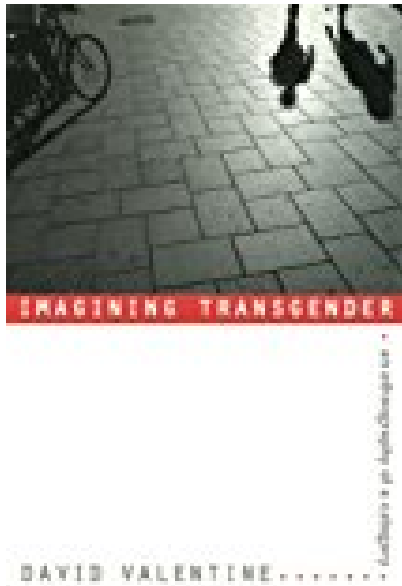


Imagining Transgender An Ethnography of a Category



BOOK DETAILS

- Author : David Valentine
- Pages : 320 Pages
- Publisher : Duke University Press
- Language : English
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BOOK SYNOPSIS

Imagining Transgender is an ethnographic examination of the emergence and institutionalization of "transgender" as a category of collective identity. Embraced by activists in the early 1990s as a means to advocate for rights and services specific to the needs of gender variant people, the category quickly gained momentum in public health, social service, scholarly, and legislative contexts. Working as a safe-sex activist in Manhattan during the late 1990s, David Valentine conducted ethnographic research, mostly among male-to-female transgender-identified people, across sites including drag balls, support groups, meetings of a cross-dresser organization, clinics, bars, and clubs. He found that while young fem queens were labeled "transgender" by social service agencies and activists, many of them either did not know the term or were fiercely resistant to its use. They self-identified as gay. Valentine analyzes the reasons for and potential consequences of this difference - between how some of the most vulnerable and marginalized gender variant people conceive of themselves and how they are perceived by service providers and others. Valentine argues that "transgender" was so rapidly adopted because it clarifies a model of gender and sexuality that has been gaining traction since the 1970s: a paradigm in which gender and sexuality are distinct arenas of human experience. Prevalent within feminism, psychiatry, and mainstream gay and lesbian politics, this distinction and categories based on it unintentionally exclude some gender variant people - particularly poor persons of color - for whom gender and sexuality are deeply connected experiences. Valentine does not oppose the rise of "transgender" as a category; he appreciates the genuine legal, medical, and social advances it has facilitated. Instead, he advocates a broad, inclusive vision of social justice and an attentiveness to the politics of language.

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