assertions that cisnormativity operates throughout contemporary U.S. interactional and structural contexts as a systemic pattern in inequality (see also Johnson 2019; Schilt and Westbrook 2009; Sumerau, Cragun, and Mathers 2016). In so doing, these articles represent the next chapter in the continued development of transgender studies in sociology.

At the same time, as evidenced by the range of social issues and topics contained within this special issue, these articles demonstrate that while it may be challenging, it is nonetheless necessary for sociology to expand, theoretically and methodologically, beyond cisgender-only foci (Sumerau and Mathers 2019). Inspired by articles in this special issue as well as other emerging transgender studies within and beyond sociology, I look forward to the continued development of sociological analyses examining the experiences of transgender people, the operation and reach of cisnormativity throughout society, and the ways these phenomena intersect with systems of race, class, sex, gender, sexual and other forms of privilege and oppression in a wide variety of social

contexts. To this end, readers of this special issue may do well to consider both the ways cisnormativity underpins all social phenomena as well as how continued expansion of transgender studies in sociology can both reveal such societal patterns as well as possibilities for social change.

ENDNOTES

*Please direct correspondence to J. E. Sumerau, University of Tampa, 401 West Kennedy Blvd, Tampa, FL 33606; email: jsumerau@ut.edu.

¹This introduction and the special issue are focused specifically on sociology and sociological scholarship in the context of the contemporary United States, and due to space constraints, it can only provide examples of transgender studies in sociology. For examples and reviews of interdisciplinary transgender studies, see, for example, Hines and Sanger (2010), Stryker and Aizura (2013) and Stryker and Whittle (2006). For transgender studies in other national contexts, see, for example, David (2015), Najmabadi (2005), and Pearce (2018). For extensive bibliographies of transgender populations, histories, and studies, see also Stryker (2017), and Sumerau and Mathers (2019).

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J. E. Sumerau