

Polare Edition 31

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Editorial

by Craig Andrews, Polare Editor

This edition features three new regular features. A "Service Profile", a crossword, and "Puzzle Pieces" - a letters problems page.

Elizabeth's report summarises our progress to date as outlined in the annual report. A lengthy outline about the new N.S.W. Relationships Bill is over on page 6.

The focus for the Health Report this time is all you wanted to know about Thrush, while "*Transmen* addresses the issues of H.I.V./AIDS for F.T.M.

An encouraging conciliation from the A.D.B.s newsletter *Equal Time* "Using the Transgender A.D.B. Legislation" is reprinted on page 15 while Ms. Israel gives some thoughtful pointers on transgender people and employment.

As ever, I welcome letters, email or carrier pigeons with responses, debates, gripes or commentary to other writers here in *Polare*.

Manager's Report

by Elizabeth Riley, Gender Centre Manager

Annual General Meeting

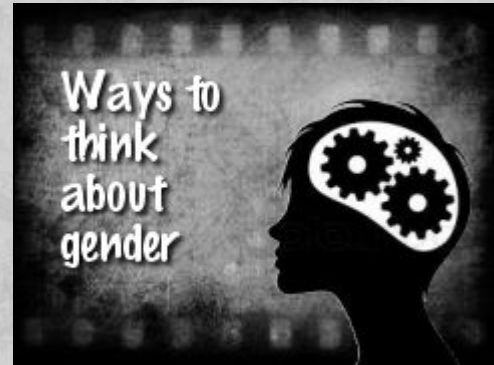
The A.G.M. is coming up on 30th September. However, since only members will receive copies of the annual report, I thought it might be appropriate to reprint the preamble to the Annual Report as my report for this edition of *Polare*. Apart from the regular services provided through The Gender Centre the preamble outlines some of the other initiatives that the Gender Centre has been heavily involved with over the 1998/99 year and may be of interest to non-members and others who receive our magazine.

The Third International Conference on Sex and Gender

This conference was held at Oxford University's Exeter College in September 1998. The conference was attended by representatives from many countries around the world and provided an enormous opportunity for exchanging information and gaining awareness of the disparity of rights experienced by transgender people in different countries. It remains one of the significant challenges to the transgender community worldwide that such disparities exist and that our rights as individuals in travelling to different countries can be seriously compromised. In this alone we do not enjoy equity with the majority of Australian citizens.

Having said that I am pleased to report that transgender people living in N.S.W. arguably enjoy the most advanced recognition of rights anywhere in the world. These achievements have been hard won and we all need to protect them diligently.

Feature Articles



One of the most important points articulated by the wave of feminism that arose in the nineteen-sixties is that sex is different from gender.

Ways to Think About Gender

Sex is felt by most people to be a stable category, but gender is a social or a cultural construct with every society assigning different characteristics to each sex. Sally O'Driscoll presents a comprehensive examination of just why sex is indeed different from gender.

Expressing My Feminine Side

Belinda has been cross-dressing at different times since she was a teenager. She's considered starting hormone treatment but isn't sure, however she's of the opinion that it may help her understand who she really is. She enjoys the freedom of expressing her feminine side.

Secret Men's Business

Secret Men's Business by John Marsden is an easy read on how to be a functioning adult male. It's primarily aimed at adolescent boys but is very useful for F.T.M.s. It gives us a look at what transitioning to manhood would be like for a boy and the issues that they face.

Thrush

Thrush is a fungal condition caused by overgrowth of the yeast known as *candida albicans*. It is often found in the body without causing disease and is not harmful. It may become evident during sex, during pregnancy, during the use of antibiotics or in diabetic people.

H.I.V./ AIDS: Some Issues for F.T.M.s

Viviane Namaste studies the needs of transmen in relation to H.I.V./ AIDS in Canada and particularly wanted to learn what F.T.M.s thought about the topic of H.I.V./ AIDS, the issues they identified as important, and the kinds of services and resources which they said they need.

Employment

Can you imagine finding employment where it didn't matter if

The conference saw many presenters delivering interesting, informative and exciting papers and produced a wonderful cross-fertilisation of ideas and philosophies. Australia boasted a strong contingent of representatives from the Gender Centre, S.W.O.P., the Intersex Society and the Western Australian Foundation for Androgynous Studies. The Gender Centre and the International Foundation for Androgynous Studies are collaborating to host the Fifth International Conference to be held in Sydney in 2002. We will keep you informed.

The Transgender Working Party

The Transgender Working Party under the auspice of the Department for Women is continuing its work to facilitate social justice and equity for the transgender community. As reported last year, the Working Party comprises permanent representatives from the Anti-Discrimination Board (A.D.B.), the Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment (O.D.E.O.P.E.), the Health Care Complaints Commission (H.C.C.C.), N.S.W. Department of Education and Training (N.S.W. D.E.T.), the Department for Women (D.F.W.) and the Gender Centre. Other government departments now represented are, N.S.W. Health, Department of Corrective Services and N.S.W. Police Service. The Working Party continues to address, and devise strategies for dealing with the many issues facing transgender people in their everyday lives. The Working Party has now adopted a policy of focusing on key issues and addressing these sequentially. Some of the issues that may be on the agenda in future include employment, health and safety, public awareness campaigns, human rights, access and equity and G.R.S. I continue to be optimistic that in time the efforts of the Working Party will improve conditions for all transgender people.

Workplace Transitions

The Gender Centre has delivered training to employer groups where an employee has decided to transition on the job. In general these have proved very successful and the employee's transition has proceeded smoothly. Transgender entry into employment still remains problematic and we are working closely with the Employment Equity Specialists Association (E.E.S.A.), to try and address some of these issues. A two day conference is being held in November of the coming year and transgender issues feature prominently on the program. Employment remains a major issue for the transgender community and it is an area the Gender Centre is committed to improving.

N.S.W. D.E.T.

Sustained training has been conducted through the N.S.W. Department of Education and Training. The Gender Centre has provided training to teachers, student counsellors and students within the system on transgender issues and gender in general. Particularly exciting has been the production of a video with them - *Valuing Diversity*.

The video dealt with a range of subjects around the question of diversity and featured a transgender component. The video, along with a training package, is intended for distribution across all N.S.W. government schools, approximately 2,400 of them in all. We hope that this will create a greater awareness of diversity, and a capacity to value difference, in our future generations.

Transgender Prison's Policy

We have continued to work closely with Corrective Services to ensure the effective implementation of the Transgender Prison's Policy. The policy was implemented on 23rd October 1998 and training on the policy was subsequently delivered to key personnel. The policy allows that transgender people be granted accommodation in the gaols of their gender-identity.

While the policy has had some teething problems the spirit of the policy is welcomed by the transgender community as a major step forward in human rights and transgender recognition. The policy is due for review in the near future and we hope to be able to solve the problems that have arisen.

N.S.W. Police Service

A committee was recently set up to develop a policy on police treatment of transgender people. Details of the policy are not yet available but we are confident that once implemented transgender people will enjoy better and more respectful relations with members of the police service. We will publish the policy in full in *Polare* when it is finalised so that all transgender people can be made aware of their rights.

Hunter Area Health Service

We have been working closely with the H.A.H.S. over recent months to assist in the development of a policy in regard to facilitating appropriate medical care to members of the transgender community accessing health services in the Hunter area. The policy involves issues around access and equity, medical records, respectful treatment in the recognition of a transgender persons chosen identity, treatment of intersex infants, counselling for transgenders and their families and so on. It is hoped that once the policy is effected it will become a model for other area health services across the state.

you had a transgender-identity? As transgender people, many are just looking to survive, others are trying to advance careers. If you feel you are not being hired because you have a transgender-identity, read on ...

Please Don't be an Airhead

It's been nine months since my husband revealed he was a transvestite and I'm fed up. Not because he likes to wear women's clothes, no, what's riling me is a certain underlying attitude that he (and some other would-be gals) has about what it means to be a woman.

Women's Services

There has been strong debate over the last year around access rights of transgender women to women only services. The Anti-Discrimination Board reports that in this year they have delivered more training on transgender discrimination to women's services than to any other organisations.

Many women's organisations have worked to develop policy around this issue and the outcome has ranged from total acceptance into the service from some organisations to acceptance only if one is post-operative. I have been in a number of situations where women from fully accepting services have championed the transgender cause with women from services that limit access to post-operative transgenders only and I think this is very encouraging. Just a matter of time perhaps.

Summary

The long-term significance of the above, and other ongoing initiatives, will be to change cultural attitudes towards transgender people and create an environment where we can expect the same levels of respect and dignity that the majority of people take for granted. This paragraph appeared in the last annual report and I repeat it here because it has continued relevance.

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Ways to Think about Gender

Sex versus Gender

Written by Sally O'Driscoll, Associate Professor of English at Fairfield University, Connecticut, U.S.A. for the 1996 Progressive Culture Works "Genderplex".

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When we think about sex, we often first think about male/female sex differences: are men different from women, and if so, what causes the difference?

One of the most important points articulated by the wave of feminism that arose in the U.S. in the 1960s is that sex is different from gender. Sex is different from gender in that "sex"

refers to a biological label ascribed on the basis of genitalia: the labels for sex available in common use are male, female, and intersex. "Gender" on the other hand, refers to a set of behaviours and characteristics assigned to each sex. "Sex" is felt by most people to be a stable category — since the vast majority of people fall, at least in external appearance - into either the male or female group. But "gender" is what we could call a social or a cultural construct that is, every society seems to assign different characteristics to each sex, and what any society believes to be "masculine" and "feminine" may change over time.

Sex is felt by most people to be a stable category, but gender is a social or a cultural construct with every society assigning different characteristics to each sex.

Taking this basic distinction as our starting point we can explore more fully the consequences of the labels we currently have at our disposal.

Sex

When we think about sex, we often first think about male/female sex differences: are men different from women, and if so, what causes the difference? Currently, to put matters in simple terms, there are two main schools of thought on this: those who believe that biological differences between the sexes are crucial, and those who see them as less important.

The position one takes here is important because it decides whether one believes that sex can actually be split apart from gender and discussed separately. The terms in current use for these two ways of looking at the situation are essentialism and social construction; these terms correspond roughly to the "nature versus nurture" debate, or to biological versus social determinism.

The essentialist position tends to see the sexed body as crucial, and gender characteristics as innate - as "essentially" part of the biological body rather than separate from it.

The social constructionist position tends to see biological sex differences as less important, and gender behaviours as characteristics that are learned in a particular social environment.

To put it concretely, an essentialist might argue that "aggression" is a gender behaviour that cannot be split apart from biological sex, because it is caused by the physical makeup of males; a social constructionist might argue in return that the evidence on hormonal aggression is inconclusive, that this gender characteristic should be discussed separately from sex because our society socialises males to be more aggressive. (It should be noted that these positions indicate opposite ends of a spectrum; there are complex ways of thinking about gender that consider both biological and environmental factors.)

Arguments about biology versus social environment are important when we consider differences between the sexes. We might want to start out by wondering why the idea of sex differences arouses such passions in most people, and why the belief that any meaningful differences exist is such a bedrock principle in our society.

If we see differences when we look at men and women in our society, we need to ask what the differences are, and if they are innate or learned. Current popular opinion, as seen in newspaper articles and on television, often asserts that male and female genes, brains, and hormones are different and account for perceived differences between men and women — for example, it is often claimed that teenage boys are better at math than girls.

Scientists split on whether such differences are, first of all, statistically meaningful, and if they are, whether they are caused by environment or by biology. As Anne Fausto-Sterling shows in her book *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories About Women and Men*,

however, supposedly neutral "scientific" assertions are often based on deeply held cultural beliefs. Fausto-Sterling shows in her book that most of what we think we know "scientifically" about sex and sex difference is, in fact, a hypothesis built on inadequate research and cultural biases.

One thing that Fausto-Sterling argues is that biological sex is not such a stable category as we have been led to suppose.

Most of us tend to think that sex is a simple chromosomal difference: people with XX chromosomes are female, those with XY are male. Yet Fausto-Sterling shows that the XX and XY chromosomes by themselves are not enough to make a simple dividing line between men and women; there are XY females and XX males. As she argues, sex is a more complex matter involving gonads and hormones as well as chromosomes, and there may be more different combinations (beyond simple male/female) than people have been willing to recognise.

In debates about sex then, we could say that the essentialist position does not try to separate sex from gender, but sees gender as flowing naturally from sex. The social constructionist position sees gender characteristics as something learned from or imposed by the social environment in all its complexity.

The social construction versus essentialism debate rages in sexuality issues just as it does in differences between the sexes. Recently, there has been some research that claims to find differences between the brains of gay men and straight men (see LeVay; DeCecco).

This kind of research fits into the essentialist, or biologically determined, end of the spectrum: it appears to conclude that homosexuality has a biological basis.

The social constructionist position, on the other hand, would see homosexuality as a predilection that developed in conjunction with environmental factors, rather than being based in biology. This position would also make it easier to explain why some people's gender characteristics do not "fit" their biological sex, whether or not they were homosexual. A social constructionist could argue that someone who was biologically male, yet had what our society would call "effeminate" characteristics, has simply learned his gender behaviour somewhat differently from what our society usually tries to impose. The social constructionist position makes it easy to concentrate on what the society tries to impose as "normal" gender, rather than labelling the person "deviant".

In our culture now, only two sexes are recognised: male and female. Our whole lives are predicated on fitting neatly into one of those categories: in this country, you can't open a bank account or fill out any government form without checking that little box — "M" or "F"? And what happens if your physical appearance doesn't match the box you've checked?

In the recent film *To Wong Foo*, three drag queens stopped by a state trooper on a lonely road late at night were terrified: they "passed" as women, but one glance at a driver's license would destroy the illusion. And even in that feel-good movie, the implications were clear — if your gender presentation doesn't match your biological sex, you can expect to be the target of violence.

Gender

One of the easiest ways to understand that "gender" is not something absolute, but is a shifting set of characteristics, is to compare the ways men and women behave in different cultures.

One can also compare the same culture at different periods in history; for example, in Restoration England during the 1660s and '70s, aristocratic men wore long wigs, makeup, bright clothes, and beautiful fabrics — all things that today would be seen as "effeminate", although they were considered perfectly "masculine" at the time.

In different cultures or at different times, it is considered acceptable for men to cry, for women to do heavy labour, etc. Class and race are also intricately interwoven with ideas about gender, as Sojourner Truth pointed out a hundred years ago in *Ain't I a Woman?* As an African-American woman who had been born into slavery, Truth was well aware that being female did not stop anyone from insisting that she perform "unfeminine" labour.

One way to think about how gender works in our current society is clothes: when we buy clothes or pull them out of our closets, we are constantly aware that clothes mark gender distinctions between men and women. Clothes are strictly segregated, into different stores or into different departments of large department stores.

Those lines of segregation have blurred a little since the 1960s, since everyone can now buy the same blue jeans and sweatpants. But every time the line blurs, it gets reinscribed: jean companies have come out with more and more types of jeans cut especially for women, and "feminised" versions of sweat suits were quickly introduced.

Try an experiment: look around and examine the clothes of men and of women. Do they often wear the same items of clothing (jeans, sweatshirts, t-shirt, etc.)? If the item is the same, are there any differences between the ones that men wear and those that women wear (in colour, cut, etc.)? Or do men and women wear the same article of clothing in a different way — close-fitting rather than loose-fitting, sleeves rolled up or down, buttons done up or left open, etc.?

We all use clothes to say a lot about ourselves: we can telegraph facts about how much money we have, how conservative or liberal we are, about race, about our professions and jobs, about whether we are sexually available and whom we wish to attract. But in all of these cases, the way we use clothes is defined by gender.

Another way to think about gender difference is self-presentation. Can you identify someone as male or female as they walk down the street and before you can see their faces? If so, what are the clues: style of walking, clothes, stance, etc.? Are these things — the way we stand, walk, raise or lower our voices etc. - biological, or were they taught to us as children?

The external characteristics of gender are easy to recognise, once one starts to think about them — in fact, they are so obvious that we often think of them as "common sense". But the internal emotional and psychological characteristics that are assigned to each sex are harder to pinpoint.

We can start to think about these by asking ourselves what generalisations we make about men and women in our own culture, broadly speaking. For example, when we turn on the television to watch the news, we expect to see pretty, smiling female news anchors, and authoritative, businesslike male anchors — often not very good looking.

If we look at our mothers and fathers and the families we know, we can see that in our culture women are still expected to raise the children, while men are still expected to earn money for the family; women still earn less money than men for doing the same jobs.

We see that men are still looked to for authority, for making decisions, for being strong; we think of women as nurturing, warm, motherly, and emotional — perhaps less logical than men. Although we can all think of exceptions to these stereotypes, they still seem to hold true in a broad way.

The question we need to ask is, are men and women naturally and inherently that way? Or does each sex behave that way because we are brought up to do so?

Splitting sex from gender is one way to address another fundamental question: what happens when a person's biological sex and his or her gender characteristics do not seem to match

This question brings another factor into the discussion — sexual orientation. The debate about differences between the sexes often gets confused with arguments about sexuality because "correct" gender behaviour includes an enforcement of heterosexuality.

A woman is seen as appropriately feminine when her behaviour complements the appropriate masculinity of her mate; we live in a culture that socialises us into heterosexuality as well as into gender roles. This is what Adrienne Rich has called "compulsory heterosexuality": to be properly female or properly male is, in our society, to be heterosexual.

(One critic, Monique Wittig, takes this further and says that lesbians are not women, since the way our society defines "Woman" is as heterosexual and in a particular social relationship with males.)

If someone's gender characteristics do not seem "appropriate" for their assigned sex, they are often assumed to be homosexual even when that is not the case. In the same way, when both women and men transgress the rule of heterosexuality (that is, if they are homosexual), they are often seen as transgressing the rules of gender as well: lesbians are often perceived as "mannish" and gay men as "effeminate".

It is as though the desire to keep things simple (men must be masculine, women must be feminine) makes people mix gender issues and sexuality issues into one sticky mess. If one wants to insist that it is masculine to be independent, protective of one's female lover, etc., then one will label a lesbian "mannish". It is easier to assume that "lesbians just want to be men" than to understand how gender characteristics do not necessarily flow "essentially" from biological sex.

The lesbian categories of "butch" and "femme" fit right in the heart of this debate. As a femme lesbian whose lover identifies as butch, I get tired of people who assume that our relationship is just an imitation of a heterosexual one, as if "butch" simply meant wanting to be a man.

Butch and femme identities, in fact, are a way of carving out a new space in the ways we can all think about ourselves. A butch lesbian, for example, might well think of herself as a woman (if indeed that is important), but her gender identity marks out a new space on the spectrum; neither feminine nor masculine as our society currently defines those terms.

The grey Area: What is not explained by these labels

By now, we have a clear sense of what is meant by sex and gender but not of how these apply to people's lives.

For someone who sees himself as a conventional heterosexual man, these labels may not seem problematic or even interesting; they may simply describe such a person's experience of the world. The same may apply to someone who sees herself as a conventional heterosexual woman — again, the characteristics attributed to men and women in this culture may seem simply to match what she sees in herself and what she perceives as her essential identity.

But what about those who don't fit neatly into these categories? For example, the tomboy girl who grows up feeling strong and physically competent, who does not wish to lower her voice, defer to men, bear and nurture children, or wear skirts? Or the man who gets typed as "effeminate" because of his gestures or stance or way of doing his hair?

We don't have many useful terms to describe people whose personal characteristics simply don't match the gender category that they're supposed to fit in because of their sex.

If your sex is female, but your characteristics are not feminine, there's a dissonance. The same thing applies if your sex is male, but your characteristics are not masculine.

That's where the word transgender comes in: it's a relatively new word that is used to refer to people whose gender presentation does not match their ascribed sex. Transgender is different from transsexual, which refers to people who have chosen to have their biological sex surgically altered from male-to-female or from female-to-male. Since "trans" means "across", transgender means crossing the borders of gender identity.

One assumption that is often made is that anyone who has such a sex/gender dissonance is gay or lesbian. The "unfeminine" woman often gets labelled a dyke, the "effeminate" man is often called a fag.

The assumption seems to be that any deviation from conventional gender characteristics is caused by, or indissolubly linked with, a deviation from heterosexuality. As I indicated above, that assumption is much too simplistic.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The art pieces in the "Genderplex" show all question, from the artist's different perspectives, the way that gender functions in our society now. The purpose of the show is to make people look with new eyes and to think from a fresh viewpoint, about the effects our deeply ingrained cultural assumptions about gender have on our lives.

What aspects of our personalities have we had to repress in order to fit into our ascribed gender category? If gender dissonance causes public disapproval (from our families, friends, co-workers, and from strangers) what sacrifices have we made to avoid that disapproval? What violence or discomfort have we suffered if we have dared to transgress our appropriate gender category?

One of the main questions we need to look at while thinking about gender is, precisely, violence: our society is made so uncomfortable by any dissonance between sex and gender presentation that violence is often the result.

Men and women who don't conform to the gender characteristics ascribed to their sex have to deal with a horrific level of violence. The violence ranges from verbal abuse - screaming epithets at people who are female but "masculine", male but "feminine", to physical violence and murder.

As I understand it, the purpose of Genderplex is to bring up these issues and provoke thought and discussion. The participants in the show began with a series of questions:

- » Are there really only two sexes? Two genders?
- » How does our society impose and enforce the notion of gender?
- » What are the effects of being gendered in this society?
- » To what extent can one opt out of the current gender system?
- » Is the way gender is currently conceived in the popular domain either adequate or accurate?

What I've tried to do here is clarify the terms behind these questions, so that a useful discussion can follow. The authors whose ideas I've used are listed below.

- » Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us* New York Routledge, 1994.
- » Judith Butler, *Imitation and Gender Insubordination In Inside/Out* ed. Diana Fuss. New York Routledge 1992.
- » Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Liberation: A movement whose time has come* New York World View Forum, 1992.
- » Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* New York Harper Perennial.
- » Adrienne Rich, *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence in Powers of Desire; The Politics of Sexuality* ed. Ann Snitow et al. New York Monthly Review Press.
- » Gayle Rubin, *Thinking Sex: Toward a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality in Pleasure and Danger; Exploring Female Sexuality* ed. Carole Vance. London: Pandora, 1989
- » Diana Saco, *Masculinity as Signs: Post-structuralist Feminist Approaches to the Study of Gender in Men, Masculinity, and the Media* ed. Steve Craig. Newbury Park Ca. Sage, 1992
- » Patricia J. Williams, *The Obliging Shell, from The Alchemy of Race and Rights* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- » Monique Wittig, *One is Not Born a Woman: from The Straight Mind and Other Essays* Boston: Beacon Press, 1992. ed. Diana Fuss. New York Routledge 1992.

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Expressing My Feminine Side

Belinda's Personal Story

by Belinda

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Every afternoon I would come home from school and try on my mother's clothes.

I am a forty-two-year-old who has been cross-dressing at different times since I was a young teenager. I remember wearing my mothers clothes whilst at school. Both Mom and Dad worked and I was an only child. Every afternoon I would come home from school and try on my mother's clothes.

It [cross-dressing] felt so wonderful but I was always worried about getting caught by my parents.

It felt so wonderful but I was always worried about getting caught by my parents. I remember one Saturday night when they went out and I stayed home. As usual I changed into Mom's clothes and a little bit of make-up. Naturally, I did not have a wig at that stage. They came back about an hour later to collect something Mom needed.

That was the excuse but I now think they suspected something. Anyway, I would not let them in until I changed which took about fifteen minutes. The dressing was hard to explain.

I don't really know why I started cross-dressing but I can not stop as it gives me so much pleasure. I am a loner who has not had many girlfriends although I have been married once. I think that was just to try to 'be normal', however that did not work as I also started wearing my wife's clothes.

Eventually, the marriage failed mainly because I lost interest in sex. Over the last few years I have not had sex with any females and have started to explore other avenues for my sexual satisfaction.

I now find I am attracted to men whilst dressed as a woman. Perhaps the urge has always been there but has been suppressed all this time. I have had a few brief encounters but would love to meet someone for a lasting relationship. I live in hope.

I find women relate extremely well to cross-dressers and I have now a few 'girlfriends' who accept who I am. I love having that freedom to express my feminine side which is gradually taking over my whole personality.

I have thought about seeing a doctor and starting hormone treatment. However, that is a big step and there is no turning back. To find and understand who I really am may require this first step. If that works physically and emotionally for me I would then hope to have gender realignment and become the total woman I have longed to be for so many years.

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Book Reviews: Secret Men's Business

Manhood: The Big Gig

Reviewed by Col Eglington

Article appeared in Polare magazine: September 1999 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Secret Men's Business:
Manhood "The Big Gig" (1998)
Author: John Marsden.

Secret Men's Business: Manhood 'The Big Gig'

by John Marsden
Published by Pan McMillan (1998)
I.S.B.N.-13 978 0330360746

[Secret Men's Business] is aimed at adolescent boys but is very useful for us F.T.M. trying to sort it all out.

This book is a good easy read on how to be a functioning adult male. It's aimed at adolescent boys but is very useful for us F.T.M. trying to sort it all out. It gives us a look at what transitioning to manhood would be like for a boy and the issues facing them and us. I found I could relate to many of the fears, lack of experience and confusions felt by the youth that are mentioned.

John Marsden's writing style is single, clear, absorbing and non-judgmental.

For boys trying to work out what manhood is about, this book is a good common sense starting point. It covers appropriate and inappropriate behaviours at a very practical level. It's not about where and how to buy a suit, it's about how to be a responsible and emotionally mature man.

The topics covered include how to separate physically and emotionally from our parents; the lies young people are told about life; what becoming a man is really all about; drugs; puberty; sex (it positively acknowledges gay sexuality); girls and women and solving your

problems.

A very interesting section is on boys' relationships with their fathers, the need for a positive one, what you can do if you don't have a father to learn from and rely on and how to cope and fill that gap.

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Thrush

Transmission, Signs and Symptoms, Treatment, Prevention

by Unknown Author

Article appeared in Polare magazine: September 1999 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

What is it?

Thrush is a fungal condition called monilia or candida albicans. It is caused by overgrowth of the yeast candid albicans. The organism is often found in the body without causing disease and is not harmful. It may become evident:

- » during sex;
- » during pregnancy;
- » during the use of antibiotics or other medication; or
- » in diabetic people.

Transmission:

Although thrush is not usually acquired from sexual intercourse it can infect a male partner who can re-infect the female during sex. Thrush can live under the skin of a uncircumcised penis.

Signs and Symptoms:

The usual symptoms are:

- » itchiness of the genital area;
- » soreness of the vagina;
- » a cheesy white discharge from the vagina; and
- » discomfort during intercourse and or pain when urinating.

Treatment:

Prescribed vaginal or oral medications are very effective treatments. The following may help to make the vagina less favourable to thrush or help to smooth the irritation but they are not cures. An external genital wash or medications are very effective treatments, but are not cures. The following may help:

- » an external genital wash of weak vinegar solution, (1 teaspoon per cup) or bicarbonate of soda, (1 teaspoon per litre of water);
- » a hand full of raw salt in the bath water;
- » inserting acidophilus yogurt in the vagina; and
- » Use of Acigel available from your chemist.

Prevention:

The following points may help to avoid an infection:

- » Wear loose clothing as tight clothing promotes excessive sweating and makes it easier for the candida fungus to invade surfaces;
- » wear cotton or silk underwear instead of polyester;
- » after urinating wipe from front (Vagina) to back (anus) to avoid infection of the vagina;
- » avoid excess use of soap; and
- » it is not advisable to have sex during a severe attack.

Thrush causes swelling of the genitals and sexual stimulation will increase the swelling, bringing discomfort, while the natural lubrications produced are alkaline and may aggravate the problem.

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H.I.V./ AIDS

Some Issues for F.T.M.s

by Ms. Viviane K. Namaste PhD.

Article appeared in Polare magazine: September 1999 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015

It is considered common knowledge that [H.I.V./ AIDS](#). can affect everyone. But we know very little about its impact on transgendered people, and even less about [F.T.M.](#) transsexual and transgender people. As part of a needs assessment on transgendered people in the province of Québec, Canada, funded by the Centre Quebécois de Coordination sur le sida, I set out to ask [F.T.M.](#) people about their relations to [H.I.V./ AIDS](#).

This research was an initiative of 'Cactus' Montreal, a needle exchange program located in downtown Montreal. The research on [F.T.M.s](#) was only one part of a much larger project: the needs assessment was based on the cities of Montreal and Hull, Québec, Canada. Other areas of inquiry in addition to [F.T.M.](#) transsexuals and transgendered people include: access to hormones, gender identity clinics, identification papers and civil status, addictions, prisons, ethno-cultural communities, and [H.I.V./ AIDS](#) services.

In terms of [F.T.M.s](#), I wanted to learn what [F.T.M.s](#) thought about the topic of [H.I.V./AIDS](#).; the issues they identified as important; and the kinds of services and resources which they said they need.

This information was gathered in two ways: individual interview with [F.T.M.s](#) in Québec; and a discussion group with [F.T.M.s](#), social service providers, and researchers at the Hero's Journey [F.T.M.](#) Conference in Boston in August of 1997. The most significant findings of this research are discussed below.

Participants declared that the criminalization of drug use in the United States made it increasingly difficult for people to access clean needles.

- » Many [F.T.M.s](#) did not consider themselves at risk for [H.I.V./ AIDS](#). Amongst the individual interviewees conducted in Québec (five [F.T.M.](#) people), several participants situate [H.I.V.](#) as an issue that affects prostitutes, street people and drug users.
- » The discussion group at the Hero's Journey conference in Boston revealed that in the context of the United States, access to sterile needles and infection equipment remains difficult. [F.T.M.s](#) stated that given the difficulties in finding a physician to prescribe hormones, some people buy them on an underground market. [F.T.M.s](#) living near the Mexican border can buy them without a prescription in Mexico, but this raises the problem of potential legal difficulties upon their return to the United States. Judicial problems can result for [F.T.M.s](#) if it is discovered that they are importing these materials. Moreover, [F.T.M.s](#) reported that many individuals use needs of two difficult sizes to inject - a large-gauge needle to withdraw the thick oily fluid from its container, and a smaller needle to actually inject the hormones into the body. Participants declared that the criminalization of drug use in the United States made it increasingly difficult for people to access clean needles. Hormone needles are available through some needle exchange programs in the United States, although some [F.T.M.s](#) maintained that there were often tremendous difficulties in accessing them. In Québec, needles for intramuscular injection are available through some needle exchange programs and can also be purchased at pharmacies.
- » There is a lack of education and prevention materials which address [F.T.M.](#) bodies. [F.T.M.s](#) interested in [H.I.V./ AIDS](#). issues stated that there was a dearth of information, resources and education materials which addresses [F.T.M.](#) bodies, cultures and sexual relations. For instance, participants in the discussion group said that although it is known that many [F.T.M.s](#) enjoy and practise vaginal sex, little is known about the risk factors involved: do male hormones dry out the vagina of an [F.T.M.](#), thus requiring that an [F.T.M.](#) who has penile-vaginal sexual relations use not only a latex condom, but water-based lubricant as well?
- » There may be a strong link between unsafe sex and self-esteem for transgendered people, according to participants. Interviewees stated that [F.T.M.](#) transgendered people may experience difficulties in finding sexual partners. Given these difficulties, [F.T.M.s](#) may not protect themselves and/or their partners during sexual intercourse, for fear of rejection. [F.T.M.s](#) who identified as gay and/or bisexual men stated that some [F.T.M.s](#) only offer oral sex to other men, so as not to reveal their own transgender/transsexual status. Due to the threat of ridicule, harassment, physical violence, or sexual assault upon discovery or disclosure of one's transgendered status, an individual might not disclose this status. [F.T.M.s](#) also remarked that some of them have 'no touching' zones on the body: a criterion to which many gay men are not accustomed in their sexual relations. Other [F.T.M.s](#) said that they enjoyed penile-vaginal intercourse,

but that they generally could not broach this subject within a gay male context, such as a discussion group. All F.T.M. transgendered people experience difficulties negotiating sexuality and fear rejection, in the view of F.T.M. participants in the discussion group at the Boston conference. In the words of one participant, this creates a global situation in which F.T.M. transgendered people may have to ask themselves, "What are you willing to give up to have sex"?

- » Interviewees and discussion group participants contended that the administration of social services excludes transgendered people. M.T.F. transsexuals who have sex with men for instance, are often classified as 'men who have sex with men'. Likewise, F.T.M.s are often classified as women. Gender exclusive forms or counselling practices are different examples of how transgendered people must categorise themselves as 'men' or 'women' and thus deny the complexity of their bodies, identities and histories. The issues of perceived risk, lack of access to sterile needles and injection equipment, lack of F.T.M. specific educational materials, self-esteem, and the exclusion of transgendered people in the administration of social services are among the most salient findings of my research. It is hoped that this information can be used in the development of appropriate resources and services for F.T.M. transsexual and transgender people with regards to H.I.V./AIDS.

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Employment

An In-Depth Look at the Many Issues Facing Transgender People

by Gianna E. Israel

Article appeared in Polare magazine: September 1999 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



... if an employer doesn't ask, don't tell. However, if you are asked about a large period of unemployment, package your response positively ...

Can you imagine finding an employment position where it did not matter if you had a transgender identity? I frequently receive letters and telephone inquiries from all over the country, where good people are looking for work. As transgender persons, many are just looking to survive, others are trying to advance careers. Some people even ask if they shouldn't move immediately to San Francisco, believing employment for transgender men and women seems a more certain prospect.

... many times people are uncertain how to explain to an employer vast periods of unemployment. This can be particularly so for people who transition ...

Many times I receive inquiries from people who assume that some type of transgender employment agency must exist or who ask if there isn't some type of work that actually welcomes transgender people. It almost seems as if after having gone through so much emotional pain, at the very least, they believe

they deserve a decent job. Regrettably, the world doesn't work that way, usually. In most cases such circumstances do not exist, you have to search for and create opportunities.

First, a word on relocation. Think long and hard about it before doing so. When you move, you are giving up any resources and the close proximity of relationships you may have built at your current location. Generally speaking, there are transgender men and women in every part of the country. I know this as a fact, having provided nationwide telephone consultation to nearly every state. There are transgender people everywhere, working in nearly every conceivable position. So, don't leave town just yet.

The best reasons for relocating are pretty easy to understand. If the area you live in doesn't appear to have many employment opportunities or room for advancement, it may be getting time to move. First, however, you would be well served in contacting other transgender people in your area. Find out how they are surviving and dealing with employment and discrimination issues. Also, find out how available positions are to the general public. You can do this by contacting your State's unemployment office. If jobs are readily available, you are then left to decide which one best suits your skills and interests.

If you feel you are not being hired because you have a transgender identity, it is time to look in the mirror and ask, "why?" Discrimination definitely exists. The fact is you really don't want to work for any employer who discriminates or doesn't appreciate the skills you offer. However, in looking in the mirror, make certain your manner of dress is appropriate for your intended occupation. Be aware that employers are most unlikely to hire you if there are any incongruencies in your presentation. In other words, be consistent. If you're name is Catherine, or Frank, dress accordingly. If you are in the midst of transition, an androgynous name and appearance is okay as long as you carry yourself with confidence regardless of whether you have disclosed your transgender status or not.

When you can't find employment one of the best reasons to leave town is if you find yourself being continuously harassed or discriminated against.

Particularly, if there seems to be no relief in sight. If your presentation matches your gender identity, and people are unwilling to accept you, for who you are, it may be time to consider moving.

To address the question of transgender specific employment. There are very few occupations which require having a transgender identity. The exceptions to this include working in gender specialized academia, counselling or therapy, or public health or education. These opportunities occasionally exist in large cities, and can be found in areas with progressive attitudes. For example, you might find a Gay/Lesbian community centre interested in hiring a transgender person should they be inclusive of diversity. Cities and counties with progressive attitudes may seek transgender persons interested in doing H.I.V. education.

Whatever the position, expect a great deal of competition from other highly qualified transgender individuals.

If you cannot immediately find employment in your location, if you're finances can realistically pay your bills, you may wish to volunteer at a hospital, non-profit organisation or at any organisation that interests you. Doing this will help build your social interaction skills,

which is particularly useful for persons in the process of coming-out. Demonstrating your abilities to others may spark job offers. The possibility also exists that you will hear of job offers as your contact with people increases.

Before seeking employment, particularly if you are in the process of transition, it would be useful to ask yourself a variety of questions. Doing so will help you gauge your potential for success. Thinking ahead will also help you prepare for difficult questions from employers and co-workers. For example, how long have you been living in role as a new man or woman? And, is this your first time working as such? If so, be prepared to package your transgender identity so as to not immediately put off others.

Packaging means to present or market yourself in the most positive light possible. In other words, marketing your skills, interests, and experiences as a selling point. If this is your first year of transition, and you are looking for work, stating you just began transition is not a very strong selling point.

Instead, when asked how long you have lived in your gender role, you may wish to infer you have done so for many years on a 'part-time' basis. This sounds considerably less inexperienced, since you may have any number of reasons why you are just going 'full-time'.

Generally speaking, the art to good packaging, is to present yourself in the best light possible. If you lack previous experience or skills, you may have to do so in a manner which cannot be disproved. This may sound phoney, and is so. The fact is, however, we as humans live in a world of illusions ... for example, to an employer, you are going to sound much more stable if you present yourself as such. As another example, many times people are uncertain how to explain to an employer vast periods of unemployment. This can be particularly so for people who transition, and had difficulty finding employment for months or a couple of years.

During an interview, if an employer doesn't ask, don't tell. However, if you are asked about a large period of unemployment, package your response positively. As long as it can't be disproved, you might have been spending time with family, travelling, studying privately, doing just about anything to improve yourself. That would sound better, and much less desperate, than saying you were straggling and struggling. On a similar note, in most circumstances it is best to not reveal the extent of emotional hardship or difficulties associated with having a transgender identity. This is true for both pre-existing and potential employers.

Within interviews and current employment relationships your first priority is to enhance a company or organisation's success. Make it clear to others that you are work oriented, stable and committed. With gender issues, make it a point to answer or address concerns that are relevant to the position. Discussing emotional baggage within interviews or employment situations will undermine people's respect of you. Interviews and the work place are no place to openly seek validation of your new identity, or to seek consolation because you have had difficulties in your personal life. If you need personal support, seek that from your friends, family, support group or gender specialized counsellor.

Within interviews and employment there also will be people who are curious about your transgender identity. Curiosity is okay because people are curious. I have frequently found that when others look at me unusually, if I do not assume their intentions to be hostile, in most cases people are just being curious.

During situations like this it is quite appropriate to let others know you have a transgender identity, and respond to general questions. However, be aware that some people's questions will be sensational in nature. In other words, they are looking for a cheap thrill at your expense.

Generally speaking, within the workplace it is appropriate to answer questions about who you are, how you deal with situations, how you deal with discrimination, how long you have been doing this, and which bathroom you use. However, when others begin asking you extremely personal questions you need to decide where to draw the line. In the workplace it is generally best to avoid long, drawn out discussions about every aspect of 'the operation', or discussing your sexual practices. If questions seem continuously invasive, ask yourself if these are questions people would be asking a non-transgender person. Usually, non-transgender persons are not repeatedly asked questions about their genitals or bedroom experiences, unless someone is looking for a date or one-night stand.

It is not rude to politely turn questions away which are personally invasive. It may in fact be required. However, equally so, there is no reason to be ashamed of being transgender. During the course of conversation in the workplace, if people are discussing how general, day-to-day issues effect them, it is quite appropriate to discuss how an issue may effect you as a transgender man or woman. Far too frequently transgender people hide in the closet when it comes to discussion of relationships, family, childhood, etc. People can learn about you, if you are willing to say how something effects you.

When thinking about employment issues, questions about stereotypes should be examined. For example, social pressure can frequently push transgender persons into accepting positions they don't want. This is particularly so in places where there are not a lot of jobs, or if a person doesn't have a lot of experiences or education. However, do not accept second best, at least not permanently. If your dream is to be a female mechanic, buy yourself a set of tools and get busy. Or, if you wish to be an F.T.M. florist, don't allow others' ideas of who you should be to stop you.

Finally, within employment, you can expect to face more typical gender discrimination issues, much as non-transgender persons experience. If you are a new man you may find women view you suspiciously or with fear. Or if you are a new woman you may find that men no longer take you seriously. This can be particularly true if you enter a new field where people are unfamiliar with you. For example, in addition to working as a gender specialist, I also work as a forensic mental health specialist. In other words I provide case management and court strategy for legal and institutional clients.

On one of my first cases while hiring a lawyer, more often than not, I noted that men were not paying attention to what I said. In fact, they treated me as if I was an impertinent schoolgirl bothering very busy men. Don't tolerate that type of attitude. In your actions - be firm, polite and business-like. If you are a woman, sometimes it is advantageous to link your name with a man, simply to gain that instant credibility as a newcomer to a field.

Finally, once you get settled into the role of working as a new man or woman, in many situations it is not always necessary to mention to others you have a transgender identity. People don't always need to know. However, if their discovering of your identity could harm you in some way, sometimes it is best to let people know up front. Basically, these type of decisions require experience having lived and worked as a new man or woman. If in the process of making a hard decision, do not hesitate to ask other transgender people how they would handle similar situations.

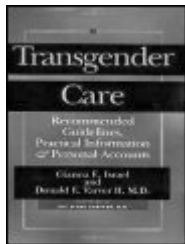
Gianna E. Israel

From Susan's Place: 📄 Gianna E. Israel was a therapist and author of many online articles regarding transsexuals and gender transition as well as the 1997 book *Transgender Care: Recommended Guidelines, Practical Information, and Personal Accounts*.



She also published numerous articles on transgender issues, including a regular column in the magazine, *Transgender Tapestry*, and a series of gender articles which are published on Usenet and in C.D.S. Publication's TG Forum. Her writings on gender issues had a significant impact on the field and had an enormous impact on many people's lives. She spent nearly 20 years providing gender-specialized counselling, evaluations, medical recommendations, and mental health services across the United States. She even offered appointments by telephone for individuals without local support or who found office visits difficult. She was a member of H.B.I.G.D.A. and worked with thousands of transpersons in all stages of transition. She passed away on 21 February 2006 after a long illness and is a sorely missed supporter of the trans community.

A full list of her essays on the "[Differently Gendered](#)" 📄 website



Transgender Care: Recommended Guidelines, Practical Information, and Personal Accounts
Author: Gianna E. Israel, Donald E. Tarver and Diane Shaffer
Publisher: Temple University Press (1998)
I.S.B.N.-13 978-1566398527.

From Amazon Books: 📄 By empowering clients to be well-informed medical consumers and by delivering care providers from the straitjacket of inadequate diagnostic standards and stereotypes, this book sets out to transform the nature of transgender care. In an accessible style, the authors discuss the key mental health issues, with much attention to the vexed relationship between professionals and clients. They propose a new professional role; that of "Gender Specialist".

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 provide definitive information (in the context of consulting health professionals) on hormone administration, aesthetic surgery, and genital reassignment surgery. Chapter 6 takes up the little-examined issue of H.I.V. and AIDS among transgender people. There is also a chapter devoted to issues of transgender people of colour, as well as a chapter on transgender adolescents. The book contains a wealth of practical information and accounts of people's experiences about coming-out to one's employer or to one's friends or spouse. Several essays spell out the legal rights of transgender people with regard to insurance, work, marriage, and the use of rest rooms. The second part of the book consists of thirteen essays on a range of controversial topics.

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Please Don't Be An Airhead

If you're going to be a female ...

Originally published in the Rainbow Newsletter of the Rainbow Gender Association by E. Fenton, the Belittled Woman
Article appeared in Polare magazine: September 1999 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



And, for God's sake, if you must emulate a woman, don't be a bimbo.

It's been nine months since my husband revealed he was a transvestite, and I'm fed up. Not with the fact that he likes to wear women's clothing; that's still a shock, but I'm coming to terms with

it. No, what's riling me is, shall we say, a certain underlying attitude that he (and some of the other would-be gals I've met) seem to have about what it means to be a woman. The last straw came tonight, when I found him curled up on the couch reading *Cosmopolitan*. The requisite blond bimbo graced the cover, wearing a red leather bra, a drugged expression, and not much else. This issue had insightful articles like "Confessions of Three Gigolos" and "The Lowdown on the Topless-Bar Scene". My favourite piece, however, was "The Bear Truth: Life from Fuzzy Wuzzy's

It's not that easy to articulate, but I feel you're mocking my gender by focusing your attention on aspects of appearance and manner that ... some women find offensive.

"Point of View". It was (I am not making this up) a spread consisting of photos of an oh-so-cute little bear cub and his lovable parents. Enough already!

If I sound somewhat bilious, it's because I am. Let me calm down a bit and explain why I'm writing this. I'm thirty-nine years-old, and about two decades ago I made a decision to reject some of the feminine frippery that I found - to dust off a phrase from the 1960s - demeaning to women. I'm talking about make-up, unnaturally curly hair, nails long enough to impair dexterity, shoes two sizes too small, starving oneself thin, and so on. (What twisted piece of karma gave me a husband who wears high heels is beyond me, but I can't help but see the humour in it.) I'm not saying I'm anything other than a product of my times, but the point is that I came to believe that while clothes make the man, they sure as heck don't make the woman. It really upsets me to see someone I love actively embracing the very aspects of femininity that I find trivial and silly, while at the same time making statements about "getting in touch with his female nature". Granted, I don't expect to find my husband poring over *The Second Sex* - but I'd be happy if he (and some of the rest of you ladies) would give a little more thought about what it means to be a member of the weaker sex (as they used to call it). Now, I understand that to realise your fantasy, you have to put on lots of make-up, do your nails and hair, wear a dress, adopt exaggerated mannerisms, and so on. That's fine. But please don't tell me that doing so transforms you into a more feminine being. If you're going to say that (and perhaps not all of you do), then show me some evidence. Show me some compassion, some communication skills, a heightened sense of aesthetics, some emotional adroitness - something! If you can't, please don't claim to have crossed any gender boundaries; you're just a guy in a dress.

And, for God's sake, if you must emulate a woman, don't be a bimbo. Don't read *Cosmo* and prattle on at length about nail polish and stockings. If you do, please don't do it around me. I have other things to think about. Don't talk to me about the Imperial Court and then - as my husband made the grave mistake of doing - tell me my work for woman's rights is pointless. I'm sorry to sound so hard-hearted. Perhaps I should show a little more compassion myself. But I'm writing this partly as an exercise in catharsis. Sometimes it's easier for me to write something down than to say it out loud. More importantly, though, I hope I can at least begin to express some of the frustrations many of your wives or girlfriends might be experiencing. I can only speak for myself, of course, but I have talked to a number of partners of transvestite men, and several of them have mentioned the same annoyance at men thinking they can enter "our turf". It's not that easy to articulate, but I feel you're mocking my gender by focusing your attention on aspects of appearance and manner that [some] men find attractive and [some] women find offensive. If your wife or girlfriend seems angry at you sometimes, perhaps this is part of the reason. Maybe you should talk to her about it.

I hope that this article does more than allow me to vent my spleen. I hope it can help couples start talking about at least some of the issues (and there are many) that are bothering transvestites' significant others. Perhaps it will initiate some discussions that will help some of us understand why you do what you do. I know that many S.O.s, for one reason or another, don't attend discussion sessions or support groups, or even talk about these issues with close friends. It must be very hard for these women, and it's up to you to try and dispel some of their frustration, anger, and feelings of helplessness.

Here's a request. Perhaps some of you could write to my ex-partner, giving your opinions on "what it means to be a woman". I, for one, would be interested in what you think, and I bet a lot of other women would be too. Thank you for reading my tirade. I feel better

already.

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