

Three Card Monte, Bailey Style

By Marti Abernathey

Published September 6, 2007 | Updated March 31, 2026

https://www.transadvocate.com/three-card-monte-bailey-style_n_169.htm

Abstract

I'm getting rather tired of posting about this, but J. Michael Bailey is at it again. He posted "Transsexual Smokescreen: Ignoring Science In "The Man Who Would Be Queen" at Scientific Blogging.com. The post is a microcosm of the disingenuous nature of this man. He's said in multiple forums: (from the KQED Forum interview) I [...]

Article

I'm getting rather tired of posting about this, but J. Michael Bailey is at it again. He posted "Transsexual Smokescreen: Ignoring Science In "The Man Who Would Be Queen" at Scientific Blogging.com.

[Figure] 1mont1.gif

The post is a microcosm of the disingenuous nature of this man. He's said in multiple forums:

(from the KQED Forum interview)

I wrote what is commonly understood to be a popular science book, in which I reviewed serious academic work by myself and other scholars."

[Figure] 2mont.gif

So the book is science?

[Figure] 3mont.gif

[Figure] 3mont.gif

He later said:

"All I did was notice some things. Is this controversial that gay men are more likely than straight men to be florists? That's what I said. I didn't say they were suited, although--you know, I don't know what that means. And I also said that in my observations, that Latina women are more likely than --or I'm sorry, Latina transgendered people--are more likely than white transgender people to be a certain type of transsexual, that is the other type that we haven't talked about yet. I just talked about what I noticed with my eyes. I didn't talk about them having genes. "

[Figure] auto.gif

So...it's NOT science?

(from the above mentioned blog article)

"If attention is focused on an endless stream of (false and outrageous) allegations made against me as a person, then no one will pay attention to the scientific ideas, presented in my book, that many of my critics wish to keep hidden."

See the trick? He blames others for "attacking him" and his ideas, yet what he tend to focus on the personal, and not the work itself.

In the comments it gets worse:

"Ben Barres lies again. Ben-All of your deceptive claims about Bailey's ideas and statements make one thing perfectly clear to me."

"Ben Barres is a self-righteous liar."

"This man wants to be taken seriously? To make Michael Bailey look bad took a coordinated team of scheming liars working for months. To make Ben Barres look bad, all you have to do is tell the truth."

"Please, Ben! That was 'inadvertent'? That is possible if you have Alzheimer disease or some other kind of brain disease or mental disorder, but it is hard to believe given your position as Professor at Stanford University."

"you were disingenuous because you merely introduced yourself by name and job title and without telling the listeners that you had been harassing Bailey for years."

- Michael B. Miller, PhD, MS, MPE University of Minnesota

What was Ben's crime? What was this harassment of Bailey? Writing the following words to the Northwestern Daily and forwarding them on to the Northwestern administration :

"To the Editor of the Daily Northwestern:

Dear Sir,

In Jennifer Leopoldt's column of July 31, she reports on the continued controversy about Northwestern Prof. J. Michael Bailey's new book, 'The Man Who Would Be Queen', published by the National Academies Press.

Although Ms. Leopoldt focuses on the alleged ethical infractions in the conduct of this research and the 'junk science' quality of Prof. Bailey's research, in addition many homosexuals and transsexuals-myself included-perceive Prof. Bailey's writing to be intolerant, hate speech.

The Professor is eager to convict a highly stigmatized minority group of inborn or genetic inferiority in the name of hard science and free speech. Prof. Bailey's 'science' wrongly promotes hateful stereotypes about LGBT folks. On the basis of a limited number of highly selected, anecdotal accounts, he writes that homosexuals have a large degree of femininity, and reports that transsexuals are primarily low socioeconomic, sex-focused losers, prostitutes, fetishists, and liars. Hate speech involves portraying a group of people as less than human. It contributes to a climate where homosexuals and transsexuals are abandoned by their families, forsaken by their coworkers, abused, shunned, and beaten. In his defense Bailey states that 'he will not be a slave to sensitivity' and 'is more concerned with science and truth than the feelings of groups'.

I wonder how the chairman of a psychology department can be so insensitive, and why a respectable university is willing to harbor such dubious research and promote such egregious bigotry?

George Bernard Shaw once said that the worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them

but to be indifferent to them; that's the essence of inhumanity. LGBT folks need the support of the Northwestern community. I hope you will let Prof. Bailey know that his brand of junk science and intolerance is not welcome on your campus."

To Professor Miller THIS IS HARASSMENT? Bailey and Miller tag team personal attacks and then cry Bailey's been attacked?

Bailey's last comment is the clincher, in my book.

"Ben Barres is rather persistent in his obsessive haranguing regarding my views on transsexual prostitution. I do in fact write the following sentence in my book: "In this sense, homosexual transsexuals might be especially well suited to prostitution." (page 185). The paragraph that this comes from is pretty clear, and I stand by it. I will explain my reasoning at some point IF someone besides Barres cares. But I won't do it now, because I prefer that people focus on the important material in my blog and not on Barres' wild, varied, and inaccurate accusations."

It started with Andrea James, then Lynn Conway, Joan Roughgarden, and now Ben Barres. Anyone that questions Bailey or his book is considered the enemy and not worthy of debating.

This kind of attack on the critics of Bailey is similar to the theory of autogynophilia itself. As Élise Hendrick so aptly pointed out on a previous post:

"Ultimately, Bailey's account (and the underlying BBL model) is abysmal from a scientific standpoint. It does not meet one of the basic - and most easily met - requirements for a scientific theory, falsifiability, because it pervasively paints trans women as liars who will misrepresent themselves to avoid being placed in one of the two categories."

You either believe what Bailey has written, or you're a liar.

Suggested citation

Marti Abernathey. "Three Card Monte, Bailey Style." TransAdvocate, September 6, 2007.
https://www.transadvocate.com/three-card-monte-bailey-style_n_169.htm