

Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review

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The Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review ('the Review') is a peer-reviewed publication that is available online through the Australian Psychological Society. Its remit is to encourage research that challenges the stereotypes and assumptions of pathology that have often inhaled to research on lesbians, gay men, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ) people. The aim of the Review is thus to facilitate discussion over the direction of LGBTQ psychology both within Australia and abroad, and to provide a forum within which academics, practitioners and lay people may publish.

The Review is open to a broad range of material, and especially welcomes research, commentary and reviews that critically evaluate the status quo in regards to LGBTQ issues. The Review also seeks papers that redress the imbalance that has thus far focused on the issues facing white lesbians and gay men, to the exclusion of other sexual, gender and racial groups. The Review encourages the elaboration of an expansive approach to psychological research on people of a diverse range of sexual and non-gender normative groups, and publishes articles from across a range of disciplines including (but not limited to) psychology, social work, cultural studies, sociology, gender studies, politics, history and legal studies.

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EDITORIAL: TRANS BODIES, LIVES AND REPRESENTATIONS

DAMIEN W. RIGGS

I am very pleased to present this latest issue of the *GLIP Review* featuring papers that speak about the lives of trans¹ people. This is a topic that the gay and lesbian issues and psychology interest group has been increasingly focusing on, in recognition of the vital importance of moving beyond a sole focus upon the lives of cisgendered² people. As such, it was heartening to receive such a strong and varied response to the call for papers, and that the issue as a whole represents something of the true diversity of trans communities as it is captured via the perspectives of (primarily cisgendered) researchers.

In the paper that opens the issue Patricia Gherovici takes to task psychoanalytic writings since Freud that have appropriated his work to the disservice of trans people. Gherovici's writing is a timely reminder of the fact that psy-

choanalysis actually has a long history of being supportive of trans people, and that the work of both Freud and Lacan, as reformulated by Gherovici, holds considerable potential for developing a non-normative understanding of gender, particularly as it pertains to the lives of trans people.

In the second paper, Joanna McIntyre focuses upon media representations of Australian transsexual celebrity Carlotta. In so doing, McIntyre highlights both the normative functions of the media - which have consistently provided a very limiting framework through which viewers can understand Carlotta's life (even if the framework overall may be characterised as positive) - and the transgressive and transformative potential that Carlotta's own narratives provide.

Andrew McLean then shifts the register in his paper from representation to narrative, in his exploration of interviews undertaken with trans people in Victoria, and their views on the utility of a gender service aimed at meeting the needs of trans people. McLean's participants speak both of the problems with current services, as well as the specific issues that would require attention if a new service was developed. McLean's findings emphasise the need for this service and signify the importance of supporting trans people to take the lead in determining what such a service would look like.

The next paper by Sonja Vivienne also reports on the experiences of trans people, this time in terms of three South Australian transpeople who have made a digital story telling their of experiences. Similar to the paper by McIntyre, Vivienne speaks of both the limiting and transformative potential of media forms, but em-

1 I use the catch-all term 'trans' here with considerable caution. As is noted throughout this issue, non-gender normative people themselves (i.e., those people whose gender identity does not 'match' their natively assigned sex - a match that is demanded under the sex/gender regime of heteropatriarchy) employ a range of descriptors when referring to their identities and embodiments. A catch-all term, then, can never adequately refer to a category constituted by people whose standpoints are often incommensurate. With this in mind, I use the term 'trans' by way of introducing this journal issue that, in its breadth of coverage, signifies the impossibility of relying upon catch-all terms.

2 'Cisgendered' as a term is slowly growing in useage, and refers to gender normative people - those individuals whose gender identity to at least a certain degree 'matches' what is expected of their natively assigned sex. The term is useful as it places transgender and cisgender people within a shared context in which gender norms shape the lives of *all* people, not just trans people.

phasises the achievements that are possible via new media such as digital stories. The experiences shared by Vivienne's participants highlight the complexities of narrating the trans self, particularly given the risks associated with speaking publically as a trans person.

Shifting the register entirely, the next paper by Jessica Choplin examines the evidence for a biological account of gender, an account that recently has risen to prominence in Australian legal cases in relation to trans people (e.g., Wallbank, 2004). Choplin's paper sensitively and carefully negotiates the complexities of biological accounts, and in so doing demonstrates the potentials and pitfalls of an exclusive reliance upon, or refusal of the role of, biology in gender identifications.

In the final paper for the issue Gabrielle Hitch, Heidi Yates and Jennie Yates provide an excellent working example of what McLean's participants called for, namely a service specifically for trans people. Reporting on the development of *A Gender Agenda*, a service in Canberra that is tailored to the needs of trans people, Hitch, Yates and Yates highlight the vital importance of trans involvement in such services, as well as the role of trans allies in supporting their functioning.

As a whole, then, this issue highlights the immense breadth of coverage of trans people, including the multiple and often contradictory ways in which trans people are represented, the diverse ways in which trans people identify and speak for themselves, and the complex issues of embodiment that sit alongside trans people's negotiation of gender norms. Papers such as those included in this issue highlight the ongoing need for examinations of the regulatory effects of gender norms, but also the pressing need to recognise the ways in which trans people themselves narrate gender and the services that are required to support their lives. Importantly, and as a significant gap in this issue itself, it is vital that trans people are supported to undertake this narrating themselves in academic and other public

fora. Otherwise, the potential remains that the predominant representations of trans people that occur will be those written by cisgendered people. Whilst cisgendered people have an important role to play in challenging transphobia and gender norms more broadly, there will always be a shortfall if opportunities are not created for trans people to speak for themselves.

I am pleased that Australian and international researchers and writers responded so well to this issue, and look forward to continuing these conversations in other venues as the interest group progresses our goals of developing a more thorough and accurate representation of trans people within the Australian Psychological Society.

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PSYCHOANALYSIS NEEDS A SEX CHANGE

PATRICIA GHEROVICI

Abstract

This paper discusses the crucial part played by psychoanalysis in the history of transsexualism and assesses the controversial yet central role of sex-change theory for psychoanalysis. Indeed, the pioneer sexologist and activist Magnus Hirschfeld was among the founders of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Society. Hirschfeld was appreciated by Freud, although rejected by Jung. It is time both to historicise and theorise the loaded connection between sexologists and psychoanalysts. The author argues for the depathologisation of transgenderism. Lacan's theory of the *sinthome* offers an innovative framework for rethinking sexual difference. With the help of this theory, one can challenge the pathological approach too often adopted by psychoanalysis. This calls for a more fruitful dialogue between Lacanian psychoanalysis and the clinic of transsexualism.

Introduction

Psychoanalysis has a sex problem in more than one sense. Transgender activists and scholars have been wary of psychoanalysis, with good reasons. In both subtle and brutal ways, psychoanalysis has a history of coercive hetero-normatization and pathologization of non-normative sexualities and genders. Such a homophobic and transphobic history, however, is based on a selective reinterpretation of the Freudian texts. It is of course true that many normative theories about sex and gender claim to derive from Freudian psychoanalysis and classify and adjudicate individuals according to sexual behavior. Freud's Oedipal Complex, it is said, starts with the recognition of anatomical sexual differences, before pass-

ing through 'castration complexes' and 'penis envy', and culminating in the development of a mature, 'normal' genital choice. In this reading, proper gender identification produces masculinity for males, femininity for women, and creates an adapted heterosexual desire that is purported to result in satisfying sexual lives.

In fact, nothing could be farther from what Freud stated theoretically or observed in his practice. One can even say that the previous claims are all reductive distortions. Freud never condemned homosexuality and had a very tolerant attitude facing it. Furthermore, as Dean & Lane (2001) have shown, the founder of psychoanalysis never considered same sex desire pathological. Freud was not voicing liberal tolerance but rather making a radical move, because for the founder of psychoanalysis homosexuality was a sexual orientation as any other, and as contingent as heterosexuality. Freud observed "that all human beings are capable of making a homosexual object-choice and have in fact made one in their unconscious" (footnote added in 1915; Freud 1905, p. 145n). For Freud, human sexuality was essentially polymorphous and perverse because the erotic drive does not follow any 'natural' course. Contrary to the standard view of traditional psychoanalysis, Freud 'queered' human sexuality (Dean & Lane, 2001) when he proposed a sexuality that operates in a mysterious, capricious way, *contra natura*, veering off the reproductive aims. Freud 'perverted' sexuality when he separated the drive from any instinctual function and described its object as 'indifferent', that is, not determined by gender. As noted by Lacan (1981), Freud "posit[s] sexuality as essentially polymorphous, aberrant" (p. 176.) What irri-

tated people most in Freud's early sexual theories was not the scandalous claim that children were sexual beings, but rather his non-essentialism in the definition of sexuality. Freud's later notion of the drive is also non-gender specific; this was the real scandal that would clash with Victorian sensibility and it was thereafter repressed by post-Freudians.

How then could psychoanalysts after Freud talk about 'normal' sexuality assuming it means heterosexual genital function when Freud acknowledged that the mutual interest of men and women is "a problem that needs elucidating and is not a self-evident fact [...]" (footnote added in 1915; Freud 1905, p. 146n)? As Dean & Lane (2001) note, one of the greatest paradoxes of the history of psychoanalysis is that its institutions have developed normalizing moralistic and discriminatory practices that are antithetical to psychoanalytic concepts. This is sad because Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis could make a valuable contribution to the field. Their theories study sex, sexual identity and sexuality, articulating ideas about the complex relationship of the body to the psyche, the precariousness of gender, the instability of the opposition of male and female, the construction of sexual identity, the challenges of making a sexual choice, and the uncertainties of sexuality, that is, the conundrum of sexual difference. Such contributions could have important implications for transgender theorists and activists, transgender people, and professionals in the trans field by enriching current debates about gender and sexuality. Dean (2000) opened the ground for a fruitful engagement with the theoretical contribution of psychoanalysis, a development that has been obfuscated by the psychoanalytic institutions: "the institutional history of psychoanalysis, particularly in the United States, has forestalled any such alliance. As I've already suggested [...] such an alliance might require both parties to renounce some of their most cherished shibboleths" (p. 226).

To further contextualise our discussion, let us take a rapid look at some canonical definitions

of transsexualism, which are as revealing as they are exemplary. This brief history of the evolution of the nomenclature will be helpful to see how the terminology has been linked to the domain of the pathological. It also shows the central and complex role psychoanalysis has played in the history of transsexualism.

Psychoanalytic Beginnings

The philosopher Michel Foucault has made us aware that sexuality has a history, and that psychoanalysis has played a very important role in it as a theory of the intersections of law and desire. His *History of Sexuality* (Foucault, 1990) states that a history of the deployment of sexuality since the classical age "can serve as an archeology of psychoanalysis" (p. 130.) For Dean & Lane (2001) this characterisation, which makes it look "as if the book were really all about psychoanalysis" (p. 8), also highlights the fact that today we cannot think of sexuality without using psychoanalytic categories. In the case of transsexuality, then, the interrelatedness with psychoanalysis is not just referential, as we will see.

The term *transvestite* was coined by Magnus Hirschfeld in 1910 to describe those who occasionally wear clothes of the 'other' sex. Hirschfeld, a passionate sex reformer and an activist, struggled for the legalisation of homosexuality. He was also an occasional cross-dresser himself and a central political figure in Germany's incipient field of sexology. Hirschfeld developed a theory of sexual intermediaries, contending that the existence of two opposite sexes was an oversimplification and that one could observe many varieties of intermediates. A pioneer advocate for transgender people, he argued that transgenderism could not be reduced either to homosexuality, fetishism, or to any form of pathology. Hirschfeld's classic book *Die Transvestiten. Eine Untersuchung über den erotischen Verkleidungstrieb mit umfangreichem casuistischen und historischen material* (1910) was translated only eighty years later, in 1991, as *Transvestites: The Erotic Drive to Cross-Dress*. Notably, its title contains a word that belongs to basic psychoanalytic

nomenclature: *drive*. The choice of term reveals an engagement with psychoanalysis, even if the sense is different. In fact, Hirschfeld played a main role in the early days of psychoanalysis, publishing a number of analytic papers. Freud's own article 'Hysterical Fantasies and Their Relation to Bisexuality' (1908) appeared in the very first issue of Hirschfeld's new journal exclusively devoted to sexology as a science, *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft*. Subsequent issues published original work by Alfred Adler, Karl Abraham, and Wilhelm Stekel (Bullough, 1994, p. 68.)

Furthermore, Hirschfeld co-founded with Karl Abraham the Berlin Psychoanalytic Society in August, 1908 (Gay, 1998). In 1911, at the third international Weimar congress of psychoanalysts, Freud greeted Hirschfeld as an honored guest and a "Berlin authority on homosexuality" (Bullough, 1994, p. 64). Yet even with this recognition, Hirschfeld left the Berlin Psychoanalytic Society shortly after the Weimar meeting, despite Abraham's "attempts at persuasion" to stay (Falzeder, 2002, p. 139). Hirschfeld's departure had been precipitated by "an external cause" (p. 139) also described by Abraham as "a question of resistances" (p. 140). It seemed that Jung had objected to his homosexuality (p. 141.) Unlike Jung, Freud did not seem to mind Hirschfeld's political activism. Freud saw Hirschfeld's advocacy of homosexual rights as a positive development and from the beginning he had encouraged Abraham to work with him (Gay, 1998, p. 181.) After losing Hirschfeld, the Berlin Psychoanalytic Society decided, at Abraham's instigation, to work collectively on Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. The irony is that the *Three Essays* owe a lot to Hirschfeld's research (Freud, 1905, p. 1, credits in the opening page the "well known writings" of Hirschfeld along with other eight authors ranging from Krafft-Ebing to Havelock Ellis, all published in *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, a journal under Hirschfeld's direction). Hirschfeld's empirical data revealed that transvestites included both men and women who were homosexual or bisexual as well as, contrary to popular belief, heterosexual. He ob-

served that some transvestites were asexual (*automonosexual* was his term); the asexual group eventually led to the 1950s classification of *transsexual*. Hirschfeld broke new ground proposing that transvestism was a separate sexual variation different from fetishism and homosexuality. Let us note, however, that as a clinician and researcher, Hirschfeld never wavered in his belief in a biological (endocrinological) basis for sexuality and thus was not opposed to Eugen Steinach's experimental testicular transplants to 'treat' male homosexuality.

Moving on from Hirschfeld, perhaps the most influential post Freudian psychoanalytic theory of transgenderism was put forward by Wilhelm Stekel (1930). He coined the term *paraphilia* for unusual sexual behaviors. Stekel's book *Sexual Aberrations: The Phenomenon of Fetishism in Relation to Sex* (1930) makes explicit in its title the wish to systematise the structure of all sexual deviations as a single entity under the model of fetishism. The book, however, included a chapter on transvestism written by Emil Gutheil. For Gutheil (1930), even though transvestism was not fetishism, it was a compulsion to create a phallic female: the attraction for the genitals of the 'other' sex was transferred onto the garments. Stekel is a good example of how a former devoted disciple modified Freudian theories and popularised them, and in so doing erased all nuances by bringing them closer to the dominating medical model. As Bullough (1994) puts it, "Freud cannot be blamed for the excesses of his disciples" (p. 90). During the first half of the twentieth century, in order to solve the problem of the mind, most post-Freudians inevitably relied upon the notion of the traumatic effect of childhood experiences. Castration anxiety accounted for a psychobiological etiology of transgenderism often confused with homosexuality (Bullough, 2000). Cross-dressing continued to be understood according to Gutheil's theories as an attempt to overcome the fear of castration, creating a phallic woman and identifying with her (Lukianowicz, 1959).

Psychoanalytic vs Biological Accounts

The word *Transsexualis* was first used in the popular journal *Sexology* in a 1949 article by David Cauldwell titled, in Latin, *Psychopathia Transsexualis*. Despite the spelling with only one 's', the term echoed Krafft-Ebing's book *Psychopathia Sexualis* ([1886] 1965), the monumental catalog of the 'aberrations' of sexual behavior (when it deviates from the sacred aim of procreation.) Cauldwell, not so much a scientific writer but rather a hyperbolic populariser and sex educator, believed in a biological etiology for transsexualism, which he considered pathological. He just added the biological component to the old psychoanalytic formula of childhood trauma: when a genetic predisposition was combined with a dysfunctional childhood, the result was the immaturity that produced a "pathologic-morbid desire to be a full member of the opposite sex" (Cauldwell, 2006, p. 40.) It is often noted that in 1923, Hirschfeld had used the German term *seelischer Transsexualismus* (psychological transsexualism), attributing transgenderism to the psyche. By 1949, Cauldwell described 'transsexuals' as "individuals who wish to be members of the sex to which they do not properly belong" (p. 275). Cauldwell also coined the term *sex transmutationist* (1947; 1951, pp. 12–16) and used both the spellings *trans-sexual* and *transsexual* interchangeably (1950).

Cauldwell's ([1949] 2006) initial position was at best problematic since he described transsexualism as a hereditary condition of individuals who are "mentally unhealthy" (p. 275). By 1950, Cauldwell had obviously turned a corner: "Are transsexuals crazy? One may as well ask whether heterosexuals are crazy. Some are and some are not. Some transsexuals are brilliant. Now and then one may be a borderline genius. Transsexuals are eccentric. Some of them are not of sound mind, but this is true of heterosexuals" (p. 4). But still he strongly advised against 'sex change surgery' on account of ethical and practical reasons, claiming that surgery could not make a 'real'

member of the opposite sex (Cauldwell, 1955.) Cauldwell is usually mistakenly credited as the first person to use the word transsexual but rarely quoted in the academic literature (except for Meyerowitz, 1998, p. 168-170, and Stryker & Whittle, 2006, p. 40-52, who nevertheless caution the reader against his excessive pathologizing, p. 40; see also Elkins & King 2001b).

Cauldwell's role as populist column writer of tabloid sex advice warrants a comment. As Stryker & Whittle (2006) observe, Cauldwell's quasi scientific work is worthy of note because it reflects the earlier positions of Krafft-Ebing, Hirschfeld, and Havelock Ellis while it anticipates the contributions of future transsexualism experts like Robert Stoller, Richard Green, John Money and Leslie Lothstein (p. 40). Most of Cauldwell's popular booklets were published by E. Hadelman-Julius, an American publisher who reached a substantial readership with a sure formula—"sex, self improvement, and attacks on respectability and religion" (Elkins & King, 2001a). Cauldwell's position as a populariser serves also as a cultural barometer—being a medical practitioner, he developed a substantial second career explaining transgenderism to the masses, a prurient matter at the time, but also a subject which according to Hadelman-Julius' winning recipe was seen as transgressing but also as self improvement. Cauldwell's post second world war switch to a somewhat more liberal attitude towards sexual matters, then, perhaps reflected a new climate of more honest public discussion over sex (as exemplified by the Kinsey studies).

The word *transsexualism* then became a popular term in the 1950s thanks to sex-change pioneer Harry Benjamin. Benjamin was a Berlin endocrinologist who relocated to New York in 1915. He had worked closely with Eugen Steinach, the gland specialist innovator who performed the first sex change surgeries by gland transplants in the late 19th century and isolated the 'sex hormones', and knew Hirschfeld, the sex reformer, from before the war. Benjamin relied on a biological concept to

account for the etiology of transsexualism, despite the fact that he could not find any bodily confirmation for this claim. Notably, Benjamin advocated against psychotherapy. Benjamin borrowed Ulrich's formula of a female soul trapped in a male body, all the while looking for answers in the body, not in the soul: "the soma, that is to say the genetic and/or endocrine constitution ... has to provide a 'fertile soil' in which the 'basic conflict' must grow in order to become the respective neurosis" (Hausman, 1995, p. 122). Despite the use of the term *neurosis*, Benjamin (1954) discouraged any psychoanalytic or psychotherapeutic intervention, seeing these as "a waste of time" (p. 228). Benjamin argued that psychoanalysis did not lessen the wish to change sex but rather forced patients to hide this desire and therefore live miserable lives. As his close collaborator Hamburger (1953) put it, "it is impossible to make a genuine transvestite [transsexual] wish to have his mentality altered by means of psychotherapy" (pp. 392–393).

Following the significant media impact of Christine Jorgensen's 1952 successful sex change, Benjamin chose to share publically his opposition to the psychoanalytic treatment of transsexuality at a symposium of the US Association for the Advancement of Psychotherapy, a professional organisation created for the development of psychotherapy in the medical field. This was a symposium that Benjamin himself organised and was attended by an audience mostly composed of professionals in the "psy" field (Meyerowitz, 2002/2004, pp.106-107). The landmark 1954 paper that came from this, published in the *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, became one of transgender studies' touchstones, as it spelled out the distinction Benjamin was establishing between the transvestite (psycho-somatic) and transsexual (somato-psychic) phenomena. Physical bisexuality was the point of departure. Benjamin (1954) wrote: "Organically, sex is always a mixture of male and female components", but he suggested that mild cases (transvestism) could be "principally psychogenic", while for true "transsexualists" "a still

greater degree of constitutional femininity, perhaps due to a chromosomal sex disturbance, must be assumed" (pp. 228–229).

Following British sexologist Havelock Ellis' contentions that *travestism* (which Ellis renamed *eonism*) was not an erotic impulse but an expression of the real self, Benjamin proposed a continuum of transgender behavior with cross-dressing on one end, and transsexualism on the other. For transsexuals, Benjamin (1954) reiterated that therapy was of no use. He was also not naïve, admitting that for a male-to-female transsexual surgery "may not always solve [the transsexual's] problem. His feminization craving may never end" (pp. 228–229). He also warned against performing sex reassignment on patients with psychosis or who were in danger of suicide or self-mutilation. The conclusion to this paper is quite revealing for its contradictions: "Transsexualism is inaccessible by any curative methods at present at our disposal. Nevertheless the condition requires psychiatric help, reinforced by hormone treatment and, in some cases, by surgery. In this way a reasonably contented existence may be worked out for these patients" (Benjamin, 2006, p. 52)

According to Benjamin, then, transsexualism is both "inaccessible by any curative methods" and yet requires specific treatments like psychiatry combined with hormone treatment and surgery. Did this mean that although incurable it was still considered a pathology? In any case, Benjamin considered that if psychoanalysis and psychotherapy could not cure transsexualism, they could not explain it either. Meyerowitz (2002/2004) observes that Benjamin emphasised the biological aspect of transsexualism, which explained for him the failure of psychotherapy in treating the condition and justified a surgical intervention. Benjamin maintained a very negative bias against psychotherapy and psychoanalysis but created a protocol for sex change in which psychiatrists were given the power to determine who the potential candidates for surgery were; psychiatrists had the final word on the treatment decision but no say on the diagnosis. As

Hausman (1995) observed, "this illustrates the ambivalent relation between the mental health specialist and the clinical endocrinologist in the treatment of transsexualism" (p. 124). The fact that Benjamin's choice of treatments affected and transformed the body (surgery, hormones), foreclosed a consideration of what may not be fully anatomical, as if the seeming efficacy of the interventions on the organism would preclude any consideration of other issues involved in the transition of sex.

Another collaborator of Benjamin, the American psychoanalyst Robert Stoller, helped establish a pioneer sex change clinic in the early 1960s, the Gender Identity Center at UCLA, which developed an influential notion derived from John Money's 1950s new vocabulary of gender by introducing the idea of an 'environmental' psychological sex separated from the biological sex, and which took pains to offer a distinct transsexual psychic structure. (Meyerowitz, 2002/2004, p. 114, Millot, 1990, pp. 49-59). Money in fact further developed Kinsey's explanation of sexual behavior as the result of "learning and conditioning" (Kinsey et al., 1953, pp. 643-644) and proposed also a behaviorist model for what he called 'gender roles' (Money, 1955). Stoller further refined the notion of a separation of sex and gender with the idea of 'core gender identity', which corresponded to the internalised idea of the individual's belonging to a particular sex. Stoller initially supported the idea of a biological force, a drive determining gender. 'Gender identity' stressed more the subjective experience of gender and separated gender from sexuality. Based on the conviction of a distinct identity and the importance of the penis, Stoller systematised a distinction between the transsexual, the transvestite (cross-dresser), and the effeminate homosexual. He noted that in contrast with transsexuals, transvestites and male homosexuals identify as men; transsexuals abhor the penis, which for transvestites and homosexuals is an insignia of maleness and a source of pleasure (Stoller, 1975, pp. 142—181).

Who's To Blame?

By 1968, Stoller, always a believer in bisexuality, had completely moved away from a biological model to a psychological one and emphasised the psychological forces that resulted in transsexualism. Stoller was mainly interested in male transsexualism, which he considered a "natural experiment" (Stoller, 1975, p. 281) to measure variables in the development of masculinity and femininity, but also a pathology of psychosexual development caused in early childhood by "excess merging with the mother" (p. 296). He recommended "'sex-change' surgery" for patients properly diagnosed as transsexual, requesting from his colleagues that "everything should be done to assist them in passing" (p. 279) and was quite humble about the goals of his treatment. Stoller opposed any attempt at "converting" male transsexuals into masculine, heterosexual or even less feminine people, because "the treatment of the adult transsexual is palliative; we must bear this and not, in our frustration, impatience, or commitment to theoretical positions, fail even to provide that much comfort to our patients" (p. 280).

Yet despite his efforts at contributing to psychoanalytic theories of sexuality, and perhaps because of the fact that he believed that transsexualism was a petri-dish for human sexuality - a "key test, in fact the paradigm for Freud's theories of sexual development in both males and females" (Stoller, 1975, p. 297) - Stoller developed a simplistic explanation with psychological overtones that he summed up in the formula: "dominant mother, father pushed to the side, infant cuddly and lovable, mother-son too close" (p. 193). In cases of male-to-female transsexualism, the key was an essential femininity passed from mother to son: "What his mother feels is femininity; what he feels is femininity" (p. 204). The model was one of mimetic imitation: The son copied the mother; the mother's excessive closeness to the son was considered to be a negative influence. Stoller also talked about a bisexual mother, who might have had a period of extreme tomboyishness, and of a distant

father. These were factors contributing to the creation of transsexuality, especially male to female. For female-to-male transsexuals, Stoller's speculations can be rendered as "too much father and too little mother masculinizes girls" (pp. 223–244). Importantly, Stoller stated explicitly that female transsexualism is not the same condition as male transsexualism, stressing that female and male transsexualism are clinically, dynamically, and etiologically different (pp. 223–244.)

After Stoller, many psychoanalytic theories of gender identity development blamed gender trouble on identifications with the 'wrong' parent (Coates, Friedman & Wolfe, 1991; Stoller, 1975; Lothstein, 1992.) And most psychoanalysts proceeded to view transgender expressions as an indicator of underlying pathology — be it a precursor of transvestism or homosexuality (Limentani, 1979), borderline disorders (Green, 1986), narcissistic disorders (Oppenheimer, 1991, Chiland, 2003) or psychosis (Socarides, 1970, 1978–1979). Understandably, feeling relegated to the realm of pathology and abjection, transpeople rejected psychoanalysis. Ethel Spector Person & Lionel Oversey ([1974] 1999) have discussed in their now classic text the reasons behind the unwillingness of transsexual patients to participate in treatment. They concluded that it was in great part created by the judgmental stance of those conducting the treatment. Nearly all of the patients they interviewed described their experiences of therapy in terms ranging "from useless to catastrophic" (p. 143). In most cases, the intense negativism resulted from the clinician's propensity to judge the patients as psychotic and to dismiss the transsexual wish as delusional.

Transsexualism and Castration

Taking up recent theorisations in the transgender and transsexual fields, Gayle Salamon (2010) has eloquently called for a reappraisal of psychoanalytic discourse, putting forward a sophisticated approximation of psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and transgender studies in her book *Assuming a Body: Transgender and*

the Rhetorics of Materiality. Similarly, Shanna Carlson (2010) has proposed a collaboration between discourses, observing that Lacanian psychoanalysis can offer "a richly malleable framework for thinking through matters of sex, subjectivity, desire, and sexuality" and that "integration of the two domains can only ever be a scene of fruitful contestation" (p. 69). I too have argued elsewhere (Gherovici, 2010; 2011) for a productive confrontation between psychoanalysis and transgender discourses and have shown how transgender people are actually changing the clinical praxis, advancing new ideas for the clinic that can be expanded to social and intellectual contexts.

One wishes that psychoanalysts would have by now abandoned the moralistic and stigmatising attitudes of previous generations of clinicians who, puzzled by the transgender phenomenon, could barely disguise in their disparaging comments their fear and contempt. Candidly, Leslie Lothstein (1977) wrote a paper advising analysts on how to manage the negative counter-transference he anticipated they would experience with transsexual patients. This situation seems to confirm Lacan's (2006) observation that "there is no other resistance to psychoanalysis than the analyst's" (p. 497). Nonetheless, several psychoanalysts have worked with transgender patients raising interesting clinical questions, such as Collete Chiland (2000), Danielle Quinodoz (1998), Michael Eigen (1996), and Ruth Stein (1995). The number of people raising such questions is quite small, which is quite remarkable since transgender people appear increasingly visible in today's society. According to Stephen Whittle (2006) "trans identities were one of the most written about subjects in the late twentieth century" (p. xi). As a result, psychoanalysts have a lot of catching up to do.

In 2005, Shari Thurer, a psychoanalytically trained psychologist practicing in Boston, tried to wake up her colleagues whom she described as "arrested in moth-eaten bias—the conviction that there are two, and only two,

normal versions of gender..." announcing that "sexuality has changed—all sorts of deviations have been 'outed'—but theories haven't caught up" (p. xi). While she accuses psychological theorists and practitioners of displaying archaic prejudices, Thurer (2005) praises theorists of sexuality - especially French cultural theorists "who leapfrog 180 degrees away from hierarchical thinking, who view sexuality as okay" - but suggests that despite all their political correctness seem to "lack common sense and are insensitive to people in pain" (p. xi). Maybe an example of the cross-pollination she hopes for may come from the other side of the Atlantic, where Giovanna Ambrosio (2009), an Italian classically trained psychoanalyst, assumes that analysts already work with gender nonconformist analysands but may not write about it. She acknowledges that "we are behind the times compared with the growing amount of medical, political-sociological, cultural, and mass media attention paid to this theme" (p.xvi) and invites her colleagues to pay more attention to the links between psychoanalytic theory and clinical experience even when that implies looking at "shaded areas" of sexuality (by which she meant transgenderism) (p.xiii).

Casting light into the dusty corners of our assumptions about sex, gender and identity, one would hope that psychoanalysts will increasingly refuse to buy into sweeping generalisations and negative stereotypes. Perhaps we can break out of pointless debate between the foundations of sex and gender, the age-old debate of nature versus nurture, of biological essentialism versus social constructivism. Charles Sheperdson (2000) relies on the work of Lacanian psychoanalyst Catherine Millot to contend that the body cannot be reduced to neither "a natural fact nor a cultural construction" (p. 94). Of course Sheperdson's choice of author to support this claim may elicit a cry of alarm because Kate Bornstein considers Catherine Millot a gender terrorist:

Gender terrorists are not the leather daddies or back-seat Betties. Gender terrorists are not the married men, shivering in the dark as

they slip on their wives' panties. Gender terrorists are those who, like Ms. Millot, bang their heads against a gender system which is real and natural; and who then use gender to terrorize the rest of us. These are the real terrorists: the Gender Defenders (Bornstein, 1994, p, 236).

Is Bornstein's accusation of gender terrorism justified? Millot's interpretation of transsexuality is classic: her essay *Horsexe* mainly focuses on the motivations behind the demand for a sex change to determine which subjects may benefit from sex reassignment surgery and which may not. She contends that the demand for surgery needs to be interpreted before being actualised. No predetermined norm, she suggests, could generalise the particulars of a subjective motivation:

The feeling of being a woman trapped inside a man's body (or vice-versa) admits radically different interpretations, depending on the context. In the same way the demand for sex-change ... may also emanate from a woman hypochondriac (this has been encountered) who claims to be a transsexual in order to have her breasts removed because she is afraid she may be affected with cancer, or from a hysteric who sacrifices herself to the power drive of the doctor willing to perform the operation (Millot 1990, p. 26).

Millot argues that sex change discourse has promised cross-gender identifications that were motivated by something that could not be seen or imagined - a place beyond sexual difference where gender would not be simply questioned or subverted but completely transcended. She claimed that those subjects identify with an 'outside sex', and that any genital change due to sex reassignment surgery was likely to fail since no anatomical transformation can grant a fantasized position beyond lack and desire. Yet, as Dean (2000) notes, if reassignment surgery involves a fantasy about escaping sexual division altogether, "[t]here is a fundamental paradox, not to mention considerable pathos, in a male-to-female transsexual's undergoing orchidectomy—surgical removal of the testes—in order to elude castration" (p. 82). Millot contended

that the identification 'outsideseX' was in fact an imaginary identification with the phallus, an identification that can be reflected in the preoccupation of transsexuals with their genitals. I agree with Patrick Califia's (1997/2003) objection that "Millot seems obsessed with castration" and that she "sees sex-reassignment surgery in simplistic Freudian terms, as castration. She focuses on the loss of the penis, without taking into consideration what is gained in the process" (p.109). Indeed, Millot's contribution is centered around the transsexual's appeal to medical practitioners for hormonal and surgical modifications of the body. She analyses the sex-reassignment demand in order to address the clinical challenges of distinguishing which candidates may benefit from the surgery and which will not.

With the problems associated with Millot's thesis in mind, it is worth examining *Transamerica* (Tucker, 2005), one of the many recent films devoted to transsexualism, and perhaps the most successful in that it offers a mainstream version of 'cases' relatively invisible before. Bree Osbourne is a preoperative, conservative-looking, male-to-female transsexual who is about to obtain the recommendation letter for sex reassignment surgery from her supportive therapist when she learns that, unbeknownst to her, when she was still Stanley, she had fathered a son, now a teenage runaway addict hustling on the streets of New York. The plot is full of twists and impossible to synopsis. The road movie across the United States makes the unlikely pair of travelers connect until Bree's son, Toby, is shocked to discover that the biological father he idealised is none other than his traveling companion, this trans woman for whom he was developing a crush, a woman claiming to be hailing from a Christian religious sect 'of the potential father'. Bree fails to reunite the young man with her own past and biological family as Toby runs away on discovering the truth. Bree has her surgery at the end, and thinks that she has failed with her son. The film's ending, however, reconciles them as they accept each other's differences: She is now a woman, and he is a gay-porn actor.

The plot of *Transamerica* (Tucker, 2005) confirms the supposition that transsexualism is bound up with symbolic issues hinged around paternity. Bree can only truly become a woman after she has faced the impossible task of being a father and honestly grappled with it. That she fails does not contradict this idea, for being a father is to fail, but her ordeal has been experienced and not avoided. The happy ending places both characters in a comfortable marginality, sharing a beer; it is only a matter of years before they both will be fully accepted by society. Here, the function of the transsexual demand is crucial. Bree needs to undergo symbolic castration before being able to qualify for sex reassignment surgery. After she has gone through the symbolic hurdles, with all the uncertainties and limitations they entail, Bree's demand appears not as addressed to an absolute Other who would complete her or reducible to hysterical avoidance of her sexuality. With these qualifications, she does, indeed, make an ethical choice. Of course let us keep in mind that castration is, as Verhaeghe (2009) observes, "a secondary and even a defensive elaboration of another, primary anxiety" (p. 41) and that anxiety refers to being reduced to the object of enjoyment of the (m)Other. Notably, Freud observed that castration threats come more often from the mother than from the father (Freud, 1924, p.174.) In Lacan's theory castration is the limited structure that permits subjects to cope with the anxiety caused by the drives and especially with the jouissance stemming from their own bodies. This solution is imperfect and it always causes symptoms. This leads Lacan to affirm that there is no subject without a symptom.

There is of course a paradoxical literalisation of what psychoanalysis calls castration in some sex change practices. This is illustrated in a gripping passage of Martino's (1977) memoir of a "painful life to live, a painful life to write" (p. xi). Martino describes a second phalloplasty that seemed to fail; the first one was unsuccessful, and the neopenis had to be surgically excised. As the tip of his new penis became black, rotted away, and necrotised, he

had to sit in water every night to slowly cut away dead tissue. He comments ironically: "Talk about castration complex! Psychologically this cutting was almost impossible for me, yet it has to be done" (p. 262). Mario broke away from the increasing distress about the inadequate results of surgery when he came to the realisation that even if he wanted "a perfect phallus" he had to accept the impossibility of the wish. "So today I'm happy with what I have: a respectable phallus—three fourths perfect" (p. 263). The phallus is a prosthesis, even then an incomplete one, three fourths perfect. This demonstrates that which psychoanalysis calls "phallus" is not an object but an instance to symbolise the drives, or fundamentally a signifier. Dealing with sexual difference is a process that Lacan calls *sexuation* and would be defined by a logic that is condensed in Lacan's dictum that "there's no such thing as a sexual relationship" (Lacan, 1998, p. 57), meaning that feminine and masculine are not mirroring opposites but two uncomplimentary ways of failing to the questions of sexual difference. Something has been irretrievably lost. As Renata Sauced (2000) states in her introduction to *Sexuation*, for psychoanalysis sexual difference "is first and above all the name for a certain fundamental deadlock inherent in the symbolic order" (p. 2). Furthermore, human sexuality is marked by a logic of discordance in which the phallus serves as "an empty signifier" (Barnard, 2002, p. 10), a stand in for the impossibility to signify sexual difference in the unconscious.

Beyond Castration

To return to Millot, then, it is in the inevitability yet variety of symptoms that I mainly disagree with Millot's generalised assumption that most transsexuals are psychotic. Instead, I argue for a depathologisation of transgenderism and thus differ from the position taken by nearly all analysts. What I propose is an alternative to the usual psychoanalytic treatment of transgenderism. That is to say, transgenderism should not be systematically defined as pathology. If transgenderism is not pathological, then a sex change should not be

considered either a treatment or a cure. My perspective follows Lacan's later theory of the *sinthome* to rethink sexual difference. This theory is a departure from the classical Freudian theory of the Oedipus complex and even from Lacan's first formulations that insisted on the symbolic and the father. It departs as well from a second period in Lacan's work when he would put the emphasis on the theory of fantasy and the object cause of desire. Lacan modified his whole position a last time in the mid-1970s when he elaborated a new conception of sexuality, just before discussing Joyce's writings.

Lacan gave a new twist to Freud's Oedipus complex when he reformulated it as evincing the domination of the Name-of-the-Father. Later, Lacan (2005) went beyond the Oedipus complex and finally proposed the *sinthome* as a way of reknitting in the psychic structure what had been left unknotted because of the father's failure. This applied above all to Joyce's case but could be generalised somewhat. Since the *sinthome* is not a complement but a supplement, it is a vehicle for creative unbalance, capable of disrupting the symmetry. The *sinthome* is what helps one tolerate the absence of the sexual relation/proportion (Lacan, 1975, p. 45). Instead of grief and reproaches for broken promises addressed to the Other as demands, the *sinthome* employs the Name-of-the-Father as a way of naming, as a path in the invention of new signifiers (Lacan, 1977). Lacan's notion of the *sinthome* thus connected fantasy, demand, the system of the symbolic, and the place of the real with the infinite possibilities that it allows for jouissance.

With Lacan's points in mind, I will mention two of my analysands. At the age of 4, Lou was made aware by her father that she was not a boy as she had believed so far, but a girl. First, she thought that her father was mistaken, and that even if he was right and she was now a girl, she would grow up and become a boy later. Eventually, she accepted that she might be a girl and remain one; thus, she acknowledged that there were anatomical

differences between males and females. She elaborated that she had to be a girl because she was missing an organ, an organ that she hoped she would eventually grow. Lou took the phallus as a real object, not just as speculation, but as something directly linked to anatomy. As a child, she thought that one day the 'error' was going to be corrected. Challenged by her father's adamant disagreement on gender issues, she concluded that even if she was not yet a boy, she would become one, unlike her mother, who had chosen to become a woman.

Lou's wish to defer her difference took the unexpected turn of sending back to her mother her own maternity: She decided to wait a little before the 'top' surgery that she fixed at a certain date, but it happened that it would take place just 9 months later. Lou's hysteria apparently worked in relation to the mother. This time, it was to give birth to her own body via an imaginary transformation that could put the father at some distance since her surgery was something that the mother openly supported and of which her father quietly disapproved. Lou's hatred of her body's female characteristics suggests a renunciation of her femininity, a renunciation that we can interpret as acting out the mother's own hatred of femininity. Indeed, Lou's mother had had a first child while still a teenager, a boy who was born prematurely and died a few days after the delivery. Lou had identified with this dead child by becoming the boy that was but could not be.

The wish to correct the 'error of nature' is often observed in transsexual practices; it is the refusal to accept a sexual discourse that is built on an error, that of taking the phallus for a signifier of sexual difference. As we have ascertained, the phallic criterion only accounts for one sex. And, when this sexual discourse is foreclosed, the error is no longer symbolic, it becomes nature's error and has then to be repaired in the real. Often, the demand for a sex change is meant to rectify this error in the symbolic register by correcting the error in the real of the body. The paradox is that human

sexuality is always defective, always erroneous because it is a classification system based on an organ taken for a signifying instrument.

The second example is from another of my analysands, I shall call Ari. Ari is a biological female who has had 'top' surgery (breasts removed) and takes testosterone. Ari is manipulating his/her body to transform it into a surface with an undecided readability: What s/he wants is to pass as neither male nor female, thus rejecting altogether the phallus as a signifier of difference. If, according to phallic signification, we write two sexes with one signifier, Lou denounces the aporia of sex by refusing to be seen as either. If the phallus is just a parasite, if it is just the conjunction of an organ and the function of language (speech). Ari elevates "the limp little piece of prick" (Lacan, 2005, p. 15) to the status of art and supplements it, transforming physical appearance into the art of divination.

It is true that the phallus, often confused with the limp little prick, is not much more than a signified of jouissance that sexual discourse transforms into a signifier. Lacan's dictum that 'there is no sexual relation' is another way of saying that for the unconscious there is no representation of the female sex, that the unconscious is monosexual or homosexual; there is only one signifier for both sexes, the phallus. The phallus refers only to phallic jouissance; other forms of nonphallic jouissance exist and can be experienced, although they remain outside signification. Sexual positioning is predicated on an 'error' that consists of taking the real organ for a signifier of sexual difference. The error is to take the phallus as a signifier of sexual difference. This common error can be what the rectification proposed by some transsexuals is all about: "If you think that because I have a penis I am a man, that is an error; I can be a woman who has a penis." Or conversely, "If you think that not having a penis makes me a woman, this is an error because I am a man without a penis" (Morel, 2000, p. 186). And, they are absolutely right, because for the unconscious somebody with a penis can be a woman or

someone without a penis can be a man. Sexual positioning is not based on organ attribution. The transgender phenomenon proves that there is nothing natural that would direct us to the opposite sex. Sexual identity is a secondary nature. Since the unconscious has no representation of masculinity or femininity, we cannot speak with certainty in terms of sexual identity of being a man or a woman, but only of an assurance, a happy uncertainty.

Similarly, Dean (2000) observes that "it is not so important that the phallus may be a penis, or in Judith Butler's reading, a dildo, as it is a giant red herring" (p. 14). As such, the phallus is clearly a misleading clue comparable to the use of smoked herrings to mislead hounds following a trail. To pun somewhat on the phrase, I would like to suggest that the phallus is less a red herring than a 'read' herring—in fact, like gender, it is subject to interpretation, and it will always be read like a text. Certainly in some cases, writing about one's transsexual transformation is of the order of the sinthome; there are many cases when the transformation is reported as achieving a re-knotting of the three registers of the real, symbolic, and imaginary. Then, the sinthome shapes the singularity of an 'art', a techne that reknits a workable consistency for the subject; this movement can best be evoked by saying that it moves the subject from a certain contingency to absolute necessity. This can be clearly observed in Jan Morris memoir *Conundrum* (1974/1986). Morris describes her trajectory as inevitable, predestined, as if the sex change had always been bound to happen:

I do not for a moment regret the act of change. I could see no other way, and it has made me happy. ... Sex has its reasons too, but I suspect the only transsexuals who can achieve happiness are those ... to whom it is not primarily a sexual dilemma at all—who offer no rational purpose to their compulsions, even to themselves, but are simply driven blindly and helplessly. ... We are the most resolute. Nothing will stop us, no fear of ridicule or poverty, no threat of isolation, not even the prospect of death itself (pp. 168–169).

One can see why her sinthome was necessary: It was necessity itself. In Morris' case, the sinthome has produced less a 'woman' than a 'woman of letters'. Sex may have its reasons but they remain unknown since sexual difference obstinately resists symbolization. This impossibility can produce a sinthome. This sinthome is something that cannot be rectified or cured. The sinthome is a purified symptom, it remains beyond symbolic representation and exists outside the unconscious structured as language. In this sense, the sinthome is closer to the real. Lacan reached the final conclusion that there is no subject without a sinthome. Lacan's contention that there is no sexual relation entails that there is no normal relation, and therefore that the relationship between partners is a sinthomatic one.

Here we can see, then, that Lacan, who was the first psychoanalyst in France to work with a patient in gender transition, clearly distances himself from a traditional reading of Freud in which sexuality would lead to an object of the opposite sex. He remains close to Freud's (1905) 'queer' early claims in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* that we, as human animals, are all bisexual (p.141) and perverts (p.160), a contention that been seen as a promising meeting ground for the discourses of gender studies and psychoanalysis (Carlson, 2010, p. 48). It is precisely in this decisive text where Freud discusses at length and in detail the then experimental first sex-change surgeries by removal of sex-glands in animals and where he shares a piece of information one imagines quite shocking for readers in 1905: "It has become experimentally possible (E. Steinach) to transform a male into a female and conversely a male into a female" (parenthesis in the original, Freud, 1905, p. 81) The discovery of sex-hormones soon after was something on which Freud himself had been working as early as 1896, as it can be seen in his letters to Fliess (Freud, letters 42 and 44, March 1 & April 2, 1896; Moussaieff-Masson, 1985).

The technologies of gender modification have

of course evolved in one century, even when many of them were launched by pioneers like Steinach, but they are now grafted onto a discourse of essentialist identity. For many transsexuals, starting as they do from a perceived problem presented as a birth defect, the issue is simply how to change their bodies to reach the ideal of being just the other sex. The apparently infinite progress of surgery and hormonal treatments has lent credence to an ideal of bodily reassignment collapsed with a new psychic holism. It is now possible to change one's gender on demand by specific interventions on the biology of sexuality. However, developing sex change technologies that allow people to move more easily from one sex to another have highlighted a question that often remains unanswered: What makes a man a man and a woman a woman?

Conclusion

What makes a man a man and a woman a woman is a question that has come to psychoanalysis from hysteric patients. The position on bisexuality held by Steinach and Benjamin seems closer to a queer notion of sexuality in which genders are placed in a continuum beyond a strict binary. Paradoxically, the liberal discourses of gender identity support a sort of essentialism about gender identification. A collaboration between psychoanalysis and transgender discourse would thus open the way for an alternative.

In one visit to Vienna by Harry Benjamin, a meeting with Freud was arranged. According to Pfaefflin (1997), Benjamin wanted to meet Freud to consult him because of problems with sexual potency. Freud suggested Benjamin's erectile dysfunction was due to his latent homosexuality. Pfaefflin claims that this short interaction between the two men resulted in Benjamin's permanent skepticism against psychoanalysis, if not a thorough dislike, which since then has been claimed to be a marker of many encounters of transsexuals and their clinicians.

Benjamin's own recollection of the encounter,

however, seems quite different. He describes Freud as very serious, but says that they laughed briefly when Benjamin jokingly declared that a disharmony of souls might perhaps be explained by a disharmony of endocrine glands. Freud spoke of Eugen Steinach, fully recognising the great value of his biological experiments. He told Benjamin that he himself had undergone a Steinach 'rejuvenation' operation. The 'rejuvenation' was, in fact, a vasoligation, and it had been performed by a close collaborator of Steinach, Professor Kun, a chief urologist. In Benjamin's view, Freud was very much biologically oriented, and, in this sense, he [Freud] was not a Freudian: "... Freud asked me not to tell anyone about his operation until after his death, and I have kept that promise. He also asked me if I had been analyzed. I mentioned my relative short analysis by Arthur Kronfeld in Berlin. Freud warned me that Kronfeld had 'a very bad character'" (Haeberle, 1985).

Thus, the sex change doctor and the psychoanalyst met and had a friendly exchange that started with a lighthearted admission of psychic and endocrinal disharmony. Now here in 2011 might be a good time to continue a debate that was cut short by the widening distance between the two discourses, psychoanalysis and the clinic of transsexualism.

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HE DID IT HER WAY ON TV: REPRESENTING AN AUSTRALIAN TRANSSEXUAL CELEBRITY ONSCREEN

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Abstract

Cabaret star and television personality Carlotta, a transsexual woman whose fame has endured for more than half a century, is arguably the most prominent transgender celebrity in Australia. This article takes screen representations of Carlotta as its focus to investigate the mainstream media's treatment of a celebrity who embodies a traditionally marginalised subject position. First examining depictions of Carlotta from the 1960s and 1970s, and then looking to more contemporary examples from the 1990s and 2000s, the paper traces the evolution of Carlotta's representation on Australian screens. The article considers the problematic elements apparent in individual screens texts, but also the ways in which these texts enable Carlotta to challenge the rigidity and 'taken for granted-ness' of the sex-gender system. The paper does so in consideration of Sandy Stone's proposal of visibly intertextual transsexualism, Kate Bornstein's advocacy of ambiguous and fluid transsexualism, and Riki Anne Wilchins's assertions that transsexualism is a practice of transformation. As a transsexual celebrity, Carlotta's appearances in film and television give mainstream Australian audiences the opportunity to engage 'safely' but constructively with a transgender person, thus informing real-world attitudes towards transgenderism, and her public presence affirmatively reflects transgender experiences. Through these screen representations, Carlotta illustrates progressive possibilities of transsexual gender embodiment.

Key words: Carlotta, transsexualism, transgender representation, Stone, Bornstein, celebrity

Introduction

As a nation nourished on a mythology of hetero-patriarchal mateship and symbols of rugged masculinity, Australia's affection for mainstream representations of male-to-female transgender¹ figures is perhaps curious. From the fictional transgender heroes in the Oscar-winning film *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Elliot, 1994), to transgender contestants on popular reality television shows, to transgender performers at the world-renowned Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, a number of differing representations of transgender people and transgender lives are popularised in Australian culture. Also promoting the visibility of transgender in Australia is a notable handful of transgender celebrities, who maintain a significant presence in the cultural consciousness of this country. Among these, perhaps the most prominent is transsexual cabaret star and television celebrity Carlotta, whose fame has endured for more than half a century. Carlotta is a transsexual woman who has been an important figure in Australian culture since the 1960s. She began her career as a member of the now iconic Kings Cross cabaret troupe *Les Girls*, starring in their first show in 1963 and going on to become the show's compere and star. In the early 1970s, her genital reassignment surgery was highly publicised and, because of her

1 In keeping with transgender theorists such as Stryker & Whittle (2006), the term 'transgender' is used throughout the article as a rubric that encompasses all expressions of gendering that fall outside or between the hegemonic categories of male/female, masculine/feminine. As Stryker (2008) asserts, 'transgender' refers to 'the movement

celebrity, was the first in Australia to receive widespread attention. Carlotta worked with *Les Girls* for twenty-six years in total and has performed onstage in a number of other shows, including the new millennium productions *Carlotta's Kings X*, *Carlotta's Priscilla Show*, and *Carlotta: Live and Intimate*, a one woman show. She is also regularly an honoured guest at public events, such as Sydney's Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Along with these differing public appearances, Carlotta has stayed in the public eye through her varied screen appearances, which are the focus of this article.

This article, then, takes Carlotta as its focus to investigate the treatment of a celebrity who embodies a traditionally marginalised subject position, and considers the ways in which she can be understood as challenging the rigid and 'taken for granted-ness' of the sex-gender system despite – and sometimes because of – her mainstream appeal. To do so, the article examines mainstream screen representations of Carlotta; those representations that are part of Australian screen culture are particularly pertinent indicators of broader perceptions of Carlotta specifically and transgender more generally, not least because they are disseminated widely and continue to be accessed long after their initial release or screening. Carlotta has appeared onscreen in a range of forums since 1970, forums which, whilst occasionally representing transsexualism as unfathomable or a 'freak show', also allow a space for Carlotta's (trans)gendering to be understood as empowering and humanising.

After first defining the nature and effects of 'celebrity', the article examines the place of transsexualism in recent theoretical contexts. It then moves on to apply relevant theoretical insights in textual analysis of early screen representations of Carlotta, finding that although there are aspects of these portrayals that are problematic, they also make room for Carlotta's transgendering to destabilise the restrictive sex-gender system. Later screen representations are then examined, including an

interview segment on *60 Minutes* and Carlotta's time as a panelist on *Beauty and the Beast*. The article argues that within these more recent screen texts, the transformative potential of transsexualism is realised, to certain extents, through Carlotta's representation as a multifaceted and evolving person.

Celebrity

It is important to begin here by discussing the nature of celebrity, and its power and effects. Contemporary western society is fascinated with celebrities, and widespread interest in a public figure's private life is a defining characteristic of celebrity (Turner, Bonner & Marshall, 2000). Despite such interest in the 'real' person behind the famous face, however, there is a disjunction between them and the representation and celebration of their celebrity persona. In *Celebrity and Power* (Marshall, 2004), Marshall proposes that celebrity does not belong to any particular individual, but is instead created and maintained through the representations of that individual. Marshall (2004) maintains that '[t]he celebrity exists above the real world, in the realm of symbols that gain and lose value like commodities on the stock market' (p. 6). This point also speaks to the commercial aspects of celebrity. Celebrities are not only inextricably merged with the products they market, they are themselves marketable products. In *Fame Games*, Turner, Bonner & Marshall (2000) contend that '[t]he celebrity's ultimate power is to sell the commodity that is themselves' (p. 12). Or as Stadler & McWilliam (2009) summarise, 'to put it crudely', celebrities 'exist to court a mass audience' (p.267). Nevertheless, this is not to diminish the skills and/or talents of the many accomplished celebrities – for indeed 'the achievement of celebrityhood is a means of signifying and establishing success' (Turner, Bonner & Marshall, 2000. p. 12) – nor the roles that celebrities play within society.

Although the image that these elevated individuals project may be largely contrived, celebrities have some very genuine effects upon culture and audiences. Many of the cultural

functions of celebrities relate to audiences' engagement with them, and their personification and perpetuation of certain ideologies. Despite the momentum of the industry system that produces celebrities, audiences can demonstrate a significant amount of autonomy when it comes to bestowing celebrity status. In *Understanding Celebrity*, Turner (2004) observes that 'celebrity is the product of a commercial process but it is worth remembering that the public expression of popular interest can operate, at times, as if it was entirely independent of this commercial process' (p.55). One of the factors that make celebrities so appealing is that audiences are able to idealise and identify with (or in contrast to) them (Marshall, 2004). Richard Dyer's seminal work on stars and stardom in *Heavenly Bodies* (Dyer, 2004) is useful in understanding the social impacts of celebrity. Dyer (2004) contends that for the audience, a star's image works 'according to how much it speaks to us [the audience] in terms we can understand about things that are important to us' (p.14). How audiences perceive and engage with celebrities is also a question of what ideologies and social group/s particular celebrities represent. The ways in which mass audiences read celebrities affects the very construction of those celebrities (Marshall, 2004). Hence, the particular ideologies a celebrity represents depends on the ideals that they are popularly understood to embody. As an individual who came to fame through performance talents associated with queer social arenas, the celebrity at the centre of this article is entwined with ideologies that counter many hegemonic regulations regarding sex, gender and sexuality.

A number of transgender theorists have drawn attention to the significance of transgender media representations in reflecting and affecting broader social attitudes towards transgender individuals. What audiences know of these celebrities may be dependent on largely intangible representations, yet they are understood and interpreted as representations of people who live the ideologies they publicly embody. Representations of transgender ce-

lebrities therefore have the capacity to be more potent than other, say, fictional, representations of transgender people. For example, *Priscilla's* transgender protagonists are played by famous actors widely known to be cisgendered and heterosexual, and such extratextual knowledge works to contain the 'threat' of the narrative's queer gendering and sexuality – arguably quelling the affirmative influence of the film's transgender representations. Furthermore, transgender celebrities – like all celebrities – convey their 'message' and reach audiences as part of the democratic bridging process of celebrity. Celebrities are granted a social mobility reserved for the powerful elite, and all the while audiences feel they have personal relationships with them. It is acknowledged that 'the representations of celebrities operate as a kind of bridge between the private world and public debate' (Turner, Bonner & Marshall, 2000, p. 14), and offer 'a bridge of meaning between the powerless and the powerful' (Marshall, 2004, p. 49). For this reason, celebrities can be very powerful advocates for minority social positions. As a celebrity, Carlotta functions as a reference point that helps shape real-world perceptions about transgender, and her public representations reveal and influence attitudes and reactions to transgender in society.

As mentioned above, Carlotta has appeared in a number of popular forums over a number of decades. Like any celebrity, her public persona is constructed via the differing representations of her that are circulated, particularly screen representations. Importantly in Carlotta's case, she is a transsexual celebrity as well as a celebrity transsexual, and as such her celebrity status is bound up with her particular mode of gender embodiment. Accordingly, this article is investigating the public portrayal of a celebrity *and* transsexual subject; that is, textual (specifically screen) representations of transsexualism that are commonly understood to give insight into the life, and life-narrative, of a real transsexual. Therefore, these representations contribute significantly to discourses surrounding transsexualism in Australian culture. Through her screen performances, Car-

lotta maintains mainstream acceptance whilst illustrating the transgressive possibilities of transgender and transsexual lives, and in doing so, she exemplifies certain recent theoretical postulations regarding transsexualism.

Transsexualism

Transsexualism refers to the circumstance of an individual's gender identity not 'matching-up' with their nataly-assigned sex and the lived experience of their need to reconcile allocated anatomy with a contrarily gendered sense of self. In medical discourse, the constant disjunction between sexed body and psychosexual identity is currently regarded as a condition termed 'gender dysphoria syndrome' or 'gender identity disorder' (Lewins, 1995). Many transsexuals endeavour to rectify this discrepancy by rejecting an anatomically designated gender to function permanently as a member of the gender with which they identify. Corporeal and permanent manifestations of a transsexual's gender-crossing can be achieved through hormone therapies and/or surgical procedures, including surgical reconstruction of the genitals and/or breasts (Lewins, 1995; Ekins, 1997). Nevertheless, transsexualism as an embodied experience is not contingent on the clinical alteration of a transsexual's body, and instead encompasses an individual's social, psychological and physical embodiment of a gender that does not coincide with their nataly-assigned sex. As Garber (1993) explains: '[t]he term "transsexual" is used to describe persons who are either "pre-op" or "post-op" – that is, whether or not they have undergone penectomy, hysterectomy, phallo- or vaginoplasty. Transsexualism is not a surgical product but a social, cultural, and psychological zone' (p. 106). Likewise, sociologist Frank Lewins (1995) allocates the term 'transsexual' to 'anyone who has made or appears to have made, the transition to living permanently in the gender other than the one originally assigned to them' (p.4).

Transsexualism and the transsexual figure have been, and continue to be, contested

sites in feminist and queer discourses. Because transsexualism converges issues of sex, gender, desire and embodiment, it is a contentious subject that has sparked volatile debates between a number of sectors with differing ideological investments. For example, many early radical separatist feminists condemned (and some still do) male-to-female transsexualism, perceiving that transwomen usurp natal women's bodily specificity and appropriate womanhood to infiltrate biological women's spaces, stealing the little power granted to natal women within patriarchy and undercutting the feminist movement by dividing feminists about what constitutes 'woman' (Raymond, 2006; Whittle, 2006; Stryker & Whittle, 2006). These troublesome assessments of male-to-female transsexualism were explicitly promulgated by lesbian-feminist Janice Raymond in her polemical 1979 text, *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-male*, which argues that 'transsexuals are constructs of an evil phallocratic empire' (cited in Stone, 2006, p. 223).²

One of the most potent retorts to Raymond's³ influential but highly problematic anti-transsexual assertions came more than a decade later in the form of Sandy Stone's (2006) 'The *Empire* Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual

2 Such was her conviction, Raymond reconfirmed in a new introduction of a 1994 reprint of *The Transsexual Empire* that her views at that time still remained unchanged (Stryker & Whittle, 2006, p. 131). Whittle (2006) declares that the thesis of Raymond's book was so detrimentally influential it 'discredited for a long time any academic voice they [transsexual women] might have, in particular with feminist theorists' (p. 199). Nevertheless, Stryker & Whittle (2006) also observe that in provoking 'an outraged, anguished, and deeply motivated counter-response from transgender people, it also did more than any other work to elicit new lines of critique that coalesced into transgender studies' (p. 131).

3 In *The Transsexual Empire*, Raymond directly derides Stone, a male-to-female transsexual, for having 'dared' to work as a woman at a feminist women-only music company.

Manifesto'. In this piece, Stone (2006), herself a transsexual, critiques previous understandings and representations of transsexualism to undermine those gender and medical discourses that, as she states, position 'transsexuals as possessing something less than agency ... [as being] infantilized, considered too illogical or irresponsible to achieve true subjectivity, or clinically erased by diagnostic criteria; or else, as constructed by some radical feminist theorists, as robots of an insidious and menacing patriarchy' (pp.229-30). Responding to the divergent epistemologies, theories and confusions intersecting 'on the battlefield of the transsexual body' (Stone, 2006, p.230),⁴ Stone (2006) queries the viability of phallogentric, binary configurations of gender and sexuality. With a sentiment that has echoed throughout much subsequent queer and transgender studies work, Stone advocates the transsexual figure's ability to proliferate the embodied self-expressions and identities available, not just to transsexuals and other transgender individuals, but to all sexed, gendered, desiring bodily subjects. She writes:

"In the transsexual as a text we may find the potential to map the refigured body onto conventional gender discourse and thereby disrupt it, to take advantage of the dissonances created by such a juxtaposition to fragment and reconstitute the elements of gender in new and unexpected geometries" (Stone, 2006, p. 231).

Positing that transsexualism should be understood as a genre, 'a set of embodied texts', Stone (2006) argues for the theoretical and lived visibility of 'the *intertextual* possibilities of the transsexual body' (p. 231).⁵

4 Stone (2006) writes: Here on the gender borders at the close of the twentieth century, with the faltering of phallogentric hegemony and the bumptious appearance of heteroglossic origin accounts, the epistemologies of white male medical practice, the rage of radical feminists theories and the chaos of lived gendered experience meeting on the battlefield of the transsexual body. (p. 230).

Although the development of this vein of theory and thought may give an optimistic indication of the place of transsexualism within contemporary culture and theory, conflicts regarding the understanding and acceptance of transsexualism are far from resolved between transgender activism, medical practice, queer theory, transgender theory, and transgender individuals. It is perhaps unsurprising that transsexualism meets with resistance from those quarters that consider sex and gender to be coextensive, and those who find transsexuals' apparent disavowal of gendered birth-right unpalatable if not incomprehensible. Yet even within many relatively recent poststructuralist queer theorisations of gender – which deconstruct and challenge gender dimorphism – transsexualism has been regarded as dubious. The suspicion of transsexualism within these arenas stems from transsexuals' *embodied* crossing of gender as well as sex (in the sense it is seen to be at odds with poststructuralist formulations of linguistically constituted subjects), and the misconception that transsexuals actually do at least intend to leap wholly from one side of a gender divide to the other, leaving the border between divisive gender categories unmarred and unquestioned (Stryker & Whittle, 2006, p. 257). Nevertheless, along with Stone, other theorists in the field of transgender studies have put forward prominent and important work which reveals and celebrates the possible 'ambiguity' and 'fluidity' of transsexualism (Bornstein,

5 Stone (2006) stresses that in the negotiation of 'the troubling and productive multiple permeabilities of boundary and subject position' arising from such intertextuality, there is a need for the rearticulation of 'the foundational language by which both sexuality and transsexuality are described' (p. 231). Since the original publication of this piece, Stone's call for 'a deeper analytic language for transsexual theory' that allows for 'ambiguities and ployvocalities' (p. 231) has been heeded, as the steady evolution of transgender studies followed in the wake of 'The *Empire Strikes Back*', giving legitimatised voice to many transgender people and foregrounding the validity and possibilities of transgender in culture (Stryker & Whittle, 2006).

1992). Notably, in *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us* (Bornstein, 1992),⁶ transgender theorist Kate Bornstein maintains that a transsexual's crossing from one sex to the other does not necessarily adhere to a binary gender framework, but can become part of a process of gendering wherein transformation *is* the meaning and motivation of gender.⁷ Similarly, in *Read My Lips: Sexual Subversion and the End of Gender* (Wilchins, 1997), transsexual activist and transgender theorist Riki Anne Wilchins draws on Bornstein (among others) to propose a theory of gender that allows transsexualism to be understood as a practice of transformation.

A cursory overview of Carlotta's gender embodiment may seem to indicate that she is a transsexual who – as some poststructuralist theorists fear of transsexuals – has cleanly and neatly crossed the boundary between 'manhood' and 'womanhood', shutting the gate behind her and leaving the sex-gender perimeter definitively intact; Carlotta was born male but now identifies as, lives permanently as, and is anatomically a woman. However, upon closer inspection it can be seen that Carlotta's transsexualism more closely aligns with those theories that find transsexualism overlaps and disrupts rather than plays into conventional gender discourses. Carlotta's personification of an intertextual and transforma-

tive transsexualism has progressively built up over many years and many screen (and other) representations. In almost all of her celebrity appearances, her previously male status is commonly known and often directly informs the context and focus of these. This continuing inclusion of her male beginnings in Carlotta's self-presentation is one significant way in which representations of this celebrity draw together 'contradictory' elements of sex and gender. As Stone (2006) argues, a transsexual's previous sex and gender are vitally important texts within intertextual transsexualism. Furthermore, in accordance with Bornstein's and Wilchins's theorisations of transsexualism as a fluid practice of transformation, the longevity of Carlotta's celebrity has meant that the public have been privy to a number of shifts in her transgender embodiment and identification. As such, Carlotta's transsexualism has come to signify an evolving process of gendering that disinherits an obligation to biological identity. The analysis below of selected screen representations examines the ways in which Carlotta is portrayed, and the reactions she receives onscreen throughout different eras. Each of these screen appearances feed into broader understandings of Carlotta, and each illuminate the transgressive nature of her particular modes of gendering.

'...More like a Woman than a Man'

In a black and white circa 1963 interview (Director Unknown, 1963), attractive cabaret performer Ricky, who uses the stage name Carlotta, discusses working at *Les Girls*. The interviewer is interested in how and when Ricky presents himself as a man, asking about his long hair and ascertaining that he wears men's clothes 'all the time' during the day. When asked if he would wear women's clothing in public if it was not against the law, Ricky – who is at the time dressed as a woman – replies that it is a 'hard question' and decides, 'at the moment, no'. This position changed somewhat in the following years, as would be documented seven years later in the 1970 semi-fictional documentary *The Naked Bunyip* (Murray, 2005). This humorous

6 In her article 'Recent Transgender Theory', Bernice Hausman (2001) asserts that Bornstein's (1992) book, along with Susan Stryker's (1994) 'My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage', initiated a move from feminist perspectives dominating theoretical interpretations of transsexualism to 'a full-fledged queer view of transgender' (p. 465).

7 While Bornstein, a transsexual, has a personal interest in transsexualism's reception in culture, she praises transgender and non-transgender theorists and critics alike for acknowledging and questioning not just of transgender issues but broader issues of sex and gender. Bornstein(1992) states: 'My voice on this subject is not representative of all transgendered people ... More importantly than my point of view, than any single point of view however, is that people begin to question gender' (p. 14).

feature's fictional premise is that a somewhat naïve and shy young man (Graeme Blundell) is hired to conduct a market research survey about sexual culture in Australia. The trailer proclaims that 'It's about Australian attitudes to sex and censorship... A searching and tolerant survey of all aspects of sex in modern society'. Blundell carries out real interviews with an eclectic range of people, including the madam of a brothel, well-known personalities, fashion models, and 'ordinary' citizens. Among those interviewed are Barry's Humphries's (yet to be famous) housewife character Mrs Edna Everage, and a youthful Carlotta, now permanently known as such. Carlotta even helped launch the film on opening night, wearing a thick, permed blonde wig (and, these days, a photo of her as she appears in the film graces the DVD cover). In the style of cinema vérité, *The Naked Bunyip's* interviewees directly address the camera and 'fly-on-the-wall' cinematography is employed for segments of live action footage. Furthermore, the interviewer is seldom seen so interviewees appear to speak straight to the viewer. Together these techniques heighten the 'naturalism' of the film. Although the fictional narrative woven through the interviews may diminish its credence as a documentary, as a feature film it evokes an unusually high level of aesthetic authenticity. Carlotta's segment is thus contextualised as sincere and authentic, and personally engages audiences.

Audiences' perceptions of Carlotta in this film are affected further by the knowledge that her cross-gendered identity is not shed once the camera is turned off. In stark contrast to Everage's playful female persona, Carlotta's permanent transgender identity appears as a serious matter indeed, and her representation in the film confronts and troubles hegemonic expectations regarding sex and gender. This confrontation notably occurs as Carlotta reflects upon her own circumstances in the interview. Audiences hear a considered, reasonable and heartfelt account of her younger years, and her gender identity, lifestyle, and chosen profession. She speaks of being tormented at school for being feminine, and

knowing something was 'wrong' as a child. She goes on to talk about feeling 'locked up in a cage' before becoming a female impersonator, and discusses the lack of awareness about transgenderism that leads to people mocking her. Although the manager of *Les Girls*, who is also interviewed, refers to all the *Les Girls* performers as 'girls that dress up as boys', Carlotta notes that she 'eventually' wants 'to be a woman and live as a woman'. At one point she asserts that she was 'born a woman in the shell of a man', a statement that might be misunderstood in some contexts to support a gender binary. Nevertheless, any such reading is dispelled, as she also describes ambiguities of her gendering, observing that in everyday life when dressed as a man, onlookers were perplexed about which sex/gender she 'belonged' to, and that she actually disrupted gender expectations less while dressed and passing as a woman.

The visual representation of Carlotta in this film (Murray, 2005) also brings to light the instability of the sex-gender system. The interview opens with Carlotta saying directly into the camera, 'I think that you think that I look more like a woman than a man', and her transgendering indeed bring issues of gender embodiment to the fore, not only in relation to demeanour and appearance but also physiology. Carlotta wears a revealing outfit during the interview and her augmented breasts are clearly visible.⁸ The interview is interspersed with footage of her performing onstage and these clips further expose the well-formed 'female' attributes of her body. She refers to herself as a female *impersonator* but her surgically enhanced breasts bespeak the permanency of her gender-crossing. In *The Naked Bunyip*, the visual conspicuousness of, and the insightful personal reflection upon Carlotta's

8 In his article 'The Genesis of *The Naked Bunyip*' (2005), director John Murray notes that the Censorship Board required close-ups of Carlotta's breast be deleted. He argued they were 'men's breasts' but the censor maintained they could be seen to 'move', which violated a rule regarding footage of women's breasts at the time.

behavioural, sartorial, and corporeal transgenerating confound assumptions that find maleness and masculinity, and femaleness and femininity are inherently coextensive. Rather than reinstating the gender divide, this portrayal of Carlotta's transgenerating aligns with Bornstein's (1992) assertion that transsexualism refuses a binary gender framework and is instead a form of gendering that *is* a process of transformation (pp. 51–2).

Keep it in the Closet

Carlotta appeared on Australian screens again only a few years later in 1973 when she guest starred in six episodes of the infamously risqué television show *Number 96* (Powell, 1972–1977). She played the character Robyn Ross, the glamorous girlfriend of serial womaniser Arnold Feather (actor Jeff Kevin). Their romance was intense but short-lived, however, for Robyn disappeared from the show when, after Arnold proposed to her, it was revealed that she was a transgender showgirl. Robyn's transgenderism was exposed when her flat mate discovered her using a large hypodermic needle and had to explain that it was not drugs she was injecting but hormones (even though hormone therapies were usually administered in pill form at the time). The provocative storyline came to a head when Arnold put his hand up Robyn's dress and said 'Miss Ross, I mean, Mister Ross'. In many ways *Number 96* offered a relatively positive fictional portrayal of a transgender character, as Robyn was presented as attractive and capable, and was taken seriously as a romantic partner.⁹ However, the show's treatment of Robyn's transgenderism as a spicy revelation perceivably lessened the affirmative impact this representation may have had. *TV Week* reported that the day after it became known Robyn was transgendered, Channel Ten's

switchboard was overloaded with calls from viewers wanting to know whether or not the actor who played Robyn was male or female (Myall, 2010). This reaction not only bespeaks the far-reaching impulse to position people (even those seen on television) within a dualistic sex-gender framework, but also that the show had effectively used the character's transgenderism to create a scandalous, titillating narrative event. Nevertheless, the bigger 'scandal' was that she who played Robyn was herself transgendered, and the way in which the show's producers hid this secret was even more problematic.

To ensure the twist regarding Robyn's gender was properly shocking, Carlotta's identity was kept secret, even from most of the show's cast and crew, and she was called 'Carolle Lea' in the credits. According to Carlotta's biography *He Did It Her Way: Carlotta, Legend of Les Girls* (Carlotta & Cockington, 1994), she remembers many aspects of the experience fondly, but makes a point of noting that she had to eat alone in her dressing room while everybody else went out, and to film on a closed set so her involvement would not be outed. The implications of this secrecy find resonance with Bornstein's (1992) observations about certain films that use a character's concealed transgenderism as a narrative strategy. Bornstein (1992) notes that when *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960) and *The Crying Game* (Jordan, 1992) were released there was a general push in both cases to 'not say a word' about the endings that revealed a central character to be transgendered – the 'big secret' of each of these films. Bornstein (1992) asserts that the public hush about these endings was not as much about spoiling the film as it was about the urge to conceal those transgender figures who disrupt binary gendering. Bornstein (1992) maintains that the response of 'keeping the secret' reflects how those who defend rigid gender categories 'would like to see transgendered people: as a secret, hidden away in some closet' (pp. 73–4). Comparably, Robyn's transgender status was indeed a 'big secret' and Carlotta was literally hidden away in a closet; as she testi-

9 Sadly, however, although Robyn 'confesses' her secret, this storyline plays into the recurrent theme in film and television that transgender characters are innately deceptive. For further discussion on the common figure of the 'transgender deceiver' in screen texts, see Joelle Ruby Ryan (2009).

fies in *He Did It Her Way*, 'Because my identity had to be kept a secret they locked me in this very small dressing room on set. I called it a cupboard, it was so small' (Carlotta & Cockington, 1994).

Despite the problematic aspects of Carlotta's transgenderism being hidden, more positive connotations also arose from this concealment. Transgender theorist Judith/Jack Halberstam (2005) argues that the secrecy surrounding *The Crying Game's* transgender character 'constructs a mainstream viewer for the film and ignores more knowing audiences' (p. 80). Certainly the shock revelation of Robyn's transgenderism in *Number 96* also relied on a mainstream audience not expecting that a character (or person) might be transgendered, and not recognising 'Carolle Lea' to be Carlotta. Nevertheless, this anonymity perceivably supported the willing reception of Carlotta's adept performance of womanhood. As Halberstam (2005) contends regarding certain transgender films, 'the relative obscurity of the transgender actors allow them to pull off the feat of credibly performing a gender at odds with the sexed body' (p. 93). That is, general audiences could enjoy Carlotta's performance without having to continually negotiate the feminine image onscreen with extradiegetic knowledge about the actor being born male. Ironically, for those mainstream viewers at whom the shock of *Number 96's* 'secret' was aimed, Carlotta's inclusion in the show provided the very exposure to transgenderism that might contribute to more people becoming 'knowing audiences'. Because of the similarity between Robyn's and Carlotta's transgendering, once the secret was well aired, Carlotta's portrayal of Robyn on *Number 96* influenced public perceptions about Carlotta and her transgendering. Although Carlotta may not have been widely recognised before that point in time, her guest role in *Number 96* certainly increased her celebrity. Within less than two years of her appearance in the show she had undergone genital reconstruction surgery. Media interest in her surgery coupled with her existing fame meant that it soon became common knowledge that

there would no longer be any confusion about whether she was a 'Miss' or a 'Mister'. Hence, Carlotta's road to celebrity was paralleled by her process of embodied gender transformation.

Desert Crossings

Carlotta's fame continued to grow throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, and by the mid-1990s she was a household name in Australia; so much so that in 1996 the popular current affairs show *60 Minutes* made her the focus of a primetime interview segment entitled 'Queen of Queens' (Wooley, 1996). In the piece, reporter Charles Wooley accompanies Carlotta as she and her troupe travel to the rural town of Broken Hill with their cabaret show *Carlotta Presents, My beautiful Boys*. Carlotta is often noted as being an inspiration for the film *Priscilla*, whose transgender protagonist's travel into the Australian outback to perform drag shows. In an example of art imitating life imitating art, Carlotta and her 'boys', inspired by *Priscilla*, headed into the desert with their flamboyant costumes and recreated a similar aesthetic to that of the popular film. The *60 Minutes* segment plays on *Priscilla* iconography too, including footage of the troupe's van on an outback road cutting to a shot of its interior and the five glamorous women inside. Documenting part of their sequined tour, the segment is made up of shot-reverses-shot interviews, live action footage, black and white historical footage, and Wooley's narration. In keeping with the theories of transsexualism discussed above, this *60 Minutes* piece sets up Carlotta's transsexualism as an intertextual and transformative practice, and as one that incorporates an amount of ambiguity and fluidity.

The extent to which the segment fulfills these progressive functions is somewhat marred by elements that exploit or at least trivialise Carlotta's transgenderism, and problematic assertions regarding the nature of sex and gender. For example, Wooley declares that the troupe's female impersonation has 'gone way beyond any act, even between performances

the show goes on', thus implying that transgender lives are some sort of 'act'. He also insists that the troupe 'really are boys' because they have all penises, as though genitals decide gender, and the piece is littered with quips such as 'When Carlotta goes bush, it's only the roads that are straight', a confused and reductive statement about Carlotta's sexuality for the sake of a pun. At another stage he appears disturbed by Carlotta's genital reconstruction surgery and points out to her that having one's penis removed is a fearful concept for most men, including himself, and cites the phallographic concept of 'castration anxiety'. In reaching out to Carlotta for explanation and sympathy regarding this matter, Wooley erroneously attempts to position her as a fellow man; fear of losing one's penis is a fear that men bear, and one that is irrelevant to a woman's subjectivity. At best these aspects of Wooley's presentation are unwitting attempts to establish, for himself and his primetime audience, an easily-digestible understanding of his interview subject's non-normative sex and gender. Yet despite these normalising and potentially marginalising comments by Wooley, there is another side to the segment that facilitates a transgressive representation of Carlotta's transsexualism.

Wooley (1996) makes reference to Carlotta's past many times throughout the interview, which often functions as a strategy used to anchor Carlotta to a biological sex and thus render her more intelligible as a sexualised being. Ironically, however, it also serves to multiply the 'texts' visible in the figure of Carlotta, and highlight a fluidity in her gendering. Throughout the segment, Wooley repeatedly observes that Carlotta was a 'boy from Balmain' and reiterates that her name was previously Ricky, and that Ricky was a hairdresser. Black and white footage from the early interview mentioned above is played, showing Ricky in costume stating: 'I was born a boy and that's the way it is. I'm doing this as a job'. As Stone contends, the sex and gender expressions of a transsexual's past are vital texts within intertextual transsexualism. For

much of the interview, Wooley and Carlotta sit together in a dressing room. Here, she discusses her genital reconstruction surgery, telling him that she found 'freedom' in having her penis removed. She recalls her displeasure with her body before the surgery – 'boobs up here, *that* down there' – and it becomes clear that she did not perceive herself to *be* a woman until she had breasts and a vagina. (As is common in media discourse surrounding male-to-female genital reconstruction, the interview's focus is on 'losing' a penis rather than 'gaining' a vagina.) Hence, the interview spans not just her life, but differing stages of her gendering and identification – from being a boy, to a female impersonator, and then a woman. As such, Carlotta's journey of gender is displayed as an intertextual transsexualism and, in accordance with Wilchins (1997), a practice of transformation.

Wooley's (1996) interview also depicts Carlotta's transsexualism as, in Bornstein's (1992) words, fluid and ambiguous. Firstly, the interview underscores that Carlotta has a fluidity of gender available to her, as she is able to access both masculine and feminine characteristics. Elegant, gracious, and attractive with lots of blonde hair, Carlotta's access to femininity is plainly evident. Yet Wooley applauds her expertise as a manager and entrepreneur, traditionally domains in which the masculine succeeds. Her physical strength is also noted, as is the fact she 'always had a good left hook'. Brooks and Scott (1997) find that in this interview, Carlotta is shown to use her masculine qualities to maintain power and authority, and Wooley's emphasis of them is an attempt to re-inscribe her with male privilege (pp. 70–1). Such propositions, however, appear misguided and rely heavily on the very gender binary that transsexualism can interrogate. Rather than seeing these masculine elements as Carlotta holding on to something she should have forsaken (or should never have wanted in the first place), or as something Wooley (1996) 'gives' or 'puts on' her, they are better understood as illuminating an adaptability of gendering we all engage with to some extent. Secondly, a level of ambiguity

in Carlotta's gender positioning comes to the fore when Wooley (1996) inquires about procreation. During the interview, Wooley brings up the issue of reproduction and Carlotta acknowledges that she is sad her surgeries mean that she cannot have children. Wooley asks whether it is fatherhood or motherhood she feels as though she has 'missed out on'. When Carlotta has trouble answering he offers her the option, 'Or just parenthood?' with which she agrees. Ambiguity arises in this statement regarding what gendered parental role she would take up, father or mother, as the possibility for either or both – or perhaps even a new type of parental role altogether – is left open. In the interview Carlotta states that 'A man's a man, and obviously I wasn't meant to be one', but with her individualised proliferation of ways of being, which these screen representations of her demonstrate, it appears that a transsexual is not just a transsexual.

You Beauty

The final set of appearances examined here come from Carlotta's prominent television role in her long-running position as a panelist on the daytime chat show *Beauty and the Beast* (Adamson, 1997 – 2007). The show entailed a 'beast' (Interviewer Stan Zemanek and later Doug Murray) and a panel of 'beauties', a changing group of six female personalities, who would all respond to viewers' letters and give advice, which provoked banter and sometimes animosity between those on the panel. Carlotta regularly appeared on the show as one of the 'beauties' between 1997 until 2002 while it was on Channel Ten and then when it moved to Foxtel's W channel between 2005 to 2007. Zemanek, a radio host known for his candid, right-wing opinions, would often purposefully stir up the panel. On one episode in 2001, while insulting each of his panelists in turn, he referred to Carlotta as 'a bloke who cut off his penis to become a Sheila', at which Carlotta bewilderedly but good-naturedly smiled and shook her head. Certainly such a comment denotes ignorance about, and a lack of sensitivity to the process of transsexualism.

Nevertheless, it does indicate the matter-of-factness with which Carlotta's gender status was dealt with on the show, and the room the show allowed to air issues surrounding this. References to Carlotta's transsexualism on *Beauty and the Beast* were usually much more considered; especially when she was called on to give advice to viewers struggling with gender and sexuality issues of their own. Nevertheless, these factors were not the central focus of Carlotta as a panelist, and her opinions about a range of topics were just as valued. Furthermore, aspects of her own life story not related to gender were also heard during her time on the show, such as when she gave a heartfelt but witty account of her parents' divorce.

Discussing the American talk show *The Joan Rivers Show*, transgender theorist Gordene O. Mackenzie (1999) relates a significant occasion during an episode on the subject of transgender. Mackenzie (1999) recounts the moment when transgender activist Leslie Feinberg, a guest on the show, interrupted a therapist's clinical explanations of transsexualism to ask if transpeople could speak for themselves. For Mackenzie (1999), this juncture represented an important challenge to and liberation from medico-clinical discourses imposed upon transgender people (pp.198–9). Mackenzie (1999) writes, '[s]uddenly, the freak show atmosphere on *The Joan Rivers Show* faded as audiences came face to face with real people. The formulaic presentation of transpeople being treated like circus animals (who are shamefully mistreated) was halted as the "voice-overs" by the circus masters and "experts" was questioned' (p. 198). Arguably Carlotta's time as a panelist on *Beauty and the Beast* facilitated a comparable even if not identical interruption; the show provided a public forum in which Carlotta was asked to speak her own truths about a number of differing topics, and where *she* was the expert on matters of queer gendering and sexuality. It was also a space in which she was respected (or in relation to Zemanek, disrespected) along with the rest of the 'beauties' as a real person, and her gender identity was

not used to conjure up 'freak show' fascination. On the show, Carlotta was represented as a woman not afraid to discuss her transsexualism, though it neither consumed nor constituted her as a person.

Conclusion

Through certain screen representations, Carlotta has been able to illustrate the progressive possibilities of transsexualism explicated by particular transgender theorists, namely: Stone's (2006) proposal of visibly intertextual transsexualism in which the transsexual is as a multiple, interwoven text; Bornstein's (1992) advocacy of ambiguous and fluid transsexualism; and Wilchins's (1997) assertions that transsexualism is a practice of transformation. In relation to Carlotta, *The Naked Bunyip* (Murray, 2005) utilises a known transgender performer from Sydney's drag scene to capture something of the experience of living as a professional female impersonator. Even in this early interview, Carlotta's screen appearance poses a challenge to the rigid dictates of binary gendering. Not too many years later, Carlotta again confounded gender expectations with the daring characterisation of Robyn Ross in *Number 96* (Powell, 1972-1977). Although the way in which the 'twist' of her storyline was executed left a lot to be desired, her role in the show, and her subsequent widely-discussed surgery provided a significant reference point in relation to her evolving gender status. Two decades later, Carlotta's appearance on *60 Minutes* (Wooley, 1996) imparted a transgressive transsexualism which incorporates multiple 'texts' as well and an ambiguity and fluidity. The progression of Carlotta's representation onscreen (so far) culminated in her role on *Beauty and the Beast* (Adamson, 1996-2007) where she was a valued member of the show, which required her to neither hide nor focus on her transsexualism.

Carlotta has played a significant role in establishing a tradition of transgender representation in Australia and has significantly contributed to improvements in mainstream accep-

tance of transgenderism, although there is a long way to go. The screen representations of Carlotta discussed here reveal much about attitudes towards transsexualism in Australia and the nature of Australian culture's relationship with transgender celebrities. Unfortunately, a tendency to exploit non-normative gendering, and negative and/or ignorant approaches to transgenderism came to light through these screen portrayals – including *Number 96* (Adamson, 1996-2007) using Robyn Ross's and Carlotta's transgenderism for cheap thrills and shock factor, and Wooley's (1996) uninformed comments in the *60 Minutes* interview many years later. These types of responses expose the marginalisation and many injustices transpeople face. Nevertheless, as has been explored, these same moments of television also facilitated progressive aspects of transgender representation. Taken together, the screen texts in question in this article also demonstrate Australian culture's capacity to be not just tolerant but accepting of people with non-normative gender identities. In these texts, Carlotta's achievements are acknowledged if not celebrated, and difficulties she has experienced as a transsexual woman are considered, particularly clearly on *Beauty and the Beast* (Adamson, 1996-2007). It may have been Carlotta's transgenderism that put her in the spotlight originally, helping make her a celebrity, yet it is her celebrity status that enables representations of her transgenderism to be so far-reaching. Her appearances in film and television give mainstream Australian audiences the chance to engage 'safely' but constructively with a transgender person, informing their real-world attitudes towards transgenderism, and thus positively affecting the lives of transpeople. Just as importantly, as a transsexual celebrity Carlotta's public presence also offers something to other transpeople. So often in mainstream forums transgendering is appropriated negatively or elided completely, yet Carlotta is one example of a public figure who affirmatively reflects transgender experiences. She has also opened the door, and cleared the path, for the favourable reception of other transgender celebrities in Australian

culture. As Carlotta aptly declared during an episode of *Beauty and the Beast* (Adamson, 1996-2007), 'I've had a fabulous, fascinating life'.

Author Note

Joanna McIntyre is completing a Media and Cultural Studies PhD, which examines historical and contemporary Australian screen representations of transgenering. She has also published articles on the history of transgender representation in Australian screen culture, the cinematic portrayal of queer space, and the depiction of transgender violence in Australian film.

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A 'GENDER CENTRE' FOR MELBOURNE? ASSESSING THE NEED FOR A TRANSGENDER SPECIFIC SERVICE PROVIDER

ANDREW MCLEAN

Abstract

This study investigated both transgender experiences with service providers as well as ideas for a transgender specific service or 'Gender Centre' in Melbourne, Australia. Participants reported the uninformed and discriminatory attitudes of medical and health professionals as an ongoing and prevalent problem when attempting to access medical and health services, leading many to seek 'transgender friendly' services. Issues with other service providers were often based on changes to gender status on forms and electronic systems, although transphobia was also experienced when accessing crisis and accommodation services. The general consensus of those that took part in the study was that the local transgender population would benefit greatly from the development of a transgender specific service provider in Melbourne, which would, ideally, feature a host of health and social services.

Introduction

In this paper, it is this researcher's intention to demonstrate that, despite preliminary evidence articulating the need for such, there is a distinct lack of transgender appropriate, let alone specific, services in Melbourne. This paper was borne out of a larger qualitative study (McLean, 2009) investigating both employment histories and experiences with a range of service providers amongst a small pool of transgender individuals living in Melbourne, Australia. A brief summation of the limited research available will be provided, describing transgender experiences with service providers in a local context, followed by an examination of the qualitative data. The first aspect of such includes the positive and negative personal

experiences of participants when accessing services, while the second relates to how a transgender specific service in Melbourne may be appropriately conceptualised. Finally, this paper will conclude with some recommendations as to how a trans-specific service provider or 'Gender Centre' may be developed for Melbourne.

Background

A significant majority of the existing body of research examining the experiences of transgender people has tended to focus on the discriminatory practices levelled at transgender people. For example, a 1994 Australian study by Perkins, Griffin and Jakobsen found that many of their sample of 146 had experienced discriminatory attitudes from personnel across a range of social services. Discriminatory practices were said to have occurred at legal services (10.3%), Centrelink and financial services (35.6%), medical services (16.1%), employment services (17.8%), the police (26.4%), and other government offices (19.9%) (1994: 59). These data provide a convincing case for the investigation of a more inclusive service delivery model, and beg the use of qualitative methods to draw out a coherent strategy for how this might be established – most likely in the form of a transgender specific service provider, such as Sydney's Gender Centre. However, the results of this report are now 17 years old and predominantly Sydney based, thus strongly indicating the need to investigate the present situation in Melbourne, with anecdotal accounts suggesting a transgender population size not dissimilar to that of Sydney.¹

1 As relayed by transgender advocate 'Sarah' in this study.

The 2007 *Tranznation* report issued by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) revealed that 87.4 per cent of transgender persons had experienced *at least one* incident of discrimination on the basis of their gender identity; half reported verbal abuse, social exclusion and the spread of defamatory rumours; and a third had been threatened with or were victims of violence (Couch *et al.* 2007). The focus of the *Tranznation* report, being the health and wellbeing of transgender people in Australia and New Zealand, is useful in relaying experiences with health services. A key finding in the report was that for many transgender people, the best experiences in the health system involved encounters where they felt accepted and supported by their practitioners. It is one of very few studies in this field to be conducted, and its pertinence cannot be discounted. However, it fails to adequately articulate the experiences of transgender people with service providers outside of the field of health – for example, services pertaining to housing, employment, crisis assistance, education, and emergencies. In feeling uncomfortable or even frightened to seek the help of such services, and being denied the right to feel safe, this clearly becomes a human rights issue, and the present research sought to attend to this.

Methodology

Given the lack of adequate attention paid to the experiences of transgender people in Melbourne in regard to their interaction with local service providers, the present research sought to engage with a small sample of individuals identifying as transgender, in order to conduct a small scale 'needs assessment' in a similar (albeit more qualitative) fashion to the project carried out by Roberta Perkins and her colleagues (1994). While an initial assumptive perspective was taken in terms of recognising that the Melbourne sex and gender diverse (S&GD)² population was unable to access a

2 Hereafter the terms 'transgender' and 'sex and gender diverse' are used interchangeably in keeping with the language used by local activist groups.

'generalised' service, preliminary research identified several groups/organizations (such as the closely aligned Transgender Victoria and Zoe Belle Gender Centre Working Group) within this population that have been lobbying for the development of such a resource.

Extensive analysis has been duly awarded to theoretical debates concerning transgender identity (see Bacon 2004 and Roen 2002), and for the purposes of eliciting experiences of those affected by such an apparent lack of services it was important to acknowledge transgender people as a group, whilst being careful not to homogenize their identifications, experiences, or aims. Thus an approach similar to that adopted by Whittle (2006: xi) was taken in understanding that *some* level of shared experience would be found, whether a transgender identity "can take up as little of your life as five minutes a week or as much as life long commitment to reconfiguring the body to match the inner self". As testament to the sensitivity towards this issue that was displayed by the researcher at all times, participants were most supportive of the aims of the research throughout the process, and none saw fit to comment on the existence of division within the S&GD population as a barrier to the eventual attainment of a 'Gender Centre'.

Thus, the only selection criteria for participants was their admission that they reside within the umbrella terms³ of 'transgender' or 'S&GD', were aged over 18 years, and were a Victorian resident. Following ethics clearance from the RMIT University Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee, recruitment advertisements were posted on online forums such as samesame.com.au and the {also} foundation's website to which three participants responded and were subsequently sent details of the re-

3 Similar to the manner in which this researcher, recently participated in research seeking those under the umbrella term of 'men who have sex with men' (MSM) while identifying as gay – yet clearly differing sectors of this MSM population will have vastly contrasting experiences/needs/wants.

search. A leading local transgender advocacy figure was approached directly to participate and provide advice regarding interview protocol, while the three remaining workers were interviewed while they were on shift as sex workers⁴ at an inner Melbourne brothel, having been informed of the research aims at an earlier stage by a personal contact of the researcher. Upon meeting each participant, the researcher detailed the aims of the project via a Plain Language Statement (PLS) and thereafter obtained informed consent.

Participants, over the course of a semi-structured interview, were asked to recount their positive and negative experiences when accessing social services, and were also asked to describe their personal visualisation of what a transgender specific service provider in Melbourne may look like. Interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically for commonalities and distinctions between the views of participants, with various factors (e.g. gender identification, social stratification) taken into account as possible determinants of individuals' particular views. Each participant has been assigned a pseudonym in order to protect their identity.

'Stabbing in the Dark': Experiences with Service Providers

Responses identified common problems transgender people face when accessing mainstream services, serving to not only underscore the depth of transphobia in the community, but also as a harsh reminder of the obstacles many transgender persons face in attempting to live a so-called 'normal' life. Promisingly, some participants spoke of strategies through which their experiences of discrimination with service providers might be overcome. It must be noted that access to the

services considered here are of a nature that members of the 'mainstream' community take for granted. Several members of the research sample had suffered numerous incidents of discriminatory practices upon seeking medical advice. Consequently, there was a strong emphasis on the importance of finding 'transgender friendly' health services, especially in respect of General Practitioners (GPs).

Considering that six of the seven participants were undergoing hormone therapy at the time the field research was conducted (with the remaining participant, Gary, seriously considering this option), it is fair to suggest that this is not an uncommon course of action for individuals within the transgender population to take – pointing to the need for a more centralised facility in Victoria (and perhaps even in other states) whereby such advice may be freely and non-judgementally provided. However, it is not this author's intention to posit that the majority of transgender individuals wish to undertake hormone treatment (let alone gender reassignment surgery), with expressions of gender identity too fluid to be bound by such a notion. As the two excerpts below demonstrate, for those who do transition, the conviction that many may have as regards their gender identity by this stage in their journey is not always validated by support from practitioners.

Verity: "A doctor in South Australia refused to give me hormone injections because he refused to believe that I knew what I was doing, and I just said, 'you know what, it's really not up to you to decide – just stick the fucking needle in'".

Peta: "Once I went to a GP years ago when I wanted to get advice about hormones. I don't think he had ever dealt with a trans person before, he seemed so nervous and it was like he didn't know what to do – he kept asking me if I was sure that this is what I wanted to do. I found it really offensive – I mean of course it's what I want to do, I can't imagine very many people just waking up and going 'I think I'll change my gender'".

4 It is necessary to point out that the disproportionate number of sex workers within the sample has significant implications for the findings of the broader *Transgender Lives* study, but also for the arguments within this paper.

Participants reported a distinct lack of knowledge of transgender issues amongst service providers as being fundamental to their negative experience with medical professionals, with insensitive questioning or in some cases blatant interrogation understandably causing distress to the affected individual, particularly in the earlier days of seeking said advice regarding hormone therapy. It appears as though some healthcare professionals have difficulty coming to terms with gender and sexual identities that fall outside of the hegemonic order - this was best illustrated by one practitioner's persistence in persuading Gary to 'reconsider' his adoption of an alternative 'masculine gender queer' identity:

Gary : Yeah people are really clunky around the gender stuff ... [there have been] people just kind of stabbing in the dark and not even asking how someone would prefer to be identified. Some GP's have been appalling, like with discussions around children. I saw one GP and he kept asking me why I didn't want to have kids. It does happen. I've had other issues with counsellors too - again asking me why I didn't want to have kids. They were at a hospital I was at when I was in there for an eating disorder, and yeah - he just kept asking me.

It would appear from this comment that while, in daily life, some transmen are often able to 'pass' unnoticed as a member of their preferred gender to a greater extent than transwomen (May, 2005, p. 23), evidently whilst 'under the microscope', so to speak, this invisibility is impossible to obtain. They may therefore be subsequently vilified in a similar manner to other transgender persons, perhaps more so given their perceived biological ability to bear children, evoking derision from practitioners because, subverting medicalised and hegemonic expectations, they 'don't want to have kids'.

Outside of the health sector, Sarah, a local transgender activist, recounted her experience with one service provider as being less than positive. Upon changing her gender identity in 1998, Sarah misplaced her driver's license.

She subsequently requested a replacement license with her preferred gender identity listed. VicRoads refused to comply with her appeal, and it was reissued under the title of 'Mr'. This is a notable case given that all individuals, transgender and otherwise, must deal with this particular service provider if they wish to drive a motor vehicle in the state of Victoria. In terms of other services outside of VicRoads, Sarah struggled to find a circumstance where she had been treated unfairly. It is important to note here that Sarah's work in advocacy may clearly place her in a position of privilege in having not only knowledge of appropriate services, but also in being able to command respect in being a leader in her field. Kylie, an accountant at a small firm, also mentioned experiencing difficulties changing her personal details (i.e., gender identifiers) with Vic Roads, as well as Super Funds superannuation, although she reasoned that these were most likely based on 'software difficulties' rather than blatant discrimination.

Verity, who was sex working at the time of the interview, had suffered the most discrimination with service providers of all those who participated, having been rejected from a homeless youth refuge, as well as being 'ripped off' by real estate agents offering overpriced and insecure tenancies, each she perceived as being on the basis of her gender identity. She spoke of her hatred towards her work and the sex industry, referring to her clients disparagingly as 'fucking faggots', and was working towards her ultimate goal of leaving the industry to work in fashion design. Verity had also been involved in transgender advocacy, working for the Australian Transgender Support Association of Queensland (ATSAQ) and primarily visiting universities, schools and the Queensland Police Academy as a community educator. It is not unreasonable to suggest that this background of disadvantage, and potential for the internalisation of such stigmatisation as a transgender sex worker, may have served to shade Verity's experiences. Verity provided further evidence that demonstrates the entrenched discrimination that some transgender people may face

when attempting to access crisis accommodation.

Verity: I heard about one tranny at [an inner city community health service] – and they weren't letting any more trannies in to the shelters because one tranny was supposedly running around naked and scaring all the women, or something.

Whether or not the individual in question in Verity's tale was in fact 'running around naked' can not be known for certain, yet this illustrates the discourse of transgender people as 'freaks', and 'scaring people' at play (e.g., May, 2005). Celeste, another sex worker, also commented on the difficulty some individuals face in this respect, although it is interesting to point out that her reference to illicit drug use is perhaps a reflection of her time and experience in the transgender sex industry, with the link between the two detailed at length by Perkins (1983).

Celeste: Here [Melbourne], lots of trannies get knocked back from [crisis] accommodation, even share accommodation, but sometimes they end up [in a relationship] with someone with a drug habit or something.

Once again, it was those participants involved in sex work that reported feeling higher levels of marginalisation, as though they didn't know where to turn for help when it was needed – or in the instance of accessing transgender friendly services, found that they were not altogether helpful.

Celeste: Melbourne is quite different. Sydney has the Gender Centre and we just go there when there is a problem. Here – there's nothing really, people don't really know where to go, especially if you're new. The community is kind of fragmented here.

Verity: I [went in and] got a reference from RhED, but I haven't found [them] to be that helpful, really.

This sense of isolation from services experienced by these sex workers could be related

to recent reports this researcher has received of management at male/transgender brothels purposefully discarding sexual health and social support information (left by organisations such as Resourcing Health and Education in the Sex Industry (RhED) seeking to educate workers), in order to keep their workers 'in the dark' about their rights.⁵

Despite negative experiences, and in some cases reticence or confusion surrounding engagement with services, there were positive stories to be relayed where constructive interactions with providers had taken place. Although, as detailed earlier (and acknowledged by herself below), Sarah may have something of an upper hand in terms of her personal and professional connections in advocacy, she considers luck and 'coincidence' to have played a role in her more positive experiences across a range of service providers.

Sarah: By amazing coincidence and sometimes networking, I've somehow stumbled my way into supportive providers, which is really good..... [it] must just be law of attraction, I mean, I find the people I need to find.

Peta had searched for appropriate avenues via websites (such as Transgender Victoria) based upon her prior negative experiences, and was now content that her needs were being met, while Cherry (with a very sunny disposition herself) merely considered the importance of someone being 'friendly' to suffice.

Peta: These days I tend to go for trans friendly doctors and other services – I mean why wouldn't you? It just saves any possible heartache.

Cherry: I just go to the ones that are friendly to me.

5 As revealed by a male sex worker with an extensive history of working in male/transgender parlours. This interview is part of a broader doctoral study investigating the male sex industry in Melbourne.

This desire to locate and patronise such services is clearly based on the need to feel comfortable and understood, and free of unwelcome interrogation. Such requirements of the transgender population would best be met by way of a transgender *specific*, not just friendly, service provider in Melbourne.

'A Safe Place to Go'

Although there had been an array of more constructive experiences with mainstream providers, each participant agreed that the transgender community would undoubtedly benefit from the establishment of a transgender specific service provider in Melbourne. The existence of a Gender Centre would serve to eradicate many of the negative experiences, in particular those with medical and health professionals that arise due to inadequate training and knowledge of transgender issues. Such a service would, as Sarah stated, ideally be 'a one stop shop', and a 'safe place to go' for anyone identifying as transgender. This concept of unification is instrumental when considering the complexities of transgender politics as alluded to earlier in this paper. In the same way that this research does not attempt to homogenise transgender experiences or voices, the centre must also acknowledge the diversity of its patrons – something that newer terms such as 'S&GD' hope to encapsulate. While some individuals with a transsexual self-identification may have differing needs (i.e., more physical – hormone therapy or gender reassignment) to someone identifying as gender queer (though not necessarily), others will again have differing needs depending on what particular stage they are at their transition, if indeed they have chosen to transition at all, in addition to other factors that Connell (2002) considers may intersect with gender (e.g., race, class, citizenship, education attainment) and potentially further marginalise individuals.

The Monash Gender Dysphoria Clinic has for many years been a key point of contact for Melbourne's transgender population, with individuals wishing to pursue gender reassign-

ment surgery required to undergo two years of psychiatric assessment at the Clinic beforehand. However, the Clinic was closed for a period in 2009 amidst great controversy, with several former patients coming forward and claiming they were wrongfully diagnosed as suffering from gender dysphoria (Stark, 2009). Despite the supposed ethical concerns in regards to patient treatment, another concern with the Monash Clinic lies with its medicalised framework that has a tendency to pathologise patients, in contrast to providing a comprehensive hub of service provision for the transgender population. The failure of the Monash Gender Dysphoria Clinic to adequately address the healthcare needs of the population was a key concern of several participants, with Gary referring to it as a 'car crash' and Kylie feeling that its adherence to and perpetuation of gender binaries (i.e., 'girly girls' and 'macho men') made it an unsuitable and often exclusionary model of health service provision. In its place, a more comprehensive service was suggested by participants, staffed by members of the transgender community, with Sarah and Kylie both eager to fill such a role. Participants were asked to outline key services that they would like to see on offer at the proposed centre, and the responses were incredibly wide and varied, further reiterating the lack of appropriate services at present.

Sarah, being heavily involved with transgender advocacy in Melbourne, had been part of the push for the development of a Gender Centre, and was therefore able to firmly conceptualise what such a service should entail. She saw the provision of primary health services (i.e., GPs) as an integral cornerstone of the facility. In addition, alternative therapists, such as naturopaths, acupuncturists, physiotherapists, and counsellors would also play an important role. Sarah also mentioned that it would be useful for the proposed facility to provide legal services, crisis services (much of which is currently issued on a gender binary basis) as well as links with employment bodies.

In the absence of such a service provider, she recognised an increased need for 'trans knowledgeable and trans sensitive professionals',

but also a need to ensure that every health professional is aware of the appropriate investigative channels when seeking information concerning transgender clientele. Although certain texts exist which aim to serve as resource manuals and guides for professionals when dealing with transgender service users (e.g., Brown & Rounsley, 1996; Greene & Croome, 2000; May 2005), there is no set 'guide' as such available for use by health and other service providers in Victoria. The Melbourne centre would, ideally, be able to prescribe and provide information to those wishing to undertake hormone therapy. As mentioned, hormone therapy is, for a number of transgender persons, considered a major step in solidifying and accepting one's gender identity, integral to the process of transitioning. However, there is apparently much misinformation and ignorance on the behalf of healthcare professionals that can ultimately thwart one's path to transitioning:

Cherry: [With] hormone therapy... I have known lots of people that when they start, they listen to people say 'take that and take that and this is a magic pill', but that is not the right information.

Gary: There's lots of things that I would be investigating in regards to taking T [testosterone] – I'll probably be doing that with mainstream doctors, which kind of terrifies me, because it's like I have to educate people and explain everything along the way – you know, 'why do you want to do that for' and the rest. Yeah so it's quite a scary prospect...you go to a service provider battling for yourself, but it can be so crushing when you go to provider and get misunderstanding, opposition – it sort of infantilises you.

Another key function of the facility could be its ability to communicate with the wider community and media through education and training programs. Kylie also spoke of the important role the centre could play in training and liaising with other service providers, and assisting with what were seen as 'simple things, like how to deal with [such] things such as changing names and genders on their computer systems'.

In addition to the core medical and healthcare aspects of the proposed centre, case management and accommodation assistance were also recognised as being fundamental. Further, it could serve to assist transgender clientele to find work appropriate to their aspirations by periodically co-locating staff from job service agencies as is practised at some services such as the Salvation Army Crisis Contact Centre in St Kilda. Staff from empathetic legal, housing and income support agencies could also conceivably play a role. However, none of the participants mentioned the crucial role that the centre could potentially play in heightening the employment prospects of S&GD people, with research indicating that workplace discrimination and diminished professional opportunity⁶ is not an uncommon experience for many individuals (Irwin 1999; Perkins et al, 1994). What was instead highlighted was the need to provide assistance with what Verity termed 'life skills' – perhaps a reflection of her experience with and exposure to the volatile lifestyle that may accompany sex work:

Verity: They need to learn how to live in society, how to cope with every day stresses. Life skills, really. Like filling out forms, like applications to apply for a place in real estate. Job applications – anything to do with that kind of stuff. It's like once people become transgender, it's like they forget who they are, their old life. And that's stupid, because it's still them, and just because they've changed sex doesn't mean they have to change who they are.

Yet what was most apparent was the general consensus that the community really just needed somewhere to go in terms of a fixed location to meet other transgender people, to combat the sense of isolation that many transgender people experience regularly:

6 This has led some commentators to note the prevalence of transgender persons' involvement in the sex industry as a result of these limited employment options (e.g. Connell 2002, Perkins et al 1994, Perkins 1983, Hounsfield et al 2007, McLean 2009).

Cherry: I think other people need more help than I did... It's a step towards accepting, and making it more normal. A Gender Centre will be really good for anyone who is more depressive and lost, or don't have a tranny friend, or doesn't know where to go for help. Because when you don't have a helping hand around you, those centres [such as the one in Sydney] are really good.

Celeste: It should be a place where trannies can go for support, where other trannies can meet each other – in the trans community we call them tranny mums – like someone who leads the way.

Finally, it was important for one participant to outline what the centre should not be. Verity was most concerned that the needs of the sex working side of the transgender subculture would be over represented, and serve to enforce a type of transgender sex worker hegemony – indicative of her willingness to dissociate herself from the industry:

Verity: [It shouldn't be] tarnished by anything too much to do with drugs, or prostitution, like a big needle exchange. Keep it separate. Because there are a lot of transgenders out there that have never thought about doing this kind of work. Lots of people starting out need some support away from their family or friends.

The Way Ahead

While the idea of a Gender Centre is far from new (having been on the transgender advocacy agenda for some time), a lack of resources within the transgender and trans friendly community has inhibited any significant developments. Following the tragic suicide of Zoe Belle (a prominent Melbourne based transgender advocacy figure) in 2008, The Zoe Belle Gender Centre working group (ZBGC) was established. Belle had been heavily involved in transgender and queer activism for some time, in addition to anti-violence campaigning and advocating for the rights of those with disabilities. While small fundraisers have been held on occasion, along with the receipt of small grants from such groups as

the Gay and lesbian Organisation of Business and Enterprise (GLOBE) to generate capital for the proposed Gender Centre, at present, ZBGC is more of an idea rather than established premises (Shaw 2010). However, the launch of a new ZBGC website in August of 2010 with a national resources directory featuring trans-friendly service providers is evidently a very valuable tool for this group, better able to assist individuals in avoiding negative experiences such as those described above. As noted, in contrast to other marginalised groups, there has been little in terms of research and advocacy on behalf of transgender groups and their needs. Consequently, nothing has been formally published⁷ that articulates that there is: a) a legitimate demand for such a centre in Melbourne, and b) the types of services that transgender people feel will be useful to incorporate in a centre (i.e., in the way that this research intends).

This researcher would like to offer a few suggestions as to how we may realise this reverie. Firstly, more fundraising activities and lobbying are currently being pursued through the ZBGC working group, in order to acquire some of the necessary capital and build the group's capacity – however, limited resources are an issue for ZBGC, and a broader solicitation of funds within the GLBTIQ community could prove successful for the group. Secondly, more research is needed, particularly in the realm of service provision, which goes beyond the scope of this research project. For instance, a comprehensive state-wide quantitative and qualitative study would be ideal, preferably conducted by someone heavily involved in the community to increase the likelihood of attracting the largest sample possible – this is also a possibility for ZBGC, although once again given the group's limited re-

⁷ In 2007, however, in the very early stages of ZBGC's development, a community consultation was held and a survey conducted with 82 participants in order to gauge interest in the centre – 82.2% of respondents said they would use the services of a Gender Centre.

sources, this may be where local academics and research institutions such as ARCSHS may be of assistance. However, more state based research in the vein of *Tranznation* is also required to determine level of need in other parts of the country. Ultimately, as recognized by ZBGC, it is the responsibility of the Victorian government to ensure the physiological and psychological wellbeing of members of the state's S&GD population –and the governmental body, the Department of Human Services (DHS), must be lobbied consistently and directly to provide this funding for the Gender Centre.

Conclusion

To date, this research heralds the only qualitative data available to articulate that there is indeed a need for a 'Gender Centre' in the city of Melbourne, Victoria - a centre that could potentially be modelled on the facility based in Sydney. Although the data herein is based upon a relatively small sample of seven, the experiences, both positive and negative, are rich in detail and demonstrate the difficulty that a significant proportion of individuals in the S&GD population face when attempting to access mainstream services. When presented with the opportunity to articulate their vision of what services a Gender Centre may encompass, participants were all enthused about the prospect of such a facility and were eager to see an array of services, however most were primarily concerned with having a fixed, central location for people to go to. While local community efforts are commendable and inspiring, they are currently hindered by resource scarcity, with further research and funding required for the proposed Gender Centre.

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TRANS DIGITAL STORYTELLING: EVERYDAY ACTIVISM, MUTABLE IDENTITY AND THE PROBLEM OF VISIBILITY

SONJA VIVIENNE

Abstract

Mainstream representations of trans people typically run the gamut from victim to mentally ill, and are almost always articulated by non-trans voices. The era of user-generated digital content and participatory culture has heralded unprecedented opportunities for trans people who wish to speak their own stories in public spaces. Digital Storytelling, is an easy accessible autobiographic audio-visual form, offers scope to play with multi-dimensional and ambiguous representations of identity that contest mainstream assumptions of what it is to be 'male' or 'female'. Also, unlike some media forms, online and viral distribution of Digital Stories offer potential to reach a wide range of audiences, which is appealing to activist oriented storytellers who wish to confront social prejudices. However, with these newfound possibilities come concerns regarding visibility and privacy, especially for storytellers who are all too aware of the risks of being 'out' as trans. This paper explores these issues from the perspective of three trans storytellers, with reference to the Digital Stories they have created and shared online and on DVD. These exemplars are contextualised with some popular and scholarly perspectives on trans representation, in particular embodied and performed identity. It is contended that trans Digital Stories, while appearing in some ways to be quite conventional, actually challenge common notions of gender identity in ways that are both radical and transformative.

Keywords: Digital storytelling, activism, transgender, identity, self-representation

Trans Digital Storytelling

While the terms 'transgender', 'transsexual', 'cross-dressing', 'intersex' and 'gender diverse' are all used in different contexts and by different people to mean slightly different things, I use 'trans' as an expression that encapsulates all of these categories; it is also the contraction that was most often used by the storytellers I worked with (which is not to say that all the people that I include under this umbrella would necessarily embrace the term themselves). Transgender theorist Susan Stryker (2006) believes 'transgender' is commonly used "as a term that refers to all identities or practices that cross over, cut across, move between, or otherwise queer socially constructed sex/gender boundaries" (p. 254). Trans Digital Stories are particularly interesting narratives of self because they problematise the categories that attempt to define them.

Digital Storytelling (DST) generally refers to a workshop-based practice in which ordinary people, mostly unskilled in media production, are guided through the process of creating a short (two to three minute) autobiographical video. In this field 'digital' frequently refers to the software¹, hardware² and digital assets³

1 Non-linear editing programmes ranging from freely available (iMovie; MovieMaker) to professional (Final Cut Pro; Adobe Premiere)

2 Computer; sound recording equipment; digital stills camera or video camera; scanner etc.

3 'Assets' refers to the constitutive parts of a digital story, that is photographs, narration, music etc.

that are utilised in the creation of a story and the online spaces⁴ in which stories can be shared. DST initiatives are often hosted by institutions and (from the perspective of both host institution and individual participants) are undertaken for a variety of objectives. These can be divided up into broad categories of purpose including personal empowerment; archiving social history; community development; education and social advocacy (for a global survey of DST programmes with an online presence see McWilliam, 2009). In many regards, Digital Storytelling and YouTube vlogs (video blogs/journals) offer similar opportunities for self-representation. Both allow the 'average' user to participate in public spaces as creators of their own self-representative media. There are, however, also many differences between vlogs and DST, and advocates for Digital Storytelling draw attention to the significance of the workshop story circle as a time and space where participants develop affinity with one another and confidence in the telling of their stories. While the stories themselves may eventually circulate in contexts that enhance feelings of social connectedness, it is the Digital Storytelling workshop process that affords a sense of participating collectively and creatively in a cultural space that is greater than the individual.

Importantly, however, while Digital Storytelling has enabled a greater number of formerly excluded individuals to participate in the shaping of culture through their Digital Stories, critics of the claim 'anyone can do it' have outlined a number of problems, including uneven access to both information and communication technologies (ICTs) and workshop practice. Problems such as these are further exacerbated in the context of Digital Stories made by trans people whose contestations of simplistic gender binaries is often experienced as a high risk activity. Unlike marginalised groups who

are protected by anti-vilification laws, in many countries overt prejudice against gender diverse people is still endorsed by social policy and practices that are discriminatory. As a consequence, trans people have both much to gain and much to lose by using their personal stories to unsettle social values.

Like many Digital Storytellers the people represented in this paper don't regard themselves as 'special' but rather 'ordinary'; similarly they don't regard themselves as paint-throwing, capital 'A' activists, but rather as more 'everyday' activists – people who Mansbridge and Flaster (2007) describe as individuals who "may not interact with the formal world of politics, but they take actions in their own lives to redress injustices..." (p. 630). They are the type of people who, when asked by a child at the checkout 'Are you a boy or a girl?' may just, if the mood strikes them, give a complex answer. While many trans people are drawn to modes of social advocacy that find them speaking on educative panels and at community forums, the Digital Story form and online distribution affords extended audience reach and longevity which is very appealing for victims of 'activist fatigue'. Sharing personal stories in online spaces also addresses the social and geographic isolation experienced by so many trans people. One of the trans storytellers included in this paper, Sean, points out that:

The trans community is about the same size as the Indigenous community in Australia... around three per cent - however it's so hard to find one another. So many of us are invisible or living stealth... the internet is a really useful tool for facilitating connections... reaching one another though storytelling is essential... it's like we've all been separated from our family at birth. We have to find one another somehow and the only thing, apart from *very* limited social services, is the internet...

4 Online spaces vary in sophistication and complexity, from simple hyperlinks to YouTube clips through to DST specific websites that provide forum discussions, downloadable 'how-to guides' and case studies on DST practice.

However, trans storytellers who aspire to 'normal lives' in which they 'pass' in their gender of belief, are torn between the desire to 'blend in' and the desire to see the world be-

come a more hospitable and tolerant place. The cost of increased exposure is reduced privacy – and not just for the storytellers themselves, but also for the friends and family members who may be part of their story or linked to them by association. In creating a Digital Story that is singular, brief and static, trans storytellers need to reconcile many different versions of personal history (versions that are frequently at odds with those held by friends and family members). These renditions attempt congruence with past, present and unknown future articulations of identity and there is invariably much distillation of complexity required to arrive at a three minute 'summary'. Some stories focus on physical transformation, others explore the reconstruction of friends and family networks post transition. Some storytellers utilise before and after snapshots; others use metaphor and illustrations as a means of both performing identity and maintaining anonymity. While identity-construction narratives are not unique to trans Digital Storytellers, traversing the boundaries of gender binaries inevitably focuses attention on changes in appearance and self-definition; shifts that are certainly more socially maligned than, for example, the changes we all undergo in the transformation from child to teenager to adult. Deciding which part of a whole life story to tell (and how) is part of the creative process for every Digital Storyteller, but for many trans storytellers these decisions have to be weighed alongside choices about personal risk over safety and exposure over anonymity.

However, unlike more spontaneous storytelling forms, the highly constructed Digital Story affords control over both the story creation process and the manner in which identity and experience is articulated; in voiceover narration; in choice of soundtrack; and in visual representations, ranging from family photos to artwork and visual effects. In the case studies I refer to, sharing personal (and often vulnerable) stories in a workshop context was generally regarded as empowering. This empowerment was later amplified by sharing these stories on cinema screens and online and most storytellers were affirmed by positive

feedback from audiences. At the theatrical launch one storyteller, Sean, was delighted to observe that, not only did his family get to 'see other identity stuff' but they 'got to meet the parents of a very young trans person and (see) how different it is now for parents...' Sean saw the whole experience as one of give and take in which '...hearing other people's stories and how they develop their identities and what shapes their identities, and then how they interpret different labels and all that sort of thing... it helps you to understand your identity better as well...'.

Trans storytellers offer nuanced personal insights into gender identity construction, thereby expanding both popular and scholarly understanding, yet these contributions are disputed by individuals and institutions that many trans people refer to as 'the gender police'. As such, and as David Valentine (2007) argues, transgender, "rather than being an index of marginality... is in fact a central cultural site where meanings about gender and sexuality are being worked out" (p. 14). The three stories that I discuss below, then, serve to highlight both the radical potential inherent in trans Digital Stories, but also the regulatory regimes that they render visible. Before examining these stories, however, I first consider some key points in relation to trans representation.

The Contested Landscape of Trans-Identity

While examples of transphobia, violence and discrimination are not hard to find in the mainstream media and are represented with varying degrees of accuracy in films like 'Boys Don't Cry' (Hart, Kolodner, Sharp, Vachon, Peirce & Bienen, 1999), it is difficult to comprehend how profoundly bigotry and ignorance flows across all sectors of society including queer communities and scholarly environs.

Susan Stryker (2006), in a well known piece on 'Performing Transgender Rage' describes, and attempts to understand, hostility from within the gay and lesbian community:

The attribution of monstrosity remains a palpable characteristic of most lesbian and gay representations of transsexuality, displaying in unnerving detail the anxious, fearful underside of the current cultural fascination with transgenderism. Because transsexuality more than any other transgender practice or identity represents the prospect of destabilizing the foundational presupposition of fixed genders upon which a politics of personal identity depends, people who have invested their aspirations for social justice in identitarian movements say things about us out of sheer panic that, if said of other minorities, would see print only in the most hate-riddled, white supremacist, Christian fascist rags (p. 245).

Much of the literature in the field of trans scholarship centers on the degree to which transgenderism or transsexuality is deemed to reinforce binary and/or stereotypical understandings of gender. In an effort to avoid accusations of essentialism, many feminist authors focus upon the constructed or performed qualities of gender while critiquing the medicalisation of embodied gender. Some of this work, while intending to complicate readings of gender identity, uses emotive language that is hostile to transpeople.

Janice Raymond's 'The Transsexual Empire' is perhaps the best-known example of the trans-bashing that has taken place in feminist literature. Raymond's book, published in 1979, likened male-to-female sex change to rape, claiming that it was yet another appropriation by men of women's bodies and women's spaces (Love, 2004, p. 93).

Of course, while not all feminist accounts of gender are critical of trans-identities, it can be argued that the epistemological investigation of gender *abstracts lived experience* to the extent that many gender diverse people are alienated from the very identity categories that are intended to describe them. In writing an ethnographic account of divergent gender diverse communities in New York, David Valentine (2007) notes "I was struck by the observation that a large number of the people I met and talked to did not know the term

'transgender' or were resistant to its use to describe them (p. 21)".

Butler (2006), while often accused of theoretical and linguistic abstraction (Benhabib, Butler, Cornell & Fraser, 1995; Speer & Potter, 2002; Bordo, 1993), offers an interesting analysis of how essentialist perspectives on gender may be deeply internalised and reconstituted in a performance of trans-identity.

...it is for the most part the gender essentialist position that must be voiced for transsexual surgery to take place, and... someone who comes in with a sense of gender as changeable will have a more difficult time convincing psychiatrists and doctors to perform the surgery. In San Francisco female-to-male candidates actually practice the narrative of gender essentialism that they are required to perform before they go in to see the doctors... (p. 191).

She uses the famous case of David Reimer, a male embodied child born with XY chromosomes who, damaged by circumcision at eight months old, was raised as a girl under the supervision of psychologist John Money. As a twin, Joan/John (the pseudonym by which David was known for many years) was an ideal test case for Money's theories on the development of gender identity through social learning. Despite Money's accounts of the success of the case, John/Joan experienced ongoing difficulties with gender identity and depression and at 14 he decided to assume a male identity, calling himself David. Using excerpts from interviews with David (John) conducted by Milton Diamond (an endocrinologist who supported Reimer in undertaking his second gender transition), Butler (2006) argues that our story of self is heavily mediated by social context and gender stereotypes.

What was the problem with Joan, that people were always asking to see her naked, asking her questions about what she was, how she felt, whether this was or was not the same as what was normatively true? Is that self-seeing distinct from the way s/he is seen? John seems to understand clearly that the norms are external to him, but what if the

norms have become the means by which he sees, the frame for his own seeing, his way of seeing himself? (p. 190).

Far from providing evidence for either the 'nature' or 'nurture' camps, Butler (2006) uses the case to illustrate how surveillance and comparison with gender 'norms' may contribute to, but by no means delineate, the complex internal amalgamation of genetics, hormones and social contexts that she believes are synthesized in performing identity. Unfortunately Reimer's journey, like that of too many trans people, ended tragically in 2004 with his suicide.⁵

While Butler (2006) focuses on gender and identity as performance, Giddens (1991) holds that:

The existential question of self-identity is bound up with the fragile nature of the biography which the individual 'supplies' about herself. A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor - important though this is - in the reactions of others, but in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*. The individual's biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self (p. 54).

Clearly narratives of self are not only shaped for personal consumption but for those people surrounding us; audiences composed of both intimate and unknown publics. What ramifications do these various theories of identity have for trans individuals with biographies that, while not fictive, may nevertheless alter dramatically over the course of several years? In an environment where everyone from celebrities to politicians to facebook users are frequently maligned for presenting inconsis-

tent opinions, beliefs or articulations of self, how do trans individuals fare? Perhaps trans identity highlights the instability and inconsistency of *all* identity? Roz Kaveney (1999) puts it like this:

...we are prone to vary across time. Often, to describe oneself is simply to describe a particular moment, to say who we were in a particular year. It is a matter of prudence not to burn bridges that we may, as individuals, find ourselves in need of sooner or later (p. 149).

Does this cautionary prudence, in acknowledging different incarnations of self across time, influence what a trans storyteller may include or exclude from their story? Green (2006) develops this issue of fluid unfolding identity, highlighting the fact that actually owning or declaring a trans-identity (especially in a public space as an activist) is at odds with the normative goals of medical and psychological treatment for transsexual people:

We are supposed to pretend we never spent 15, 20, 30, 40 or more years in female bodies, pretend that the vestigial female parts some of us never lose were never there. In short, in order to be a good - or successful - transsexual person, one is not supposed to be a transsexual person at all. This puts a massive burden of secrecy on the transsexual individual: the most intimate and human aspects of our lives are constantly at risk of disclosure (p. 501).

Green (2006) argues that, in order to confront bigotry and social ignorance around gender diversity, it is desirable for trans individuals to be visible and to publicly declare their history, despite the significant personal risks this entails. While both Green (2006) and Kaveney (1999) accept that these risks are likely to cause some trans people to choose 'stealth' (living exclusively in one's gender of belief, negating trans identity), they both emphasise the positive consequences of 'being out':

...the campaign for personal invisibility has

⁵ Sean, whose work and advocacy is centred in mental health, was quick to cite recent research that asserts the rate of attempted suicides in the trans community is 17% higher than in the general population

always struck me as entirely perverse and self-hating... It is less important to pass than to be accepted. If being transgendered is valued as a human variation, then many problems disappear. And it is more likely to be valued if we value it ourselves - being out and proud and prepared to defend ourselves is probably less risky than being in the closet, ashamed of our pasts and relying on a piece of paper (Green, 2006, p. 149).

So far these discussions of fluid, evolving identity have focussed upon what Kaveney (1999) calls 'conversion narratives', where transition occurs from one clearly defined gender category to the other and, having arrived at the destination, stays fixed: "I once was lost, who now am found/Was bound, who now am free (Kaveney, 1999, p. 149). Here Kaveney (1999) utilises a lyric from the hymn 'Amazing Grace', which of course emphasises not just transition from one state to another but cathartic and conclusive religious redemption achieved in the process. What prospects are there for those whose 'biographies of self' continue to evolve? Are they forever prone to accusations of inconsistency or disparaging comments along the lines of 'I guess it was just a phase you were going through?' In an essay published online, FTM Max Wolf Valerio (2003) writes:

I celebrate the human capacity and right to change, rediscover, reinvent and continuously experience revelation; to re-evaluate and to renounce any aspect of myself that is no longer authentic; to live beyond my own fears and preconceived notions as well as those of the people around me. Without a doubt, anything can be revealed at any moment. Without a doubt, anything usually is . . . I claim the right to change my mind.

Valerio (2003) suggests, like Giddens (1991), that one's biography should be under constant review, but is unconcerned that radical alterations that repeatedly traverse gender categories may leave him prone to personal criticism. In fact he accepts that his identity journey may be difficult to understand, but nevertheless proclaims a moral obligation to live au-

thentically in the moment. In her review of recent writing on trans-identities, Love (2004) speculates:

...in part it is because of the visibility and the supposed immutability of gender that such changes encounter such widespread resistance. Valerio claims the right to change - to change oneself materially and with finality - and then to change again beyond that very finality. While such subjective flux tends to be stigmatized in transsexuals as either mental illness or lack of political commitment, Valerio presents it as a crucial aspect of human subjectivity (p. 99).

It is also worth noting that embracing a right to rediscover and reinvent articulations of self may also include embracing identities that defy categorisation. In this regard, 'genderqueer' is a term gaining in popularity as a catch-all descriptor of gender identities that fall outside the binary categories of male or female, and is often claimed by individuals who are androgynous in appearance and diverse in their sexual identity. Driver (2007) reflects upon her research into an online "birl" community (boyish girls or girls who identify as boys).

...the community provides a collective place to dialogue publicly about identity, to share with others alternative ways of inhabiting in-between genders. A youth introduces himself in the following ways: "I am a boyish girl (and a girlish boy) because I fluctuate between feminine and masculine... I love to wear skirts, but I also love to bind, pack and wear ties. I am comfortable being called she most of the time, but other times I prefer he." Gender ambiguity becomes a source of pleasure and bonding between these youth... At times, the very concept of gender is up for grabs, boldly theorized by youth beyond heterogendered frameworks (p. 188).

Given their capacity to describe themselves on their own terms in a text based space, one can only speculate what impact these "birls" might have if they were to share their unapologetic stories and self-representations in

multi-media Digital Story form with a wider community.

Overview of the Rainbow Family Tree Project

During 2009, a series of Digital Storytelling workshops were auspiced by SHine SA (an SA based government funded sexual health education and information network). As principal facilitator I acknowledged my multiple roles as Queer Digital Storyteller, filmmaker and researcher. Some of the workshops took place face to face and others were facilitated almost entirely online. The initiative was known as 'the Rainbow Family Tree' project and had several stated objectives, being GLBTQIS⁶ community engagement and production of an educational resource. Participants were recruited via info posters placed in social service agencies and distributed via e:lists and in some cases through word of mouth. They were aware that their finished Digital Stories would be launched at a theatrical screening, appear online and be a part of a DVD compilation (to be packaged with a facilitators guide as an 'anti-homophobia' resource, distributed by SHine SA). Issues of privacy and publicity were discussed with all participants and, in fact, many were keen to engage in the initiative out of a desire to 'get our stories out there'. There was a general perception and underpinning assumption that sharing personal insights and anecdotes is an effective means of raising awareness of diverse sexual and gender identities and confronting social prejudices. Sarah and Karen were involved in the face to face workshop (but had met prior) and Sean followed in the online workshop. I give a thumbnail description (approved by each storyteller) as a means of briefly outlining their motivations, aspirations and challenges in creating and sharing their Digital Stories.

6 The acronym used by SHine (and in various other forms by many others) to connote Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Same-sex attracted

Sean is a 29 year old female to male (F2M) individual who has been living full time in his gender of belief for several years. He has an Honours Degree in Social Work and his thesis canvassed a wide range of perspectives on gender transition. He currently works as a Community Rehabilitation worker in the mental health field and has taken a lead advocacy role in educating both his fellow workers and employers about trans issues. He generally refers to himself as a trans-man with pan-sexual preferences and notes that he modifies these self-descriptors according to who he is speaking to. He believes many of his clients assume he is a gay man. His Digital Story is a short journey through his happy childhood and tumultuous teenage years followed by learning about transgenderism and deciding to 'become male' (Sean's words). His focus is positive and self-accepting and acknowledges the significance of the two families ("my trans brothers and sisters" and "my family who raised me") who love and support him.

Sarah is an older transsexual woman (male to female or M2F) who is currently undertaking a higher research degree. She had an unhappy childhood in England, much of it spent in abusive foster homes or state institutions, and left the UK when she was 21. She has adult children, one of whom she is reconciled with after initially having lost contact at the time of transitioning. She is a leader and vocal advocate for the South Australian Transsexual Support Group (SATS) and, while she often speaks at community events, she regards herself as an intensely private 'almost reclusive' person. Her story is illustrated with her own drawings of a caterpillar's transformation into a butterfly and her narration is poetic and allusive, accompanied by reflective cello music.

Karen is a transgender woman (M2F) who made her story in the early days of her transition. She has worked for many years as an administrative officer in a Women's Health Service. Her story starts with her childhood in a 'typically conservative and idyllic' family in England and travels through her realisation that she wanted to be like her sister: 'a little

girl'. Years later, having decided to acknowledge her inner truth, Karen describes the acceptance she unexpectedly received from her sister. She focusses on this positive relationship and the hope that it inspires, while grieving the loss of relationships with her partner, children and parents.

While the storytellers in this paper have much in common, the ways in which they have manipulated the multimedia tropes of Digital Storytelling are divergent and complicated. While all three were familiar and relatively comfortable with sharing their personal stories as a mode of social advocacy they all considered that their engagement with the Rainbow Family Tree project would probably take them out of their comfort zones. None of them regarded themselves as especially tech savvy and they all had trepidations about their capacity to master the editing software as well as engage in the online community. The desire to 'conquer the technology' actually proved to be a useful focus by diverting anxiety away from more creative storytelling concerns. There was also an accompanying emotional roller coaster as they each braved many levels of anxieties; first, sharing their stories in a small group workshop (both face to face and the online equivalent); frequently confronting well buried memories; then consulting with friends and family members as to whether they were happy to be included in their stories.

Analysis of Trans Digital Stories

In 'Back to Happiness', the narrator – Sean – describes a 'happy, adventurous and confident childhood'; racing matchbox cars, dressing as a superhero, climbing trees and riding a BMX bike. The accompanying photos show what appears to be a cheeky blonde boy. The next part of the story reveals the impact of social and media messages about 'how to be a girl... not a boy' and the onset of female hormones, accompanied by images of a shy/sullen teenage girl. The narrator states: "I rarely wore dresses because they made me feel like I was in drag", and "I lived with anxiety and depression for nearly two decades". A change in

background music and visual style heralds the next phase in the narrator's existence, including online research and meeting "my first transgendered person". He states: "I realised I was the cliché of being male trapped inside a female body... but at last I found how I could finally become happy again. I decided to transition to become male". The rest of the story summarises the experience of 'becoming male' in a few short sentences and skips over the accompanying tumultuous social changes with the gloriously understated, "after a period of adjustment my family and friends were very supportive too". The narrator speaks positively about having two families who can now see the "confident and happy person I am once more". He includes photographs of a birthday celebrated with a little niece and nephew alongside photos of friends in the trans community resplendent in black ties and frocks.

The positive self-acceptance that emanates from Sean's digital story is reflected in an interview in which he describes the process of making it. His father did not wish to be identifiable in the story and Sean debated whether or not to blur his image in a family snapshot he wished to use.

That seemed to imply shame and I didn't think Dad was ashamed, more that he was simply paranoid about the internet... and at the end of the day he has the right to have control over how and where he is represented just as I do...

Sean's empowered choice in representing his families as he sees them (loving and diverse) while simultaneously respecting their right of self-representation demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of both identity and community. It seems unlikely that an outsider 'looking in' could create this kind of nuanced and ethical story and for this reason alone it is a radical example of trans storytelling.

'I am Sarah' is told almost entirely with hand drawn images of a slightly cartoonish pair of caterpillars, one brown and plain, the other attractive and with long eyelashes. The narra-

tion starts with, "I was different; not how other people wanted me to be... my body alien to my inner self", and becomes increasingly poetic and slightly abstract. As the caterpillars become chrysalises we hear "fear cannot deny truth any longer, nor hold sway... all that was wrong has finally become right". Finally we see first one beautiful butterfly, then a flock, accompanied by, "Into such a diverse world I am *not* unique... different perhaps, depending upon your perspective... but I know who I am".

Much of Sarah's story comments implicitly on gender norms as measured by physical representations of beauty. However by using symbolic images of caterpillars and butterflies she both maintains her privacy (through not using before and after shots or images that might identify place, family or friends) and avoids affirming the very gender stereotypes she wishes to deconstruct. Sarah describes herself as a private person and in a perfect world she would choose to 'blend in'. She also recognises this impulse in other M2F friends.

The majority of girls that I see, while they may not be as reclusive... as socially isolated as me, by choice, um... they tend to want to be invisible. Now, as I am, I can't be invisible, unfortunately. Not without, um [makes noise], a road closure, or a scaffold, and a building team, reconstruction papers, and certificates, whatever. I joke about it.

Towards the end of the story Sarah breaks with the visual style she has established by showing herself in a head and shoulders photograph, dressed and beautifully made up, half smiling against a neutral background. The narration states: "I am Sarah, not part of a clique". Sarah reflects upon the inclusion of this photograph:

I changed my mind on that about 10 times I think... 'cause I'm not photogenic. I never have been. The camera does not like me. I always look about 500 years older... The idea was to get people to see that I'm not comfortable with being upfront and in your face, and exploring my entire life history in

open, you know? But what putting that photo at the end does, is it shows that people *can* get past that. And I hope that with people who want to transition, or people who are in transition and struggling, I'm hoping that that final frame takes them by surprise, and they go, 'Oh, *that's* what you look like!' That final image just validates the message, and says, 'Look, here I am. Um, I'd rather *not* be here. But here I am. So if I can do it, why can't you?

Sarah's decision to maintain a sense of privacy through poetic abstraction while taking a stand in support of other trans people treads a fine line typical of the everyday activist. She has a similarly courageous attitude when it comes to sharing her story with audiences.

I'd rather walk into a room full of hostiles than walk into a room where everybody's on side. To me, that's no value, you know? What's the point of talking to people that have some understanding, when you should be talking to people that have got no bloody understanding, could be totally intolerant? ... yet you can walk out of there knowing that you've got a couple of them thinking.

'Sisterhood: a path less travelled (a tribute)' follows one of the shared generic tropes of both Digital Storytelling and many trans narratives by 'starting at the beginning' with photographs and a description of childhood. The storyteller – Karen – describes an early realisation, at age seven, that she was jealous of her sister because, "I wanted to be a little girl... just like my sister..." Grainy black and white photographs chart the sister's development into a beautiful young woman and the narrator's parallel journey into masculinity, marriage and fatherhood, described as "to play a role and hide my truth, both for my safety and their ease, seemed easier... This strategy clearly didn't work... constantly flowing beneath the surface was a stream of unhappiness, confusion, silent yearning, pain, suffering and unfulfillment...". In a later passage, precisely composed and narrated with great calm and control: "When my uninvited dilemma became too powerful and I felt like I

was dying inside... I had to speak out loud... Those nearest and dearest to me couldn't cope... I lost them all... all, that is, except my sister". The image of a family gathered together on the lounge for a family portrait (several faces obscured by blurring) becomes high contrast black and white then shatters into many tiny squares.

Karen struggled with finding a creative way to represent her current relationship with her sister. She had very few photographs of them together, and we talked about trying to reenact and photograph some ritual that they shared. Something 'female'? Something 'sisterly'? She decided on a series of photographs (taken in a bathroom by an invisible third party) of she and her sister putting on make-up together; a ritual of 'feminisation' that Karen had watched and envied many times as she grew up. In this way Karen constructed and performed a present embodied self and placed clear parameters around the aspects of the relationship that she wished to represent. 'Sisterhood' is essentially a story of acceptance set against the concomitant and understated theme of rejection. While it was made with the desire to communicate to a wide audience it addresses one person specifically - her sister.

There is a postscript to 'Sisterhood' that illuminates the problematic issue of fluid, evolving identity and the difficulty of foreshadowing further change in a permanent digital document. In an interview with Karen over a year after the making of 'Sisterhood', she revealed that "Karen's days are numbered". For a number of complex reasons, Karen has decided to 'revert' to her male identity. While much of the language used in describing this journey was oriented around 'success' and 'failure', Karen was also keen to state that this new incarnation of identity would reflect aspects of all previous selves.

I believe that it's a little bit like a history record... history comes from the perspective of the writer... you ask different people about that history and they'll see that history differ-

ently but it was true to the writer of that history... Also, you know that story didn't finish at that point, in fact that was the beginning of a journey in many ways... the journey has taken another direction that was perhaps unexpected? But I guess the potential, the awareness... you could say had always been there because that's what the journey is about... it's about discovery...

Karen's Digital Story was unique and compelling in its original context; however the postscript, far from undermining the original, brings new insight into the transient nature of identity and the unexpected paths that all our lives take. Karen also highlights the arbitrary nature of choosing any one point as the beginning, middle or end of a Digital Story. While at the time of interview she felt that she "couldn't see the wood for the trees", she thought it possible that at some point in the future she might undertake an update to her story, perhaps in the form of a new Digital Story or as an online post/blog entry. This capacity to update or modify the context of a Digital Story goes some way towards addressing the problem of its immutable form. However it is the underpinning acknowledgment of fluid and amorphous identity that is celebrated by these storytellers and trans activists like Green (2006), Kaveney (1999) and Valerio (2003), that is perhaps most challenging for mainstream audiences.

Digital Stories: Embodied, Constructed, Distributed

Trans storytellers articulate their journeys in many different ways. Theories on gender identity are similarly divergent, ranging from social constructionist perspectives that focus on performances of gender through essentialism and debates about embodiment and genetic/biological origins. While Digital Stories are authentic first person accounts, they are nevertheless highly constructed and mediated by social context (including the circumstances of the workshop in which they are created). The choice of images, music and particular words reflect a conscious construction of iden-

tity just as the intonation of narration reflects a performance of self. Unlike the written word, photographs represent identity *incarnate*, hence in some ways these stories are both embodied *and* performed. As contrived digital documents they provide opportunity to reflect upon and control self-representation in a way that is difficult when just 'being myself in the moment' (a process that further distinguishes them from the typical verbatim YouTube vlog). Influencing distribution by limiting screenings to a handful of friends or by strategically targeting audiences, both intimate and unknown, affords storytellers additional control over how they share their identities. It is my contention that Digital Storytelling, as an accessible audio/visual multimedia form that easily populates online spaces, offers profound and far-reaching potential for trans storytellers as everyday activists.

Conclusion

The city in which these stories were created, Adelaide, feels like a small country town for many trans people. There are limited medical and psychological services dealing with gender identity issues. Trans support and social groups are few and often combine people from very different backgrounds and with very different ideas about what it means to be 'trans'. Each of the trans storytellers in the Rainbow Family Tree case study has made a series of tough decisions, first in deciding to transition and second in making a Digital Story as an 'out' trans person. Sean argues that developing a thick skin is crucial.

...from the very beginning of my transition I'd decided that I was no longer going to care what people think about me... If I continued to care about what people thought of me, including my family, I would have just gone crazy because there's so many different perspectives about gender transition... I just dealt with my parents' reaction as though, you know, they'd get it eventually, and I didn't take anything they said to heart... and that was the key really.

Perhaps 'not caring what people think' affords

trans storytellers the tenacity to live and speak as exemplars of everyday activism? Rendering a slice of life in permanent Digital Story form, then distributing it widely, while no doubt upping the stakes, nevertheless evokes the same conflict between privacy and publicity that is wrangled on a daily basis.

While Digital Storytelling affords greater autonomy in constructing and distributing stories of self than comparable well-meaning documentaries created *about* self they are nevertheless representations of identity that are mediated by social circumstances. This does not negate their authenticity; neither does an acknowledgment that our current performed and embodied selves are influenced by parenting and a myriad of social institutions (schools, hospitals, courts) alongside genetic factors. Trans Digital Stories are radical offerings in part because they report the existence of these multitudinous influences and, *despite this*, claim a space to describe personal and heartfelt truths. Additionally, far from voicing the marginalised concerns of 'other', they offer everyone, regardless of their gender identity, an opportunity to better understand the nuances of human existence and the inspirational potential of living beyond gender stereotypes.

Author Note

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CONTRIBUTIONS OF BIOLOGICAL PSYCHOLOGY TO UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER IDENTITIES

JESSICA CHOPLIN

Abstract

Research on the biology of gender has to date investigated factors (such as anatomical brain structures, genes, and hormones) that are thought to correlate with discrete gender behaviours. By contrast, the present paper argues that this research program is misguided, and moreover that its sole focus on biological explanations can serve to essentialise and pathologise non-normative gender identities. As a corrective to this, the present paper suggests that the relationship between social influences and biology is reciprocal such that social influences often affect behaviors that are interpreted as gendered through the lens of biology. The paper then proposes a preliminary list of situations where the gendered social roles that western culture has constructed do not accommodate variability between individuals including: stressful situations, friendships, situations requiring empathy, expected emotionality, and situations that require or prohibit aggression and assertiveness. This alternative approach allows us to glean insights from biological psychology to better understand the social construction of gendered identities without implying gender essentialism.

Key words: biological psychology, social construction, gender identity, non-normative gender

Introduction

Research investigating the aetiology of non-normative gender identities continues to search for biological factors that are dichotomously associated with such identities, including: anatomical brain structures (Zhou et al.,

1995; Kruijver et al., 2000), sex-steroid or hormone related genes (Henningson et al., 2005), or pre- or post-natal exposure to hormones (Schneider, Pickel, and Stalla, 2006; Phoenix et al., 1959; Goy, Bercovitch, and McBrair, 1988; Gorski, 1991; Short, 1979). The assumption underlying this research program is that if researchers can find an essential attribute that is shared by all people who best fit a male role (whether they were assigned to play that role at birth or not) and another such essential attribute that is shared by all people who best fit a female gender role, then non-normative gender identities can be easily absorbed into a normative binary understanding of gender. This outcome may potentially be appealing to some non-gender normative people (such as transsexuals), partly at least on the basis of the fact that it appears that non-trans people who believe biological explanations of non-normative gender identities are more accepting of trans people (Tee & Hegarty, 2006). One implication of establishing a biological basis to non-normative gender identities, then, would be the extension of civil rights for trans people on the basis of this greater acceptance. Whilst this support for biological explanations appears logical, however, it is far from clear that it would function in this way in the United States, for example, as it is not automatic that a suspect class status would follow from proof of biological immutability (see Hegarty, 1997).

This search for biological 'proof' of the veracity of non-normative gender identities is also problematic for the ways that it has the tendency to locate such identities within a pathologising model (at least to the extent that some sort of medical 'problem' is taken to have produced the apparent incongruity be-

tween gender identity and anatomical sex; see McKittrick, 2007). This approach is further pathologising for any non-gender normative person who 'lacks' the proposed essential attribute (the diversity of intersex conditions suggests that there would almost certainly be a large variety of possible variations; see Blackless et al., 2000). A biological approach can also be problematic from a political point of view in that it can be used to defend gendered social hierarchies wherein male-assigned people¹ are given higher status than female-assigned people, which would mean that even after transitioning non-gender normative people would be expected to conform to dominant gender hierarchies (see Peters, 2005, for a personal account of a trans woman who experienced these dominance hierarchies; see also Bem, 1993; Parlee, 1996).

Of course the problems with the search for solely biological explanations of gender are not only limited to their application to non-gender normative people; such explanations also fail to capture the entire spectrum of gender identities amongst gender-normative people (i.e., those whose gender identity matches up, more or less, with their assigned sex). For example, survey research has consistently documented varying degrees of discomfort in assigned gender roles amongst a range of 'biological' men and women (Gillespie & Eisler, 1992; Pleck, 1995; Eisler & Skidmore, 1987). Furthermore, just as any psychological theory of same-sex attraction also needs to explain

opposite-sex attraction (e.g., Freud, 1962/1905), so any psychological theory of why some people are uncomfortable or feel distress in their assigned gender roles should also explain why others are comfortable, ambivalent, or indifferent (i.e., the entire spectrum).

Also, and from a traditional scientific standpoint, any approach that assumes that biology is the cause, and social roles are the effect, is problematic in that it would assume that biology is fixed, which would fail to capture the complex, dynamic, and reciprocal relationships between biology and the social and physical environment in which individuals develop (e.g., Batalha, 2006; Fausto-Sterling, 1985). Recent research has demonstrated, for example, that levels of sex hormones such as androgens and progesterone vary due to social influences such as recent victories and defeats, physical health, and social support and closeness (Brown et al., 2009; Schultheiss et al., 2005). The model in which biology is thought to be the cause and social roles and behaviors are thought to be the effect is, therefore, at least partially incorrect; social roles and other ecological contingencies are deeply involved in attenuating, amplifying, and in some cases creating biological realities (Parlee, 1996). In other words, we might think of biology as one medium through which society and culture often construct social realities, rather than being the root or cause of social realities as assumed by conventional biological explanations (Ahmed, 2008). The goal of this article is to explore this suggestion by examining some areas where biological psychology might provide insights into why social roles as they have been constructed in contemporary western cultures fit some people better than others.

Problematic Situations or Opportunities to Thrive

Due to the constructed and arbitrary nature of gendered social roles within western cultures, there will always likely be differences in the degree to which they fit individuals

1 I use the terms "male-assigned" and "female-assigned" to refer to the expectations that are placed on individuals. The category "male-assigned" includes cisgender men, trans men after they have transitioned and are expected to act like cisgender men, and trans women prior to transition when they are still expected to act like cisgender men. The category "female-assigned" includes cisgender women, trans women after they have transitioned and are expected to act like cisgender women, and trans men prior to transition when they are still expected to act like cisgender women.

(see Mead, 1935/2001, for a classic analysis of how cultures construct arbitrary gendered social roles and why some individuals may not fit these roles). Some situations will create difficulties or distress in the daily lives of some people. Other situations will create opportunities for individuals to thrive if only they were allowed to adopt a gender role that does not 'match' with the sex they were assigned at birth. I hypothesise that some of these situations include: stressful situations, friendships, situations requiring empathy, expected emotionality, and situations that require or prohibit aggression and assertiveness. No two individuals will be alike in the degree to which they find these situations easy or difficult or the degree to which they would have an opportunity to thrive in these situations to the extent that the people around them and the legal system allowed them to adopt their preferred gender identity. It is important to note that my goal is only to present some examples and this list is not complete. Listening to each individual's personal story is critical in understanding their idiosyncratic challenges and opportunities (Lysenko, 2009).

Stressful Situations

I hypothesise that in contemporary western cultures, individuals' idiosyncratic strategies for coping with stress might be one of the most important issues affecting the degree to which gender roles fit them. Some people cope by discussing their problems with friends, while others prefer physical exercise, and still others prefer to be alone (Tamres, Janicki, & Helgeson, 2002). That is, individuals have their own idiosyncratic strategies for dealing with stress. Nevertheless, western cultures typically expect male-assigned people to cope by engaging in physical activity or socially isolating themselves (Jourard, 1971; McKenna, Green, & Gleason, 2002), and conversely expect female-assigned people to cope by affiliating with others (Taylor, 2002).

Some researchers have argued that this

purported gender difference, wherein male-assigned people cope by isolating themselves and female-assigned people cope by affiliating with others, is due to biological differences between male-bodied and female-bodied people (Taylor et al., 2000), but there are reasons to question whether biology is purely a cause and the different responses to stress are purely effects. Traditionally, responses to stress have been characterised as fight-or-flight responses (Cannon, 1932), but oxytocin is a hormone that reduces fight-or-flight responses (Carter, Lederhendler, & Kirkpatrick, 1999; Insel, 1997; but see Taylor et al., 2006). Along with endogenous opioids, this hormone is thought to encourage people to befriend others, trust them, spend time with them, and disclose problems to them in response to stress by providing endogenous rewards for positive social affiliations (Heinrichs et al., 2003; Kosfeld et al., 2005) and possibly punishment for failing to establish positive social affiliation (Taylor, 2006). Taylor et al. (2000) argue that because androgens inhibit oxytocin release (Jezova et al., 1996), and estrogen enhances the anxiety reducing properties of oxytocin (McCarthy, 1995; McCarthy et al., 1996), affiliation ought to be more characteristic of female than male-bodied people's responses to stress (Taylor et al., 2000; Taylor, 2002). There are reasons to be skeptical of such an essentialist account, however. Both male and female-bodied people have fight-or-flight responses as well as oxytocin; androgens do not eliminate oxytocin release; and oxytocin still reduces anxiety without estrogen. Most importantly, the levels of these hormones vary due to the social environment and factors such as recent victories and defeats, physical health, and social context (Schultheiss et al., 2005). In other words, biology is not purely a cause but rather is also an effect, as can be seen by the fact that social roles and other ecological contingencies shape biology (see also Rosario et al., 1988, for a discussion of how social roles might create some of the observed gender differences in response to

stress). It follows that individuals will have idiosyncratic ways of dealing with stress and these idiosyncracies will operate through a reciprocal relationship between biology and social and environmental factors.

So this point about biology, context and stress begs the question of what happens to individuals whose coping strategies do not fit these expectations? Female-assigned people whose natural instinct is to cope by spending time alone to regroup and who, therefore, do not disclose their problems to others might find themselves disliked (Chelune, 1976; Collins & Miller, 1994), judged more masculine, and judged to have poor psychological adjustment (Derlega & Chaikin, 1976; Shaffer, Pegalis, & Cornell, 1991). Male-assigned people who act the same way are not vulnerable to the same types of social rejection (Chelune, 1976) and are judged to be well-adjusted (Derlega & Chaikin, 1976; Petronio, 2002). Perhaps we should not be surprised if some of these female-assigned people feel as if their assigned gender roles do not fit them. Similarly, contemporary western cultures do not expect male-assigned people to cope by affiliating with others (Jourard, 1971; McKenna, Green, & Gleason, 2002), so those male-assigned people for whom affiliating with others is their preferred strategy for coping (Tamres, Janicki, & Helgeson, 2002) may face enormous difficulties. First, they might have more difficulty getting the emotional support they need (Eagly & Crowley, 1986), so their preferred strategy for coping might not be as available as it would have been if they had been assigned female roles. The difficulty of finding emotional support might be compounded if they are also shy or withdrawn, another personal attribute that has been investigated by biological psychologists (see Kagan, Reznick, & Snidman, 1987; Kagan & Snidman, 1991; Kagan, Snidman, & Arcus, 1998, for research investigating biological correlates of shy or withdrawn behavior). Furthermore, research has found that while female-assigned people who disclose their problems

to others are thought to be better adjusted than female-assigned people who do not, male-assigned people who disclose their problems are thought to be more poorly adjusted (Chelune, 1976; Derlega & Chaikin, 1976; Petronio, 2002). While disclosure usually increases how much female-assigned people are liked, depending on the situation, disclosure often *decreases* how much male-assigned people are liked (Collins & Miller, 1994; Chelune, 1976). The end result is that a male-assigned person experiencing stress who needs emotional support to cope will have difficulty receiving this emotional support and might find himself disliked and judged to have poor psychological adjustment.

Friendship

The types of friendships people prefer could also affect the degree to which gender roles fit them. In contemporary western cultures, many people's most intimate, non-romantic friendships are same-gender (Bukowski, Newcomb, & Hartup, 1996) and female and male-assigned people typically have very different types of friendships available to them. Female same-gender friendships as they have been constructed in contemporary western cultures tend to emphasise emotional intimacy, sharing, and conversation, while male same-gender friendships tend to emphasise shared activities (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982; Parker & deVries, 1993; Sheets & Lugar, 2005; Veniegas & Peplau, 1997; Vigil, 2007; Tiger, 1969). However, perhaps due in part to biological variations in stress reactivity (Gottman & Levenson, 1987; Markman & Kraft, 1989; Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1994; Reis, 1998) which are shaped to a large degree by social factors (Meaney, 2001; Uchino, Cacioppo, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996), individuals have idiosyncratic preferences for various types of friendships. Some female-assigned people prefer friendships that emphasise shared activities and some male-assigned people prefer friendships that emphasise emotional intimacy, sharing, and conversation

(Zarbatany, Conley, & Pepper, 2004). However, because contemporary Western culture has constructed same-sex friendships as it has, some people will have difficulty establishing their preferred types of friendships or find their friendships less rewarding than they otherwise could be (Zarbatany, Conley, & Pepper, 2004; Kupersmidt et al., 1999). The desire for friendships that emphasise emotional intimacy, sharing, and conversation might be one reason why trans women are more likely than others to request friendship in personal advertisements than others are (Child et al., 1996; see also Sakamoto et al., 2009, for a discussion of social support among homeless trans women). In other words, difficulties in establishing rewarding friendships could be a major reason why some people might feel as if their assigned gender roles do not fit them (Peplau & Perlman, 1982).

Situations Requiring Empathy

Western cultures expect female-assigned people to be more empathetic and to feel more sympathy and compassion than male-assigned people (Skoe et al., 2002). Despite this expectation, there may be no actual gender difference in empathy. Research has found differences primarily when these differences are measured by self-report, but rarely when other measures are used (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983). Nevertheless, due in part to social factors that in turn affect biology (Meaney, 2001), some individuals are more empathetic than others (Eisenberg et al., 1991; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). Reciprocal causal relationships between social context and biology are implicated in these individual differences (Decety & Jackson, 2006; Roys, 1997). There is evidence, for example, that the quality of care one receives, which is affected by environmental stressors on care-givers, affects oxytocin receptor gene expression (which in turn affects the type of care one gives; Meaney, 2001). Due to such environmental influences that, in turn, affect biology, some individuals will find that gendered expecta-

tions within western cultures naturally fit them, while others will not.

In addition, contemporary western cultures assign different types of helping tasks to people it has assigned to play female or male roles (Eagly, 2009). Female-assigned people are expected to help others, especially their family members, in long-term, non-emergency situations; while male-assigned people are expected to help others in emergency situations and other situations that conform to male-gender role norms (e.g., lifting heavy things, Eagly & Crowley, 1986). People's levels of empathy might affect their willingness and sometimes their ability to help in these situations (Eisenberg et al., 1988; Skoe et al., 2002).

Expected Emotionality

Emotionality and emotional expression might also affect how well gender roles fit individuals (Lippa, 2001). Due to reciprocal causal relationships between social context and biology (Ekman, Levenson, & Friesen, 1983; Ax, 1953; Graham, 1962; Roberts & Weerts, 1982; Schwartz, Weinberger, & Singer, 1981), some people are more emotional or are more likely to express emotions than are others (LaFrance & Banaji, 1992; Sprecher & Sedikides, 1993; Larson & Pleck, 1999). For example, idiosyncratic social factors such as environmental stress, number and quality of care-givers, and parental touching can affect the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and neurotransmitters that regulate how emotions are expressed (Cirulli et al., 2010). Despite the fact that this reciprocal relationship is not directly related to gender, female-assigned people in contemporary Western culture are expected to experience and express emotions such as happiness, sadness, fear, guilt, and shame while male-assigned people are often strongly discouraged from expressing such emotions (Brody & Hall, 1993). Likewise, male-assigned people are expected to experience and sometimes express emotions such as anger, pride, contempt, and so

forth, while female-assigned people are often strongly discouraged from expressing them (Fehr et al., 1999; Biaggio, 1989). As a result, some people will be expected to express emotions or will have emotions attributed to them that they are not experiencing. Others will be expected to suppress or will not be acknowledged as having emotions that they are experiencing. These social prescriptions could create a situation wherein some people may feel as if their assigned gender roles do not fit them (Lippa, 2001; Quartana & Burns, 2007).

Situations that Require or Prohibit Aggression and Assertiveness

Aggression and assertiveness are often useful in performing tasks that western cultures delegate to male-assigned people, but these traits can sometimes interfere with tasks that are delegated to female-assigned people (Eagly & Steffen, 1984).² Due to this cultural delegation of tasks, there is a statistical difference wherein male-assigned people in contemporary western cultures are on average more likely to be physically aggressive than female-assigned people. Nevertheless, approximately one third of female-assigned people are more physically aggressive than the median male-assigned person, and approximately one third of male-assigned people are less physically aggressive than the median female-assigned person (Hyde, 1984; Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Archer, 2004). Research suggests that an individual's idiosyncratic level of aggression is due to complex, reciprocal relationships between social influences (Lightdale & Prentice, 1994; Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Bandura, 1973) and biology (e.g., Rhee & Waldmann, 2002; see Stoff & Susman, 2005, for a thor-

ough discussion of this complex, reciprocal relationship). Nevertheless, the cultural delegation of tasks often requires male-assigned people to be aggressive and often requires female-assigned people not to be, even if these requirements are contrary to an individual's idiosyncratic level of aggression.

For example, Western culture expects almost all male-assigned people to play aggressive sports and play them well (Sabo & Panepinto, 1990); and it expects that fewer female-assigned children will play such sports and that if they do play, they will play them to a lower standard than do male-assigned people (Landers & Fine, 1996). Female-assigned people who wish to play sports might become dissatisfied with their assigned-gender role, because they are often discouraged, given fewer opportunities, and ignored (Huffman, Tuggle, & Rosengard, 2004; Pottker & Fishel, 1976; Burns & Ross, 1986). In addition, since western cultures expect male-assigned, but not female-assigned, individuals to be aggressive, identical behaviors might be judged more aggressive if performed by a female-assigned person than if performed by a male-assigned person (Condry & Ross, 1985). Being judged overly aggressive might cause some female-assigned people to feel as if their assigned gender role does not fit them. Likewise, because success in aggressive sports is such an important feature of masculinity in some parts of Western culture, male-assigned children who are not physically aggressive might feel as if their assigned gender role does not fit them. Failure can lead to social isolation, name calling, and bullying (Soulliere, 2006; Plummer, 2006).

Likewise, assertiveness is often useful in the performance of tasks that are culturally delegated to male-assigned people, but sometimes interferes with the performance of tasks that are culturally delegated to female-assigned people. Because of this cultural delegation of tasks, male-assigned

2 There are exceptions to this rule. In particular, aggression and assertiveness can be useful in performing tasks given to female-assigned people in contemporary Western culture, if used for the benefit of children or other family members (Babcock & Laschever, 2003).

people are on average more assertive than female-assigned people (Anderson & Leaper, 1998; Romaine, 1999; Kalbfleisch & Herold, 2005). Nevertheless, individuals have their own idiosyncratic levels of assertiveness, so the cultural delegation of gendered tasks associated with assertiveness will be more difficult for some individuals than for others. A person's idiosyncratic level of assertiveness is likely to be due to complex, reciprocal relationships between social influences (Romaine, 1999) and biology (Kagan, Reznick, & Snidman, 1987; Kagan & Snidman, 1991; Kagan, Snidman, & Arcus, 1998; see Kagan, 1994, for a thorough discussion of these complex, reciprocal relationships). One conclusion to be drawn from these examples is that research on the biology of gender identity might be well advised to concentrate on these reciprocal relationships, rather than on anatomical brain structures, sex-steroid or hormone related genes, or pre- or post-natal exposure to hormones.

The difficulties that people encounter in these situations are often compounded because people commonly use subtle social signals to elicit expected behaviors from those with whom they interact (Snyder & Swann, 1978; Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977). Telling a person to "act like a lady" or to "take it like a man" is an unambiguous instruction that one is expected to follow gendered expectations, but in some social contexts a nod of the head towards a male-assigned person, especially a friend, might more subtly signal the expectation that he will help move boxes or a glance into a female-assigned person's eyes might signal understanding, an offer of emotional support, or request for help (Valentine & Ehrlichman, 1979; Deaux & Major, 1987). Such social cues might cause people to behave as others expect (Skrypnek & Snyder, 1982), even if this behavior is contrary to how they wish to act. A female-assigned person who is not particularly empathetic might nevertheless find herself soothing someone in distress after receiving a glance from a dis-

tressed other. Such cues might also be particularly likely when gender is salient and people are thinking about gender (Deaux & Major, 1987) such as after a sexist television show, for example, or when the vast majority of people in a room are one gender and there are only a few token members of the other gender (Guttek & Morasch, 1982).

Conclusion

Biological gender essentialism is the view that due to factors such as hormones, sensitivity to hormones, chromosomes, differences in anatomical brain structures and genitalia, what are seen as two distinct sexes are essentially different and this difference is immutable. Such an understanding of sex assumes that people can be categorised as female or male based upon whether or not they possess these characteristics, and that the gendered roles and tasks that are assigned to each sex are a natural result of these biological differences (see Bem, 1993, for a critique). Researchers who have investigated the biological origins of non-normative gender identities have typically looked for essential traits (Zhou et al., 1995; Kruijver et al., 2000, Henningsson et al., 2005, Schneider, Pickel, & Stalla, 2006; Phoenix et al., 1959; Goy, Bercovitch, & McBair, 1988; Gorski, 1991; Short, 1979). By contrast, the approach presented here offers an alternative to these essentialist theories (in fact, no categories have such essences, Medin, 1989; Wittgenstein, 1953; but there are cognitive and social reasons why people falsely believe that they do, Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2000; Medin & Ortony, 1989; Prentice & Miller, 2007; see also Bem, 1993; Diamond, 2006; Hale, 1996; McKittrick, 2007; Martin & Parker, 1995). It considers the female and male roles that our culture has created to be like any other culturally defined tasks, and the ease with which people can perform these tasks will depend upon a reciprocal relationship between social influences and biology. Biology is, therefore, not simply a cause but is also an effect, and social influences are deeply involved in attenuating, amplifying, and in some cases creating biological realities (e.g., Schultheiss

et al., 2005). Understanding these complex, reciprocal relationships will help clarify why there is such enormous diversity among experiences of gender identities, and why simply choosing to conform to social expectations is typically not an option, and thus why there can never be biological markers of 'true' gender.

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THE EVOLUTION OF A GENDER AGENDA: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HOW CANBERRA'S SEX AND GENDER DIVERSE INDIVIDUALS ARE GROWING A COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

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Abstract

Growing a successful community organisation from a group of individuals who share their diversity as a common link is no mean feat. Canberra-based community organisation A Gender Agenda has been working toward this goal for more than a decade, but the last few years have seen a marked growth in the organisation's membership and more particularly in the breadth of its achievements. A discussion of the framework which has facilitated this growth, followed by an examination of the five key strands which comprise AGA's core strength, provides insight into how this work has been achieved and how AGA has moved along the continuum of achievement toward success.

Introduction

This article provides an overview of the community organisation *A Gender Agenda* (AGA),¹ a Canberra-based organisation providing information, community education, counselling,² support and advocacy services in relation to issues affecting transgender and intersex communities, referred to in this article as Canberra's sex and gender diverse (SGD) community. AGA is committed to achieving legal and social recognition and protection of human rights for all people regardless of their legal or biological sex, or their gender identity or expression.

1 For more information please see : <http://www.genderrights.org.au/>

2 AGA currently provides counselling on an informal, voluntary basis.

On 21 January 2011, AGA launched its 2011 Social Inclusion Project funded by the ACT Health Promotion Fund. Across the ACT, brightly coloured posters invite trans and intersex people, along with partners and families, to participate in a year full of 44 activities which include: discussion groups; skill share sessions; leisure activities; art therapy; and an Exploring Gender intensive course. At the launch, held at a local swimming centre booked exclusively for AGA's use, two trans women, aged 43 and 69 years, who were independently attending their first SGD event ever, were overheard to say

Who would have thought that it was this easy, if I'd known it was like this I'd have had more courage to take some steps years ago.

Another person confided that due to their intersex condition, it was the first time that they had swum in a public pool since the onset of puberty. One week after the Project launch, AGA opened its first premises comprising office, meeting room, kitchen facilities, counselling room and a backyard just waiting for a fire pit. Where did this organisation come from and how has it harnessed such energy, drive and commitment to achieve so much in a relatively short time frame?

While much of the progress outlined above has been achieved within the last three years, it is the result of a carefully thought out strategy developed over the preceding decade. The psychology behind this strategy was developed in direct response to the obstacles experienced by many marginalised groups in trying to develop a significant community presence.

This paper examines the underlying framework and assumption adopted by AGA, it identifies the population AGA comprises and represents, and also provides an account of AGA's core strength, an interweaving of five key strands: broad based community support; inclusive management structure; effective communication strategies with the SGD community and the broader community; crafting opportunities for social interaction; and political activity focussed on direct lobbying and individual discrimination complaints. Together, these strands provide a strategy which is able to focus on supporting and enriching members of the SGD community and also the relationship between SGD members and the wider community of Canberra.

Framework for Understanding Gender in a Way that Allows for all Presentations

In the process of giving a voice to the SGD community's needs in both legislative and human rights arenas, AGA is working hard to develop a framework that will allow all possibilities of sex and gender identities and presentations to be considered. A workable framework eschews the binary notion of male and female based on anatomy. Something else needs to fill this space, and AGA believes that perhaps the concept of a continuum of sex and/or gender identity may better reflect the natural order and lived experience of the human condition. A continuum framework immediately removes the pressure for surgery, a potentially life threatening and expensive requirement that should remain a choice, not a necessity. It also allows already marginalised citizens to fully express themselves without further trauma through the imposition of arbitrary constructs.

In addition to the continuum framework (relating to *biological sex* and *gender identity*), of critical import is the assumption that individuals should be free to *express their gender* in whatever way they choose. This should not rightly be a matter for public policy or leg-

islative constraint, nor a reason for increased experiences of bullying, harassment or discrimination.

The ongoing development of AGA's framework and associated assumption has been critical to members who deserve the assurance that their biological sex, gender identity and gender expression are all represented in the organisation's work for legislative change and human rights protection.

Who Does AGA Give Voice To?

While there is a distinct lack of Australian-based research on issues affecting the trans population, the few studies that have been done consistently confirm that there are significant gaps between the health and well-being of trans people and the general population. There is essentially no intersex-specific research available (though we do know that between two and four percent of the population are born with an intersex condition, Wilhelm; Palmer; & Koopman: 2007).

Sex and gender diverse people, despite being more highly educated than the general population, are over represented in the unemployment statistics and in those living below the poverty line. They suffer exceptionally high levels of discrimination, extremely high incidences of depression and suicide, high rates of homelessness, and poor interactions with health services. They experience violence at far greater rates than the general population and more often that violence is extreme. The majority of the SGD population report modifying their behaviour in certain settings due to fear of stigma and discrimination, behaviour that inevitably results in low rates of social inclusion and participation (Couch; Pitts; Mulcare; Croy; Mitchell; & Patel: 2007; Riley: 2011; Perkins: 1994).

These are the people who AGA gives a voice to, these are the people who, with their partners and allies, participate in the management of the organisation, the community education and training, the networking, the social

events, and the political activities. At times, when there are short falls in the required skill set among the SGD membership, the organisation works with members who are non-trans allies to achieve the necessary resources and input.

Core Strength: An Interweaving of Five Key Strands

AGA's strength has in large part come from the need to bring together an extraordinarily diverse, isolated and marginalised population in ways that allow individuals to engage in a manner, and at a rate, that is right for them as individuals.

In many ways the AGA is doing what the lesbian and gay population did in the '70s and '80s. Essentially, it is about: speaking into existence the experiences lived daily by a marginalised group; taking up physical space; and being able to hear the existence of transgender and intersex individuals acknowledged positively in the everyday discourse of the general population. In the same way that specialist gay and lesbian community centres, counselling services and health services were a significant focus for building individual and community strength several decades ago (but for some are now no longer as imperative), AGA envisages that in the foreseeable future SGD community members will have the same experience. AGA anticipates quality service delivery in mainstream settings, automatic consideration of SGD issues in policy and legislative decision making, and a celebration of the increased diversity of 'mainstream' society. The following five key strands work together to bring this about.

Building a Broad Base of Wider Community Support

Perhaps the most critical key strand contributing to AGA's current standing is the decision to seek support from a broad base of community organisations, which are not primarily focused on SGD issues, but which nonetheless will

have members of that community among their clients. This position stands AGA apart from those organisations within the SGD community that aim to derive support almost exclusively from others who have 'lived' the particular experience they primarily represent.

AGA developed this broader base from late 2008, when a deliberate strategy was put in place to understand how transgender and intersex issues intersected with the work of each potentially supporting organisation. Organisations, such as sexual assault services, community health services and gender-specific service providers were then approached with that intersection in mind. AGA began to develop and offer education and support to organisations to train their staff so that they were better able to attract and provide for their SGD clients.

This approach is fundamentally solution focused. It positions AGA among other community organisations that have service provision as their focus. This ultimately results in a situation where service providers across the territory are well informed about SGD issues, to the point that their organisations' policies, procedures and training reflect appropriate considerations and processes. At the same time, their staff members generally feel significantly more comfortable than they have previously when working with members of the SGD community, because they are better educated and know how to readily access further information and support should that be required.

After a recent training session with a Tertiary Counsellors network, a psychologist was heard to say that she really liked the continuum framework, that it could be applied not just to gender but to life in general, and that 'boxes' were generally very unhelpful things! Another said that she had worked with two transgender clients in recent years and had no idea where to go to get support/education for herself or which services were trans friendly and therefore appropriate when making referrals for her clients.

SGD community members who use the ser-

vices of organisations that have developed relationships with AGA report finding more informed and respectful service provision. This is crucial in attending to the needs of this traditionally under-served population as it is likely to allay fears and concerns experienced during numerous previous encounters with unsympathetic or misguided service providers. In turn, word spreads that specific service providers are 'doing a good or reasonable job' and more SGD people will feel inclined to seek necessary support that they may hitherto have been reluctant to access. The ultimate result is quality service provision to the SGD community within a broader community framework that can only be richer for its diversity.

An Inclusive Management Structure

The second strand to the AGA core is its management structure. Founding AGA members noticed that in other jurisdictions management committees often held all the cards, with the membership being left to like it or leave. In others, while the language was based on the concept of actions 'by and for' the membership, the reality was harder to achieve. This process of concentrating power in the hands of a few mimics SGD community members' experiences of disenfranchisement in other parts of society and it was important to develop a management structure that actively encouraged members to feel they had agency within the organisation.

Consequently, AGA's structure has consciously evolved to enable members to have ownership of particular aspects of the organisation. This has often provided management with some challenging moments, requiring of them the wisdom and courage to 'let go' some positional power. But this commitment is bigger than just acquiescing to those who wish to take more ownership of certain areas. The 'real meat' of this choice is in actively creating opportunities for people to engage in ways that are meaningful to them, orchestrating events so that people who may feel like they are not entitled to 'own' anything can do so within their own limits and be genuinely ac-

knowledged for that.

There is a general mindfulness within AGA that even a very small contribution from someone may equate to a large investment of resources for them and should be so appreciated. There is also an on-going struggle to be inclusive in every sense of that word, sitting alongside an open and honest acknowledgment that there are many areas where AGA needs to do more work and a commitment to inviting participation from the people who can help to do that work.

The vehicle for this process, confirmed in the AGA 2009 End of Year Report, was the commitment to hold members meetings six times a year. The results of this practice have been evidenced directly in the number of people who are choosing to take up space, be recognised for their contribution, and go on to not only contribute further themselves but encourage others to take the risk of 'owning' too. Clearly the organisation and the individual both benefit from this process.

Effective Communication Strategies

A key part of AGA's visibility is due to its increasing media presence. This increased media presence attends to a range of ethical dilemmas associated with developing a public profile of a community that has been historically much maligned. The AGA management committee utilises a recognisable, 'branded', image and tone to associate with AGA communications and advertising. This tone is designed to suit the current and emerging trends within social media and also emphasise the value of SGD lives without risking harm to individuals. AGA works to democratise the modern media relationship by using Facebook, publicising its media releases, and encouraging members to dialogue about potential media topics.

The organisation is keenly aware of the need to develop positive relationships with members of the public and media representatives. However, there is a tension to be considered

between two competing contexts. On the one hand, public interest in SGD issues is an area that AGA seeks to cultivate and to do so by utilising media and appearances at public events in order to hopefully bring about positive change in community attitudes. Simultaneously, spokespersons for the organisation are mindful of a distracting and damaging tendency towards voyeurism, which feeds the stigma and marginalisation that AGA seeks to redress. The difference between these two contexts can be difficult to identify, and still harder to remedy from a media perspective.

It is important to the values of AGA that the strategy for media representation is not one which erases or ignores the real and tangible differences between trans and non-trans experiences. That is to say that AGA does not employ the discourse of 'we're just like you'. A key aspect of any 'pride' model of media discourse is an active effort to emphasise the unique positives present within that group (in this case, trans and intersex groups). More specific to AGA's agenda is the attention towards a practical embracing of diversity. This means that, unlike some more mainstream rights' campaigns, AGA will not participate in hierarchical attempts to create a culturally palatable imagery and visual association for their work.

However, some audiences can make it clear through somatic interactions that they have particular expectations of what an appropriate 'trans speaker' is. Do they look 'strange' enough? Can you 'just tell' that they're 'really a man/woman'? Is the person enough of a visual oddity to adequately capture and hold the public interest? This is ethically and politically unworkable, and is the primary challenge that is encountered by AGA in engagements with the media.

One of the organisation's non-trans spokespersons notes that when she stands up to address a group of people about gender issues and mention that she identifies as a 'non-trans person', there can be a sense of disappointment, because she does not adequately con-

stitute the circus attraction that some individuals associate with their mental image of the SGD community. In the past, this spokesperson didn't disclose whether or not she identified as trans, with the political understanding that this identification should not matter within a broader discussion of injustices, discrimination, or community values. However, it quickly became self-evident that some audiences were simply waiting to hear the specifics of a personal, embodied, gender journey and were therefore not absorbing the abstracted information the spokesperson was attempting to convey. One strategy that has proved beneficial is to use this sense of voyeurism as an example to illuminate AGA's larger concerns. For example, when a conversation is diverted by the audience away from sociological concerns towards "so...have you had sex-change surgery?", it can be helpful to answer by challenging the audience to ask themselves why they feel entitled to such personal, private information about a stranger.

Difficulties remain for a positive relationship between AGA and the media. It is clear at this point that mainstream culture upholds a particular idea of what an 'authentic' trans identity is, and that identities which exist outside of those parameters can sometimes be dismissed in a search for more salacious examples. The organisation recognises that some of these instances can have more serious psycho-social consequences. This cultural ideation of 'trans'ness as abject, a correlation frequently found in media coverage of SGD communities, can suggest a sense of compulsory self-loathing, as if a person is only truly trans if they hate themselves entirely. This ignores and de-legitimises the happiness and vibrancy present in many trans lives. Acting as a counterbalance to stigmatising mainstream discourses is the primary desired outcome of media interactions within AGA.

In addition to their focus on communicating with people outside AGA, the question of how best to keep in touch with members of the SGD community is also one that has focused the attention of the organisation. Many people

within the SGD community want to be anonymous or feel socially isolated. If an organisation aims to give voice to these particular populations then the ubiquitous web, with its gift of anonymity, is surely a crucial tool. So it is no surprise that this third strand was developed at a time when social networking was increasing in popularity and web access was more available than ever to those marginalised economically, physically and socially. Members are encouraged to be engaged in a variety of different ways (e.g., an email list where all anyone knows about anyone else is their email address). This provides a forum for people to provide input in an essentially anonymous way.

In 2009, AGA launched its revitalised website and established a series of email lists for members, families and their supporters. The lists include one for: members; events; MTF spectrum people of all gender-expressions and sexualities; FTM spectrum people of all genders-expressions and sexualities; under 30s - a mix of trans girls, trans boys, genderqueers, partners, allies, friends and queer-family; partners of people who are transgender, intersex, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, cross-dressers, are transitioning, have transitioned, or are considering transitioning. Importantly, the specificity reflected in the names given to these particular lists provides a safe space to ask questions of, share information with and seek advice from people in similar situations.

At the same time, AGA made its presence felt on the ACT-wide ACTQueer email list. This has established AGA in the broader LGBTIQ community as a visible organisation dedicated, not only to providing and building support among individuals, but also for taking political actions that highlight the need for changes to relevant legislation.

Crafting Opportunities for Social Interaction

In crafting opportunities for social interaction, it is important to recognise that violence, discrimination and stigma are real, and that this

means that many places are not safe spaces for people to be out. But AGA also acknowledges that the *fear* of stigma and discrimination incapacitates some trans and intersex people at least as much, if not more than, the actuality of harassment or violence perpetrated against them. One response, in order to allay some of these legitimate fears associated with getting together in a safe physical space, has been the acquisition of premises owned by the organisation. Now there is a safe place where SGD people can meet for support, for discussion and just for fun.

The recent move into AGA's own premises also bears testament to the benefits of 'working alongside' friends to get a job done. Members upped tools during a sunny Saturday to assemble furniture, hang pictures, unpack the library and construct the BBQ, whilst kids worked on decorating the backyard with chalk pictures. Those present shared lunch out the back under the AGA marquee, heralding the first of many informal gatherings planned for the space. Below, members share their recollections of the move into the new premises:

One of the most exciting things about the day for me was watching people turn up, and wander around a little bit aimlessly – not knowing where to start. And when someone said "oh, you could put those posters up" and they were given permission to start to "own" the space, they leapt at the opportunity.

A trans woman in her sixties said to me "I can't believe this is real – having our own space. I really didn't think I'd see it in my lifetime. I had to come along today – just to make sure it was true.

Already, the existence of AGA's own premises has made a difference to one Canberra family. While a tradesman stood waiting at the premise's front door, he watched the AGA project officer (a trans woman) walk down the driveway toward him, wearing a dress and high heels. He asked the project officer what AGA stood for and during the ensuing two hour conversation, focussed on transgender issues, he said that her approach had brought him an

extreme sense of relief. Relief because his 9 year old child has always identified as the gender that was "opposite" to their birth sex and he hadn't known where to go for support, who to talk to, or where to turn for insight into how best to support his child and wife. This is a graphic example of the two-way benefits of the SGD population taking up physical space. Being visible is not just about benefits for those who identify as SGD, but about increasing the well-being of the broader community.

Another key social event is the AGA community picnic which has been held for a number of years. In 2009, at the first picnic to be held after the email list began, the desire for online friendships to become concrete became evident. The event was attended by in excess of 80 people. It was an event that attracted members, their partners, other family members and the local television news who were advised the event was being held via an AGA press release. This was also an opportunity for AGA to engage with the press, as much as possible, on their terms.

The accounts of this picnic also point to the value of providing unstructured and informal opportunities to get together. Another insight into the power of this community came from a transwoman who attended her first members' meeting in 2010. She commented to a friend over coffee some weeks later:

"You know, I've had more social contact in the three months since I joined AGA than I had in the preceding 10 years".

This above quote highlights the level of social isolation experienced by some members of the SGD community and speaks to the importance of the social activities fostered by AGA.

For a number of years, AGA has also organised a Trans Day of Remembrance event. These have been quite sombre events attracting a small number of SGD people. In 2010, with the email lists in full flight, training in progress and planning for the 2011 Social In-

clusion project underway, a decision was made to hold a more positively-focussed event. The new format would serve not only to remember all those who had suffered inexcusably, but to celebrate the growing community, and recognise the strength that members draw not just from each other but from their broader community base. More than 60 people attended (at least six times previous attendance numbers), including members, family, friends, representatives of supporting community organisations and a supportive ACT politician. Attendees left with a potted marigold to be planted in a garden of their choice: a reminder of the continuing strength and growth of the Trans and Intersex community. The politician arranged for his marigold to be planted in the gardens of the ACT Legislative Assembly - a golden reminder of the law reform work yet to be done to obtain equality for the SGD community. The transition of this event from remembrance, to a combination of remembrance and celebration, clearly evidenced a community need to come together not just to commemorate loss, but to celebrate the hope found in community strength.

As mentioned in the introduction, this year has seen the launch of the Social Inclusion project,³ the largest project ever undertaken by AGA. At the time of writing, the first skill share event *Container Gardening* had been a huge success and the first discussion group *Doing it Differently* to be run this week already has a waiting list as long as the attendees list. Some of the events scheduled for May and June are already full, and almost all the other events have registrations for more than half their capacity and it is still only February.

3 The link to the calendar of events can be found at: http://www.genderrights.org.au/images/stories/files/AGA_Social_Inclusion_events_2011.pdf
The Social Inclusion project is funded by the ACT Health Promotion Fund.

Political Activity: State and Federal Lobbying

The fifth and final strand to this core strength is one that is grounded in the very nature of the SGD community. Fundamental to AGA's political lobbying strategy is a particular style of thinking about one of its most available assets – diversity. Given the political currency of diversity, readily recognised by the broader population in multicultural and sexuality contexts among others, AGA has chosen to embrace that diversity and talk about it, while at the same time working tirelessly to draw out the common threads.

At a lobbying level this translates to acknowledgement that members don't all agree about everything, which in turn adds weight to what can be said that everyone does in fact agree about. This was evident in the consultation process in 2008 leading up to the Australian Human Rights Commission's (AHRC) Sex Files report. It was noted that Canberra was the only session they came to where, even though everyone had a different personal story, there was unanimous broad agreement about the basics; about what laws needed to be changed and how they needed to be changed. Finding a way to acknowledge diversity while speaking as a unified group is a 'rare find' to be valued and protected.

Overall, AGA's political activity is aimed at achieving systemic change through 'big picture' lobbying and strategic individual discrimination complaints. AGA recognises that there is a big communication gap between the SGD community and our elected representatives. This means the SGD community's needs are rarely taken into account in the making of the laws and policy decisions that affect their lives, such as when a person can get a passport or change their legal sex.

AGA aims to provide safe opportunities for members to discuss their experiences of mistreatment and discrimination. Out of these discussions come action plans, to ensure that others don't face the same barriers in the fu-

ture. AGA has found this to be an empowering process, where the sharing of stories, with one another, better prepares us to communicate them more effectively to politicians and the broader community. Whilst members do not always agree, there are many issues on which AGA can speak with a unified voice, on behalf of a marginalised community that is demanding a better response from government. As one AGA member said at a recent law reform meeting:

I feel like talking and writing to politicians means we are making a difference, I'm trying to change the system to make my life better, but at the same time, I'm making sure other people don't have such a rough trot.

As well as facilitating opportunities for discussion, AGA seeks to build the capacity of individuals to take action. For example, AGA has built connections with several legal experts—from outside the SGD community—who can provide advice and support in the formulation of lobbying strategies, submissions, letters and individual complaints.

Direct Lobbying

In recent years, AGA has built good working relationships with members of the ACT Legislative Assembly and the Australian and ACT Human Rights Commissions, with a view to invoking legislative change. Back in 2004, the ACT Government hosted a number of small workshops to hear from the Transgender and Intersex communities about what needed to be done to attain legal equality. Over the next 5 years, AGA members worked intensively with the broader LGB community—specifically the lobby group 'Good Process'—to remove discrimination on the basis of gender. In this period, lobbying and media work focused on ensuring that each individual's rights would be protected *regardless* of their gender, not because of it. This involved shifting the mainstream discourse from discussion of 'same-sex' and 'opposite-sex' couples. In 2008, the Stanhope Government courageously provided for Civil Partnerships that could 'be entered

into by any two adults, regardless of their sex'.

Nonetheless, when the AHRC consulted the SGD Community in the lead up to its 'Sex Files' report in 2008, the issues highlighted in 2004 remained on the agenda. The Canberra AHRC consultation played a crucial role in identifying AGA's law reform priorities, and inspiring those present towards action. Thanks to the input of many members, AGA's submission to this inquiry included a large number of case studies, each detailing an aspect of the discrimination and hardship experienced by AGA members in their day-to-day lives. These de-identified case studies have since become invaluable educative tools, bridging the gap between theoretical understandings of marginalisation and disadvantage and the lived experiences 'on the ground' in the SGD community.

Galvanised by the recommendations of the 'Sex Files' Report, AGA has continued to lobby for (amongst other things) a human-rights compliant process for individuals to obtain identity documents that are consistent with their gender identity. Whilst the ACT does allow individuals to change their legal sex, it first requires them to undertake unnecessary, expensive and often inaccessible sterilisation surgery. AGA continues to argue that this is a breach of the human rights of the individual concerned.

After multiple meetings with members of the Legislative Assembly, AGA were very pleased when the ACT Attorney-General announced his intention to refer this issue to his Law Reform Advisory Council for advice. Importantly, the Council's work will be informed by advice from the ACT Human Rights and Discrimination Commissioner.

As the first jurisdiction to implement a Human Rights Act, AGA believes the ACT has a unique opportunity, and responsibility, to lead the country in removing legislative discrimination against the SGD Community.

Individual Discrimination Complaints

AGA has also discovered the benefits of making strategic individual discrimination complaints to highlight specific, problematic, policy issues. Whilst individuals may talk with a friend or counsellor about experiences of discrimination, AGA is committed to giving people information about what the type of formal or informal complaints processes may be available to redress this discrimination, if the individual is interested in doing so. Information about legal processes and possible outcomes can assist people to decide what action (if any) is right for them.

As in most jurisdictions, the resolution of discrimination complaints in the ACT involves a conciliation process. Generally, conciliations result in a negotiated solution which applies directly to the individual's grievance. However, because the conciliation process is open ended, AGA has been able to use this process to seek broader policy-based solutions. For example, individuals have been able to engage high-level bureaucrats in face-to-face discussions about relevant issues. This strategy has aided us to build constructive working relationships with particular key individuals, as well as affecting smaller scale, but nonetheless significant, change on a day-to-day level. In this sense, complaints can be a strategy to engage others in constructive, ongoing dialogue, rather than being an end in themselves. AGA is broadening the base of this strategy and aims to use it in relation to a number of Commonwealth-based law reform issues over the coming year.

Conclusion

So far, the AGA story has been one of hard work, creativity and cooperation. Diverse elements of the community have chosen to come together in a broad range of forums, accepting opportunities for face-to-face and/or electronic engagement. This engagement has motivated a growing number of individuals to contribute to AGA's activities, with people sharing their skills and expertise with others or

devoting their time to the administrative jobs that are crucial to AGA's ongoing presence.

Perhaps the organisation's greatest strengths are its commitment to inclusivity and community, its capacity to adapt to the changing context in which it exists and its ability to adopt a number of different strategies working in conjunction towards a common goal.

In addition to providing its members with practical opportunities to access social, emotional and political support, AGA has continued to build relationships with established community organisations, bureaucrats and politicians. This work promises to improve access to services for existing members but also, and perhaps more importantly, to change the policies and practices of service providers in a way that better respects the needs and experience of the SGD community.

Collaborating with established organisations not only increases AGA's resources (for example, several organisations have paid for AGA members to attend conferences, donated equipment and other resources), but also generates opportunities for ongoing dialogue about how best to address prejudice related to gender diversity, and invent better ways of getting things done. Through formal training as well as open discussion, AGA is offering its members and others the chance to build a social understanding of gender and sexual diversity as an inclusive continuum.

All this said, AGA is excited to see how it will further evolve in 2011 (and beyond), as relationships between members, and with the broader community, continue to inspire new challenges and adventures.

Acknowledgements

AGA would like to thank Peter Hyndal, a founding member of AGA and current member of the executive committee, for his input into this article.

AGA would like to thank Dr Mary Louise Ras-

mussen; Faculty of Education, Monash University, for her time and effort in revision of this article and her ongoing support of the work of AGA.

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Gabrielle Hitch is a management committee member of AGA, managing youth and media issues. She is an advocate and activist for SGD and GLBTIQ visibility and rights, and works within the community sector.

Heidi Yates is an AGA member and community law reform advocate who also works as a Human Rights solicitor at the Women's Legal Centre (ACT & region).

Jennie Yates is an AGA member, a teacher and a registered psychologist who works in the Counselling and Equity Unit, Canberra Institute of Technology.

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BOOK REVIEW

PETER B. TODD

Davis, Mark and Squire, Corinne. (2010). HIV Treatment and Prevention Technologies: An International Perspective. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp 210, ISBN:9780230238190.

This edited collection of chapters explores the biomedical and social technologies which have been used to control the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Through such qualitative research methods as case studies and critical commentaries within a distinct sociopolitical and cross cultural framework, the volume engages treatment access in both the developed and developing worlds while examining the apparent tension which has existed historically between the objectives of prevention of HIV transmission and treatment with antiretroviral drugs.

One of the strengths of the book is its emphasis upon the tendency for complacency induced by the belief that HIV/AIDS is a chronic manageable disease, and the role of this in minimising the importance of adopting behaviours to prevent HIV transmission. It could indeed be argued that this is a manifestation of defensive denial of the implications of prodigious mutation in HIV and the phenomenon of multiple drug resistance in an era of highly active antiretroviral therapies. Kane Race's chapter on the culture of barebacking (whereby seropositive persons negotiate unprotected sexual encounters in disregard of the risk of reinfection with another strain of HIV) might well be a case in point.

Perhaps the most insightful and illuminating chapter is Paul Flower's contribution concerning "HIV Transitions: Consequences for the Self in an era of Medicalization". This chapter examines the impact on self-definition of the stigma associated with HIV seropositive status

and such conspicuous bodily changes as lipid dystrophy due to the long term use of anti-retroviral medications. Flowers, while noting the tendency to minimize psychosocial issues due to the medicalisation and normalization of HIV infection, notes empirical evidence for the frequency of major depressive disorder in seropositive persons to be twice that observed in seronegative individuals.

Todd (2009) has argued that psychosocial and unconscious mental factors are significant determinants of HIV progression and mortality via their impact upon the neuroendocrine and immune systems. The authors of the book claim to have brought the psychosocial features of HIV "back into relationship with an ascendant biotechnological" focus in which the salience of such factors has tended to be disregarded (p. 201). In so doing they highlight well the ethical, political and cultural dimensions of HIV/AIDS in what they refer to as the "treatment possibility era". However, apparently missing is any comprehensive review of quantitative research into the role of psychosocial factors in either prevention or treatment.

The need for ongoing quantitative research in the HIV/AIDS field is important due to serious Kuhnian anomalies including rapid HIV mutation and multiple drug resistance as well as difficulties with vaccine development. Immunologist Ted Steele (2009) has also pointed out that the continued use of anti-reverse transcriptase drugs may not only inhibit HIV replication, but also the generation of antibody diversity which requires reverse transcription. This implies the need for more not less research into fundamental physiology and molecular mechanisms as well as the predic-

tive significance of psychosocial factors impacting upon immunological and psychic self integration.

tors in HIV infection. *Mind and Matter*, 6 (2), 193-206.

In conclusion, the book contains many important insights into the cross-cultural experience of living with HIV/AIDS. However, its ambivalence towards quantitative research is I believe misguided given the unresolved anomalies and gaps in our present understanding.

Author Note

Peter B. Todd BA (Hons, Psychology) MAPS graduated from Sydney University in 1968. He started work as a postgraduate research psychologist at the School of Surgery, St George Hospital (University of New South Wales). This research was essentially a psychoanalytic study of quantified unconscious ego-defences and affects as predictors of behavior and outcome in women with symptoms of breast cancer. This was among the first successful attempts in the world to quantify unconscious mental processes. Research was published in the *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 1978.

Subsequently, Peter held a position as research psychologist at the Neuropsychiatric Institute, Prince Henry Hospital, Sydney, became a member of the biopsychosocial AIDS Project at the University of California in San Francisco, consultant at the department of immunology at St. Vincent's Hospital, and research psychologist at the Albion Street AIDS Clinic Sydney. He has published numerous peer-reviewed papers, his most recent being in the interdisciplinary journal 'Mind and Matter', 2009. Currently he works as a registered psychoanalytically oriented psychologist and psychotherapist in private practice in Sydney.

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- Todd, P.B. (2009). Unconscious mental fac-



BOOK REVIEW

PRATHIBA NAGABHUSHAN

Alan Berman & Robinson, Shirleene, (2010) Speaking Out: Stopping Homophobic and Transphobic Abuse in Queensland. Bowen Hills: Australian Academic Press. ISBN 978-1-9215-1360-2, pp.260.

This important book draws attention to the social problems all too often faced by members of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) communities. Based on the largest survey of LGBTIQ reactions to violence and harassment in Australia, *Speaking Out* gives voice to the many victims who have suffered in the State of Queensland, once recognised as Australia's most homophobic. This book aims to explore the ways in which homophobic and transphobic abuse impact upon the lives of LGBTIQ people in Queensland and to provide information that may assist individuals currently experiencing homophobic or transphobic abuse, harassment and violence.

The book begins with a detailed description of the population demographics that have informed the study. The authors managed to attract a solid sample of LGBTIQ respondents from different ages. Interestingly, the regional locations of respondents tend to reflect the broader population distribution of the State of Queensland. The sample size and the geographical, gender and age diversity of the respondents form a strong foundation for making pertinent observations about the way that homophobic and transphobic violence impact upon Queensland's LGBTIQ population.

The second chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the way homophobic and transphobic abuse has shaped and affected respondents over the course of their lifetimes.

The statistical information about the abuse and harassment of LGBTIQ participants in the study is wide ranging and draws the attention of the reader to probe into this crucial issue.

The focus of the third chapter is much more specific, in terms of the experiences of the survey respondents in homophobic and transphobic violence and harassment within the past two years. By limiting its focus to the past 2 years, it is able to make observations about the relatively recent prevalence of homophobic and transphobic harassment and violence to be drawn. The psychological, physical and other impacts of such abuse are meticulously captured in this chapter.

While the experience that LGBTIQ people have of abuse and harassment in society is a major concern, understanding who is most likely to perpetrate homophobic or transphobic abuse is also an essential question that requires much exploration. The results reported in the next chapter illuminate Joseph Harry's (1990) findings that males constitute a majority of the perpetrators who are in their late teens or 20s, strangers to the victim(s) in groups, and not engaged in violence for profit. This raises questions about the links between homophobic and transphobic abuse and constructions of masculinity on the part of offenders.

Another important question considered by the book is the degree to which LGBTIQ people in the study sought help and what was the effectiveness of help that they received. The authors claim that "the overwhelming majority of respondents did not report the incidents of abuse, harassment and/or violence to law enforcement or seek assistance from a commu-

nity or other support mechanism, including family, partners and friends" (p.120). Berman & Robinson (2010) refer to findings of a British study which proposed that respondents based their decisions on reporting on a much broader social and political context (Peel, 1999). From their own study, Berman & Robinson (2010) report that many respondents felt that their reports would not be taken seriously or treated fairly and that they felt marginalised within society. They suggest that reporting a homophobic or transphobic crime "can involve victims exposing themselves to secondary homophobia or transphobia (p. 135). In considering the experiences that members of the LGBTIQ community have had with the police in the aftermath of homophobic and transphobic harassment and violence, it is evident that only 16% of incidents of homophobic abuse, harassment and violence to the police and liaison officers were reported. This appalling statistic plainly reveals that LGBTIQ community's engagement with the police service is low, and even lower with liaison officers. This definitely calls for further interrogation as it holds significant potential to make a detrimental effect on LGBTIQ people who experience violence.

Some instances of homophobic and transphobic harassment and violence, however, have proceeded to the judicial system. Yet despite this, there seems to be negative attitudes toward reporting incidents to the police which may be due to real life personal experiences of respondents. The authors have suggested governmental initiatives "to help shape social attitudes in Queensland so that the principles of sexual diversity, inclusiveness, personal dignity, autonomy and privacy are celebrated as values which will serve to further the goals of all societies for greater social cohesion" (p. 170). These suggestions will hopefully inform the drafting and implementation of policies to establish social fairness and integrity.

The eighth chapter maps the experiences of respondents who have moved within the judicial system, considering police responses within a legal context, the court system and

overall impressions that respondents had of the judicial system. One of the remarkable characteristics of the book is its approach towards strengthening LGBTIQ agency and resilience by presenting not only the quantitative data but also the real life experiences and stories of members of our community who continue to feel impacted upon by the legacy of an era in which bias inspired harassment and violence against the community, and which was perpetrated by the state rather than prohibited by the institutions of government.

The authors have also explored the extent to which homophobia and transphobia cause respondents to engage in behaviour modification. It considers the perceptions respondents have about homophobic and transphobic abuse and the steps they take to modify their behaviour in the hope of avoiding such abuse. This clearly provides a strong and further indication of the extent to which members of the LGBTIQ community are affected by these prejudices.

The last chapter of the book contributes to promoting sexual diversity and social equality and justice as well as reducing homophobic and transphobic harassment and violence. It sets out recommendations for legal, educational, and social reforms that can be taken to address the serious problem of homophobic and transphobic harassment and violence. It also reiterates the fact that the capacity to live a life free from discrimination, harassment and abuse is a basic human right.

Undoubtedly, *Speaking Out* is an eye-opener to the treatment that LGBTIQ communities receive in society. It addresses one of the most important issues that needs urgent attention to maintain social justice and equilibrium. Berman & Robinson (2010) deserve accolades for their significant contribution, not only from the LGBTIQ community, but also from all readers who have a strong faith in fairness that all humans should have to lead a peaceful life in a society. This book is a valuable resource for officials in the area of community services, students and researchers.

Author Note

Prathiba Nagabhushan teaches Psychology and Sociology at St. Mary MacKillop College, Canberra, Australia. Currently, she is doing her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the Australian National University with a focus on the exploratory and longitudinal perspective of motivation, student engagement and wellbeing of senior secondary students.

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This is the logo for The Pinnacle Foundation.

The Pinnacle Foundation has been established to provide scholarships and mentors to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersex and queer youth who are marginalised or disadvantaged.

Scholarships:

Scholarships are provided for LGBTIQ youth who desire to undertake full-time or part-time education at a public or private secondary school or public institution of higher education in Australia.

It will be for the purpose of gaining an educational or vocational qualification in any profession, trade or the arts. The Scholarship will cover such vital needs as the cost of tuition fees or dues to an approved educational institution, laptop, textbooks and uniforms.

Mentoring:

We want to ensure our scholarship recipients receive more than just financial support. Mentors can play a really important part in developing the skills and qualities you need to be truly successful in life.

We're putting together a panel of what we call "vocational mentors" – a group of really successful gays and lesbians that have reached the pinnacle of their professions and who come from all walks of life. Our aim is to give all scholarship winners regular access to these guiding lights and be inspired.

If you feel you qualify for a scholarship, or would make a suitable mentor, call us on 02 9990 4708 or check out our website for more information and selection criteria: www.thepinnaclefoundation.org



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Types of articles that we typically consider:

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Empirical articles (6000 word max)
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Research in brief: Reviews of a favourite or troublesome article/book chapter that you have read and would like to comment on

B)

Conference reports/conference abstracts
Practitioner's reports/field notes
Political/media style reports of relevant issues

Book reviews (please contact the Editor for a list of books available & review guidelines)
Promotional material for LGBT relevant issues

The Review also welcomes proposals for special issues and guest Editors.

Each submission in section A should be prepared for blind peer-review if the author wishes. If not, submissions will still be reviewed, but the identity of the author may be known to the reviewer. Submissions for blind review should contain a title page that has all of the author(s) information, along with the title of the submission, a short author note (50 words or less), a word count and up to 5 key words. The remainder of the submission should not identify the author in any way, and should start on a new page with the submission title followed by an abstract and then the body of the text. Authors who do not require blind review should submit papers as per the above instructions, the difference being that the body text may start directly after the key words.

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All submissions must adhere to the rules set out in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (fifth edition), and contributors are encouraged to contact the Editor should they have any concerns with this format as it relates to their submission. Spelling should be Australian (e.g., 'ise') rather than American ('ize'), and submissions should be accompanied with a letter stating any conflicts of interest in regards to publication or competing interests. Footnotes should be kept to a minimum. References should be listed alphabetically by author at the end of the paper. For example:

Journal Articles: Riggs, D.W. (2004). The politics of scientific knowledge: Constructions of sexuality and ethics in the conversion therapy literature. *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*, 5, 16-24.

Books: Kitzinger, C. (1987). *The social construction of lesbianism*. London: Sage.

Edited Books: Coyle, A. & Kitzinger, C. (Eds.) (2002). *Lesbian & gay psychology*. Oxford: BPS Blackwell.

Book Chapters: MacBride-Stewart, S. (2004). Dental dams: A parody of straight expectations in the promotion of 'safer' lesbian sex. In D.W. Riggs & G.A. Walker (Eds.), *Out in the antipodes: Australian and New Zealand perspectives on gay and lesbian issue in psychology* (pp.393-416). Perth: Brightfire Press.

References within the text should be listed in alphabetical order separated by a semi-colon, page numbers following year. For example:

(Clarke, 2001; Peel, 2001; Riggs & Walker, 2004)
(Clarke, 2002a; b) (MacBride-Stewart, 2004, p. 398)

Authors should avoid the use of *sexist*, *racist* and *heterosexist language*. Authors should follow the guidelines for the use of non-sexist language provided by the American Psychological Society.

Papers should be submitted in Word format: title bold 14 points all caps left aligned, author 12 points all caps left aligned, abstract 10 points italics justified, article text 10 points justified, footnotes 9 points justified.

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