

University Student's Perception of Transgender Identities in Japan and America: Literature Review

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Definitions

- Transgender: an umbrella term for many different identities, those who identify as trans have a gender identity, sex, and/or gender expression that does not line up with the sex they were labeled with at birth
- Cisgender: people whose gender identity matches up with the sex they were assigned at birth
- Agender: individuals who identify as neither gender or an entirely different gender altogether
- Bigender: people who identify as both men and women, neither, or somewhere in between the classical two sexes
- FTM: someone assigned female at birth who transitioned to live as a male
- MTF: someone assigned male at birth who transitioned to live as a female
- Crossdresser: proper term for transvestites; people who enjoy wearing clothes associated with the opposite sex

Japanese Terms

- Folk Categories (民族範疇)- terms native to Japan such as ‘dansho’ and ‘blue boy’ that describe identities outside of the strict gender binary that is enforced by modern, Western medicine
- Dansho (男娼)- cross dressing male prostitute
- Dondengaishi (どんでんがいし)- male prostitutes who could “reverse” between passive, effeminate sex roles and dominant, masculine ones
- Gay Boy (ゲイボーイ)- effeminate, homosexual men who occasionally cross dressed
- Blue Boy (ブルーボーイ)- transgender males, often performers, who have undergone sexual reassignment surgery
- New Half (ニューハーフ)/ Mr. Lady (ミスターレディ)- transgender male entertainers who have undergone varying degrees of sexual reassignment surgery, drawing upon both male and female gender identities

History of Transgenderism

In America

- Native American tribes recognize “two spirited” identities
- Christine Jorgensen first widely known MTF in 1950s
- Stonewall Riots of 1969
- National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights 1979
- Transgender Law Center founded 2002
- National Center for Transgender Equality founded 2003

(Teich, 2012)

In Japan

- First recorded MTF sex change, Nagai Akiko, 1950
- Publications devoted to the discussion of sexuality are common prior to WWII
- “New Half” is popularized in the 1980s, transgender media is popularized again
- Sex change operations legally resume in 1998
- First FTM operation occurred in 1998

(McLelland, 2004)

Difficulties and Setbacks

- Lack of support
 - alienation from family and/or friends
 - fear of public persecution
 - Lack of finances
 - unable to obtain hormones to begin HRT
 - unable to afford sexual reassignment surgery
 - Lack of education
 - some schools may not require a sex education class
 - information regarding transgenderism could be lacking or missing altogether
 - Religion
 - certain religions contain doctrines that are against transgender identities
 - Reparative Therapy
 - a type of psychotherapy designed to keep a transperson as the sex and gender they were assigned at birth
- (Teich, 2012)

Laws

In California

- Applicants for documentary gender change must have letter signed by a physician stating you have undergone “clinically appropriate treatment”
- Name changes must be published in local newspaper for four weeks

[transgenderlawcenter.org](https://www.transgenderlawcenter.org)

In Japan

- In 2003, National Diet of Japan votes to enable a law that allows transpeople to change their legal sex on family registry
- Applicants must be unmarried and childless

(Smela, 2014)

Medical Coverage

In California

- Medi-Cal covers some transition related care
- Hormone replacement therapy and certain forms of gender reassignment surgery are covered benefits

[transgenderlawcenter.org](https://www.transgenderlawcenter.org)

In Japan

- Transitioning is not covered by Japan's National Health Insurance
- Only mental health counseling is covered

(Smela, 2014)

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